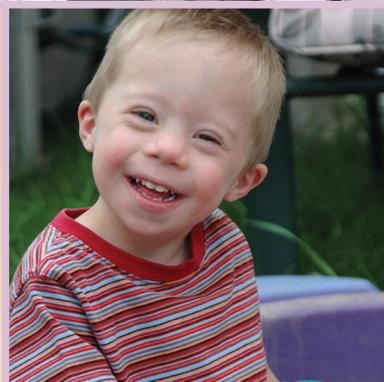
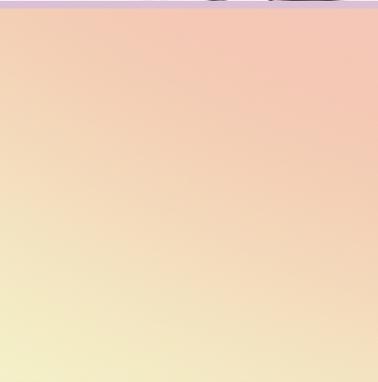


# The Professional Learning Report



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Education and Early Childhood Development



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*A central part of the practice of improvement should be to make the connection between teaching practice and student learning more direct and clear. The present generation of students deserve the best practice we can give them and their learning should not be mortgaged against the probability that something good will happen for future generations. Improvement should be focused directly on the classroom experience of today's students.*  
(Elmore, 2002, p. 31)

*The present generation of students deserve the best practice we can give them and their learning should not be mortgaged against the probability that something good will happen for future generations.*

The success of the Prince Edward Island (PEI) education system rests ultimately with our teachers and educational leaders. If we are to realise continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in our classrooms, schools, and system we must build the capacity of our educators to meet these expectations.

This will require more than simply allocating additional resources for professional development programs. It will require us to understand what teachers must know and do to improve student learning. Most importantly, we need a model of learning that informs all the opportunities provided for teachers to engage in the improvement of their practice over time.

The primary purpose of the *Professional Learning Report* is to propose a renewed model of professional learning for educators in PEI. Professional learning opportunities for educators need to be relevant, and of high quality, in order to impact and improve student learning and achievement. The proposed model in this report is informed by effective practices already in place in the PEI education system, as well as proven practices clearly identified in the research literature. It is also informed by the research findings in the *Research on Professional Development: A PEI Perspective 2012*. The research findings from the *PEI Perspective 2012* are listed below:

- **Finding 1:** Align, adhere to, and support the student learning and achievement goals and priorities informed by consultation with the education community
- **Finding 2:** Provide continuous improvement in knowledge, skills, practices, and processes to strengthen teaching excellence because quality teaching is the most influential factor related to student learning
- **Finding 3:** Develop and strengthen the instructional leadership skills of principals, vice principals, and other in-school leaders to support teaching excellence
- **Finding 4:** Emphasize the importance of providing ongoing, specific, and timely feedback to teachers to support their practice, and to students during the formative assessment process while learning is taking place

- **Finding 5:** Foster the role of professional learning teams within collaborative environments that emphasize capacity building, shared responsibility, and collective commitment demonstrated through focused intentional actions
- **Finding 6:** Advise immediate restructuring of the school calendar to enable professional learning for teachers to be ongoing, sustained, purposeful and embedded
- **Finding 7:** Reduce significantly the use of the pull-out model of professional in-service and move toward adopting a school-based model.

There are clear guiding principles outlined in the report which serve to underpin the delivery of high quality professional learning to improve student outcomes. These principles make explicit the key characteristics of effective professional learning and provide a common language for describing good practice. High impact professional learning is directly linked to student learning and focuses on people and practices, not programs. Goals of professional learning need to shift from transmission of teacher learning to a more effective model that supports deliberate change in teacher practice. High impact professional learning encompasses the four components of curriculum, assessment, instructional strategies, and classroom climate. Teachers who engage in a professional learning process work among these four components to continually refine and improve their craft. These ideals must become the reality for PEI educators.

Within the PEI school system, much positive action has been taken to invest in the professional learning of teachers. There are many pockets of exemplary practices happening in every school across PEI. However, findings from the *PEI Perspective 2012* clearly indicated that more work has to be done to encourage and support teachers at the school level. To make this happen, there is not so much a need to impose a new structure of professional learning on the system but rather to take actions that will allow effective practices to grow and flourish in a renewed model of professional learning. Fundamental to the success of the new model is the incorporation of the following actions that form a foundation that enable the realization of teaching excellence, skilled leadership, and improved student learning and achievement. The list of actions, highlighted in the report, are listed and briefly explained below:

- **Restructured School Calendar:** Currently days that are allocated to professional development of teachers are not embedded within the workday of teachers, are splintered in purpose, and are not conducive to ongoing learning for educators. The most significant issue is that the days available for professional learning are not systemically organized to benefit teaching and learning. Random and sporadic professional learning days without a clear ongoing intentional purpose cannot be expected to successfully embed the imperative process of continual professional learning and system improvement. Within the new model, all professional learning days will be resituated within the school calendar. The placement of professional learning days will enable and nourish an environment that generates motivation for learning and teacher confidence. As well, this environment will provide a platform to embed the ongoing process of professional

learning in pursuit of teaching excellence and student achievement. Also, additional professional learning days for teachers will be intentionally added prior to and within the school year.

- **In-Servicing of New Curriculum: An Instructional Development Approach:** During the past few years, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) have taken intentional steps to reduce the overall number of outcomes within subject areas during the curriculum development process to minimize the complexity of the curriculum. This newly developed curriculum has a focus on rigorous, higher order thinking skills, and it is more manageable for teachers, providing clear targets for instruction and student learning. The process of demystifying the curriculum facilitates a deeper understanding of the meaning of outcomes; the depth and breadth of the curriculum outcomes are indicated by a set of achievement indicators that lend themselves to high impact instructional strategies, as well as appropriate assessment strategies. In-servicing of curriculum will occur on identified professional learning days prior to and during the school year. Curriculum in-service will follow a three-component approach used successfully by some other provinces. The purpose of the instructional development approach will be to provide support to teachers prior to and during the implementation of new curriculum.
- **School-Based Professional Learning:** In PEI, school-based teams work collaboratively to improve teaching excellence and student achievement. No other type of professional learning identified in the literature increases the capacity to change educational systems. Within schools and classrooms, practice becomes a collective endeavor and teachers work collaboratively instead of in isolation. Teachers who are masters of their craft share their insights with fellow colleagues and student achievement becomes the focus.
- **Personal Professional Learning Plan:** Teachers are at the center of their own professional learning. While many supports will be in place for teachers, it is required that teachers be responsible to develop and carry out *Professional Learning Plans* every year. The *Professional Learning Plan* must have evidence of student learning of the curriculum outcomes specific to the teaching assignment, alignment to the school goals, instructional strategies conducive to student-level and curriculum outcomes, explanation of how teachers will collect ongoing data through the use of the formative assessment process, summative assessment of student learning to determine success of goals and plans.
- **Literacy and Numeracy Data:** We know PEI students must attain excellence in literacy and numeracy if they are to be competitive in today's world economy. Educational partners are in agreement that achievement goals must focus on the priority areas of literacy and numeracy. Currently, literacy and numeracy assessments have been added at the elementary and intermediate levels, and plans are now developing for literacy and numeracy assessments in high school. The DEECD, with input from educational partners, will develop and implement a policy that sets out procedures responsive to the data

collected in order to support student learning, teacher professional learning, school development, and educational interventions, including how to support schools with low performance trends.

- **Instructional Leadership Program:** Strong instructional leadership influences student learning and achievement. This influence is second only to that of high quality teaching. Therefore, it is imperative that instructional leadership is expected, developed, and sustained across all elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools. The key expectation for leaders within this model is that principals and vice principals need to be lead learners and model the power of lifelong professional learning. Lead learners are experts in the teaching and learning processes. These skills encompass current and evolving understanding of curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment to guide teacher development and practices that improve student learning and achievement within a continuously improving education system. An *Instructional Leadership Program* for PEI principals, vice-principals, and interested teachers will be developed. The implementation of an *Instructional Leadership Program* will define the expectations of skills, knowledge, and mind-set required by principals and vice-principals, and ensures they are prepared to meet the demands of leading PEI schools.
- **Financial Resources:** To allow the renewed model of professional learning to be implemented across the PEI's education system, it is imperative that the present financial resources to support professional learning for teachers be examined. The DEECD will work with educational partners to develop an equitable process that will allow financial resources to support professional learning move more directly to schools and classrooms where teaching and learning is occurring. Investing in professional learning is the key to ensuring that schools become learning communities where teachers work together, learn from each other, and share effective professional practices.
- **Collaborative Working Relationships:** It is imperative that the DEECD work collaboratively with the school boards, the PEI Home and School Association, the Prince Edward Island Teachers Federation, Faculty of Education, University of Prince Edward Island, and other educational partners to help parents, guardians, and communities understand that effective professional learning is fundamental to realizing high-quality education for our youth in PEI. To do this, all partners must have a clear understanding of the direction of the renewed model of professional learning. This will require a concerted effort by the DEECD to reach out and collaborate with all educational partners to develop a clearer understanding of the importance of professional learning of teachers.

Successful achievement of the positive outcomes identified within this proposed model rests ultimately with our teachers and educational leaders. If we are to realize continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in our classrooms, schools, and the entire education system, we must build the capacity of our educators to do just that. The list of actions above will create the environment for this to happen. This report is suggesting that systemic reforms need to be undertaken immediately. It highlights the urgency to optimize professional

learning to improve instruction as it is the most powerful catalyst for improving student learning and achievement. By putting in place the necessary policies and practices, we will be able to fulfill our professional and moral obligation to the children we serve.

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

### *Purpose*

The primary purpose of the *Professional Learning Report* is to develop a renewed model of professional learning for educators in Prince Edward Island (PEI). Professional learning opportunities for educators need to be relevant, and of high quality, in order to impact and improve student learning and achievement. To determine the perspectives of PEI educators regarding current professional learning practices and future learning needs, information was gathered through interviews, focus groups, and an online survey. A small committee of educators also reviewed the information and provided feedback into the process. The proposed model in this report is informed by the research findings in the *Research on Professional Development: A PEI Perspective 2012* (hereafter referred to *PEI Perspective 2012*), and the feedback from the committee. It is also informed by best practices already in place in the PEI education system as well as proven practices clearly identified in the research literature.

The report attempts to address the growing challenges for the PEI school system inherent in the current practice of providing professional learning opportunities for educators that are aligned with schools, school boards, and department priorities. To provide professional learning opportunities that are in line with educational priorities, effective practices, and current research the model will suggest the following:

- Promoting student learning and achievement by aligning support to key educational priorities in particular, literacy and numeracy
- Restructuring the process for curriculum in-service and implementation that significantly reduces the use of the pull-out model of professional development and moves toward adopting a school-based approach
- Restructuring the school calendar by embedding professional learning time into the workdays of teachers in order to support continuous improvement in the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices of teachers
- Fostering professional learning teams for educators that are collaborative and emphasize respect, capacity building, shared responsibility, collective commitment, and intentional actions
- Developing and strengthening the instructional leadership skills of principals, vice principals, and in-school leaders to support teaching excellence
- Nurturing teaching excellence by creating a supportive environment that provides ongoing, specific, and timely feedback to teachers
- Identifying procedures to effectively use provincial literacy and numeracy assessment results to assist school board members, school board staff, school leaders, and teachers with data-influenced decision-making

- Providing the education system with current and timely research-based educational updates on effective educational practices
- Shifting the overall emphasis of professional learning, and the financial resources to support professional learning, from outside schools to inside schools and classrooms where teaching and learning are occurring by allocating resources and necessary supports
- Encouraging and supporting collaborative working relationships between the Home and School, the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation (PEITF), school boards, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI), Faculty of Education, and other organizations committed to student learning and achievement

## ***Background***

A number of important reports and studies have influenced the development of *The Professional Learning Report*.

### ***1. Charting the Way: Final Report of the Education Governance Commission 2012***

This report, which can be found on the DEECD website at [www.gov.pe.ca/publications](http://www.gov.pe.ca/publications), put forward the following rationale for professional learning.

Professional learning is more important than ever in helping teachers meet the changing demands in our classrooms. It is worth noting that countries experiencing the highest level of student achievement have teachers who are highly trained, valued by society, and who work in school systems where collaboration time is regularly scheduled, and often built in the school day. The “best” school systems are in continuous dialogue about whole school reform. Teachers are moving from individual practice to a collaborative model. The collective capacity of all teachers combined far outweighs individual excellence. These school systems don't want teachers to simply teach; they want them to collaborate for the good of the entire system. Their collaboration time is spent working with colleagues, sharing best practices, preparing and analyzing lessons, developing and evaluating assessments, reading research, observing other classrooms and meeting with students and parents.

*Teachers are moving from individual practice to a collaborative model. The collective capacity of all teachers combined far outweighs individual excellence.*

With regard to the content of professional learning, strong emphasis should be placed on the maintenance and support of the existing curriculum. Research, as well as the Commissioners' own experience, affirms that the quality of the curriculum is irrelevant if it is not being taught as intended or supported with effective instructional practices.

The Commission heard, in its consultations and particularly in its discussions with the students, that the extensive use of substitute teachers to enable teacher in-servicing and other system-

generated activities undermines learning for students and causes anxiety, stress, and weakened performance. These concerns were most acute in rural areas and among students in specialty areas such as French immersion.

As with in-servicing, the use of ‘a-day-here-and-a-day-there’ pull-out approach to professional learning may be easy to implement, but is neither good for the students nor effective for teachers. This is a critically important example of where the system needs to put students learning first. Here too, the model needs to move toward greater use of the at-the-elbow coaching and mentoring techniques which have proven successful with early literacy, bringing expertise into the classroom to benefit both teachers and students. Professional learning communities, already a vibrant force across the province can and should also play a larger role. Their beneficial impact can be further increased through alignment of their activities with plans and goals at the provincial, district or school level.

Where group approaches outside the classroom are appropriate, professional learning should be scheduled when students are not in school.

Effective professional learning time must be embedded, ongoing, and focused on improving daily classroom instruction. When professional learning is meaningful, and improves instruction, teachers buy in and fully support its objectives. Professional learning plays a critical role in ensuring teachers’ professional practice meets public demands and expectations. The bottom line is improved student learning. Quality teachers have a greater influence on student learning than any other school-based factor. It is essential that professional learning efforts for teachers be system wide and clearly aligned with curriculum and assessment. Good teaching matters. It matters more than anything else we do. (pp.43-44)

*Effective professional learning time must be embedded, ongoing, and focused on improving daily classroom instruction.*

*The bottom line is improved student learning.*

*Good teaching matters. It matters more than anything else we do.*

## ***2. The Professional Development/In-Service Review 2003***

In February 2003, findings of the Professional Development/In-Service Review Committee were presented to the PEI Minister of Education. The committee represented various educational organizations on PEI. They reviewed current practices in the area of professional development and made 15 recommendations focused on increasing effectiveness and cost efficiency of in-servicing of curriculum and other professional development practices that support student learning. Many of these recommendations continue to be exemplary practices today. The report identified six major issues regarding professional development: (1) lack of opportunity for job-embedded learning; (2) the need for increased access to ongoing support relating specifically to teaching and learning; (3) the need for improved delivery of in-service for new curriculum focusing on teaching strategies; (4) alternatives to two-day pull-out model which negatively affects the continuity of instruction and consequently student learning; (5) support for teachers

not involved in *new* implementations; and (6) the need for professional development that directly impacts student learning. A decade later, these points still remain current issues.

