Professional Learning
Florida

In 2014-15 and 2015-16, how has Florida fostered effective professional learning statewide for all educators on its college- and career-readiness standards, K-12, in English language arts (ELA) and math?

SREB researchers gathered information on efforts in Florida, particularly at the Florida Department of Education, to foster effective **professional learning on the state's college- and career-readiness standards, the Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS) and Mathematics Florida Standards (MAFS).** In collaboration with SREB states and national experts, SREB identified a set of expected state actions — "look-fors" — in **four areas of state leadership in professional learning**. The researchers reviewed online sources, such as state policy documents and the department's website, to assess the state's efforts.

State efforts in each area fell into one of three levels of implementation:

- *Minimal*, indicating state leadership addresses some of the look-fors

- *Essential*, indicating state leadership addresses the look-fors SREB considers necessary for providing leadership and supporting local efforts

- *Strong*, indicating that in addition to the necessary look-fors, state leadership offers substantial support to foster quality and consistency statewide

The *Project Overview and Look-Fors* document and state profile reports are available on the project Web page.

Highlights for Florida

- **Strong expectations for professional learning** through adoption of robust standards for professional learning and state law requiring high-quality local professional development systems

- **Strong guidance, tools and exemplars**, including the Florida Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol and self-assessment checklists, and extensive online resources on the CPALMS (Collaborate Plan Align Learn Motivate Share), Continuous Improvement Management System (CIMS) and Florida School Leaders websites

- **Notable use of program evaluations to inform state efforts.** In 2015, the Florida Department of Education published a program evaluation of its K-1 formative assessment training. The study found positive and significant impacts from the 2012-13 training for educators on student formative assessment results and tests of teacher content knowledge. The department also commissioned an evaluation of some of its Race to the Top activities related to professional learning that intended to examine impacts of the initiatives on student outcomes.

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1 Establish Clear Expectations

Has the state established clear expectations for high-quality professional learning for all educators on the state college- and career-readiness standards through state professional learning standards or other policy documents?

Florida provides *strong* support.

- Florida revised its Professional Development Standards in 2010 to reflect changes in state law, current research and best practices, and key elements of the National Staff Development Council's 2001 Standards for Staff Development. Florida's Professional Development Standards include standards at the educator, school and district levels and require that professional development align to the state student learning standards and address educator needs and student outcomes.

- Additionally, state law requires every school district to have a professional development director. The director supports development of the district annual master plan for in-service activities, which must align to the Professional Development Standards and the Florida Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol.

2 Provide Guidance, Technical Assistance and Other Support

Does the state education agency provide information, guidance, tools, direct assistance and other support, such as technology and flexibility for innovation, to support local efforts to deliver high-quality, college- and career-readiness standards-aligned professional learning that meets the needs of all teachers in service of all students?

Guidance and tools

Florida provides *strong* support.

- Tools for planning, implementing and evaluating professional learning

  – Planning tools, online learning modules, a technical assistance guide, checklists and the Florida Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol, which establishes criteria for exemplary professional development practices at the district, school and educator levels. Together these tools provide extensive support for planning, implementing and evaluating professional development on the LAFS and MAFS at the district, school and educator levels.

- Professional learning resources and exemplars

  – Extensive sets of resources for educators, including online courses, guidance documents, videos of exemplary instruction, instructional planning tools and resources geared specifically toward district professional development directors

- Support for educator induction and mentoring programs

  – State law does not require induction or mentoring programs for all new teachers. It only requires that teachers completing a district-sponsored alternative certification program or serving as part-time teachers have a mentor. The department provides online guidance and resources to support local efforts to provide coaching and mentoring.

Technical assistance

Florida provides *essential* support.

- Through its statewide Differentiated Accountability (DA) system, the department's DA regional offices provide targeted assistance to schools and districts in need of improvement, including support with improvement planning and professional development.

- The department conducts site reviews of all 75 district professional development systems on a four-year cycle, using the Florida Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol. As part of the review, the department provides technical assistance and a report of findings to districts.

- The department provides training to district leaders on developing and monitoring professional development so they may use local educator evaluation results to inform planning. In addition, the department provides feedback on district annual master plans for in-service activities.

