Making Professional Development More Strategic: A Conceptual Model for District Decisionmakers

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A recent call to action issued by U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan shines a spotlight on the development of the teacher workforce, demanding innovative thinking about this critical area of national policy: “No area of the teaching profession is more plainly broken today than that of teacher evaluation and professional development” (Duncan, 2009).

Drawing on lessons from the private sector, there is a growing interest within the education community in proposals examining the human capital systems that underlie and help to determine the quality of the teaching workforce (Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2009). Currently, school districts are said to “fail to make the most of human resource management and its potential,” (DeArmond, Shaw, & Wright, 2009). In a recent book offering “break the mold” ideas about the teaching profession and in several other conceptual pieces about human capital systems, experts suggest a need to reform the “inefficient and outmoded systems” in place to recruit, prepare, develop, and retain effective teachers (Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2009; DeArmond et al., 2009; Hess, 2009; Wurtzel & Curtis, 2008; Odden & Kelley, 2008). Getting to the heart of the “instructional improvement puzzle” requires a focus on teacher performance and continuing teacher development, because “teachers weave a combination of their knowledge, skills, and abilities into specific performance competencies that become drivers of student learning and achievement” (Milanowski, Heneman, & Kimball, n.d., p. 1).

Teacher professional development (PD) is one of the district human resource strategies currently under scrutiny (Rice, 2009; Miles, Odden, Fermanich, Archibald, & Gallagher, 2004; Jerald, 2009), and school districts have been called to task for the lack of implementation of best practices in PD (Wurtzel & Curtis, 2008). Without building district capacity to manage and support PD, PD may in fact not be the best investment (as it currently is implemented) to advance the goals of improved teaching and learning (Elmore, 2002).

Some policymakers are giving up on PD as a lever for school improvement because it has not been demonstrated to enhance teacher effectiveness or student achievement when delivered at scale. Others continue to believe that PD is an important tool in a teacher human resource system, arguing that it is the lack of a well-developed district PD strategy that prevents this resource from being used effectively to accomplish district goals (DeArmond et al., 2009; Miles et al., 2004; Hess, 2009). This view—that PD has to become more strategic—has received support in a number of reviews of research and in descriptive studies of district policies regarding teacher development (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009; Spillane, 2000; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

While there is a growing consensus that PD should be made more strategic, this task is complicated by the fact that PD includes a wide range of activities. It takes many forms (e.g., short-term workshops, institutes, courses, coaching, and mentoring); it serves many purposes (e.g., individual teacher growth, school capacity building, and program implementation); and it is provided at different levels by different providers. PD activities may vary dramatically in any one district and across districts, in quantity and quality, and from year to year, depending on
funds made available from external sources and changing budget realities. Furthermore, district priorities for PD may change with new leadership, and this frequently sets up conditions in which the emphasis given to PD ebbs and flows.

Finally, teachers may participate in many discrete PD activities over the course of each school year, administered by different district and school staff and other organizations and designed for different purposes. Even when individual activities are well-aligned with district goals, teachers may experience these activities in a fragmented way if the cross-activity alignment is not clarified.

In this paper, we will address three concerns about PD as it currently operates in school districts, outlining the complexity of the problem:

- Decentralized operations within large school districts and inadequate resources in small districts have led to the fragmentation of PD.
- PD often is expensive, but there are few tools to document its cost and yield.
- PD is not linked to teacher evaluation or ongoing policies of accountability for student performance.

This paper provides a framework for districts to manage this complexity and to use the considerable resources expended on PD in a more purposeful, strategic, and effective manner. Section I describes the current state of PD in districts. Section II discusses lessons from the literature regarding ways to make PD strategic and systematic. This lays the groundwork for three sections that present three strategic approaches to PD:

- Section III discusses PD that focuses on improving the effectiveness of individual teachers.
- Section IV discusses PD that focuses on building school capacity to identify and solve problems of teaching and learning.
- Section V discusses PD that focuses on supporting the implementation of curricula, assessments, and other programs adopted by the district.

Finally, Section VI offers conclusions.
I. Current State of Professional Development in School Districts

PD available to teachers can take diverse forms, including workshops, institutes, courses, coaching, mentoring, and lesson study, and PD can serve diverse purposes—in particular, improving teacher knowledge and skills, building school capacity, or supporting the introduction of a new program or a new technology. Some PD activities are voluntary, and some may be required, as in the roll out of training for a new curriculum or a new behavior code. Some PD activities are actively sought by teachers to fulfill recertification requirements or salary increases. New teachers may participate in induction programs, and veteran teachers may participate in coaching or mentoring to advance to leadership positions. Other PD may be provided to meet the requirements of state or federal programs (e.g., a state literacy program).

District administrators often “tend to see staff development as a specialized activity within a bureaucratic structure” and not as part of an “overall strategy for school improvement” (Elmore, 2002, p. 10). In large districts, PD is administered by a variety of district offices and staffed by individuals with diverse knowledge and skills (e.g., curriculum content specialists; staff with grade-level expertise; and staff with expertise in particular student groups, such as students with special needs or English language learners). School-based PD may be designed by departments or initiated and led by school-based staff, including coaches and lead teachers. PD is also provided by outside partners, such as universities, consulting groups, publishers, and local community organizations (e.g., organizations specializing in behavioral or violence prevention programs).  

In small districts, PD may be administered by local leaders who often have a fulltime classroom teaching load. Many of these leaders may already have a variety of other responsibilities, such as procuring curricular materials and developing classroom materials (Spillane, 2000).

Given the diversity of PD, it is not surprising that teachers may experience PD as a set of disparate activities, and observers may view PD itself as “a mile wide, but an inch deep” (Milanowski, p.c.). In the absence of a coherent approach to linking types and purposes of PD,

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1 Although there is a substantial literature on PD, relatively little focuses directly on the district management of PD. The discussion in this section is based on case studies (Spillane, 2000; Childress, Elmore, Grossman, & Johnson, 2007) and studies of the resource allocation to PD (Miles et al., 2004; Rice, 2009). We also draw on a survey of 12 districts regarding the use of performance measurement feedback by teachers, principals, and district staff (Weisberg et al., 2009). A number of recent papers (including Wurtzel & Curtis, 2008; Odden & Kelly, 2008; Hershberg & Robertson-Kraft, 2009; Jerald, 2009; DeArmond et al., 2009; Hess, 2009) have focused on improving the teacher human resource system and much of this focuses on alignment and management of policies that affect recruitment, evaluation, support, and compensation for talented individuals. Literature on district administration also addresses the role of the superintendent and the capacity of the school district to manage PD for school improvement (Elmore, 2002; Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006). The literature remains weak in some areas. For example, we continue to lack good data to answer questions posed by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989): How are goals for PD set and coordinated? How are resources allocated? What determines which individual teachers have access to PD? And how do contextual factors (e.g., resources, state mandates) influence success? These questions have recently been revisited by Miles and colleagues (2004) and in two books (Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2009; Hershberg & Robertson-Kraft, 2009).
teachers may experience a tension between PD focused on individual growth and PD focused on organizational performance.