Along with recommendations and the identification of major issues, the report outlines systemic issues that present barriers to professional development. They were outlined for the purpose of highlighting their significance to the educational community. Two of the five issues continue to influence the delivery of professional development today. These are as follows:

- The school calendar, including the structure of the school year and lack of time during the school day, inhibit implementation of research proven strategies; and
- Teaching assignments that require teachers to teach a number of different subject areas resulting in educators teaching outside their areas of expertise, a lack of specialist certification, and changes in staffing assignments from year to year that have a profound impact on effectiveness and cost efficiency of professional development.

### ***3. Excellence in Education A Challenge for Prince Edward Island: Final Report of the Task Force on Student Achievement 2005***

In 2005, PEI Premier Pat Binns called for the creation of a Task Force to make recommendations for positive enhancement of student achievement in the public school system. *Excellence in Education A Challenge for Prince Edward Island: Final Report of the Task Force on Student Achievement* was released in December 2005. After receiving input through public consultation, a 15-member committee identified and made recommendations in four interrelated and interdependent areas including assessment, engagement, resources, and curriculum. Many recommendations in this report have been advanced and others continue to provide direction for the education system on PEI. Although much has been accomplished since the release of the report, the sections on “Teachers as Life-Long Learners and Leadership” (p. 32) still remain relevant and provide direction in developing a renewed professional learning model.

### ***4. The Impact of a Systematic and Strategic Professional Learning Approach on Teachers’ Concept of Professional Development 2012***

Dr. Kyhm Goslin (2012) published a two-part report entitled *The Impact of a Systematic and Strategic Professional Learning Approach on Teachers’ Concept of Professional Development*. In writing this report, Dr. Goslin, a professor in the Education Faculty at the UPEI, facilitated an action research project in partnership with a PEI elementary school. Pre-service teachers fulfilled their practicum requirements within the school in 6 weeks. The pre-service teachers planned collaboratively every morning and taught every afternoon. This schedule freed up staff to work in collaboration every afternoon without the responsibilities of planning for a substitute or needing to follow-up on the afternoon assignments. An implication of the report was embodied in the statement:

The systematically facilitated learning experience of the teachers demonstrated how content and curricular knowledge along with the instructional and assessment practices can be enhanced through a learning community model. The experience also highlighted the challenges system leaders will need to confront in order to make job-embedded learning a reality for all teachers. (p. 3)

## 5. *Report of the Joint Advisory Committee on Teacher Workload and Teacher Allocation 2011*

Two important research questions were posed in this report:

- What does the research say about quality teaching as it relates to student learning and achievement?
- What does the research say about putting the above into practice?

In responding to these questions, the *Report of the Joint Advisory Committee on Teacher Workload and Teacher Allocation 2011* provides the following overview:

In answering question number one, there are common themes which emerge in the literature on effective teaching and learning strategies. Firstly, to be effective, teachers need to know their content area and the appropriate methodology for delivering curriculum. They also need to know the curriculum; the outcomes and standards expected. Beyond that, they need a vast repertoire of instructional strategies and management techniques that work. These also include good understanding of assessment practices; the learning environment, and differentiation.

In answering question two, there are two specific strategies that are noted throughout the literature for enhancing teacher quality and effectiveness; the creation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) and coaching. Barber and Mourshed (2007) conducted research to investigate why top-performing school systems are doing better than other systems. For teacher professional development, they identified a number of effective interventions:

- Coaching classroom practice,
- Moving teacher training to the classroom,
- Developing stronger school leaders, and
- Enabling teachers to learn from each other.

The research also noted that teachers in the top-performing schools regularly:

- Observe each others' practice,
- Share knowledge on what works and what does not,

- Provide feedback to one another,
- Regularly assess their own weakness, and
- Help shape a common aspiration and motivation for improving the quality of instruction. (pp.1-2)

It is clear from the findings and recommendations from the aforementioned reports, as well as other literature, that we know a good deal about professional learning. What is imperative is that we take what we know and what we have studied and turn it into action. The time to propose a renewed model of professional learning is now as there seems to be a congruent of agreement among and between the educational partners of PEI that we need to act upon the good practices already in place.

### ***PEI Exemplary Practices***

There have been many changes in teacher development on PEI. Within these changes, exemplary practices have been explored and in some cases, adopted. These efforts have resulted in pockets of improvement in practice for those who have been involved. Brief descriptions of some key exemplary practices that have impacted the practice of PEI teachers are described in the following paragraphs.

#### **Literacy Coaches**

A literacy coach is a literacy leader who works collaboratively with teachers, administrators, school board, and department staff to improve student achievement in literacy. The literacy coach provides school-based, job-embedded support for teachers as they implement effective literacy instructional practices. (DEECD, 2010, p. 1)

Currently in PEI, a literacy coach works with more than one school. Literacy coaches have been implemented to support both French (2003) and English (2006) programs. The literacy coaching model has provided substantial support and follow-up with classroom teachers and school-based administrators. The research on effective professional development recognizes coaching as one of the most effective methods to support a change of instructional practices in classrooms.

Literacy coaches support classroom teachers and schools in many ways. Some of the ways literacy coaches support teachers and schools include the following: supporting the implementation of new curriculum; making connections between educational research, theory, and classroom practice; analyzing data to support instructional decision making; supporting and nurturing collaborative environments; developing literacy goals within schools; encouraging parental engagement in support of literacy; aligning their practices with current coaching and literacy research; and leading research-based literacy initiatives. Literacy coaches also meet regularly with principals and vice principals to problem-solve school-based and systemic challenges that impede progress and to help distribute the responsibilities of instructional leaders within schools.

Growth of the coaching model is supported in Recommendation #2 in the *Report of the Joint Advisory Committee on Teacher Workload and Teacher Allocation*. It recommended “that coaches continue to be added from existing FTEs (full-time equivalents) as enrolments decline for the upper grades for both literacy and numeracy” (p. 24). Supporting this statement is Recommendation #23 in *Charting the Way: Final Report of the Education Governance Commission*. The commission recommends an “at-the-elbow” mentor model of in-service giving support within classrooms.

### **Reading Recovery®**

Reading Recovery® is an effective, early intervention series of lessons designed to dramatically reduce the number of children with reading and writing difficulties within an education system. It identifies children in Grade 1 who are *at-risk*, and specially trained Reading Recovery® teachers, deliver a short-term series of individual lessons. Reading Recovery® is based on the assumption that intensive, high quality intervention during the early years of schooling is the most effective and productive investment of resources (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1999). The early years, which set the stage for later learning, are critical for children who are at-risk. Current research indicates that the “gap” in reading widens dramatically after the first year and is hard to close in later grades. In an Australian study, it was found that even by third grade the learning gap was so large that, for low achieving students, catching up with their peers was virtually impossible (Hill & Crevola, 1999).

Currently in PEI, Reading Recovery® is available to Grade 1 students in most elementary schools in both English and French. There is a strong professional development component in the training and the ongoing support of Reading Recovery® teachers which is provided by highly trained teacher leaders. This provision for ongoing professional development for Reading Recovery® teachers have produced a learning model that creates opportunities for educators to work together to support, discuss, and problem-solve based on evidence and observation, and to explore procedures and practices. Teachers participate in colleague visits and receive consultative visits from the teacher leader. Although this model of professional learning is limited to the number of Reading Recovery® teachers in the province, it has much to offer to support ongoing learning needs of all teachers and school-based administrators. It has already been modified to help support the learning needs of teachers in the Primary Literacy Intervention Program (PLIP) and the Early Numeracy Intervention Program (ENIP).

### **School Development**

In the school year 2004-2005, educational leaders within the DEECD, school boards, and schools initiated a project to develop and implement a renewed provincial school development model for the purposes of improving student learning outcomes and increasing student success. The model adopted by schools across the province represent the basic features of school development (as

distinct from a list of effective school characteristics): shared purpose, norms of collegiality, norms of continuous development, and structures representing the organizational conditions necessary for significant improvement. Shared purpose includes vision, mission, goals, objectives, and unity of purpose. It represents a shared sense of purposeful direction. It is not static, and does not occur without effort. Norms of collegiality refer to ways in which sharing, assistance, and joint effort is valued and honoured. Norms of continuous development and experimentation are intertwined with collegiality in the teacher's constant search for and assessment of better practices inside and outside school. Structure refers to organizational arrangements, roles, and formal policies that explicitly create working conditions that support and inspire movement in the other parts of the model: for example, providing time for joint planning, time for classroom observations, or developing a mentoring process.

Teacher as learner is the centerpiece linking classroom and school development. Much time, discussion, and professional development was invested in creating and supporting learning communities at the school, school board, and the DEECD level. Learning communities can take many forms but the direction learning communities were encouraged to take at the school level was to focus on curriculum, instructional skills and strategies, assessment and evaluation, classroom management, to encourage reflective practices, and provide time and support for collaboration. The hope was to integrate and establish the strengths of each.

There have been many challenges with the school development process but it also has and continues to produce many success stories. As we move toward a renewed professional learning model, the school development process at present in place at schools across the province, can serve as a foundation to support and encourage professional learning for educators that is relevant and of a high quality in order to impact and improve student learning and achievement.

### **PEI Grade 9 Math Project**

In 2008, the Western School Board (WSB) Math Working Group brought its Grade 9 math teachers together to study the results of the *Intermediate Mathematics Assessments*. The provincial, school boards, and school-level results were specifically examined. Teachers discussed students' common errors, and decided to identify foundational outcomes that would support students' learning across all outcomes in Grade 9 math, as well as provide students with a strong foundation to proceed in learning mathematics in high school. Teachers examined the outcomes carefully so they could clearly articulate what students needed to know in order to achieve the required knowledge and skills of the outcomes. They determined the cognitive levels of learning required for students to meet the demands of the outcomes and created multiple choice quizzes to be used as a means of beginning a formative assessment process.

The teachers in this learning community collected their student data from the quizzes and reconvened to discuss what to do next. After researching instructional strategies, they used

formative assessment data to inform different ways to differentiate learning opportunities for students who had not grasped the outcomes. They determined whether they needed to re-teach the entire class or whether individuals or small groups of students required further instruction and practice.

Teachers involved in this project have touted it as the best professional development they have received and participated in during their careers. Through this process they deepened their knowledge of content, heightened their knowledge of fair assessment practices, and honed skills to create classroom assessments upon which good decisions could be made about student learning. They learned about high yield instructional strategies. The curriculum, instruction, and assessment triangle became seamless, and the collaborative, professional dialogue motivated teachers and inspired internal accountability to one another and to their students. This project has now become a provincial initiative and has been extended to also include teachers in the Eastern School District (ESD) and the Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF). Recognized deficits of this model include lack of follow-up and guidance in classrooms and schools and reliance upon a pull-out model of in-service, taking teachers away from their students. During April 2012, a Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA) Coach worked with as many teachers as possible to provide additional support. Unfortunately, this support was for a short duration of time. Feedback from teachers receiving help or seeing lessons modeled has been extremely positive.

### **Moderated Marking**

Moderated marking of student writing has been an important aspect of school development projects over the past few years. A number of PEI schools have examined their Provincial Literacy Assessment results in writing and determined that attention was required in this area. Teachers posed two key questions:

1. What do we expect in writing at each grade level?
2. What does good writing at each grade level look like?

Moderated marking is a process that allows teachers to come together to create a common set of criteria based on the writing standards. First, teachers receive training in how to use a rubric to assess student writing. Next, student exemplars are selected according to the specifications of the rubric. Then, as a group, teachers mark student work therein creating consistency and accuracy. One of the benefits of this process is the rich dialogue among educators. Teachers become comfortable identifying their biases when marking and work to identify when and how those biases influences accuracy in marking student work. Teachers do not mark their own students' writing. Each level shuffles the pieces to allow for anonymity, eliminating non-blinded bias.

Moderated marking requires support in order for it to work in a seemingly effortless manner. Typically, the school development team leads the initiative along with support and guidance from administration. The Literacy Assessment specialist provides training of the moderated

marking process, works with the staff to determine timelines, facilitates logistics and assists with data analysis.

This process takes guided practice in order to evolve to the point that the school can continue to work independently following a gradual release of responsibility model. The ongoing support of the Literacy Assessment specialist leads to a level of comfort crucial to the success of the process. Schools determine how much support is needed. Once the data is presented, the analysis and interpretation lead to data-influenced decision making and goal setting for the school year ahead. Moderated marking is an excellent example of scoring student work collaboratively with agreed upon criteria. For teachers, participating in moderated marking provides a powerful experience that develops consistency in evaluating student writing and in professional judgment across classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

Given that much good work is already underway, there is still a need to strengthen and grow teacher development. In order for all students to have an equal opportunity to learn, teacher development must adhere to a systemic approach. Random, isolated endeavors increase the inconsistency between teachers who receive quality professional development and those who do not receive what they need. Meaningful professional learning opportunities for some and not for others translate into an increased gap in equitable opportunities for all students to learn a strong, viable, and guaranteed provincial curriculum that is grounded in research and practice.

Without coherent aligned professional learning, the gap between the intended curriculum and the implemented curriculum will continue to broaden. Even when teachers follow the same curriculum outcomes and use the same textbook, there is no guarantee that students will be taught the same content. Students have the right to be taught the same knowledge and skills outlined in the curriculum, regardless of the teacher with whom they are placed. The teachers and administrators have the responsibility to ensure each and every student receives the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills outlined in the curriculum, regardless of their assigned classroom.

*Students have the right to be taught the same knowledge and skills outlined in the curriculum, regardless of the teacher with whom they are placed.*

Effective professional learning must provide all teachers with the potential to develop their practice and become experts in their craft. While positive professional learning has occurred intentionally such as when teachers work with literacy coaches, at other times professional learning is a by-product of an activity that holds a different purpose, such as assessing students' work at provincial marking boards. A new professional development model must align itself to a

thorough teacher understanding of outcomes and assessment techniques in order to measure student progress and inform subsequent instruction. It must also equip teachers with research-proven instructional strategies so that they become comfortable in formative assessment and differentiating instruction, both of which are essential to ensure that all students experience high-quality learning.

### ***PEI Context***

At the PEI Minister's Summit on Learning (2010), the focus was on how to prepare students to become productive citizens in the 21st Century. A cross-section of participants, including parents, educators, and community members agreed that the way in which we educate students must ensure that students develop the necessary skills to become lifelong learners. Education must be relevant for students so that they view learning as both valuable and integrally connected to their futures. Participants at the summit also identified the need for increased competency in literacy and numeracy skills.

Over the last few years, the identification of students requiring special needs services has grown steadily. Currently, 34.7 % of students in PEI are identified as needing specialized support in school. While across Canada, the provincial average number of students identified as needing special needs services vary greatly, the Canadian average is 12.4% which highlights that PEI has a substantially higher percentage than all other provinces. Many factors may be influencing these numbers, yet it is critical that we question the possibility of over-diagnosing students with special needs. This must not provide an excuse from doing what needs to be done. A focus on strengthening and supporting the classroom teacher and the pedagogy practiced within classrooms and schools is the first and most important intervention for all students. Regardless of the specific and diverse learning needs of students, the teacher is the single most influential resource in the education system.

