

This We Believe About the Professional Development of Business Educators

Policy Statement 60

We Believe That professional development is the process that improves the job-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes of business educators. The goals of professional development are to advance student's learning and to improve the practice of teaching. The professional development of business educators is a process that begins with recruitment, progresses through initial preparation, induction or entry year, and licensure; the development process continues through advanced certification and career-long learning. Renewal is at the heart of each of these phases of the professional development continuum.

High-quality professional development can be an important catalyst for improving learning and teaching amid changes in delivery, subject-matter content, student needs, schools, society, and the workplace. Business educators must work collaboratively with educational and business communities to garner support and resources to achieve personal professional development goals that are complementary to the future direction of their discipline, the schools, and the business environment. The focus of this statement is continuing professional development, which addresses ongoing needs, strategies, required resources, and the impact realized through that development.

Need for Professional Development

We Believe That teachers have the responsibility for educating students and must have the knowledge, expertise, and power to make decisions about the teaching-learning environment. Continuing professional development is a required, not an optional, element in school reform, in increased academic rigor, in continual learning, and in authentic assessment.

Educating students for technological change and complexities of the workplace, as well as their personal business lives, compels business educators to commit themselves to continuing professional renewal. Thus, **We Believe That** business educators are more likely to alter practice when they experience collegial support and believe that professional risk taking is encouraged.

Business educators recognize the need for ongoing professional development when they analyze their own teaching, observe others teaching, are observed, share and discuss ideas critically, challenge their own and others' assumptions, and examine beliefs and practices. Shared teaching concerns are powerful motivators for teacher relearning and change. When

addressing professional development needs, business educators must pursue activities that promote their individual growth and that bring them together with other educators for reflection and planning. These activities provide the framework business educators need as they design their own professional development plans.

Strategies for Professional Development

We Believe That professional development requires teachers to become part of a professional learning community that places inquiry and excellence at its center and focuses on building the capacity for continuous learning.

Business educators must have opportunities to engage in professional dialogue with colleagues within their educational system and with professionals in other environments.

Individual professional development plans include strategies such as:

- Completing formal instruction; for example, technical updating, pedagogical updating, economic and political awareness.
- Conducting action research.
- Engaging in peer coaching and critique.
- Implementing new instructional approaches; for example, cross-disciplinary practices, project-based learning, and school-based enterprises.
- Interacting with the community.
- Learning from Internet experiences.
- Learning from students and through student organizations.
- Learning from work-based experiences.
- Mentoring and being mentored by others.
- Networking with other professionals.
- Participating in professional organizations.
- Reflecting through personal journals.

Resources For Professional Development

The continuing professional development of business educators requires a variety of resources which may be described as formal and informal. Given the constraints under which teachers work and the need for supporting resources, professional development initiatives should provide teachers the opportunity to try new practices in their classrooms and allow for feedback, reflection, and dialogue. In addition, a climate that supports this continuing development is critical to its success.

Active participation in professional organizations (i.e., National Business Education Association, American Vocational Association, Delta Pi Epsilon) provides an ongoing, readily accessible avenue for each business educator's professional development plan. One of the roles of professional education organizations is to stimulate reflective thinking, questioning, and receptiveness to change. Annually these professional organizations provide opportunities to learn about strategies addressing an array of issues that continue to impact daily instructional activities. Professional organizations provide publications and forums for learning, exchanging, and reflecting.

Teacher education programs and school-based professional development activities, long viewed as separate, are coming together through professional development centers and schools, regional alliances, and similar initiatives. Inherent in these initiatives is the necessity for practitioners to collaborate when selecting concepts and content that teachers and their students must learn.

Because professional development is a process that extends from the decision to become a business educator throughout

the career of that individual, the entire educational community, including colleges and universities, school systems, and the business community, partner in the professional development. An ongoing professional development plan includes courses, programs, and other learning experiences provided by those partners.

Impact of Professional Development

We Believe That as business educators implement individualized, ongoing professional development plan, the results should lead to strengthened teacher roles and improved student learning. Further, plans should enable educators to contribute to meeting the goals of their learning communities. Restructuring practice is difficult.

Therefore, **We Believe That** through professional development, teachers learn to think and teach differently; policy makers learn about the complexities of transforming ideas into realities; and administrators learn about the support necessary to facilitate teacher change. Thus, professional development based on a collaborative network among business educators, administrators, policy makers, and business and community representatives, leads to positive change.