The reality of PD is that there is a substantial gap between the ideal, as reflected in the principles of PD espoused by professional organizations (e.g., the National Staff Development Council) and the way things work in districts (Elmore, 2002). In particular, the diversity in form, funding, and provision of PD presents three key challenges for districts in managing their portfolio of PD activities.

- Responsibility for the selection and management of PD is fragmented, affecting the quality of the PD provided.
- Districts are unable to carefully monitor the resources allocated to PD, making it difficult to assess whether the investment is cost-effective.
- PD is not aligned with teacher evaluation and other components of districts’ human resource management systems.

Each of these challenges is described in more detail below.

**Responsibility for the Selection and Management of PD Is Fragmented**

Decentralization within school districts has resulted in a fragmentation of policies and practices, including those related to PD (DeArmond et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Childress et al., 2007; Spillane, 2000). Participation in many PD events is voluntary, and teacher selection of PD opportunities has been the norm and has become more closely tied to the needs of the salary schedule or degree sought than to the problems identified through a district review of student, teacher, and school needs (Hess, 2009; Elmore, 2002; Jerald, 2009). Districts do not generally build an understanding of PD needs, map and measure current investment in PD, or create a multiyear PD strategy (Shields & Miles, 2009). Instead, district management of PD is generally conducted within “silos” defined by the source of funds, the type of PD, and the purpose of the PD.

For example, if a district invests in the strategy of placing coaches in each school, the resources may be controlled by the district, while the PD provided by coaches is managed by the school principal. When PD is supported by external organizations (e.g., through grants), there may be restrictions on the use of funds and district managers may have little or no flexibility in distributing the funds or targeting their purpose. Under these conditions, each department within a district may control funds targeted exclusively to the purpose of that department. In a study of nine districts, Spillane (2000) found that in larger school districts, responsibility for teacher learning was divided among different units in the district office. One urban district leader in the study explained, “We have professional development being done by [the] special education department, by [the] compensatory education department, by curriculum services” (p. 22). This division of
responsibility for teacher learning meant that different district subunits constructed separate and often divergent curricula for teacher learning.

Another district leader noted:

> We have change coming in from some of the schools from bottom up and then we have change coming in from central office down, and we’re advocating the philosophy of a single tier system but sometimes what we advocate and what we do doesn’t necessarily all jive [sic]. (Spillane, 2002, p. 22)

The result was a curriculum for teacher learning with discrete components for cooperative learning, graphing calculators, alternative assessment in mathematics, using mathematics manipulatives, conflict resolution, among others, that were not well-integrated. According to this superintendent, “able teachers might have integrated the lessons they learned from these diverse offerings into a coherent plan for their practice, but that is no easy task” (p. 22).

Spillane (2000) noted that smaller districts were much less segmented organizationally, but they faced the same fragmentation challenge because of their reliance on outside providers for PD. Individual teachers choose from the menu of PD offered by an array of agencies and individuals in the school system and beyond.

The fragmentation of PD in school districts has several implications for the quality and nature of the PD provided. Similarly, Childress and colleagues (2007) make the case that fragmentation may reduce the quality of PD, arguing that fragmented PD is likely to be “disconnected from the district’s instructional objectives and therefore irrelevant to the day-to-day work that people are expected to perform” (p. 12). Under these circumstances, “staff members do not receive the support they need to work effectively within the district-wide strategy, and they retreat to their schools and classrooms in relative isolation to do their best work independent of the district-wide strategy” (p. 12).

The fragmentation that marks decisions, choices, and resources for PD is a key barrier to the goal of developing and implementing a strategic PD approach. As Elmore (2002) suggests, fragmentation can derail a district’s efforts to improve schools:

> The practice of improvement is moving whole organizations toward the culture, structure, norms, and processes that support quality PD in the service of student learning and further involves mastery in several domains: knowledge and skill, incentives, and resources and capacity. (p. 15)

**Districts Are Unable To Carefully Monitor Resources Allocated to PD and Track PD Effectiveness**

The level of financial resources invested in PD among school districts is “largely unknown” (Rice, 2009). A number of studies have attempted to establish how much PD costs, how money is spent, and who pays for PD (Little, Gerritz, Stern, Guthrie, Kirst, & Marsh, 1987; Education Commission of the States, 1997; Inadequate Monitoring

The level of financial resources invested in PD among school districts is “largely unknown” (Rice, 2009).
Killeen, Monk, & Plecki, 2002). Other studies have examined specific types of PD, such as participation in the application for National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and compared spending across schools in districts or across districts in states (Fermanich, 2002; Cohen & Rice, 2005; Cohen, Gerber, Handley, Kronley, & Parry, 2001). These studies indicate that the decentralization of PD management and funding has led to continued difficulties in managing these resources strategically (Shields & Miles, 2009).

Due to the decentralization of school districts, many costs related to providing PD may be hidden in individual office or program expenditures; and support for PD may be drawn from multiple federal, state, local, and foundation sources, including funds external to the program using them (Miles et al., 2004; Rice, 2009). In a review of the literature on district spending on PD, Rice found that different studies using varying methodologies show ranges from a low of $2,000 per teacher per year to a high of over $15,000 per teacher per year.

Miles and colleagues (2004) examined expenditures for PD in five urban school districts, seeking to define the components of PD, describe their purpose and organization, and track and describe the cost:

- The five districts invested “significant but widely varying resources in professional development” (p. 17). Miles found that multiple departments managed these resources and a substantial portion of the overall PD budget was administered by outside providers. Miles and colleagues also confirmed a finding noted in other research, namely that external sources of funding (e.g., federal funds from Title I, National Science Foundation, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and Title II Eisenhower grants) were used for a good portion of the PD provided—almost half in these five districts.

- In the five districts, providing teachers time during the school day for PD, providing stipends for PD held on weekends or over the summer, and providing substitutes for PD was a significant component of the cost of PD, but districts rarely monitored this aspect of the allocation of resources to PD.