***Regardless of the specific and diverse learning needs of students, the teacher is the single most influential resource in the education system.***

In 2006, the DEECD began the *Provincial Common Assessment* program. Provincial assessment data indicate the following:

- High numbers of students meeting expectations in the *Primary Literacy Assessment* (PLA) in reading and encouraging results in writing
- The *Primary Mathematics Assessment* (PMA) results show a positive trend over the past 3 years
- Results of the *Elementary Literacy Assessment* (ELA) indicate a positive trend in both reading and writing
- Positive trends are apparent in the *Intermediate Mathematics Assessment* (IMA)

*The Elementary Mathematics Assessment (EMA)* and the *Intermediate Literacy Assessment (ILA)* will be administered in the spring of 2013. Provincial assessment data will continue to provide critical information about students' literacy and numeracy levels at the end of Grade 3, 6, and 9. The DEECD will continue to collect, analyze, monitor, and report provincial common assessment data. This action will help to identify trends in student literacy and numeracy, provide reliable and relevant data in support of student learning, and help identify professional learning to advance excellence in teaching and leadership.

While provincial assessment data show encouraging trends at Grade 3 and Grade 6, data from the *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009* justify concerns that literacy, as well as numeracy levels, of PEI 15-year-olds are weak, and in fact are among the lowest in Canada (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada Statistics Canada, 2009). (See Table 1 below)

Table 1

*PEI PISA Results as Compared to Canadian Results: Literacy*

	<b>Level 1 - 2</b> Lack fundamental skills to prepare students for the workplace	<b>Level 3</b> Functional	<b>Level 4 - Level 5 - Level 6</b> Participate effectively and productively in Life
<b>PEI</b>	21%	53%	26%
<b>Canada</b>	11%	49%	40%

Interestingly, in the contextual data collected through PISA (2009), PEI students indicate a high level of enjoyment of reading. Although it is encouraging that PEI schools are instilling an enjoyment of reading, many of our 15-year-old students lack the fundamental literacy skills necessary to enter the workforce or successfully pursue postsecondary education. The lack-luster results of PISA (2009) raise troublesome contradictions as PEI boasts a Grade 12 graduation rate of 78.6% (Statistics Canada, 2010). A further disturbing trend is the high percentage of PEI graduates who discontinue programs of studies at UPEI within the first two years of post-secondary programs (Innovation and Advanced Learning, 2012).

Given the realities of these hard-to hear-messages, providing evidence of inadequate levels of literacy and numeracy among PEI youth and citizens, there is a sense of urgency not only to declare literacy and numeracy as key priorities, but to relentlessly work collaboratively to improve student learning.

The opportunity to propose a renewed professional learning model, with emphases on high quality professional learning for teachers, vice principals, and principals offers an opportunity to focus once again on improved learning and achievement for children and youth on PEI. As a province, we must forge strong, respectful partnerships in order to capitalize on strengthening teacher expertise and instructional leadership in schools as these are the greatest factors to

influence student achievement. A collective commitment to sustain and embed ongoing professional learning is imperative. Reeves (2010) identified prevailing evidence that effective professional learning is “directly relevant to the needs of teachers and students, and it provides opportunities for application, practice, reflection, and reinforcement” (p. 23).

There are clear guiding practices for what quality professional learning looks like. High impact professional learning is directly linked to student learning and focuses on people and practices, not programs. Goals of professional learning need to shift from transmission of teacher learning to a more effective model that supports deliberate change in teacher practice. High impact professional learning encompasses the four components of curriculum, assessment, instructional strategies, and classroom climate. Teachers who engage in a professional learning process work among these four components continually to refine and improve their craft. These ideals must become the reality for PEI educators. Reeves (2010) also implored those leaders responsible for providing professional learning for educators not to be convinced to allow defenders of ineffective professional learning to persist. Local traditional practices, embedded in policy, must not override common sense and the moral responsibility of what is in the best interests for educators and ultimately PEI students.

## SECTION 2: RESEARCH

### *Professional Development: A PEI Perspective 2012*

From January to May 2012, research was conducted to determine the perspectives of PEI educators regarding current professional learning practices and future professional learning needs. The information was gathered through interviews, focus groups, and an online survey. The important involvement and contribution of the educational community has resulted in a comprehensive data collection process.

- Twenty interviews were conducted with key educators at the DEECD or school board level who have professional development responsibilities within their mandate.
- Eight focus groups were conducted with key groups such as superintendents of school boards, principals, consultants, and the UPEI Faculty of Education.
- The Professional Development Survey, a comprehensive online survey with a response rate of 79.4%, was sent to the school development committees at every school.

A thematic analysis was conducted to uncover emerging themes evident throughout data collected from the interviews and focus groups. Major themes to emerge include: Alignment and Focus, Principal Leadership, Time and Timing, Collaboration, Professional Support, Responsibility and Accountability, and Future Opportunities. Important, but less frequently discussed themes include: Support for Kindergarten and Support for French Programs.

The Professional Development Survey consisted of both Likert style questions and open-ended questions. A quantitative analysis was conducted on the Likert style questions and a thematic analysis was used to determine themes in open-ended questions.

The survey gathered information about:

- Demographic data
- The pull-out model of in-service
- Collaborative teams
- Current professional development days
  - timing of days during the school-year
  - impact on current days on teaching and learning
  - alternate times for professional learning, and
- Challenges
  - time
  - alignment of goals
  - allocation of teaching assignments

Overall analysis of the data gathered from interviews, focus groups, and surveys indicate a strong congruence of perceptions about the current trends, and future needs for professional development on PEI. Relevant findings from this study follows.

## **Finding 1**

*Align, adhere to, and support the student learning and achievement goals and priorities informed by consultation with the education community*

A major theme emerging from the focus groups and interviews identified a lack of alignment among educational levels and a lack of focus of professional learning. Participants called for a time bound plan with a “relentless effort to accomplish aligned learning goals.” A clear message was given that educators from the DEECD, school boards, and schools must work collaboratively to align and focus on specific goals. One participant reflected the thoughts of many by saying, “We need a plan bigger than people in various roles.”

Along with alignment among and between levels of education, the setting of priorities and alignment of those priorities to professional learning was emphasized. One principal commented, “The base of the pyramid is quality teaching – day to day teaching must be aligned (to goals and professional learning) and translate into learning for each and every child.” An absence of clear goals and lack of focus resulted in feelings of fragmentation and a splintered approach to professional learning.

### **Research Literature**

This finding speaks to two key factors that have implications for professional learning.

#### **1. Alignment of Goals**

In order to improve student learning in classrooms, professional learning must be aligned to the priorities communicated by the educational community. Alignment informs decision-making regarding allocation of resources, specific high impact strategies, and the tools necessary to meet the goals. The call for alignment is clear in the 2011 Report of the *Joint Advisory Committee on Teacher Workload and Teacher Allocation*, as indicated in the following statement, “The appearance of a lack of strategic priorities or an alignment of priorities between various levels of the system as well as questions surrounding governance creates a burden on teachers” (p. 20). Therefore, the explicit alignment of goals provides a consistent common message about what students are to learn and student achievement priorities in PEI.

Alignment must also be tangible between the identified goals and the professional learning initiatives for educators. When we deliberately focus on a few important goals, we are more likely to be successful in meeting these goals. Guskey (2000) underlined that professional learning requires focusing on clear and worthwhile goals with the intent to improve student learning. He contended that piecemeal approaches cause fragmentation and confusion and simply do not work. “True professional development is a systemic process that considers change over an extended period of time and takes into account all levels of the organization” (p. 20).

Fullan (2011) further emphasized the necessity of systemic change as one of the four drivers of educational change. He defined systemic as occurring when “all elements of the system are

unavoidably interconnected and involved, day after day” (p. 16). In order to meet the achievement goals for students in PEI, professional learning goals must develop and strengthen the skill sets essential for teachers to effectively improve student learning and achievement.

## *2. Priorities and focus*

White (2005) provided convincing evidence that an inverse relationship exists between the number of priorities that leaders pursue and their long-term effectiveness. Reeves (2010) agreed and added that the problem with most professional learning is that initiatives are introduced with a smattering of many ideas but fail to focus on any. Organizational fragmentation is not only ineffective, but it inhibits learning for both students and adults (Reeves, 2010; Sawchuk, 2009). There is abundant evidence that students are better served when professional learning is focused on a few goals and attention is paid to the fidelity of implementation, refinement of plans, deliberate practice and perfection of professional practice, monitoring and follow-up, and in-school support.

It is critical that the student achievement goals selected are needs-driven, are informed by data, and address the long-term requirements of our students in PEI. Using these guidelines, literacy and numeracy have been deemed urgent priorities through analyses of the current context of student learning in PEI. Priorities, and subsequently professional learning, must be responsive to the identified needs in order to improve student achievement levels. The *Provincial Common Assessments* are providing important information to educators and parents about PEI students’ literacy and numeracy levels. Analysis of yearly results as well as an examination of trends over time, assist educators to make informed decisions about where and how to allocate resources.

To be competitive in today’s world economy, we know PEI students must attain excellence in literacy and numeracy. Educational partners are in agreement that achievement goals must focus on the priority areas of literacy and numeracy. They recognize that a focus on improving levels of literacy and numeracy gives powerful leverage to influence student learning in all other disciplines. That is to say, by strengthening the focus on literacy and numeracy, improvements of students’ reading, writing and math skills will ensure a strong foundation for future learning across many subject areas. Reeves (2010) explained that for teachers and school leaders, the principle of leverage includes such concepts such as feedback and engagement and rigorous professional learning that is appropriate to every subject and grade level.

### **Context**

It is crucial for school goals to be tied to school board goals and to the DEECD goals. These goals must be explicit and focused to ensure a clear understanding by students, educators, parents, and communities about what the priorities for student learning are in PEI. In order to realize gains in student achievement, professional learning must intentionally align with these goals.

*The ultimate goal of professional learning is to grow the local capacity of educators’ craft in order to improve student achievement.*

Teachers need to see clearly the connection of professional learning to classroom practice, and professional learning must provide support to teachers in developing new knowledge and skills imperative to achieve the goals. The ultimate goal of professional learning is to grow the local capacity of educators' craft in order to improve student achievement. Professional learning must be integrated within the goals articulated by schools, school boards, and the DEECD.

### **Implications for Professional Learning:**

- Alignment of achievement goals among education community
- Alignment of achievement goals to professional learning initiatives
- Student achievement goals will be focused on literacy and numeracy
- Achievement goals are evident in all school development plans and professional learning plans
- Ownership and responsibility for student learning and achievement be distributed across all levels of education

### ***Finding 2***

*Provide continuous improvement in knowledge, skills, practices, and processes to strengthen teaching excellence because quality teaching is the most influential factor related to student learning and achievement*

Interviewees and focus group participants discussed the need for professional learning to strengthen and support PEI teachers as demands for student learning increase. The vast array of content and pedagogical skills required, along with a clear understanding of assessment and evaluation of students, necessitates professional learning to be a continuous process rather than one-day events that have little to no impact on changing practice. Participants listed many essential skills and competencies necessary for teachers in today's classrooms:

- Continuously stay abreast of content expertise and acquire a deep understanding of curriculum outcomes
- Provide high-quality, meaningful, and timely feedback to students
- Focus on the formative assessment process to identify where students are at in the learning process
- Differentiate instruction and assessment to ensure all students have the opportunity to learn and achieve
- Use a variety of flexible grouping strategies to meet student needs
- Work collaboratively to consistently mark student work
- Attain knowledge of and participate in action research projects
- Analyze student data to make evidence-based decisions
- Grow proficiencies of pedagogy relating to current technologies
- Develop and nurture positive learning environments where students feel safe to take risks

- Uphold teacher professionalism and promote positive culture within schools
- Implement a variety of high impact instructional strategies
- Interpret Provincial Common Assessment data to reflect on professional learning needs and student learning needs
- Develop a comprehensive literacy program to support student needs
- Encourage a passion for learning, creativity, and innovation

Without a doubt, the complexity of teaching in a 21st century classroom reflects the increased skills youth will need to garner success in tomorrow's evolving world. Teachers' renewal of skills and ongoing development of new skills is only possible through ongoing, effective professional learning and by taking advantage of creativity, productivity, and innovation which emerges when educators work collaboratively.

Significant challenges in helping teachers realize requisite competencies through professional learning were exposed via the *Professional Development Survey* regarding allocation of teaching assignments. Seventy-two percent of respondents either agreed or somewhat agreed that teachers are asked to teach content areas that are different than their areas of expertise. This response was consistent across school boards and strongest at the K-8/9 (100%) and Grades 7-9 (75%) school levels. Also, the survey revealed that 42% of respondents believe that teachers request to teach content areas that are different from their content area of expertise. This point was also strongest at K-8/9 (67%) and Grades 7-9 (50%) and weakest at the elementary school level (29%). School respondents indicated that teachers often teach at an educational level different from their pre-service training (60%), highest at K-8/9 (89%) and Grades 7-9 (75%) school configurations. Respondents agreed (80%) that changing grades too frequently inhibits developing teacher expertise and that additional support is needed for teachers whose assignment changes significantly (92%) indicating high agreement across all school boards and school configurations.

It is disturbing to identify this trend of teacher movement, in particular, when teachers are assigned to areas that are different from their content areas of expertise (both when teachers are asked to change and/or request a change). Teachers who are required to teach at levels different from their pre-service teacher training lack understanding of the specific developmental needs of their students. For instance, this point is particularly applicable during early learning years or during adolescence, because student needs are unique during these years and their stages of development inform responsive teaching practices.

Substantial support is required for teachers whose assignment change significantly. While this recommendation is obviously imperative, it is a tremendous drain on resources and an ineffective use of resources. Compounding this statement, when teachers move, the expertise and professional learning provided for that particular assignment is lost and must be reinvested. In

consideration of these practices regarding school staffing procedures and teaching assignments, further investigation is warranted. These practices are not cost effective, nor are they conducive to quality teaching, student learning, student achievement, or reducing achievement gaps. Furthermore, such practices do not instill public confidence in teachers as professionals. Should we continue to endorse these practices, we need to hold expectations that within a short span of time, teachers will be required to take a methods course aligned with the content and level of instruction. Even so, unnecessary and habitual movement in assignments is a significant barrier in growing teacher excellence over time and reduces professional learning to fragmented exercises where learned skills cannot be built upon to improve practice and improve student learning.

*When teachers move, the expertise and professional learning provided for that particular assignment is lost and must be reinvested.*

Where we focus our professional learning efforts is important. Re-conceptualizing the focus on professional development specifically to help PEI teachers, vice principals, and principals requires knowing where we are at, as an education system, in our own continuum of developing professionally as educators. There is not a one-size-fits-all recipe, and we must listen to the voices of our teachers. Just as students and teachers have individual needs, our education system has specific needs if we are to have the capacity to embrace the ideal learning environments extolled in descriptions of 21st century classrooms. PEI teachers have identified what is relevant to their day-to-day professional needs for excellence of teaching in the classroom.

PEI teachers want to attain increased knowledge of subject-specific content. Content expertise and background knowledge are prerequisites of teaching excellence. Teachers need to possess a thorough understanding of the provincial student learning outcomes they are required to teach, and in turn, students are required to learn. Therefore, professional learning must provide support and ongoing opportunities for teachers to work together to deepen their understanding of curricular learning expectations of their teaching assignment.