Other support, such as technology and flexibility for innovation

Florida provides *essential* support.

- Technology
  - Repositories offering extensive online, on-demand professional learning resources: <u>CPALMS</u> (Collaborate Plan Align Learn Motivate Share) website, <u>iCPALMS</u> platform and the <u>Florida School Leaders</u> website
  - Learning management system: <u>Continuous Improvement Management System</u> (CIMS) online platform for collaborative planning, problem-solving, performance management and accessing professional development resources

- Policies and opportunities to foster flexibility and innovation in professional learning
  - Charter schools may be approved to waive certain state rules or regulations to improve professional learning.
  - Deregulated Public Schools Act of 1999: Schools can apply for administrative and fiscal autonomy, waiving certain state laws, rules or guidelines to improve professional learning.

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3 Offer Professional Learning

Does the state education agency offer coordinated professional learning opportunities that develop educators' understanding of the state college- and career-readiness standards and skills to implement them — and that build local capacity to lead high-quality professional learning for all educators?

Funding for professional learning in 2014-15 and 2015-16:

Florida used or is using state funds (including 2014 dedicated appropriations for administrator professional development grants to districts), federal funds, and grants including Race to the Top and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Context: The department focuses on building the capacity of local districts to implement their own professional development systems. In doing so, the department assumes a limited role in providing professional development for educators.

Florida provides *minimal* support.

- Professional learning for teachers
  - As part of the state's Just Read, Florida! initiative, the department provides professional development programs for content area teachers of grades six through 12 on reading intervention strategies across the content areas. The Content Area Reading Professional Development (CAR-PD) and the Next Generation Content Area Reading Professional Development (NGCAR-PD) include 60 hours of face-to-face training and a 30-hour practicum.

- Professional learning for school and district leaders
  - Since 2012, the department has provided DA summer academies through DA regional offices for leaders in schools and districts in need of improvement. Academies focus on continuous improvement and leading local professional development. In 2015, the department shifted from regional trainings to a statewide conference geared toward district teams.
  - Established by the state Legislature, the department coordinates the William Cecil Golden (WCG) School Leadership Development Program for emerging and current school leaders. The program addresses the state Professional Development Standards and principal evaluation standards and focuses on literacy, data-driven instruction, mentoring and coaching. All state-approved university and district school leadership development programs are required to incorporate elements of the program.

4 Use Data and Accountability for Continuous Improvement

Does the state education agency use data to inform its planning and leadership of statewide professional learning, and does it provide feedback to local leaders and hold districts accountable for excellence in local professional learning?

Florida provides *essential* support.

- Department leaders regularly analyze data to inform professional learning efforts on the LAFS and MAFS.

- The department regularly uses various types of data to inform its work. Notably in 2015, it published a program evaluation of its K-1 formative assessment training, which examined the impacts of the 2012-13 training for educators on student formative assessment results and tests of teacher content knowledge, showing positive and significant results. The department also commissioned an evaluation of some of its Race to the Top activities related to professional learning. The evaluation examined impacts of the initiatives on student outcomes. Information on the impacts of training can help leaders understand the outcomes of state efforts, identify effective practices and weed out ineffective ones.

- In providing feedback to local leaders and accountability for excellence:
  - The department provides feedback to local leaders on their professional learning efforts through a review of district annual master plans for in-service activities and district reading plans. The department also conducts onsite reviews of district professional development systems, reaching all 75 districts on a four-year cycle.
  - Department leaders expect schools and districts to leverage the support and funding they receive for professional learning to make continuous improvement on school and district professional learning systems.

MOVING FORWARD: Practices for Florida to consider

- Explore ways to provide more **ongoing, comprehensive technical assistance and professional learning to local leadership teams**. This would support the long-term work of building deep and broad capacity in schools and districts to implement high-quality professional learning for all educators. See work with local leadership teams noted in the Alabama, Delaware, Kentucky and Louisiana profiles.

- Continue to undertake **comprehensive program evaluations** to analyze the efficacy of professional development initiatives — in particular, their impacts on teacher knowledge and practice as well as student outcomes — to help identify effective practices and weed out ineffective ones. See program evaluations noted in the Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee profiles.

All related state profiles and reports are on the project Web page.