- Miles and colleagues (2004) reported that “none of the districts had previously totaled the investments aimed at particular schools or groups of teachers” (p. 22). Four of the five school districts targeted the majority of PD toward school-level capacity building (e.g., overall school reform models, department-based training, content coaches, and school-based instructional facilitators) rather than individual capacity (e.g., mentoring, coursework, and PD school arrangements with teacher preparation programs).

The lack of systematic documentation of the costs and expenses of PD extends to efforts to evaluate its effectiveness. The current state of PD management in districts offers little incentive for evaluating PD and using the resulting data to improve the quality of the PD provided. For example, when PD is provided as a component of a federally funded grant program, a national evaluation may be conducted. But the information is seldom communicated to participating districts. Outside providers of PD, such as universities, do not provide feedback to the district about teacher performance, other than course completion data, such as grades. Voluntary PD activities may be evaluated with the most basic of Likert-type satisfaction instruments to minimize burden on teachers, with the unfortunate result that no information is available about the impact on teacher knowledge and instructional practice or on student achievement. Furthermore, long-term followup is rare. System-wide PD rollouts may include formal
interviews and surveys of administrators and teachers, but the lack of coherent management of PD information and lack of integration of PD with other human resource strategies at the district level means key findings are rarely used to change the content, format, or delivery of future PD.

These weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation are important considerations in the planning of a strategic PD component within a human resource system. Miles and colleagues’ (2004) results indicate that dependence on external funding for PD and the fragmentation of control of PD diminishes the chances that PD will be part of a district’s long-range planning and will be used to accomplish the district’s vision. Furthermore, with little information about the relationship between cost and benefit and no data about effectiveness, district leaders are unable to assess whether the investment in PD is worth it.

**PD Is Not Aligned With Teacher Evaluation and Other Components of a District’s Human Resource Management Systems**

District human resource management systems include district policies and practices for the recruitment, selection, allocation, evaluation, development, and compensation of teachers. There is some evidence that existing human resource systems in school districts often do not work on behalf of school district goals because they tend to focus on the introduction of single practices or policies, which are not coordinated and aligned with overall district goals (DeArmond et al., 2009). Reformers also suggest this lack of alignment is due to gatekeeping by some institutions (e.g., institutions of higher education controlling the entry into the profession) and outmoded assumptions about the teacher workforce (Hess, 2009). In particular, the systems of preparing, hiring, and compensating teachers are designed for individuals expected to remain in the same district doing the same type of job for their entire career (Hess, 2009). Other researchers suggest the lack of alignment is related to challenges of gathering substantial support among stakeholders for reforming entire systems (Rotherham, 2009).

Heneman and Milanowski (2007) found that even in some districts where a reform policy regarding teacher compensation was being implemented, it was a “standalone” reform and not linked to the school districts’ improvement plans or to other human resource policies, thus possibly diminishing its chances for sustainability (Jerald, 2009). Similarly, PD is rarely aligned with teacher recruitment, evaluation, and compensation (Wurtzel & Curtis, 2008; Jerald, 2009; Rice, 2009; DeArmond et al., 2009). However, Jerald (2009) reports some changes resulting from a growing awareness by state and federal policymakers about the problems of implementing reforms as single policies, noting that eight states that have pay-for-performance programs also incorporate PD programs for teachers to some extent (Chait, 2007).

Hess (2009), Odden and Kelly (2008), Jerald (2009), Corcoran (2009), and Elmore (2002) highlight the problems caused by the lack of alignment between PD and teacher evaluation. They suggest that teachers have little incentive to participate in high quality PD because it is not tied to
teacher evaluation, to opportunities for advancement, or to accountability goals of the district. Jerald (2009) reviews national data on teacher participation in PD and highlights the features of PD as one-shot, without opportunities for feedback or followup and without focus “on strategies for improving classroom instruction in specific content areas or even linked to school and district improvement plans” (p. 7). Jerald’s review of the insufficiencies of PD is reinforced by a study conducted by The New Teacher Project (2009) regarding the teacher evaluation system in Cincinnati, Ohio, and by a survey of teachers in 12 districts (Weisberg et al., 2009). Teachers reported that the “current” (i.e., pre-reform) teacher evaluation system in Cincinnati did not differentiate among teachers and was not used to make human capital decisions. Therefore, teachers did not find it helpful.

The challenges of implementing aligned policies that link PD, evaluation, and compensation systems are substantial. First, aligning PD with other human resource practices would be a dramatic change in the way business is done by superintendents and department leaders. The “one practice at a time” approach is business as usual for district managers, according to Childress and colleagues (2007): Leaders “identified the challenges (of managing human resources) easily, but most viewed them as distinct issues to be solved one by one. For instance, human resources had sole responsibility for hiring new teachers, while a curriculum and instruction department was exclusively responsible for teacher professional development” (p. 12).

Second, Jerald (2009) indicates that because the emphasis on alignment in human resource systems in education is recent, there is little guidance about “what true alignment looks like and how it can best be achieved” (p. 3). Jerald emphasizes that implementing compensation, evaluation, and PD policies that are reinforcing to each other (not just a set of components in a system but an integrated system) requires a “highly intentional design” and proposes the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) design as an example of an integrated system with strategies to link teacher evaluation and PD and “to help teachers develop a clearly defined repertoire of instructional skills that are rewarded by annual bonuses” (p. 4).

**Summary**

A review of evidence about the current state of PD indicates that PD selection in a district is often based on teacher preferences or short-term opportunities provided by unique state or federal grant programs. The administration of PD is often fragmented, residing in separate district departments and offices. Districts have difficulty managing PD resources because PD budgets are controlled by individual departments or may be administered by outside providers. Districts do not have an integrated budget for PD or tools or metrics to evaluate the investment made in PD. Finally, PD is often disconnected from district policies for teacher recruitment, retention, support, and compensation. The lack of alignment with performance goals, career development opportunities, and accountability for student achievement leads to PD that is frequently considered of little value to the needs of teachers, school capacity building, and program implementation.
II. How Can Professional Development Become More Strategic?