Also, PEI teachers at all levels acknowledge their professional learning needs pertaining to the whole domain of assessment competencies. Assessment know-how extends beyond a basic understanding of the difference between the words *summative* and *formative*. Rather, authentic assessment is situated within schools and classrooms and encompasses fair assessment practices of collecting student data, marking student data, analyzing student data, making evidence-based instructional decisions using student data, and providing timely and specific feedback to students about their learning. Only when teachers institutionalize the formative assessment process as part of their daily operations within classrooms, can they effectively differentiate instruction to meet all students' learning needs. Without formalizing the process of formative assessment within classrooms, how can teachers be expected to provide interventions that target the specific

learning needs of each and every student? The formative assessment process involves students in their own learning so students can increase levels of self-regulation of their own learning needs and become savvy of metacognitive strategies. Metacognition is key for students to become autonomous, self-initiating, innovative, creative problem solvers and proficient lifelong learners.

Finally, PEI teachers are constantly seeking to improve their repertoire of sound instructional strategies. They seek to shift their classroom practices to more effective ways to help students learn. High impact strategies are well-documented in the research literature (Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001; Glaze, Mattingly, & Levin, 2012; Hattie, 2012) and are not unknown to PEI teachers. The challenge is to stop doing what has been done habitually in order to transition to new ways of working. Researchers dub this as the knowing-doing gap in educational practice. Teachers will need ground-floor support from specialists, coaches, mentors, vice principals, and principals in schools and classrooms to make this shift successfully. High-quality professional learning for teachers holds the potential to be a catalyst for increasing teaching excellence, the most influential factor affecting student learning and achievement.

*High-quality professional learning for teachers holds the potential to be a catalyst for increasing teaching excellence, the most influential factor affecting student learning and achievement.*

### **The Research Literature**

PEI teachers' professional needs are not dissimilar to the needs of teachers identified throughout the research literature (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan, 2011; Hattie, 2012; Reeves, 2010). PEI educators need the opportunities to work together in a collaborative environment in order (1) to deepen their understanding of the skills and knowledge students need to demonstrate whether they meet specific curriculum outcomes, (2) to determine the appropriate assessment practices to uncover where students are needing additional help, and (3) to expand their collection of instructional skills and strategies necessary to reach the diverse needs of learners. Teachers value the time invested in professional learning, and recognize how continuously growing professional skills are relevant to classroom routines and how extending these competencies impact student learning and achievement. The American Education Research Association (2005) found that professional development has the greatest impact on student learning when it is rooted in subject matter and focused on student learning. Students showed the greatest increase in basic and advanced reasoning and problem-solving skills when professional development focused on how students learn and how to use assessment to effectively gauge student learning.

Along with a professional learning focus on curriculum, assessment, and instruction, research is clear on the significant impact of a positive school culture and an inviting classroom

environment for learning. In fact, positive school cultures and inviting classroom environments for learning are connected. In schools where teachers work collaboratively to benefit student learning, teacher-student relationships are also stronger. Positive teacher-student relationships are a precursor to positive student climate and one of the most important influences on student achievement is the relationship between the teacher and the student (Hattie, 2009). Students must also have a safe place for learning to occur. Classrooms (and schools) must be safe places where learners can take risks and where errors are seen as opportunities for new learning. Teacher-student relationships are a key factor to determining whether students perceive teachers care enough to do whatever is necessary to ensure learning, and the ensuing climate is supportive and collaborative with mutual trust among members (Freiler, Hurley, & Canuel, 2012). Teachers must help students adopt the belief that hard work and effort, rather than depending solely on success in past performances, lead to future accomplishments and achievement. In her book *Mindset*, Dweck (2006) promoted a growth mindset where students focus on “self-development, self-motivation, and responsibility” (p.154) and teachers help students develop a tenacity for learning as well as resilience and determination to overcome obstacles and set-backs. When teachers embrace these attitudes, positive teacher-student relationships flourish and students develop the self-efficacy in their ability to learn and confidence to tackle difficult tasks.

The ultimate responsibility of educators is to prepare students for their world and the future. Teachers aspire to provide learning environments that enable students to develop skills such as problem solving, innovation and creativity. The classroom must meet the developmental needs of each learner and provide opportunities to work collaboratively with others as well as provide opportunities that will foster independence and interdependence. Through relevant learning experiences, students acquire self-understanding of their strengths and passions that engage students in meaningful, authentic learning. When students are engaged in learning, they are motivated to determine and seek out pertinent resources. Students become the key players in their own learning and become competent in learning how to learn. Jacobs (2010) explained that technology used to support 21st century learning must be relevant to the task at hand, accessible to all students, and have an authentic purpose.

Teachers are at the center of their own professional learning. When teachers receive a teaching assignment, they are individually responsible to ensure all students learn the prescribed outcomes in that curricular area. Accountability for the student learning of outcomes is shared by the DEECD, the school boards, principals, vice principals, and teachers to ensure every student is provided with the opportunity to achieve the prescribed outcomes. With accountability comes the responsibility to support teachers in areas of curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies including the use of technology.

Teaching is a professional designation. Like other professionals, teachers have the responsibility to stay abreast of new content and current effective practices throughout their years in the profession. It is unrealistic to expect a teacher to be finished learning after receiving a Bachelor of Education degree or receiving tenure. In the past, teachers have been expected to set professional goals for every new school year. These goals are often arbitrary, disconnected from teachers' work in the classroom, and lack monitoring, support, and follow-up. In turn, such goals unlikely impact their teaching practices.

***Teaching is a professional designation. Like other professionals, teachers have the responsibility to stay abreast of new content and current effective practices throughout their years in the profession.***

While many professional learning supports will be provided for teachers, the research literature is clear that teachers develop professionally when they have autonomy for some of their individual learning needs (Sahlberg, 2005; 2012; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). There must be room in the renewed model of professional learning for teachers to have opportunities to seek out what they feel they need as professionals, to grow personally, and meet any new expectations placed on them. In the book, *The Fourth Way*, Hargreaves and Shirley promoted educational change through deepening rigorous learning of teachers and students, improving professional quality and engagement, and instilling public confidence by connecting to parents, community and all institutional educational partners. Rather than setting goals as in the past, teachers would benefit professionally if they developed yearly *Professional Learning Plans* that are aligned with teaching assignments and students' needs, and are focused on improving practice and student achievement. While teachers may work independently on a *Professional Learning Plan*, others may choose to network with another teacher, or a small group of teachers within their family of schools, who have identified the same interests and needs.

To restate what has been repeated for the past decade within educational research literature, what matters most is teacher growth and development. That is, teacher learning improves student learning. Darling-Hammond (2009) conducted rigorous research to analyze the characteristics of effective professional learning in high-achieving nations around the world, including the United States. Her research on effective teacher development shows that Professional Development should:

1. Be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice
2. Focus on student learning and address the teaching of specific curriculum content;
3. Align with school improvement priorities and goals
4. Build strong working relationships among teachers

Also noted in Darling-Hammond (2009) study, coaching programs as well as mentoring and induction programs increase teacher effectiveness. While teacher induction programs for beginning teachers are not elaborated upon in this report, pre-service teacher education is insufficient to meet the complex needs of novice teachers. The PEI educational community must reconsider the current manner in which pre-service teachers are transitioned to the school system. Their apprenticeship must occur primarily within schools and classrooms so that their professional learning is connected to the practical requirements of the classroom. Pre-service teachers need significant amounts of time to learn alongside model teachers within collaborative school communities to prepare them for their professional responsibilities for student learning and student achievement. Mentoring, coaching, and high-quality induction programs situate themselves within classrooms and school communities. In summary, research confirms that the closer professional learning occurs to classrooms, the greater the likelihood that new strategies and practices will be adopted, and take hold.

*The PEI educational community must reconsider the current manner in which pre-service teachers are transitioned to the school system. Their apprenticeship must occur primarily within schools and classrooms so that their professional learning is connected to the practical.*

## **Context**

Research unequivocally deems quality teaching as the most influential factor related to student learning (Dufour & Marzano, 2011; Fullan & Starratt, 2012; Glaze et al., 2012; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Reeves, 2010). Overall, PEI teachers are hard-working, dedicated professionals who enter the profession with high aspirations to excel as teachers and are confident they will have a positive impact on students. Meeting high expectations of teaching excellence requires time for professional learning and ongoing support to implement new strategies within classrooms. The emphasis and current press placed on teaching excellence is noteworthy in a number of locally-generated reports. Noteworthy among these include the following:

- *Excellence in Education: A Challenge for Prince Edward Island, Final Report of the Task Force on Student Achievement (2005)* (hereafter referred to as The Task Force on Student Achievement)
- *The Report of the Joint Advisory Committee on Teacher Workload and Teacher Allocation (2010)*
- *Review of Special Needs Program and Support Services (2012)*, and
- *Charting the Way: Final Report of the Education Governance Commission (2012)*

The groundwork has been laid and the time is right to propose, support, and implement a renewed professional learning model.

## Implications for Professional Learning

- DEECD take a lead role in researching and communicating effective teaching practices to all educational partners
- Human resources hire teachers with the skills and education to fill teaching positions
- School boards monitor and substantially reduce the practice of teacher reallocation to assignments within and across schools by putting protocol in place to ensure teacher skills match assignment needs
- School boards hold expectations that within a short span of time, teachers teaching outside their area of competency are required to take a methods course aligned with the content and level of instruction
- Explicit literacy and numeracy goals will shift the emphasis of professional learning to supporting teachers to ensure student proficiency along literacy and numeracy continuums across the grades
- Teachers be responsible for devising *Professional Learning Plans* that meet each teacher's own professional needs, and which are specific to their assignment and responsive to their students' needs
- The importance of soliciting, creating, and sustaining a collective coalition among key educational partners including the DEECD, school boards, PEITF, UPEI, and the PEI Home and School must be ingrained into the learning culture and support system for educators on PEI.

## Finding 3

*Develop and strengthen the instructional leadership skills of principals, vice principals, and other in-school leaders to support teaching excellence*

One of the key themes emerging from focus groups and interviews was the importance of the principal serving as a school-based instructional leader to support teacher practice and student learning. Managerial responsibilities of principals divert significant amounts of time away from the priority focus of teaching and learning. Pressing management issues such as transportation, building maintenance and repair, overseeing caretakers, occupational health routines, as well as other assigned logistical duties, consume the precious finite time of a school day and shift principals' attention away from the important areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and supervision. These situations create an unreasonable expectation and divert the focus from the primary role of school leaders, which is to support sound pedagogy and

*One of the key themes emerging from focus groups and interviews was the importance of the principal serving as a school-based instructional leader to support teacher practice and student learning.*

student learning. Some jurisdictions allocate the managerial responsibilities to a site administrator who oversees clusters or families of schools. Participants suggested that the educational requirements for a site administrator position would not require the same focus on educational leadership but rather increased emphasis on a business/management background.

The need for distributed or shared leadership within schools was another key theme that emerged from the interviews and focus groups. The identification of master teachers within schools is critical. Recognizing the talents and strengths of teachers on staff and providing these teachers with opportunities to build expertise garners commitment to continuous school improvement. A cornerstone for developing and sustaining strong leadership within school districts is to identify teacher leaders early in their career and nurture their professional development needs. One applicable response to this statement includes redefining the role of department heads in high schools. Currently many department head positions have become clerical in nature, accounting for books or other administrative duties. Department heads could assume increased responsibility for improved instruction. They could provide clarity and consistency of course level expectations, become leaders in guiding moderated marking, and provide instructional support and mentorship to new teachers.

## **The Research Literature**

Reeves (2010) and Robinson (2011) clearly stated that within the influence of the school, the two variables that make a substantial difference in student achievement are: teacher quality and leadership quality. Countries and jurisdictions that celebrate high student achievement place value on the role of the principal, and such schools show evidence of how the principal's role influences the quality of teaching practice and levels of student learning. Effective principal leadership, as well as distributed in-school leadership such as provided by coaches, is a key ingredient of schools where continuous student achievement is the norm. When an entire school community pulls together great things can happen for student learning. Instructional leaders are adept at understanding data and guide their staff in interpreting results so that the best possible instructional decisions can be made for students. They empower teachers to work collaboratively to improve their skills and practice effective strategies as well as inspire students to achieve academically (Blase & Blase, 2003; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2012; Parks Le Tellier, 2006; Robinson, 2011; Ylimaki, 2013). In sum, much research has verified that a strong connection exists between effective leadership practices and high levels of student

*Countries and jurisdictions that celebrate high student achievement place value on the role of the principal, and such schools show evidence of how the principal's role influences the quality of teaching practice and levels of student learning.*

achievement (e.g., Fullan & Watson, 2000; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Reardon, 2011; Robinson, 2011; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Wildy & Louden, 2000).

McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) stated that effective principals build a critical mass of distributed leadership across the school in the present and therein affect the future. They endorse teacher growth and coherence among staff. Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, and Wahlstrom's (2004) meta-analysis on quantitative and qualitative research targeting school leadership concluded that, of all student-related learning variables, leadership is second only to instruction within the classroom. In their synthesis of these studies, Leithwood et al., found that leaders who influence student achievement set clear direction for a shared vision, develop the people, and restructure the school to include collaborative cultures, and strong ties with community and parents. The skill set of new competencies required to be a successful principal is complex. Fullan (2006) added to the list including that effective leaders invest in data-influenced decisions that impact success, and select resources to respond to needs indicated by student data.

Glaze et al. (2012) described characteristics of instructional leaders:

- Lead by example
- Set high expectations for all staff and students
- Develop and maintain a strong focus on instruction and learning
- Value and protect instructional time, eliminating distractions
- Provide opportunities for staff collaboration and job-embedded professional learning
- Frequently observe in the classroom in order to mentor and coach teachers
- Use data to inform schools decisions
- Mobilize resources to improve teaching and learning.

PEI's neighboring provinces are also making instructional leadership a priority. The newly created *Leadership Academy* in Nova Scotia offers a Diploma in Instructional Leadership. The academy provides a comprehensive definition for instructional leadership and provides a description of how principals demonstrate instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership ensures that all students have ongoing access to high quality teaching and learning to achieve curriculum outcomes. Principals demonstrate instructional leadership when they:

- Focus on improving the effectiveness of instruction to increase the achievement of all students
- Know when, how, and why to initiate and sustain instructional change

- Create a school-wide inclusive culture of high expectations for achievement and for rigor, relevance, and respect in the classroom
- Ensure instructional practices are appropriate to the context and grounded in research and the authentic assessment of student learning
- Close the knowing-doing gap by moving successfully from sound theory to effective practices
- Are knowledgeable about and deeply involved in the implementation of the instructional program of the school” (<http://www.nselc.ednet.ns.ca/welcome-to-the-nsila.html>)

Goslin (2012) worked for six consecutive weeks with teachers in a PEI elementary school. Teachers were released from their teaching duties for the purpose of working collaboratively together on a specific curricular area. Pre-service teachers fulfilled the classroom teaching role so teachers were freed from preparing for substitutes and could focus on their own professional learning. One of the four recommendations from this study identifies the need for re-training of principals in effective instructional approaches, curricular design, and assessment approaches. Goslin further explains that it is imperative for “system leaders to re-define the role of the school principal so as to allow these key individuals to do the important work of guiding and directing their teachers toward enhanced professional practices” (p. 32 ). Confident, capable leadership is critical if job-embedded professional development is to effect the changes cited in the literature.

