

PLT CONCEPT REVIEW SHEET

Concepts addressed:

Types of Resources Available for Professional Development and Learning

PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

Teaching is a research-based profession. Strengthening the teaching profession depends upon increasing the knowledge base for teaching through research and basing professional practice on research. Professional literature is a broad term that refers to an educator's scholarly work. Scholarly work contributes to the profession and provides a forum for educators to share their expertise. Scholarship is most often thought of in the traditional sense of conducting research and writing for publication in referred journals. Scholarship, however, can extend into areas that may take the form of application of knowledge, interpretation or integration of current research, and study of pedagogy. Educators should be aware of new and developing research in their fields as well as emerging theories and practice. Being a regular consumer of professional literature enables educators to be on the cutting edge.

COLLEAGUES

Perhaps one of the most valuable and accessible professional resources that teachers have available on a daily basis exists right in their own school building or district—their colleagues. Becoming an active member of your learning community is one way to develop yourself as a professional. Beginning teachers, especially, should strive to establish and maintain friendly, cooperative, and collaborative working relationships with everyone who is part of their learning community. This could include administrators, support staff, peers, educational assistants, service providers and even parents, students, and community members. Colleagues can provide feedback and suggestions for one another and engage in dialogue regarding best practice teaching methods and curriculum decisions. Veteran teachers can mentor beginning teachers and provide ongoing support in those early years of teaching. Talking with other teachers and observing their teaching are both ways to collaborate and learn from one another. Inviting a colleague into your classroom to observe your teaching and give you feedback is a wonderful way to move yourself forward in your teaching.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Teachers are represented by professional and labor organizations such as the National Education Association, NEA and the American Federation of Teachers, AFT. These organizations exert considerable influence on conditions of employment, organization, governance, compensation and benefits, and curriculum.

The NEA, the largest professional association for teachers, 2.7 million strong, was founded in 1857 to elevate the character and advance the interest of the teaching profession and to be an advocate for education in the United States.

The AFT, 1.3 million strong, was founded in 1916 to improve the lives of its members and their families as well as to give its members a strong, unified voice.

In 1998, the NEA and AFT formed the NEAFT partnership to provide a format for the two organizations to collaborate on various areas but left each group free to differ and work separately.

Both the NEA and AFT influence the nature of the relationship among teachers, administrators, and boards of education. Unions in particular help to clarify and set conditions for employment.

In recent years, both organizations have been proactive in their stances toward educational issues such as charter schools and zero tolerance policies.

Other professional organizations for teachers reflect interest in particular subject areas of student groups. For example, NCTM, the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics has had considerable influence on math curriculum and instruction. NAEYC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children helps to improve the practice of early childhood educators.

Below is a listing of only a few of the various professional organizations for teachers:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Professional development is an important aspect of one's teaching career. Simply put, professional development is the process of growing and becoming a professional. From one's days as a beginning teacher and throughout one's entire teaching career, involvement in ongoing learning opportunities helps one to gain new knowledge, skills and attitudes

- ~ CEC Council for Exceptional Children
- ~ NSTA National Science Teachers Association ~
- NCTE National Council of Teachers of English ~
- NCSS National Council for the Social Studies
- ~ MENC National Association for Music Education ~
- IRA International Reading Association

which will result in increased effectiveness in and out of the classroom.

Professional development often takes the form of teacher in-service days and may, for example, include activities that:

-).- Improve and increase knowledge of content area,
-).- Advance understanding of best practice instructional strategies,).-
- Provide training in the use of technology,
-).- Provide instruction in methods of teaching students with special needs,
and
-).- Include instruction in the ways in which teachers may work
effectively with parents.

Professional development may be school wide or occur in professional learning communities such as grade-level teaching teams or district committees. Professional development is considered most valuable when the teachers themselves determine its focus.

In addition to school-sponsored training or in-service programs, professional development for teachers may mean attending and presenting at local, state, and national conferences, writing for publication, writing and facilitating grants, and pursuing advanced degrees.