As we argued in the previous section, the coordination and administration of PD is a substantial challenge. In this section, we consider ways in which the organization of PD might be improved, by integrating the management of PD with the district’s overall strategy for school improvement—that is, by making PD more strategic. In the vernacular of human resource management, the term strategic has multiple definitions, referring to processes and outcomes of organizational improvement. We use the term to indicate that PD is focused on the goal of “improving organizational performance (i.e., student achievement)” as defined by Odden and Kelly (2008, p. 13). In a strategic human resource management system, PD would adhere to five key principles:

- PD would be driven by the district vision for teaching and learning.
- PD would be aligned vertically and horizontally.
- PD would be managed and resources would be allocated through a clear district-wide process.
- Districts would have a differentiated approach to PD, distinguishing three critical purposes: teacher effectiveness, school capacity building, and program implementation.
- PD would be monitored for quality of delivery and evaluated using data on classroom instruction and student achievement.

We consider each of these in more detail below.

**PD Would Be Driven by the District Vision for Teaching and Learning**

The foundation of a district’s educational improvement strategy is “an explicit instructional vision (i.e., a finely articulated understanding of effective instructional practice)” (Odden & Kelly, 2008, p. 10; Miles, 2003). The role of a district leader is to ensure that (a) the vision, once articulated, is communicated throughout the district and (b) people are supported and held accountable for a common set of expectations and goals (Childress et al., 2007). With an explicit vision, district leaders can “manage the entire cycle (talent acquisition, development, and retention) against goals and expectations” (Klein, 2009).

A district vision can drive a district’s approach to PD by narrowing the choices (Childress et al., 2007) and “targeting” resources to PD that is “designed according to evidence-based principles regarding...
activities most likely to improve student performance” (Miles, 2003, p. 36). One aspect of the district’s vision should be the consideration of how to direct resources to “student performance priorities and teachers who can benefit the most from PD” (Miles, 2003, p. 36).

**PD Would Be Aligned Vertically and Horizontally**

To maximize the effectiveness of the PD opportunities available to teachers in a district, PD should be aligned with other policies and practices in two respects (Odden & Kelly, 2008). First, PD should be aligned with district and school improvement plans. Second, PD should be integrated with other components in a human resource system. Thus, a district’s PD plan, which contains information about roles (who will carry out the strategy), core teacher competencies, and standards would tie together policies and practices of talent acquisition, development, and retention—avoiding the “mixed and confusing signals” often sent to teachers about the knowledge and skills needed to be effective (Odden & Kelly, 2008).

The two aspects of alignment that should characterize a PD plan can be viewed as vertical and horizontal. Composite definitions of horizontal and vertical alignment are drawn from Jerald (2009), Odden and Kelly (2008), and Heneman and Milanowski (2007):

- **Vertical alignment** refers to the fit between human resource practices and the larger set of district policies and practices to improve student achievement, especially policies and practices concerning curriculum and instruction.

- **Horizontal alignment** refers to the fit among the human resource practices, leading to reinforcement of all strategies.

DeArmond and colleagues (2009) emphasize that district administrators will be more likely to succeed in an aligned system if they maintain a dual perspective—remembering to “zoom in and zoom out,” focusing on individual practices and then on sets of practices, and being cognizant of how various practices may complement each other. Several authors have proposed models of human resource management that focus on improving vertical and horizontal alignment, and we have drawn on them in our discussion. (See the sidebar based on Jerald (2009) for one example. Also see Wurtzel and Curtis (2008).)

A review of PD by Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2009) reinforces the notion that PD should be vertically aligned with school improvement initiatives:
Research suggests that professional development tends to be more effective when it is an integral part of a larger school reform effort, rather than when activities are isolated, having little to do with other initiatives or changes underway at the school. (p. 10)

**PD Would Be Managed and Resources Would Be Allocated Through a Clear District-Wide Process**

To ensure coordination of PD initiatives, districts must establish an organizational structure and process for the management and allocation of resources to PD. Childress and colleagues’ (2007) lessons learned from managers of large organizations, including those in school districts, emphasize that district administrators must design and manage their organizations as “integrated systems.” The Public Education Leadership Group suggests that districts should develop a framework that specifies the actions to be taken to “provide capacity and support to the instructional core, with the objective of raising student performance district-wide,” detailing “how the people, activities, and resources of a district work together to accomplish a collective purpose” (Childress et al., 2007, p. 48). Reinforcing this approach, Miles (2003) suggests that (a) districts develop an integrated budget for PD that represents all sources and purposes and (b) this budget be mapped to the district vision. Shields and Miles (2009) propose that each district undertake a strategic three-step PD review:

- **Consensus Building**, resulting in a shared understanding among all relevant stakeholders of PD needs and priorities. In this step, buy in would be sought from participants (teachers and principals) in PD and from providers (e.g., universities or research agencies) of PD.

- **Mapping and Measuring Current Investment**, detailing and measuring the current investment in PD. In this step, districts would gather data from all departments that manage PD activities and take stock of district expenses for PD.

- **Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation**, creating a multiyear PD strategy that aligns with best practices of staff development and system-wide priorities. In this final step, the district planning team (including teachers and other school representatives) would identify strategies that are best suited to accomplish specific teaching and learning goals.

Rather than placing all responsibility for system maintenance on the superintendent or human resource administrator, Wurtzel and Curtis (2008) suggest that a district-wide team be organized to maintain an integrated system.

Researchers have also identified challenges in implementing a district-wide strategic approach to teacher development and evaluation. One key challenge concerns achieving a balance between standardization and local flexibility of units (schools). A second challenge concerns the fidelity of implementation of PD according to district vision and research-based principles. DeArmond and colleagues (2009) suggest an overarching district goal is the implementation of a flexible, strategic human resource system in which the needs of local units can be balanced with the benefit of standardized, across-the-district policies and practices. For example, they ask: Is it possible to allow local units to tailor teacher performance evaluation instruments, and how does this affect the overall implementation of a policy for the district in the use of this system?
Problems can occur when a school approaches implementation of a tightly scripted system with flexibility. For example, in a study of districts implementing a teacher evaluation framework in which performance pay is contingent upon teacher evaluations, school variation in implementation resulted in teachers not receiving the feedback needed for improvement (Heneman & Milanowski, 2007). Principals reported they “did not have expertise or time” to implement a sophisticated system with fidelity. Weisberg and colleagues (2009), in a 12-district study, found that training did not lead to consistent implementation of teacher observation and ratings.