Strong leaders who impact teacher practice and student achievement do not just appear but rather evolve from specific professional learning experiences that focus on purposeful capacity building that target improved student results. In-school leaders stay the course and focus on key priorities. They are skilled at managing the challenges of change and are grounded advocates promoting schools as places of learning. They care about student learning at the school level, the school board level, and across the province, and therefore are relentlessly committed to the belief that all PEI children can learn and have the right to learn.

### **Context**

PEI educational leaders have continued to grow and develop their skills over the past decade. The following are examples of three key initiatives that were purposefully developed to support this growth:

- In 1999, UPEI implemented a Master level degree in Educational Leadership and Learning. The option to pursue a Master of Education degree without leaving PEI has substantially increased levels of formal education attained by Island educators, in particular women, over the past decade.
- From 2000 –2005, a joint project between the DEECD and the PEITF offered a series of three-day and four-day leadership courses called the *Saskatchewan Leadership Modules*.

Participant selection drew from both educators in formal leadership positions as well as classroom teachers with aspirations to lead either in formal or informal ways.

- Coinciding with these opportunities, the DEECD offered a number of leadership programs for principals, vice-principals, and school leaders which focused on educational leadership. They were *IDEAS*, *Leader 1,2,3*, *LEAP*, and a six-day seminar sessions called *Creating the Future: Educational Leadership for Tomorrow's Schools*. All these programs focused on building leadership capacity, and provided leadership training for many PEI educators.

These initiatives encouraged leaders to continue to develop professionally and provided opportunities for leaders to network with others in similar roles. In The Task Force on Student Achievement Report (2005), Recommendation 11 targets the need for leadership training for administrators. It acknowledged that “leaders need to be more than managers...they need time to concentrate on teaching and learning in the school...and therefore recommended ongoing, appropriate, and updated training and support opportunities, including training in leadership, be provided for all administrators” (Kurial, 2005, p. 35). The call for the development of an *Instructional Leadership Program* for principals is echoed in *Charting the Way: Final Report of the Education Governance Commission* (2012). The Commission identifies an urgent need for increased professional learning for school principals as they are influential in creating time devoted to “student learning, curriculum instruction, assessment, and supervision” (p.46 ) within supportive learning environments to ensure learning opportunities for all students. Ongoing development of knowledge and skill, as well as the will of school leaders to be key learners in their schools, are essential to improving professional learning for teachers and to raising student achievement levels on PEI.

In recent years, the press for principals to become instructional leaders in their schools has increased as the commitment to provide all students with high quality instruction has become the expectation within all schools. Many PEI elementary school principals have attended courses at Lesley University (Cambridge, MA) in order to increase their capacity as instructional leaders and to support improving student literacy levels. Principals who attended the courses feel better equipped to support literacy coaches and have a clear understanding of how to focus successfully on literacy specifically, as well as how to increase effective practice within their schools. These principals learn to promote literacy instruction across all subject areas and give a clear message that all teachers are teachers of literacy. The principals who have attended Lesley University not only promote literacy within their schools, but are also engaged with teachers to keep track of students' progress, to ensure early intervention, and to facilitate job-embedded opportunities for teachers to share instructional strategies and continually develop effective strategies.

## Implications for Professional Learning

- DEECD solicit support to grow a coalition with UPEI and PEITF to provide a program for PEI principals and vice-principals that targets the specific knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices of school-based instructional leaders
- DEECD develop indicators of competencies in order to measure the skill sets of principals and leaders to improve teaching practice and student achievement
- School boards use the indicators of competencies when hiring principals and vice-principals who aspire to transition into leadership roles as principals
- Principals network within professional learning communities where school leaders can learn and work collaboratively to support each other
- Site management positions, perhaps organized by families of schools, be created to remove clerical and / or custodial responsibilities that interfere with principals' time spent being instructional leaders
- School board staff spend increased time in schools to support and monitor the growth and development of principals and provide meaningful feedback on their skill sets and competencies
- Begin early identification of people who manifest key leadership skills who demonstrate the desire to lead

## **Finding 4**

*Emphasize the importance of providing ongoing, specific, and timely feedback to teachers to support their practice, and to students during the formative assessment process while learning is taking place*

### **Feedback in the teaching process:**

A common message in focus groups, interviews and on surveys conveyed an inadequate amount of feedback and support received by teachers who are implementing new practices, and on teaching practice overall. On the *Professional Development Survey*, 10% of respondents agreed and 42% of respondents somewhat agreed that the number of days provided for [initial] in-service was sufficient to implement a new curriculum or resource.

However in a follow-up question, 34% of respondents disagreed and 24% of respondents somewhat disagreed that sufficient ongoing support is provided when implementing a new curriculum or resource in classrooms. Educators voiced the need for additional touch-points during the school year to ensure the fidelity of implementation of new curriculum and resources. Consistent, ongoing support is sought from specialists at the school boards and the DEECD. On one survey a respondent requested follow-up support in “real-time within classrooms and schools must be increased”.

In the *Professional Development Survey* 62% of respondents agree that the principal supports collaborative teams within schools. Forty-two percent of respondents agree that the principal is engaged in the work of collaborative teams. When asked if collaborative teams receive specific and timely feedback from the principal on instructional practices, only 18% were in agreement. Therefore, the amount of involvement of the principal in the work of collaborative teams declines as the expectation for involvement increases.

While principals are very supportive of teamwork, they have lower levels of engagement in the work of collaborative teams, and are less likely to provide timely and specific feedback on instructional practices. This trend was evident across school boards and grade configurations. At the Grades 7 – 9 levels, principal support was rated highest at 87.5%. It is a concern however, that within the same grade configuration, principals providing specific and timely feedback on instructional practice was rated lowest at 0%.

In another section of the *Professional Development Survey*, respondents rated twelve different types of professional development according to their impact on teaching and learning. *Working with coaches* was very highly rated as 52% of respondents agreed that it highly impacted teaching and learning. Across school boards, 41.7% (ESD), 57.1% (WSB) and 100% (CSLF) of respondents agreed that *Working with coaches* highly impacted teaching and learning. Report of impact had a lower rating in the Grades 7 – 9 school configuration (37.5%) and Grades 7 – 12 school configurations (0%). A lower rating of impact of coaching on teaching and learning is not surprising at the upper grade levels because the coaching model is not as prevalent or as developed in intermediate schools or high schools.

During interviews and focus groups, it was documented that the coaching model on PEI was highly valued as effective professional learning, embedded and ongoing in the daily work of teachers. Principals regarded coaches as significant instructional leaders who provide ongoing feedback to teachers about teacher practice. They are highly valued within schools as their impact on improving literacy teaching strategies of teachers and literacy achievement levels of students is paramount. Currently, coaches are shared between two or more schools. While appreciative of the coaching received, ideally, principals believe every school needs to have their own coach reside within their school. Sharratt and Fullan (2009) noticed that in Ontario schools showing significant improvement, literacy coaches worked in sync with principals, planning lessons with classroom teachers, modeling lessons, observing instruction, reviewing data, and leading collaborative marking of student work. Principals in these roles become more effective instructional leaders, and principals and coaches together were integral in developing effective strategies system-wide (Nidus & Sadder, 2011).

## Research Literature

Reeves (2010) applied the principles of the formative assessment process to the process of sound professional learning. Both provide specific and timely feedback to learners. Formative assessment is a process that provides specific and timely feedback to students. It involves reciprocity that influences subsequent actions by both the learner and the teacher to help teachers adjust their instruction and to help learners adjust their approach to learning. Similarly, the teacher as learner, benefits from specific and timely feedback provided through formative coaching. Nidus and Sadler (2011) described formative coaching as an approach that uses student work as the foundation for mentoring and professional development. In formative coaching, principals and coaches, along with the teacher, analyze student work to inform next steps for instruction. It is built on a deep analysis of teaching and learning for the purpose of informing professional practice to improve student achievement. Traditional evaluations of teachers tend to be infrequent, formal, and evaluative and can be compared to summative assessments given to students. Once-a-year teacher evaluations have negligible impact on teacher performance or student achievement.

The September issue of the educational journal, *Educational Leadership*, is dedicated to the topic of feedback for learning (2012). Editor, Marge Sherer (2012), explained that the purpose of the issue is to explain the difference between what feedback is and is not, as well as what it does for learners.

It is not a grade or number on a rating scale. The best feedback, the authors (in this issue) tell us, describes what the student has done and helps the student decide what to do *next*. Good feedback not only motivates, but also transfers a sense of agency to the learner.  
(p. 7)

In John Hattie's article, *Know Thy Impact* (2012) he reminded teachers that in order for feedback to be effective, teachers must know where students are at in the learning process, how they are progressing toward the learning outcome, and where their learning needs to go next.

### **Feedback in the student learning process:**

Participants in the interviews and focus groups discussed at length the challenges of shifting practice to a formative assessment process. Many referred to the Grade 9 Math Project as an exemplary example of using a formative assessment process to improve student achievement. Principals noted, that within their schools, Math teachers concurred with a veteran teacher who claimed,

This is the best PD I have had in 20 years because it focuses on curriculum, assessment and instructional strategies with the goal to improve student achievement in math. It is relevant and what was learned could be used the next day in class with students.

This recommendation speaks to our need to do formative assessment, and that it is essential for an effective reciprocal relationship to exist between teacher practice and student learning. A multitude of literature and resources have become available to support the practice of formative assessment, as the evidence is now without dispute of its impact on raising student achievement and narrowing the gap between learners. Participants in focus groups and interviews discussed the need of quality professional learning that focuses on student work as it is the anchor of meaningful professional learning. Teachers, principals, and coaches who collaboratively mark student work, put formative assessment at the heart of professional learning.

Black and Wiliam (1998) conducted a meta-analysis of over 250 sources and found widespread evidence to support formative assessment not only as a process that increases student achievement but also a process that reduces the achievement gap between low and high performance. Effective feedback to learners is non-evaluative and describes the particular qualities of student work or teacher practice, with advice on how to improve. Hattie and Timperley (2007) identified feedback as one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement. In particular, feedback is influential in learning if it provides feedback on the task, the process, or on self-regulation of commitment, control, and confidence. Least effective, is the kind of feedback most often used in classrooms, feedback about the self as a person. It is overused and has minimal impact on learning. Dean, Hubbell, Pitler and Stone (2012) built on the work of Robert Marzano's high-yield instructional strategies. They included the strategy of *setting objectives and providing feedback* as one of the key ways to build a positive classroom environment. Students in classrooms with a positive climate are more confident to be risk-takers in learning and are more willing to keep trying until they are successful. The link between formative assessment and self-assessment is inevitable, resulting in increased motivation and commitment by the learner. If learning happened by transmitting information, then *sit and get* forms of in-service would impact teaching and traditional lectures would impact student learning.

Research evidence confirms that teaching and learning are ineffective if the process is an arbitrary, passive exercise. Active learning of deep intensity that occurs over time, promotes reflection of one's own thinking, essential to good learning. Thinking about one's own thinking is called metacognition. It includes knowing what one knows, what one can do, and what one knows about one's own cognitive abilities (Flavell, 1976). In PISA 2009, students rated the usefulness of two metacognitive strategies: (1) *understanding and remembering text* and (2) *summarizing text*. PEI 15-year olds were significantly below the Canadian average in *understanding and remembering text* and *summarizing text*, and PEI was lowest when compared with other Canadian provinces. Awareness of both metacognitive strategies, *understanding and remembering text* and *summarizing text* have a strong correlation with reading proficiency. Females are consistently more aware of the positive effect of metacognitive strategies and

females consistently outperform males in levels of reading proficiency (Brochu, Gluszynski, Cartwright, 2012 ).

Reeves (2010) drew the connection of students and teachers both having the need for feedback:

Marzano (2007) found that the frequency of feedback from the teachers to students is directly related to gains in student performance, so Colvin (2008) has more recently documented that adults who aspire to professional levels of expertise require frequent observation, coaching, and feedback in order to make substantive improvement. (p. 45)

In conclusion, professional learning must increase the emphasis placed on the significance of quality feedback to all learners whether they are teachers learning a new instructional strategy or students learning a new outcome. Time committed for giving planned and spontaneous feedback to support the learner (Heritage, 2011), as well as knowing whether the feedback should focus on the task, process, self-regulation, or person is necessary in order to move learning forward (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Both time and know-how are essential aspects of giving meaningful feedback to both teachers and students. Currently, a scarcity of feedback is driven by lack of time allocated to classroom follow-up on professional learning such as the implementation of a new curriculum, and an absence of follow-up by teachers to each student's work. For students, it [feedback] means gaining information about how and what they understand and misunderstand, finding directions and strategies that they must take to improve, and seeking assistance to understand the goals of the learning. For teachers, it [feedback] means devising activities and questions that provide feedback to them about the effectiveness of their teaching, particularly so they know what to do next (Hattie & Timperley, 2007 ).

*Professional learning must increase the emphasis placed on the significance of quality feedback to all learners whether they are teachers learning a new instructional strategy or students learning a new outcome.*

Those involved in designing learning opportunities for teachers or students have a crucial role to play in moving learning forward, but only the learners receiving quality feedback in trusting environments can reflect on their own learning and move their learning forward.

### **Implications for Professional Learning**

- Feedback is one of the most potent influences on teaching practice resulting in student learning and student achievement. It is a critical part of professional learning process for teachers and is a crucial component of the formative assessment process for students
- Metacognition, the understanding of one's knowing, raises performance and results in learners being able to generalize effective learning strategies to novel situations

## Teachers

- Teachers as learners benefit from ongoing, specific, and timely feedback from principals and / or coaches about their classroom practice
- Follow-up and monitoring of curriculum and program implementation occurs on a consistent and ongoing basis within families of schools, schools, and classrooms
- Successful implementation of strategies is informed by the degree of success in student learning

## Students

- Student learning and achievement increases when students receive timely and meaningful feedback while their learning is in the process of developing
- The roles of both students and teachers are complementary in the formative learning process, and quality feedback is centerpiece in a supportive classroom
- Decision about how to differentiate instruction is informed by valid and ongoing use of the formative assessment process
- Determining which students form short-term flexible groups for specific instruction is decided through the formative assessment process

## **Finding 5**

*Foster the role of professional learning teams within collaborative environments that emphasize capacity building, shared responsibility, and collective commitment demonstrated through focused intentional actions*

Focus group participants and interviewees discussed their experiences and perceptions of collaborative teams. While valuing the opportunity to work together, they called for a more structured framework. Participants described a structure that includes instructional modeling, guidance, and feedback from coaches and specialists, and genuine support and increased hands-on participation from the principal. The structure must focus on student work and data, and the topics of professional discourse are around curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies. It was frequently noted that collaborative teams must have external expertise available to ensure that only high strategies are selected and that these are implemented consistently. One participant described the benefits of working in a collaborative team as:

Working together to understand and organize the curriculum, create lessons and common assessments, and problem-solve to determine what to do next. It encourages shared responsibility that leads to sideways accountability (among colleagues) and acceptance of shared responsibility for student learning.

