

Professional Development...it's About You & Your Career

Take advantage of every opportunity to learn. Stay open to ideas and change. Never become smug or complacent. — Marlene Ott

Your professional growth does not stop once you leave college. Growing as a professional not only makes your job more enjoyable, it also enhances student learning. Students and their world constantly change, and teachers are challenged to keep pace and to develop new strategies and techniques. It is essential for you to be aware of and take advantage of professional development opportunities.

- Learn about professional organizations in your discipline or area of interest. Membership benefits usually include regular publications and staff development conferences. Familiarize yourself with professional journals.
- Begin license renewal immediately. The Professional Development Plan is a five-year process. Don't put it off.
- Find out about professional development opportunities provided by your local association. Many are free or at a low cost.
- Collaboration is a great way to learn from your colleagues. Early in your professional career, try to develop the perspective that teaching is a cooperative and collaborative undertaking. Be willing to ask questions and to exchange ideas with other teachers. In addition to your mentor, it is advantageous for you to seek out a professional colleague who has a similar teaching assignment, and use this handbook with him or her. This person should be an experienced, effective teacher who communicates well and is willing to share knowledge and insights with you.
- Reflection is an essential element. Teaching is a profession filled with beginnings and endings; teachers begin and end school years, semesters, grading periods, units of study, chapters, and vacation periods. In the lives of teachers, there are opportune moments that can and should be used for both reflection and for planning. Unfortunately, the pressures to plan may frequently outweigh the tendency to reflect on past practice. Yet, appropriate planning can occur with reflection as a backdrop. Reflection can take a variety of forms; personal journal, weekly observation forms, and professional dialogue with other teachers.

Reflect upon the following:

- What would you like to have done differently?
- What would you like to try?
- What encourages you?
- Do students enjoy coming to your classroom to learn?
- What is your relationship with your students?
- What is your relationship with your students' parents?
- Are students successful in your classroom?