**Districts Would Have a Differentiated Approach to PD, Distinguishing Three Strategies: PD Focusing on Teacher Effectiveness, School Capacity Building, and Program Implementation**

There is substantial variation in the language used by educators and policymakers to describe different forms and purposes of PD. However, there is an emerging consensus about the value of a differentiated approach to PD based on whether the focus is on improving individual teacher knowledge and skills, school capacity building, or program implementation. While these three ways of focusing PD are all based on an assumption that improving student outcomes depends on strengthening teachers’ classroom instructional practice, each of these focus areas embodies a somewhat different theory about how to improve student outcomes; and each requires a somewhat different strategic approach to identify needs, deliver PD, and monitor outcomes. A district’s overall PD strategy is likely to involve a combination of all three strategic approaches. Thus, in developing its overall PD strategy, a district must determine the role of each of the three strategic approaches to PD in meeting district goals for teaching and learning and the relative emphasis to place on each of the three approaches.

The three strategic approaches that we have identified are analogous to other discussions in the literature. For example, Rowan and colleagues (2009) argue that three basic approaches to school reform have been articulated in the literature on school improvement: one focusing on improving teacher quality; one focusing on improving schools as professional communities, and one focusing on school designs or curricular components. These three approaches closely parallel the three purposes of PD we have outlined (focusing on teacher effectiveness, school capacity building, and program implementation).

Our three strategic approaches are also consistent with five models of staff development proposed by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989):

- **Individually Guided Development**: The teacher designs his or her learning activities. An assumption of this model is that individuals are motivated by being able to select their own learning goals and means for accomplishing those goals.

- **Observation and Assessment**: Instructional practices are improved if a colleague or other person observes a teacher’s classroom and provides feedback.

- **Involvement in a Development or Improvement Process**: Systemic school improvement processes typically involve assessing current practices and determining a problem whose solution will improve student outcomes. The solution might include developing curricula, designing programs, or changing classroom practice.
• **Training:** A training design includes an expert presenter who selects the objectives, learning activities, and outcomes. Usually the outcomes involve awareness, knowledge, or skill development; but changes in attitudes, transfer of training, and “executive control” also need to be addressed.

• **Inquiry:** Teachers formulate questions about their own practice and pursue answers to those questions.

The first and fourth models proposed by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley appear to be forms of PD for teacher effectiveness; the second and fifth models are approaches to school capacity building; and the third model is an approach to program implementation.

Although researchers have described different purposes and approaches to PD, little research has been conducted about the ways in which different approaches to PD should be managed and evaluated. In sections III, IV, and V below, we consider the implications of each approach for the development and implementation of a district PD strategy.

Before presenting each model separately, we would like to note the purpose of presenting the models as three distinct approaches and the way that we see them being used by districts.

The three logic models are “ideal” types of PD for teacher effectiveness, school capacity building, and program implementation. We recognize that districts probably already have a blend of these approaches but do not currently monitor the use of the strategies and make purposeful decisions to blend when needed, based on their vision and objectives. The point of having three models highlights the fact that some parts of the theory of action and the information relevant to effectiveness evaluation differ depending on the PD strategy.

By providing a foundation and tools for districts, we are hoping to realize strategic blending in the way that districts are using the strategic planning of Shields and Miles (2009).

**PD Would Be Monitored for Quality of Delivery and Evaluated Using Data on Classroom Instruction and Student Achievement**

A feedback component of a performance management system fulfills several needs of the system: to identify effective human resource practices; examine the different skills needed by teachers to help students succeed; assess working conditions in schools; and provide information on the level of implementation of...
instructional programs adopted by the district (DeArmond et al., 2009; Miles, 2003; Odden & Kelly, 2008; Wurtzel & Curtis, 2008).

In the field of human resource management, methods to use in evaluating teacher effectiveness are currently a matter of debate (Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2009; Hershberg & Robertson-Kraft, 2009), with some reformers placing an emphasis on evaluating “inputs” (what teachers do) and others emphasizing “outputs” (what students learn) (Danielson, 2009). Teacher performance frameworks, such as the Charlotte Danielson framework, focus on inputs. These frameworks are being implemented in several districts and are the focus of ongoing research to document fidelity of implementation and the use of the data produced by the frameworks (Weisberg et al., 2009).

On the output side, value-added methods are gaining increased attention as an approach to determine the contribution of the teacher to student achievement (Sanders & Rivers, 2009). Although technical and substantive issues remain to be resolved, some districts (e.g., those participating in TAP) are beginning to incorporate value-added data in their teacher evaluation systems (Weingarten, 2009; Goldhaber & Hannaway, 2009).

Few districts have well-developed feedback systems in place to monitor the outcomes of PD and relate PD to teacher learning or student achievement (Rice, 2009; Milanowski et al., n.d.; Jerald, 2009). This is an area in which development work is especially required.

Summary

The logic model in Figure 1 summarizes the five principles underlying a strategic approach to PD. According to the model, PD would be

- Driven by the district’s vision for teaching and learning (box 1)
- Aligned vertically and horizontally (boxes 2a and 2b)
- Managed and resources allocated through a clear district-wide process (boxes 3a and 3b)
- Differentiated, distinguishing three strategic approaches to PD: focusing on teacher effectiveness, school capacity building, and program implementation (boxes 4a, 4b, and 4c)
- Monitored for quality of delivery (box 5) and evaluated using data on classroom instruction and student achievement (boxes 6 and 7)

As shown in Figure 1, the district’s PD strategy should be driven by its vision for teaching and learning (box 1). The strategy should be designed to be vertically aligned with district policies for curriculum and instruction (box 2a) and to be horizontally aligned with district policies for teacher evaluation, compensation, and other elements of the district’s human resource system (box 2b). The development of the strategy should be supported by the systematic allocation of resources to PD (box 3a) and by a district-wide organizational structure (box 3b).

The PD strategy should be differentiated, involving a portfolio of activities that support three distinct strategic approaches to PD: PD focused on teacher effectiveness (box 4a), school capacity building (box 4b), and program implementation (box 4c). In turn, the PD strategy
should guide district and school planning and the delivery and monitoring of specific PD activities (box 5). These activities should lead to improved instruction (box 6) and student outcomes (box 7), and data on these outcomes should provide feedback to improve the district’s PD strategy.