*On the Professional Development Survey, 94% of school respondents indicated that their school colleagues belong to collaborative teams. While 62% of respondents agreed that principals*

support collaborative teams, just 42% of respondents agree that principals are engaged in collaborative teams. Only 18% of respondents agreed that the principal provided specific and timely feedback to collaborative teams. Overall, there is strong agreement that working in collaborative teams is a highly effective form of professional learning. Respondents were asked to indicate agreement about specific ways that working in collaborative teams support student learning. Teachers believe that important things get done when teachers work collectively and share the responsibility to improve student learning and student achievement.

A few of the ways respondents agreed that membership in collaborative teams helps them grow professionally are noteworthy:

- Sixty percent of school respondents agreed that their membership in collaborative teams supports a more trusting environment among teachers. Positive school cultures where all members are learners are contingent upon deep trust. Teachers feel safe to be open and reflective about their practice and willing to seek new ways to improve their teaching. Building positive relationships within the education system is based on respectful collegiality.
- Fifty-seven percent of school respondents agree that their membership in collaborative teams facilitates working with teachers who have the same teaching assignment. Research indicates that there is more difference in student learning between classrooms within schools than between schools (Willms, 2007). When teachers work in collaborative teams, consistency of teaching outcomes increase, effective instructional strategies are shared, common formative assessment practices are grounded in student work, and responsibility for every student to learn is shared by the school community.
- Forty percent of school respondents agreed that their membership in collaborative teams helps teachers in their school to respond when student do not learn. This statement must be a focus if we are to close the gap in student achievement. A collective commitment for all students to learn is imperative. Sharing important values shapes school cultures and helps schools monitor their daily decisions and actions.

School respondents indicated agreement that their membership in collaborative teams helps teachers in many other important ways: to deepen understanding of curriculum; to have the opportunity to work with teachers at the same level; to mark and examine student work with other teachers; to use formative assessments and analyze data; to differentiate instruction; and to have time for self-reflection of teaching practices. Respondents shared at length that the two school-based days allocated to working in collaborative teams were by far the most valuable days for professional learning and have the greatest impact on student learning. One respondent's comment summarizes the high value placed on collaborating in a professional learning community:

Collaboration holds significant potential to build capacity, grow expertise, and improve student results. Research supports this model but it must be guided with expertise. What

makes it valuable is the focus on student work and the subsequent discussions and decision-making about what strategies need to occur in the classroom to ensure all students learn. This is the focus of conversation. This changes practice. Collaboration needs allocated time if it is to make a difference.

### **The Research Literature**

While the concept of a *community of practice* is not new, Etienne Wenger (2006) formalized and defined the term community of practice as, “Groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (<http://www.ewenger.com/theory>). Currently, the concept is being adopted by business, government, and other sectors as a way to improve performance. Communities of practice provide a new approach that focuses on people within social structures to enable them to learn with and from each other. Three defining aspects of a community of practice include:

1. The Domain: Members share a commitment to a specific domain and strive to have collective competencies and to learn from each other;
2. The Community: Within the community, members participate in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. Members interact and learn from one another; and
3. The Practice: Members develop and sustain a collective practice based on current needs and work together to solve problems. Resources are shared to benefit a common purpose.

All communities of practice focus on learning but in the field of education, learning is not only a means to an end, it is the final desired outcome.

In the book, *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*, Dufour and Eaker (1998) popularized the term *Professional Learning Communities* and invented the trendy acronym PLCs. PLCs define collaborative teams as the basic structure of the professional learning community that share a common purpose. They explain that building a school’s capacity to learn is a collaborative effort, not an individual one, that the engine of improvement, growth, and renewal is one of collective inquiry in a continuous cycle of improvement (p. 26-28).

Many earlier educational researchers also recognized the powerful potential of professional communities of practice and called for teachers to work together rather than in isolation. Sergiovanni (1994) described collective practice within a professional learning community as it contributes to overall benefits of teaching and learning:

When practice is collective, successful teachers offer help to those that are having difficulties. Teachers with special insights share them with others. Success is not defined in terms of what happens in one classroom but what is happening in the school as a whole. Teachers, in other words, feel compelled to work together because of internally felt obligations (to students and one another). (p. 147)

*When practice is collective, successful teachers offer help to those that are having difficulties. Teachers with special insights share them with others. Success is not defined in terms of what happens in one classroom but what is happening in the school as a whole.*

Recent research supports the importance of building capacity in schools through collaboration. Glaze, Mattingley, and Levin (2012) believed that effective leaders recognize the importance of developing learning communities with their school where educators can share their knowledge, discuss challenges, and determine next steps in instruction (and) by ensuring that when teachers have the opportunity to collaborate and learn together, improved student achievement becomes the focus (p. 164).

Fullan (2011) cited building social capital as a key driver of educational change. Human capital is important but systemic change can only occur and be sustained upon the foundation of building expertise among all educators.

Professional Learning Communities serve as a collaborative, ongoing, focused process for professional learning. It helps educators learn new knowledge, apply new skills and engage in new practices. Leaders who lead this process provide collaborative teams with clarity, structures, resources and ongoing support. They create the conditions needed to help collaborative teams be effective.

School leaders must develop the clarity of purpose and priorities, structures, support, feedback and dispersed leadership essential to successful teams. They must be willing to be directive about the work that must be done by teams, but they must also accept the obligation of providing every team with what it needs to succeed in what it is being asked to do. (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p 86)

*Fullan (2011) told us, “Better performing countries did not set out to have a very good teacher here and another good one there. They were successful because they developed the entire teaching profession”*

Fullan (2011) told us, “Better performing countries did not set out to have a very good teacher here and another good one there. They were successful because they developed the entire teaching profession” (p. 10). He advised that in order to create systemic change the investment must be on development of social capital instead of solely focusing on the development of human capital; one teacher at a time. He

described social-based strategies as collaborative practices that “mobilize and customize knowledge in the system, enabling teachers to know what other teachers do and to learn from them (and) foster a trusted and respected profession” (p. 10).

There are many names for groups of teachers that collaborate together to grow their teaching practice for the purpose of improving student learning. Regardless of what collaborative teams are called, it is crucial to enable the collective efforts of colleagues working together for a common purpose. Collectively, teams positively influence teaching practice and, in turn, improve student learning and achievement.

It is essential that PEI teachers are provided with clear direction, ample time, and ongoing support by principals and others in leadership positions to ensure the development of high-quality collaborative teams.

### **Context**

For many years, PEI teachers have been actively involved in working and learning together for the benefit of their students. With the introduction of formalized school development and concurrently with the rise of information on the effectiveness of Communities of Practice such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the need for dedicated time for such meetings became increasingly apparent. Various methods to create dedicated time were attempted inconsistently across the province with varying degrees of success. These included after school time, time-banking, and synchronized prep times. In response to the need for dedicated time, Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development approved two days on the 2010-2011 School Calendar for Collaborative Team Planning / School Development days. The two additional days were also approved for the subsequent years. Implementation of these days varied among the 3 districts. The following briefly describes the implementation in each district.

### **Western School Board (WSB)**

In the WSB, these days were used to complete work in support of school development goals. Effective collaborative team work was recognized as a strategy to actualize school development goals. Also, as in the Eastern School District (ESD), WSB principals expressed the concern that allowing teachers to haphazardly meet in teams across families of schools and/or across the district could potentially compromise school development initiatives. As a result, it was agreed that teachers could meet with teams outside of school development initiatives only with their principal’s approval. Teachers, as per the Memorandum, were still welcome to participate in self-directed learning opportunities and/or team meetings such as Music Teachers’ Association, on the Provincial Professional Learning Day.

A Summary of the WSB Collaborative Teams:

- Collaborative teams evolved to be much more focused on student work and student results

- Teams formed for specific purposes and met for a period of time, completed a given task and then disbanded. Purpose was paramount
- Reporting was completed through the school development report; some schools also passed on regular reports of team meetings
- Cross-school board initiatives in math and writing proved to be very successful

### **Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF)**

At the CSLF, significant energy and discussion was invested into promoting the value of collaborative work amongst teachers. They held the belief that solid collaborative teams must collaborate on specific issues, such as student achievement. Upon reflection, CSLF realized that they already had grassroots collaborative teams working to improve student achievement. The teams were focused on an inquiry-based model with one key question in mind: what strategies should we use to improve the learning of each and every student? Those strategies were then tested to see what impact they were having on student achievement. Data served as starting points for professional discussions and grounded the discussions in student learning. Benchmark assessments in literacy at the elementary level were used to develop student and class profiles and *the Primary Literacy Assessments* at the end of Grade 3 were used to inform instruction. The two allocated days were used for these purposes.

### **Eastern School District (ESD)**

In the ESD, principals were informed of the Collaborative Team Structure. This structure was designed to support the creation and growth of collaborative working groups so all teachers would have opportunity to work on priorities identified in School Development initiatives. The proposed structure would allow schools with similar themes to work together as well as opportunities for provincial collaborative work. ESD principals expressed the concern that allowing teachers to create teams across families of schools and/or across the district could potentially compromise school development initiatives. As a result, it was agreed that teachers could create teams outside of school development initiatives only with their principal's approval. Proposed Collaborative Teams were submitted for approval by the ESD School Development Department. The ESD created an online database using PBWorks to document each team's membership, goal(s), meetings, and results. The ESD provided PBWorks training to team facilitators in May 2011. With the support of principals, teams evolved to allow teachers to collaborate on teaching and learning goals connected to their teaching assignment. Therefore, specialist teams (e.g., counsellors, music teachers, teacher librarians, physical educators), or high school math teachers could meet together. Many of these teachers feel that the collaborative structure has provided the best professional development they have experienced to date.

### **Implications for Profession Learning:**

- Builds content and pedagogical expertise
- Discourages teacher isolation and encourages collective practice
- Embeds ongoing professional learning directly linked to the daily work of teachers
- Provides time for reflection on teaching so that it can be improved continually
- Necessitates ongoing feedback and involvement of the principal and vice principal
- Builds distributed leadership
- Creates a shared responsibility for all students to learn

### ***Finding 6***

*Advise immediate restructuring of the school calendar to enable professional learning for teachers to be ongoing, sustained, purposeful, and embedded*

During focus groups and interviews, educators offered many suggestions regarding how to improve the structure of the school calendar to become conducive to what is known to be effective professional learning. Many interviewees stated that during previous formal reviews, the calendar had been tinkered with rather than bringing forth wholesale change. Participants conveyed the belief that the School Calendar Committee members, responsible for setting the school calendars for the next five years, have a moral obligation to seize the opportunity presented in conducting this review of professional learning to make courageous changes. One individual captured the essence of these thoughts saying, “The school calendar is the white elephant and we need to take this opportunity to make positive change that is beneficial to improving teachers’ skills and making significant gains in student learning.” Other interviewees hold the DEECD responsible to honor the collective voices calling for systemic change. Some popular suggestions included:

1. Teachers begin during the last week of August to receive necessary curriculum support prior to the start of the school year with students
2. Embed days intermittently – resituate current allotment of professional learning days and increase the number of professional learning days so collaborative teaming within and across schools is the norm and to dispel the need for pull-out in-service
3. Reduce the number of instructional days for students with the expectation for teachers to be professional and accountable for their professional learning
4. Measure the success by examining the impact on student learning and student achievement
5. Restructure professional learning days to occur on school days by not having students at school so that substitutes are not required for teachers to participate in ongoing professional learning

In the *Professional Development Survey*, only 14% of school respondents strongly agree that the current placement of professional development days is responsive to the day-to-day professional learning needs of teachers. Forty percent of school respondents disagreed that the current structure allows for ongoing and meaningful teacher collaboration. This disagreement was unanimous across all school boards and school configurations except for high school where 43% agreed that the current structure allows for ongoing and meaningful teacher collaboration. This point is noteworthy as high school teachers have a daily 73 minute prep period. In the open-ended questions, one response stated that:

Professional development is key to transitioning to 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning. It is time to put theory into action and in order to do this teachers are going to have to change their practice significantly. Teachers are going to need a lot of time to reflect on their practice and as such, we should adopt a model of professional development that puts aside time each month for teachers to meet in professional learning communities. Professional development should not be an event that happens in isolation of what is happening in the classroom.

### **The Research Literature**

Over the past decade, the research literature presents a consistent and compelling argument to embed intentional, ongoing, and systemic professional learning opportunities for educators. The goal is to improve student achievement. It is urgent to move forward with change in how we structure the school calendar and how we regard effective teaching. The number of hours of seat time for students does not correlate to the amount of student learning. The research is clear that it is the quality of teaching that has the greatest impact on student learning and student achievement.

In *Charting the Way: Final Report of the Governance Education Commission*, the relationship between quality teaching and student achievement is explicit:

Professional learning plays a critical role in ensuring teachers' professional practice meets public demands and expectations. The bottom line is improved student learning. Quality teachers have a greater influence on student learning than any other school-based factor. It is essential that professional learning efforts for teachers be system wide and clearly aligned with curriculum and assessment. Good teaching matters. It matters more than anything else. (St.Jean & Whelan 2012, p44.)

*It is urgent to move forward with change in how we structure the school calendar and how we regard effective teaching. The number of hours of seat time for students does not correlate to the amount of student learning.*

The essential need to embed ample time for teachers to improve their craft through effective professional learning is supported throughout the research literature (Fullan, 2011; Gusky, 2000; Reeves, 2010) and has been adopted in high-performing countries and jurisdictions (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Sahlberg, 2012). Improving system performance is reliant upon improving the learning experiences of students in classrooms. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) completed the most comprehensive review and analysis of what research has determined to be effective professional learning that improves practice and student achievement. The report unequivocally uncovers how high-achieving and continually improving nations have made substantial investments into the professional learning of teachers during the past two decades. Nations performing well on international assessments benefit from effective professional learning. While there are other factors to consider across countries, Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) reveal that the investment in professional learning for teachers has made a significant contribution to their students' ongoing successes.

One key difference is the amount of time Prince Edward Island teachers, and in fact those in Canada, spend teaching students with “significantly less time to plan and learn together and to develop high quality curriculum and instruction than teachers in other nations” (Sahlberg, 2012). PEI teachers, similar to many teachers in the United States, spend over 80 percent of their school time face-to-face with students engaged in classroom instruction. By comparison, teachers from nations such as Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Norway, and Switzerland as well as in Asian countries such as Japan, Singapore, and South Korea spend about 60 % of their school time with students. This amounts to about 15 to 20 hours per week spent on work such as lesson preparation, marking student work, meeting with students and parents, and collaborating professionally with colleagues (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

In his book “*Finnish Lessons*”, Sahlberg (2012) explains the paradox of “teach less, learn more”. Contrary to what one might expect, “there appears to be very little correlation between intended instructional hours in public education and resulting

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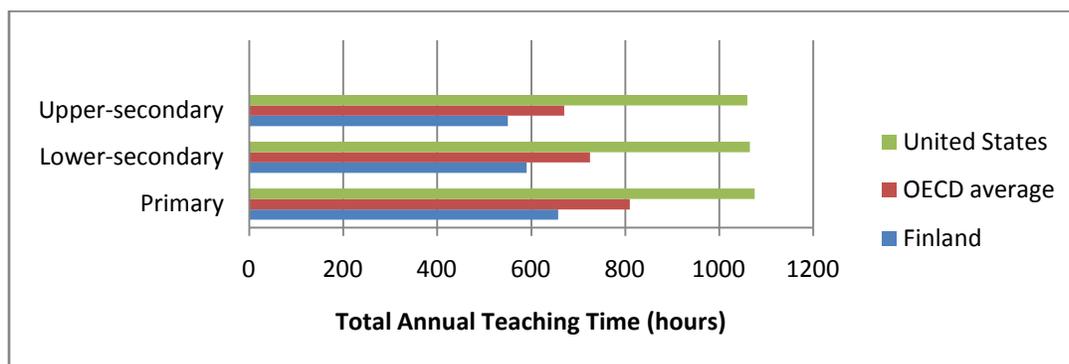
*PEI teachers, similar to many teachers in the United States, spend over 80 percent of their school time face-to-face with students engaged in classroom instruction. By comparison, teachers from nations such as Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Norway, and Switzerland as well as in Asian countries such as Japan, Singapore, and South Korea spend about 60 % of their school time with students.*

student performance, as assessed by PISA study” (p. 63). High-performing nations on PISA rely less on teaching time as a driver of student learning. Rather, these nations with lower teaching hours provide teachers with increased opportunities to engage in school improvement goals, co-plan high quality lessons with colleagues, reflect on their practice, contribute to professional learning communities, work with the community, and pursue personal professional learning.