**Figure 1: Strategic Design of District PD System**

In sections III, IV, and V below, we focus in more detail on strategies that are appropriate for the three distinct purposes of PD: teacher effectiveness, school capacity building, and program implementation. These three sections “zoom in” on box 5 in the figure, examining the methods of planning, staffing, delivering, and monitoring PD underlying each of the three strategic approaches to PD.
III. Professional Development for Teacher Effectiveness

One approach a district may include in its overall strategy for PD is to focus PD activities on improving individual teacher effectiveness—a strategy sometimes called “performance management” (Odden & Kelly, 2008). This strategic approach places particular emphasis on aligning PD with the teacher evaluation and compensation system. The term *performance management* emerges from the private sector and connotes “the fact that the system not only will evaluate employees, but also use the data flowing out of the evaluation system to develop the employee’s competencies, improve future performance, and promote them into new roles” (Odden & Kelly, 2008, p. 20). This strategic approach requires evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the performance of individual teachers, identifying PD opportunities to address weaknesses or build on strengths, and monitoring the results to determine whether expected improvements occur.

**Determination of Individual Teacher Strengths and Areas for Improvement**

In PD for teacher effectiveness, the district’s formal teacher evaluation system plays a key role in identifying teachers’ areas for improved performance needs for PD.

Such an evaluation system should define the knowledge, skills, and classroom practices valued by the district. The system should also specify the manner in which teacher evaluations will be conducted, including the role of classroom observations, student achievement test results, and other outcomes. Annual evaluation results based on this process may be used by the district, school, and teachers to identify specific teacher needs for PD and also signal high performing teachers. PD may be required for teachers who are not meeting expectations or who request support. Teachers who are identified as having high potential are provided with additional growth opportunities.

Weisberg and colleagues (2009) summarize the goal of PD for teacher effectiveness:

Teachers should be evaluated based on their ability to fulfill their core responsibility as professionals—delivering instruction that helps students learn and succeed. This demands clear performance standards, multiple rating options, regular monitoring of administrator judgments, and frequent feedback to teachers. Furthermore, it requires professional development that is tightly linked to performance standards and differentiated based on individual teacher needs. The core purpose of evaluation must be maximizing teacher...
growth and effectiveness, not just documenting poor performance as a prelude to dismissal. (p. 7)

These practices are not yet common. In a study of performance management policies in 12 school districts, Weisberg and colleagues (2009) found that the evaluation of teachers through observations occurred about once every 3 years; the duration of observations was about 30 minutes long; and there was no peer review process. Several districts are using Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), a program that relies on a set of integrated conditions that link PD, training of mentors and reviewers, and performance decisions (Weingarten, 2009; also see sidebar). Chait (2007) reported that eight states with pay-for-performance programs also incorporate PD programs for teachers to some extent.

Planning of Individual Teacher Learning Opportunities

To address areas for teachers’ professional growth, the district would need to maintain a menu of PD opportunities that cover the domains in which teachers are likely to require support. These activities might include experiences directly provided by the district and opportunities provided through partnerships with universities, consultants, and other outside organizations. In addition to the menu of PD opportunities, an important element of the teacher effectiveness strategy is matching the individual needs of teachers with specific PD activities. This might take the form of a “catalog” that lists the types of needs for which each activity is designed to fulfill. Or, it might involve coaches, teacher leaders, and other

What Would a Useful Performance Evaluation System for Professional Development Look Like?

Many district evaluation systems of teachers (and other staff) appear to be designed more for terminating the poorest performers and symbolizing accountability rather than working together with other human resource management systems. To be useful for PD and to facilitate alignment with other key human resource management systems, a teacher evaluation system should:

- Be based on a model of performance derived from the district’s vision of instruction and intended strategies for improving student achievement, so that the evaluation process is about something that really matters and the ratings provide information that can be used for PD needs assessment
- Include explicit performance standards or dimensions that capture how teachers (or other staff) contribute to student learning and to implementing district strategies, so that the key competencies for which teachers are supposed to develop are clearly communicated
- Have multiple performance levels defined by rating scales or rubrics that provide concrete behavioral examples of less than proficient, proficient, and superior performance, so that teachers have a clear developmental path to follow
- Use trained evaluators, with recognized expertise, who make multiple observations of practice, so that teachers are assured that ratings don’t depend on who is evaluating or what day they were observed and that feedback is credible
- Provide specific feedback keyed to the rating scales so that teachers can understand why they received the ratings they did and what aspects of performance they need to improve
- Provide access to someone trained and responsible for providing coaching and assistance, so that teachers who want to improve their evaluated performance have help and support (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Heneman, Milanowski, Kimball, & Odden, 2006; MacDonald & Sulsky, 2009; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Pulakos, 2009)
district or school staff who work with teachers to identify appropriate PD experiences. Finally, in addition to a matching system, the district must be able to staff the required PD opportunities. PD is provided through staff who are skilled in individualized PD. Information gathered each year for each teacher includes data from routine teacher evaluations, records of PD participation, and other evidence of effectiveness or performance that becomes part of their career plan and is considered in their compensation and other rewards.

Some districts have established teacher competencies and use a structured instrument to evaluate their performance against the framework, but few have developed the capacity to match the information from observations to individualized learning opportunities (Jerald, 2009). This is an area that may require support to help districts move forward. Jerald suggests that, when fully implemented, the TAP contains the elements and the potential to (a) be used to plan individual teacher learning opportunities and (b) improve other performance management components, such as compensation and teacher advancement.

Delivery and Monitoring of PD

PD for teacher effectiveness might take varied forms, including workshops, institutes, courses, mentoring, and coaching. Providers of the PD might include external and internal providers—including publishers of curricula, research and dissemination organizations (e.g., ED labs and centers and university centers), and university teacher preparation programs. Some districts may have a cadre of individuals, such as coaches or instructional facilitators, who are experienced in PD delivery or trained administrators who can deliver PD in specific topics. Teachers might select or be referred to summer institutes or courses (e.g., to build content knowledge), or they may work with coaches to improve classroom management skills or improve specific instructional practices. Whatever form the PD takes and whatever the provider, districts should establish procedures to monitor the quality of delivery to ensure that PD aligns with the needs of teachers who participate. One aspect of this monitoring activity is building capacity to manage, deliver, evaluate, and give feedback to teachers. The training of principals and specialized mentors is a costly element in the implementation of a strategic PD system that is linked to teacher evaluation. But such training is considered an essential component to ensure feedback is gathered and provided (Jerald, 2009). Districts may need technical assistance to develop the capacity to prepare a strategic PD plan and conduct the required monitoring and evaluation.

Feedback

In this PD strategy, observations of teaching and data on student achievement outcomes serve two purposes. First, they provide the data required to identify individual strengths of teachers and areas for improvement. Second, they are a source of feedback on the effectiveness of district-provided PD. One way to judge whether the portfolio of PD activities is effective is whether teachers referred to specific PD opportunities improve. If they do not, this may suggest that the portfolio of activities needs to be modified.

Although principals commonly use observation checklists when observing teachers, few districts gather performance-based data that connect such observations with student achievement data (Weisberg et al., 2009; Jerald, 2009). In addition, districts have reported struggling with the training required for consistent implementation of teacher observation tools across all schools.
These variations in implementation may prevent districts from gathering the information needed to provide meaningful feedback and planning support for teachers. In districts that use a highly structured program that links the evaluation of teacher competencies with individualized PD, teachers report finding the feedback useful (Jerald, 2009). However, in other districts, such as New York City, efforts to provide teacher reports based on achievement data alone are considered “developmental” and not used for evaluation. This is an area in which districts need more support, in both developing metrics that make sense and are acceptable and developing systems that lead to good decisions about PD.

**Summary**

The logic model in Figure 2 summarizes the strategic approach to PD for teacher effectiveness. Consistent with the principles already outlined, a district’s decisions about the role of PD for teacher effectiveness as part of its overall PD strategy (box 4a) should drive the planning, staffing, delivery, and monitoring of this approach to PD. In particular, goals for teacher effectiveness and information from the teacher observation system and data on student achievement should guide the identification of teacher strengths and weaknesses (boxes 5a, b, and c). Based on these identified strengths and weaknesses, the district, school, and teacher can plan a set of specific PD opportunities for the teacher, drawing on the district’s menu of PD options and supported by district staff (boxes 5d, e, and f). The planned PD should then be used to guide the PD as delivered (box 5g). If effective, PD should improve instruction and student outcomes (boxes 6 and 7). In turn, information on instruction and student outcomes should be used to inform the identification of teacher needs and to evaluate the district’s overall PD strategy for teacher effectiveness.
IV. Professional Development for School Capacity Building

A second approach a district may include in its overall strategy for PD is to focus PD activities at the school level. This strategic PD approach stresses improving each school’s capacity to use data to identify areas of weakness and to build each school’s capacity to provide school-wide support to improve performance in identified areas. The approach requires the school to be active in the development and use of data and to be a partner with the district, working within the overall district plan for PD and improvement. The practice of improvement at the school level involves identifying the knowledge and skills needed by students and teachers, providing incentives to encourage improvement, and establishing the type and extent of materials needed to support improvement efforts (Elmore, 2002). The essential assumption underlying this strategy is that improvement operates “one school at a time.” In this view, school improvement requires a coherent, school-wide approach to reform, in which teachers work together to identify problems of teaching and learning, craft strategies to solve them, and monitor their success. In this strategic approach, PD is “rooted in the institutional structure of schools” (Elmore, 2002, p. 11).

Determination of Focus for School Improvement

In PD for school capacity building, a school’s PD strategy rests on identifying a school-wide focus or goal for improvement efforts that drives the choice of PD activities. A school may identify a whole-school focus (e.g., improving reading comprehension), or it may identify a set of areas for improvement in specific subjects or grade levels (e.g., fractions in Grades 4 and 5 mathematics). To provide insight into areas that require improvement, the focus is generally based on an analysis of school-wide student achievement and systematic data on classroom teaching. For example, student achievement data may indicate weaknesses in fractions, and classroom observation data may suggest specific teaching strategies that require attention (e.g., the use of the number line to introduce fraction concepts).

Ideally, the identification of a school’s focus for improvement would originate from an analysis of data by school staff, but the focus must also align with the district’s vision for teaching and learning and be consistent in scope with the resources available to support the planned improvement approach. From this perspective, PD should not be seen as a measure to make the school or teachers “shape up”; instead, PD should be viewed as a problem-solving approach that reflects the school and district’s agreement that both are responsible for working to meet the school’s accountability requirements (Elmore, 2002; Childress et al., 2007).

Planning of School PD Activities

Once a focus for improvement has been established, planning for PD activities involves allocating time and staff to facilitate teachers’ collaborative work and a collective focus on data. Insofar as possible, PD for school capacity building occurs during the school day, as close as possible to the actual work of teaching, so that PD can be focused on the work of instruction. The planned activities may include joint lesson planning, action-oriented research, observation of instruction, and other collaborative work. One key requirement is the availability of school-based staff who can serve as leaders, coaches, mentors, or facilitators. Some school-based PD providers (e.g., a school literacy or math coach) may focus on specific school subjects. Others may be
generalists who work with teachers and identify specialist resources from outside the school. One approach might entail providing PD for current teaching staff to support their growth into teacher-leader or coaching roles. Flexibility in the use of teachers’ professional time and flexibility in managing resources (e.g., training staff to be facilitators) have been cited frequently as being critical to accomplishing school improvement goals (Jerald, 2009; Weingarten, 2009). Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2009) have identified the need for teachers to have control over shaping their daily learning opportunities as one of the most important findings from their review of PD. Shields and Miles (2008) focused on flexibility for time and resource organization in nine small urban high schools, noting performance outcomes were “better” in these conditions.

Delivery and Monitoring of PD

The PD designed for school improvement may involve a variety of components, including coaching, lesson planning, collaborative study of student work, and classroom observation. Two challenges are monitoring the quality of delivery of the PD and ensuring that the PD activities are coherent and focus on the established school improvement goals. One approach schools may take is to establish a school-based lead staff member who is responsible for organizing and monitoring the delivery of school-based PD and identifying external staff that may be required to complement school-based staff. The strategy of hiring additional staff (e.g., vice principals) or developing a cadre of teachers as the instructional team assisting the principal or developing teachers who can mentor and evaluate first year or veteran teachers is costly, and more research is needed to understand if this can be an effective way to build school capacity to deliver and monitor improvement practices, such as PD or teacher evaluation (Jerald, 2009). Schools usually lack staff to perform these functions, and they lack the systems to incorporate the data and track and analyze trends. This is an area in which schools are likely to need the district’s assistance.