Table 2 (below) shows the average teaching hours per school year in Finland, the United States, and in OECD countries. While Sahlberg does not have comparable data for Canada, he estimates that Canadian teachers teach approximately 900 hours annually. This estimate closely reflects the average number of teaching hours per school year in PEI. PISA results clearly indicate that more hours of instruction in the United States does not result in increased student learning. Also, fewer hours of instruction in Finland provide the necessary time for teachers to work collaboratively to improve student learning.

Table 2

*Average Net Teaching Hours per School Year in Finland, the United States, and in OECD Countries*



Sahlberg (2012, p. 91)

A number of jurisdictions within Canada embed professional learning time for educators. For example, the Catholic School District in Fort McMurray allocates every second Friday to professional learning and boasts high student achievement in Alberta provincial assessments. This is remarkable as 15-year old students from Alberta are highly competitive on PISA when compared to 15-year-old students of high-performing nations throughout the world. In Fort McMurray, teachers work diligently to improve their teaching skills. Having *Professional Learning Fridays (PLF)* every second week diminishes the necessity to pull teachers out of classrooms to receive in-servicing on new curricula or programs, enables ongoing collaboration within schools and across the school district, and provides time for teachers to hone pertinent professional learning goals to best serve their students. Governments invest in professional

learning and embed time into teachers' work hours for ongoing teacher development. Thus, these teachers have much more non-classroom time to learn together through collaborative planning, lesson study, peer observations, and action research. Ultimately, they grow their collective craft to ensure students learn and achieve.

The aforementioned models have embedded professional learning time within the workdays of teachers with fidelity of purpose and intentional commitment to continual improvement to student learning and student achievement. It is strongly recommended that educational leaders in PEI make significant structural changes to the school calendar with a relentless tenacity for improving the education system for our children.

### **Context**

The 2003 Professional Development / In-Service Review Committee reviewed practices in the area of professional development on PEI. They suggested 17 recommendations focused on increasing effectiveness and cost efficiency of in-servicing of curriculum and other professional development practices that support student learning. The report identified the school calendar as a systemic issue and major inhibitor to implementing many of the strategies that we know contribute to effective PD for educators. This report brought into question the placement of PD days, the lack of time teachers have to work together during the school day, and the structure of our school year. Recommendation 3 of this report recommends the exploration of existing and alternative ways to access time for ongoing professional development.

The rigidity of the allocated PD days within the current model of a school calendar is not conducive for teachers and schools to accommodate when, what, where, and how to meet their professional learning needs necessary to serve students. Professional learning needs must be driven by student learning needs. In order for this to happen, the school calendar must be restructured to embed professional collaboration on focused instruction and intervention for each and every student when needed by the student. Dedicated time for effective professional learning is a must as we move forward.

### **Implications for Professional Learning**

- Allocated time for professional learning be inserted into the work days of teachers
- Allocated time for deep study of the subject matter teachers will be teaching including curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies

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- Time to work collaboratively within schools and across the district to build local capacity
- Time so all teachers have equal opportunities to grow teacher excellence and extend their professional skills
- Time to ensure all students have equal opportunities to benefit from teachers knowing individual students and to gauge their learning needs
- Ample time for follow-up to curriculum in-service without pulling teachers out of classrooms

## **Finding 7**

*Reduce significantly the use of the pull-out model of professional in-service and move toward adopting a school-based model*

Focus group and interview participants shared concerns about the issues surrounding the pull-out model of professional development, currently the means of professional development delivery on PEI. Educators discussed the challenge of preparing for student learning to continue while attending an off-site in-service session. Significant preparation time is spent by teachers prior to leaving students with substitute teachers for the day. In attempts to have the flow of learning to continue in their absence the following preparations are made: specific instructions are left regarding school routines and expectations, the goals of lessons are specified, the instructional strategies to be used are explained, the specific needs of some students are described, the resources needed for lessons are prepared, and additional notes regarding duty, money collection, and other administrative details are recorded. While teachers are attending the in-service day, their attention is divided between taking advantage of the opportunity for professional learning and wondering how their students are getting along in their absence. Also, for some teachers, there is significant travel time required to attend these off-site sessions. Upon returning to the school, teachers must try to determine where students are at in their learning, pick up the lessons from notes left from the substitute, review and re-teach parts of the lesson, touch base with others as need be, including parents. This substantial increase in teacher workload necessary to partake in a pull-out model of curriculum in-service unfortunately has minimal return on improving instruction, student learning, or student achievement. It provides at best, a very superficial introduction to new curriculum or programs.

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In the Professional Development Survey 20% of respondents rated professional development as very effective when it is offered on weekdays when students are in school (substitute provided) while 74% of respondents rated professional development very effective on weekdays when student are not in school. Anecdotal comments explained how on days when students are not in school, teachers can focus on the professional learning without being distracted by thoughts of what is happening in the classroom. Also, 70% of respondents either agreed or somewhat agreed that being away from the classroom to attend in-service interferes with teaching and learning. Agreement was consistent across all school boards and all school configurations.

Over the past decade, the use of the pull-out model has steadily increased on PEI. Currently, a maximum of seventy-five teachers are permitted to be pulled out of the classroom on any given day for in-service. The model necessitates the use of many substitute teachers throughout the school year. While many substitute teachers are well qualified, it is very difficult to find teachers who are skilled in science and math at the high school level. It is also extremely challenging to satisfy the substitute requirements for French teachers in French Immersion classes or French First Language classes. Many schools have their preferred list of substitutes who are familiar with school routines, teacher assignments, and the students.

At present, there are a number of negotiated days for teacher professional development in which schools are closed for instructional purposes but teachers meet together for learning opportunities. These are two days in September prior to the start of the school year, two days for the PEITF Annual Convention, two days for school-based staff development, and one day for school-based board work, such as parent teacher interviews, etc. School respondents to the Professional Development Survey repeatedly expressed the value of the two school-based professional learning days. The PEITF Annual Convention was the least highly rated professional development opportunity that had an impact on teachers' professional learning. The timing of the convention was one of the reasons given for its rating as well as the size of the convention which leaves little opportunity for collaborative work. The challenge to work collaboratively with colleagues within the current structure of the school calendar poses a systemic barrier to building effective professional communities of educators. One response reflected the comments of many. "...the challenge is to provide a framework that allows the structure to be flexible – one that enables regular collaboration of groups of teachers and supports teachers to visit other teachers."

This would mean developing a structure in which there is good flow of instructional days for students and teachers to get on with the important work of learning but to combine that with opportunities for teaching learning in a collaborative environment without students present. That type of framework

*To create a learning environment conducive to both students and teachers requires a far lesser dependence on the present pull-out-model of in-servicing as well as a restructured school calendar.*

could very well impact the placement of the negotiated days for professional development which reinforces the need to restructure the school calendar with both the students and teachers in mind. To create a learning environment conducive to both students and teachers requires a far lesser dependence on the present pull-out-model of in-servicing as well as a restructured school calendar.

### **Research Literature**

The stand-alone one or two days allocated to professional development for teachers is typical of the pull-out model of in-service. The workshop mode of delivery has garnered many negative nicknames such as *drive-by PD*, *sit and get*, and *spray and pray*. Nonetheless, well-designed professional learning programs have the potential to extend local teaching capacity and improve student achievement. Currently, PD Days are typically passive events viewed as occurring on 5 or 6 days of the school year. Feedback from the *PEI Perspective 2012* echoes the clear message voiced in the research literature that fragmented, disconnected professional learning has no positive impact on teaching or learning. Topics of one-day workshops become regarded as educational bandwagons or passing fads that will disappear with the next fad. Guskey (2000) outlined the 3 defining characteristics of professional development:

1. It is an intentional process. True professional learning is a process, not an event. It is based upon worthwhile goals that are clearly articulated and measureable in improvements in practice and student learning.
2. It is an ongoing process. Education is a dynamic profession and knowledge of the teaching / learning process continues to grow and expand as we learn more about how people learn and how to create positive environments for all to learn in schools.
3. It is a systemic process. Professional learning must help teachers fully understand the curricula and instructional practices they are trying to implement. It is imperative to provide the ongoing organizational support to optimize teacher success and fidelity of the innovation.

Therefore, clear organizational support and ongoing individual support is critical if educators are to shift their current thinking about PD and to think about professional learning in a new way.

Finally, scattered days within a school calendar will not achieve the anticipated benefits of effective teacher professional learning or student achievement. Periodic workshops do not provide the intensity and duration necessary for “serious, cumulative study of the given subject matter or for trying out ideas in the classroom and reflecting on the results” (Darling-Hammond et al, 2009, p.9). The aforementioned study cites evidence indicating that fewer than 14 hours of professional learning show no effect on student learning while 30 – 100 hours spread over six to 12 months show a positive and significant effect on student achievement gains.

Therefore, it is urgent that PEI educators significantly reduce the number of days used for the pull-out model of in-service. There will be times when this mode of learning remains the best option, such as when a major educational concept needs to be communicated to all educators or a specific group of educators across PEI. The decision to use the pull-out model must adhere to

what we know about effective professional learning. The purpose must be clear, the duration and intensity of the days must be significant, and teachers must be provided with time to return to their classrooms, try out new content or approaches, then reassemble with colleagues to reflect and share. Otherwise, the cost-benefit of episodic workshops is low. It disrespects teachers' time and wastes viable opportunities for professional learning.

### **Context**

The 2003 Professional Development / In-Service Review Committee reviewed practices in the area of professional development on PEI. They suggested 15 recommendations focused on increasing effectiveness and cost efficiency of in-servicing of curriculum and other professional development practices that support student learning. The report clearly recommended finding alternatives to the two-day pull-out model of in-service used for new curriculum implementation to alleviate the stress on the system. Concerns regarding the pull-out model included the disruption to the continuity of instruction and the consequent negative effect on student learning. Almost a decade later, educators are still strongly voicing concerns about the pull-out model of in-service. Not only does it interrupt teaching and learning but research provides abundant evidence that it is an inefficient and ineffective model of professional learning. Furthermore, through consultations with educators and discussions with students, Recommendation #23 in *Charting the Way: Final Report on the Education Governance Commission*, highlighted the detrimental effect of “a-day-here-and-a-day-there” (St. Jean & Whelan, 2012, p. 44) mode of in-service. It goes on to say, “The extensive use of substitute teachers to enable teacher in-servicing and other system-generated activities, undermines learning for students and causes anxiety, stress, and weakened performance” (p. 44 ).

This recommendation is key because it emphasizes the urgency for a fundamental shift away from using in-service days for the purpose of providing an overview of a new curriculum or program and a move to focusing the days on follow-up, support, and monitoring of the implementation of new curricula and programs within schools and classrooms. It is clear that the most effective professional learning for teachers occurs during class time with students, including before and after instruction. An important goal of the DEECD's new professional learning website will be to house overviews and descriptions of curricula and programs to provide a current and ongoing resource available to teachers at all times. Teachers can refer to this resource to review the meaning of outcomes, hone new strategies, or to direct a substitute or support a teacher with a new assignment. It will convey a common message to all educators regarding curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies. Rather than spending valuable time transmitting a traditional overview of the layout of curriculum and resources during in-service, subsequent face-to-face in-services will focus on increasing content skills and competencies of teachers and to practice in real-time high impact strategies to improve student learning. While the continuance of the pull-out model may be required in special circumstances such as committee work or marking boards, overall usage must be diminished immediately.

**Implications for Professional Learning:**

- Professional literature correlates with teachers beliefs about the pull-out model of in-service
- Avoid pull-out model of in-service for less than 30 hours of professional learning
- Explore alternate means of in-service for implementation of new curricula or instructional strategies when fewer than 30 hours required
- Adopt the use of videos to introduce an overview of new curricula
- Place time and emphasis of professional learning to support teachers' understanding of curriculum, to adopt and implement instructional strategies, and to practice formative assessment and differentiation within classrooms
- Shift from an off-site to in-school and across families of schools professional learning model

## Conclusion

The findings from this research project, along with the growing body of literature on effective professional development will lead to the development of a renewed model of professional development for educators on PEI. The literature is clear about what effective learning looks like. It is intensive and sustained over time. It responds to the needs of teachers, and provides opportunities to learn, try-out, reflect, and refine daily practice. Powerful professional learning for teachers can ignite systemic capacity by transforming teacher practice and can have a tremendous impact on improved student learning and achievement.

*Powerful professional learning for teachers can ignite systemic capacity by transforming teacher practice and can have a tremendous impact on improved student learning and achievement.*

A synthesis of research from Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning organization (McREL) (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005) solidifies the union between high-quality, effective professional learning and improved student learning and achievement. The synthesis of 37 major research studies found that practice is impacted when professional learning:

- Is sustained over time
- Focuses on specific content and/or instructional strategies
- Involves teachers within collaborative learning environments
- Aligns with clear, specific goals
- Provides teachers with time and learning opportunities
- Embeds in-classroom support when implementing new knowledge, skills, and practices

## Learning Forward

The OECD report, *Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Lessons from Around the World (2012)* concluded that there have been many attempts in many countries to reform curriculum, assessment, and instruction with the objective to better prepare youth for future learning and life. Nations organize the skills they believe students need to be successful into a curriculum frameworks to guide instruction. However, throughout this report, it is emphasized that hinging on students gaining the critical skills is the need for teachers to be: (1) competent in the subjects they teach, (2) develop a deep understanding of assessment and capacity to use data to inform decision making, and (3) possess a broad scope of instructional strategies that are combined or modified to accommodate individual learning differences. “Such strategies should include direct, whole-group teaching, guided discovery, group work, and the facilitation of self-study and individual discovery...and personalized feedback” (p. 52). For teachers, the significant gains are realized by working together in networks of professional communities within and beyond the organization, including the act of mentoring other teachers. Finally, the report highlights the need for teachers’ competency using technology as an effective teaching tool, to access current resources, and as an efficient mechanism to monitor student learning. Overall, teachers must understand how learning happens.

It is clear, that unless educational reform reaches the classroom setting, the heart of teaching and learning, no change in practice occurs. Professional learning must focus on improving the act of teaching and the effectiveness of leaders. Targeting a specific focus of student learning priorities enables teachers to practice new strategies and learn from their colleagues. This focus also provides time for those in leadership roles to implement and embed time for teachers to collaborate with colleagues, and to embellish their pedagogical knowledge and expertise.