Feedback

A key element of PD for school-based capacity building is regular feedback on whether classroom instruction and student achievement issues selected for attention improve as anticipated. This may involve an annual review of classroom observations and student achievement results on the accountability test and student achievement results on interim assessments. For example, if fractions were selected as the focus of attention, is there evidence that student performance on fraction items has improved? Planning and delivering feedback about PD and its impact should be based on a shared understanding of the problem that is the focus of the PD and skilled providers of feedback who share an underlying theory of adult learning (Childress et al., 2007; Miles, 2003; Shields & Miles, 2009). Here again, schools may need assistance from districts. It is common now for all schools to have improvement plans based on accountability results. Teachers also may have PD plans based on identified strengths and needs. In reality, though, these plans are rarely integrated. Feedback about how PD has addressed school-level goals or problems is not systematically gathered, and district resources are rarely allocated to developing school evaluation capacity.
Summary

The logic model in Figure 3 summarizes the PD school capacity building strategy. As discussed in Section II, the district’s decisions about the role of PD for school capacity building as part of its overall PD strategy (shown in box 4b) should drive the planning, staffing, delivery, and monitoring of school-based PD. In particular, district decisions about the areas in which PD for school capacity should emphasize and school-based data on classroom instruction and student achievement should serve as the basis on which schools identify a school-wide focus for PD (boxes 5a, b, and c). Based on the school-wide focus, time during the school day and school-based PD staff should be allocated to specific collaborative learning opportunities (e.g., lesson planning, study of student work, and classroom observation) (boxes 5d, e, and f). These activities should be carried out and monitored, under the leadership of school-based staff (box 5g). If the PD activities are effective, they should produce improvement in school-level measures of classroom instruction and student achievement (boxes 6 and 7). School staff examine these outcomes to assess whether ongoing school-based PD is producing the anticipated outcomes or needs adjustment.

Figure 3: Strategic Approach to PD for School Capacity Building
V. Professional Development for Program Implementation

A third strategy for deploying PD emphasizes the role of PD in supporting the implementation of specific curricula, instructional approaches, school reform programs, assessments, or technologies. This is also known as “improvement by design” (Rowan et al., 2009). From this perspective, the focus is on instructional or curricular materials being implemented district- or school-wide and on the instructional strategies underlying these materials, under the assumption that the materials will support improved student achievement. In this approach, PD is a strategy designed to facilitate high-quality and consistent implementation of the adopted programs, curricula, or materials across adopting schools and teachers within the schools.

Determination of Program Implementation Focus and Content

The focus for PD may depend on the stage of adoption of the program within the district or school. That is, at the time of initial adoption, PD may emphasize general features of the program and provide support for a basic level of implementation. Later, PD may turn to solving persistent problems of implementation and supporting teachers in effective adaptations. PD may also differ for teachers new to the district or school, who require an introduction to an ongoing program. The importance of identifying the stage of implementation and the status of the teacher’s knowledge and skills and matching this with the focus and content of PD has received support in several studies of PD and program or curriculum implementation (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hull, 1998; Arbaugh, 2008; Sporte et al., 2009; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007).

In this approach, observations of instruction play a critical role in identifying areas in which PD is required. Classroom observations, guided by a detailed protocol that is grounded in the features of high-quality implementation of the adopted program or materials, can provide essential information on areas in which further support for implementation is required. In addition, an examination of the relationship between the quality of implementation and student outcomes may suggest specific areas in which improved implementation may result in improved student outcomes.
Planning of PD Activities to Support Implementation

In PD for program implementation, PD is ordinarily grounded in program materials, including those used by students and teacher editions, and other guidance. The effectiveness of the PD depends on the availability of facilitators who are knowledgeable about the materials and their intended use. This may require contracting with program developers to provide PD, or it may be possible to use a train-the-trainer approach in which district or school staff are provided initial development in the program and then support district- or school-wide implementation.

Delivery and Monitoring of PD

PD may take varied forms, including summer institutes, coaching, observations (including observations of facilitators modeling quality implementation), and lesson study; and PD may be centrally organized by the district or deployed at the school level. In either case, PD should be monitored to ensure that it is tightly linked to the adopted materials and that it focuses on the areas of implementation that have been identified as being new or problematic.

Feedback

If PD is effective, it should result in improved implementation of the adopted program and subsequent improvements in student achievement. Feedback on both of these areas can be used to reassess PD activities. Continued low levels of implementation, whether district- or school-wide, may raise questions about whether the appropriate supports have been provided. Similarly, high levels of implementation coupled with low achievement may raise questions about whether the program is in fact effective.

Researchers have found even when curriculum-focused PD is provided as planned, other factors (e.g., student attendance and student behavior) can affect program implementation and student outcomes (Kennedy, 1998; Sporte et al., 2009). Feedback on the level of implementation and student achievement may suggest other potential focus areas for PD (e.g., student behavior management).
Summary

The logic model in Figure 4 summarizes the PD program implementation strategy. As discussed in Section II, the district’s decision about the role of PD for program implementation as part of its overall PD strategy (box 4c) should drive the planning, staffing, delivery, and monitoring of program-based PD. In particular, PD for program implementation presumably begins with a district’s decision about which adopted programs should be the focus of attention. These decisions, together with detailed classroom observation data on the quality of implementation and data on student achievement, should be used to identify specific areas of program implementation that require PD support (boxes 5a, b, and c). Based on the chosen focus, specific PD activities should be planned, drawing on program materials and staff who are experienced in the content and instructional methods underlying the program (boxes 5d, e, and f). The PD delivered (box 5g) may involve a mix of institutes, coaching, lesson study, and other activities—all of which should be monitored to ensure a focus on the areas of implementation identified as needing attention. Finally, followup data on classroom instruction and student achievement (boxes 6 and 7) should be used to assess whether the anticipated improvements in implementation and student outcomes have occurred.

Figure 4: Strategic Approach to PD for Program Implementation
VI. Conclusions

We have argued that the management of PD is often fragmented in school districts. It is difficult to determine the amount that districts spend on PD or to connect expenditures with outcomes. PD is rarely aligned with other components of the human resource management system or other district policies and practices. We have also argued that improving the planning, delivery, and monitoring of PD requires a substantial shift in the organizational approach to PD, making it more strategic.

In particular, we have suggested several steps to make PD more strategic. The central task involves linking the district’s PD strategy to the district’s vision for teaching and learning; ensuring that the PD is aligned with teacher evaluation and other elements of the district’s human resource system; establishing a clear organizational structure and process for the management of PD; establishing a differentiated approach to PD that focuses on three distinct purposes (teacher effectiveness, school capacity, and program implementation); and closely monitoring and evaluating not only the quality of implementation of PD using contextual and structural factors but also the effects of PD using data on teacher instruction and student achievement. Ultimately, we hope that in offering and explicating these principles, we will be helping districts in their goals of establishing a well-balanced, aligned, and strategic PD portfolio that supports teachers in improving their practice and student achievement and in closing achievement gaps.
References