Fullan (2011) provided substantial evidence for

policymakers to consider. His research verified that collaborative groups accelerate teacher performance. He concluded, “You actually cannot get whole system reform without peer power” (p. 12).

*It is clear, that unless educational reform reaches the classroom setting, the heart of teaching and learning, no change in practice occurs.*

Barber (2007) coined the idea of a creating a “guiding coalition” (p 8) to support large-scale reform. Represented within the coalition are key leaders from all levels. The coalition communicates the key messages and strategies in common language. Membership in the coalition includes political leaders and leaders from the educational community. Their message speaks of solidarity and reciprocity. The PEI political and educational community must sing *from the same song sheet*, so to speak. This chorus of people must include students, parents, teachers, principals, vice principals, school boards, DEECD employees, PEITF, UPEI Faculty of Education, and other postsecondary leaders in education. Collectively, we can nurture collaborative cultures that grow educator competence and commitment so that significant change comes to fruition, and is supported in classrooms, thereby raising expectations for all.

Mourshed, Chinezi and Barber (2010) released the report *How the World’s Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better*. They synthesized 20 educational systems to determine the critical factors that are conducive to continuous improvement. In this document, the authors provided educational policymakers with a compass to determine the specific needs of a jurisdiction by analyzing the educational systems behind the PISA results. Attaining the goals of increased student outcomes does not demand the identical path as systems are at various entry points. While there is no set path, there are strong commonalities shared by nations whose students excel and by those whose journeys show continual improvement:

- Dramatic change can occur in six years or less
- More emphasis must be placed on improving instruction than on changing the content
- Systems can neither improve by simply doing more of the same or by trying to replicate systems at significant different levels of performance
- Balance of pressure and support, mandates and persuasion
- Interventions that improve instruction, assessment, data systems, policy development, revision of curriculum, and appropriate remuneration
- Collaborative practice becomes the mainstay for improving practice and increasing a lateral accountability among teachers to improve student learning, building social capital rather than individual capital

- Leaders follow consistent messaging and lay the foundation for the improvement journey
- Stability of leadership is critical. And, ensuring succession planning with the right people to go forward provides long-term continuity.

This synopsis indicates that PEI is not only on the right path, but moving toward the development and implementation of a renewed model of professional learning based on the findings in this report will propel the education system of PEI in a path of significant and continuous improvement. It is important to adopt a renewed model of professional learning in consideration of a growing body of research that “provides support for teacher professional learning - one based on evidence about the kinds of experiences that appear to build teacher capacity and catalyze transformations in teaching practice resulting in improved student outcomes” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p. 27).

## SECTION 3: PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

### *The Seven Principles of Effective Professional Learning*

There is congruence within the broad scope of the research literature about principles that guide effective professional learning that positively impacts student learning and student achievement. Throughout the past decade, Guskey (2000) opened the field for rigorous research that confirms the undeviating union between professional learning for teachers and improved student achievement. The provision of quality professional learning experiences is the essential link to improvement in teacher practice and student outcomes.

The model proposed in this report is grounded in that research on effective professional development and is based on the following principles which will underpin the delivery of high quality professional learning to improve student outcomes, and applies to all levels of the system – schools, school boards, the DEECD. The seven principles below are taken from work done by the Victorian (Australia) government education system, within the Department of Education and Training (2005) as part of its reform agenda to build capacity of its educators (see Figure 1).

#### *Principle 1: Professional learning is focused on student outcomes (not just individual teacher needs)*

Professional learning is aimed at maximizing student learning so that all students meet their learning potential. Using multiple sources of student data, teacher professional learning should be guided by analyses of the differences between goals and outcomes for student learning and student performance. Such analyses will define what teachers need to learn, make teacher professional learning student-centered, and increase public confidence in the use of resources for professional learning. Student outcomes will improve if professional learning increases teachers' understanding of how to represent and convey content in meaningful ways.

#### *Principle 2: Professional learning is focused on and embedded in teacher practice (not disconnected from the school)*

Teacher professional learning should be school-based and woven into the day-to-day work of teaching. The most potent and meaningful learning experiences occur in the school, where teachers can address the immediate problems and challenges of learning and teaching. Being situated close to the classroom and colleagues enables teachers to work together to identify problems, find solutions, and apply them.

This does not imply that beyond school learning experiences, such as postgraduate studies or attendance at workshops, in-services, and seminars are not valuable. External learning opportunities can complement school-based professional learning. Professional learning should be anchored in the school-based work of teachers but enriched with ideas and knowledge sourced from outside the school.

***Principle 3: Professional learning is informed by the best available research on effective learning and teaching (not just limited to what they currently know)***

Teacher professional learning that improves the learning of all students prepares teachers to apply research to decision-making. Successful professional learning programs immerse teachers in the content they teach and provide research-based knowledge about how students learn that content.

Results of research need to be made accessible to teachers to enable the expansion and elaboration of their professional knowledge base. This research should include information on effective teaching and learning, how students learn particular content, classroom management, assessment, and curriculum.

***Principle 4: Professional learning is collaborative, involving reflection and feedback (not just individual inquiry)***

Professional learning opportunities should relate to individual teacher needs but be organised around collaborative problem-solving. Organised in teams, educators take collective responsibility for solving the complex problems of teaching and learning and improving student outcomes. Teams share knowledge, expertise and experience in order to deepen learning and to foster a mutual understanding of effective classroom practice. Teams create the conditions for collegial reflection and assist in spreading workloads evenly.

Constructive, objective, and actionable feedback on teacher practice is important for targeting areas where a teacher needs to improve his or her performance and for the purpose of designing professional learning opportunities that address areas for improvement.

Competent, experienced teachers, school leaders, or an expert sourced from outside the school can also provide teachers with feedback on their professional learning. For example, feedback from a trusted peer on the operation of a professional learning team, a coaching pair, or a mentoring partnership is useful to gauge the effectiveness of such strategies.

***Principle 5: Professional learning is evidence based and data driven (not anecdotal) to guide improvement and to measure impact***

Data from different sources can be used to determine the content of teachers' professional learning and to design and monitor the impact of professional learning programs.

Evidence, rather than anecdotes, needs to be collected regularly at the student, teacher, and school levels to help define student learning and the professional growth of teachers. Student journals, for example, can be analysed to identify areas where students are struggling or how students are progressing during set periods of time.

Data can be used to measure and improve the impact of professional learning. Formative evaluations allow teachers to make mid-program refinements and corrections, while summative evaluations measure the effectiveness of professional learning activities and their impact on teacher practice, knowledge, and student learning.

***Principle 6: Professional learning is ongoing, supported and fully integrated into the culture and operations of the system – schools, school boards, and the department (not episodic and fragmented)***

Professional learning needs to be ongoing, long-term and sustained. Significant and long-term change in teacher practice does not occur in a matter of weeks but more often over months or years. Learning by doing, reflecting and refining is a long, multi-stage process.

Teachers need support for their professional learning. Solving complex problems and implementing innovative practices may require outside expertise and additional resources. Encouragement and recognition is also crucial to maintaining effort since finding new ways to do things is difficult and often painful. Sustained, immediate, and quality support is essential to ensure improvement in schools and classrooms, particularly when unexpected problems arise.

Supported, ongoing professional learning must be embedded in the system. School boards and the DEECD staff have a responsibility to model good practice by participating in ongoing professional learning.

***Principle 7: Professional learning is an individual and collective responsibility at all levels of the system (not just the school level) and it is not optional***

Professional learning should occur at all levels of the system. It is an individual and collective responsibility encompassing schools, school boards, and the DEECD. For teachers and school leaders, professional learning needs to be linked to schools' development goals. These goals in turn need to reflect the needs and aims of the school boards and the DEECD.

Professional learning is inextricably linked to enhancing the capacity of the system as a whole. School boards, the DEECD, and other key stakeholder groups should work collaboratively to determine strategies for improvement and share best professional learning practices to drive school and system-wide improvement.

**Figure 1:** The Core Features of Effective Professional Learning



## SECTION 4: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING MODEL FOR THE PEI SCHOOL SYSTEM

*“Change will not come if we wait for another person, or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek” (Barack Obama).*

### **Overview**

The importance of effective teaching in global, knowledge-based societies cannot be overstated. In a world rich in information and communication technologies, and characterized by complex social, economic, cultural, and political interactions, young people need high level problem-solving skills and an ability to apply knowledge to new and different situations. The extent to which students develop these capacities will depend in large part on the quality of teaching they experience at school.

But teaching is complex and challenging work. Teachers need in-depth knowledge of the subject areas they teach, how students learn, and an understanding of classroom environments that optimize learning. They need access to ongoing, high-quality professional learning opportunities to develop and enhance the necessary skills and understandings. Like the members of other professions, teachers need to be continuous learners who see their own learning as being fundamental to membership in the profession rather than something that is incidental or optional.

Investing in professional learning is the key to ensuring that schools become learning communities where teachers work together, learn from each other, and share best practices on effective teaching and learning. It is only through the collective work of teachers and by creating a shared professional knowledge that sustained school improvement to increase student learning and achievement will be secured.

*It is only through the work of teachers and by creating a shared professional knowledge that sustained school improvement to increase student learning and achievement will be secured.*

### **PEI Context**

Within the PEI school system, much positive action has been taken to invest in the professional learning of teachers. There are many pockets of exemplary practices happening in every school across PEI. However, findings from the *PEI Perspective 2012* clearly indicated that more work has to be done to encourage and support teachers at the school level. To make this happen, there is not so much a need to impose a new structure of professional learning on the system, but rather to take actions that will allow effective practices to grow and flourish in a renewed model of professional learning.

It is clear that there is a collective will from the education partners to act in this area, rather than conduct more studies or promote further discussion. The findings from the *PEI Perspective 2012* clearly provide direction to such a renewed model. A detailed description of each finding is found earlier in this report, but for the purpose of this section, these findings are reiterated below:

- **Finding 1:** Align, adhere to, and support the student learning and achievement goals and priorities informed by consultation with the education community
- **Finding 2:** Provide continuous improvement in knowledge, skills, practices, and processes to strengthen teaching excellence because quality teaching is the most influential factor related to student learning
- **Finding 3:** Develop and strengthen the instructional leadership skills of principals and other in-school leaders to support teaching excellence
- **Finding 4:** Emphasize the importance of providing ongoing, specific, and timely feedback to teachers to support their practice, and to students during the formative assessment process while learning is taking place
- **Finding 5:** Foster the role of professional learning teams within collaborative environments that emphasize capacity building, shared responsibility, and collective commitment demonstrated through focused intentional actions
- **Finding 6:** Advise immediate restructuring of the school calendar to enable professional learning for teachers to be ongoing, sustained, purposeful and embedded
- **Finding 7:** Reduce significantly the use of the pull-out model of professional in-service and move toward adopting a school-based model

To provide a framework for this renewed model of professional learning, the seven principles of effective professional learning were introduced to underpin the delivery of high quality professional learning. These principles apply to all levels of the system: within schools, school boards, and the DEECD. The findings of this report align with the seven principles of highly effective professional learning. The seven principles are:

- **Principle 1:** Professional learning is focused on student outcomes
- **Principle 2:** Professional learning is focused on and embedded in teacher practice
- **Principle 3:** Professional learning is informed by the best available research on effective learning and teaching
- **Principle 4:** Professional learning is collaborative, involving reflection and feedback

- **Principle 5:** Professional learning is evidence based and data driven (not anecdotal) to guide improvement and to measure impact
- **Principle 6:** Professional learning is ongoing, supported and fully integrated into the culture and operations of the system – schools, school boards, and the department
- **Principle 7:** Professional learning is an individual and collective responsibility at all levels of the system (not just the school level) and it is not optional

These principles, the findings from the *PEI Perspective 2012*, and the effective practices already in place provide the framework for the renewed model of professional learning for PEI's educational system. However, to move forward to achieve the purpose outlined in this report, clear actions need to be taken. This process will require more than simply allocating additional resources for professional development programs. It will require us to understand what teachers must know and do to improve student learning and achievement. Most importantly, these actions will allow this renewed model of learning to inform all the opportunities provided for teachers to engage in the improvement of their practice over time.

## ***Actions***

Improving the learning outcomes of all students regardless of their socioeconomic background or geographic location is a key objective for the education system of PEI. However, the success of reaching this objective rests ultimately with our teachers and educational leaders. If we are to realize continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in our classrooms, schools, and the entire education system, we must build the capacity of our educators to do just that. Thus, it is important for actions to be embodied by all leaders to enable an already vibrant education system to continue to grow and improve. The list of actions below will create the environment for this happen. But time is of the essence. This report is suggesting that systemic reforms need to be undertaken. It does recognize that the PEI education system is doing many things well. However, it does highlight the need to focus more on why and how we provide professional learning in our system. By putting in place the necessary policies and practices to make this happen, we will produce better results for students across our system.

***Improving the learning outcomes of all students regardless of their socioeconomic background or geographic location is a key objective for the education system of PEI.***

- **Action 1:** Embed time into the workdays of teachers for professional learning in order to support continuous improvement in the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices of teachers by restructuring the school calendar
- **Action 2:** Restructure the process for curriculum in-service and implementation that significantly reduces the use of the pull-out model of professional in-service and moves toward adopting a school-based approach
- **Action 3:** Foster the role of professional learning teams for educators that are collaborative and emphasize respect, capacity building, shared responsibility, collective commitment, and intentional actions
- **Action 4:** Nurture teaching excellence by creating a supportive environment that provides ongoing, specific, and timely feedback to teacher
- **Action 5:** Develop and strengthen the instructional leadership skills of principals, vice principals, and other in-school leaders to support teaching excellence
- **Action 6:** Provide the education system with current and timely research-based educational updates on effective practices
- **Action 7:** Promote student learning and achievement by aligning support to key educational priorities, in particular, literacy and numeracy
- **Action 8:** Identify a procedure to follow-up with provincial literacy and numeracy data within school boards and schools
- **Action 9:** Shift the overall emphasis of professional learning and the financial resources to support professional learning, from outside schools to inside schools and classrooms where teaching and learning are occurring by allocating resources and necessary supports
- **Action 10:** Encourage and support collaborative working relationships between the PEI Home and School, the PEITF, school boards, DEECD, Faculty of Education, UPEI and other organizations committed to student learning and achievement.

### ***Renewed Model of Professional Learning***

A renewed model of professional learning requires a structural and philosophical shift in how the PEI educational system conceives professional learning for educators. The renewed model will respond to the *PEI Perspective 2012* research findings and will adhere to the seven Principles of

Effective Professional Learning. Fundamental to the success of the new model is the incorporation of the ten actions that form a foundation that enable the realization of teaching excellence, skilled leadership, and improved student learning and achievement.

Specifically, the ten actions filter through:

- the school calendar
- a new approach for in-servicing new curriculum
- continued support for school-based collaborative work
- the implementation of teacher-driven *Professional Learning Plans*
- the process to follow-up on provincial literacy and numeracy data
- a program to extend instructional leadership skills
- financial resources
- collaborative working relationships

The changes in the above areas will efficiently and effectively mitigate the identified barriers to high quality and ongoing in-servicing of curriculum and ongoing school-based professional learning within schools. The new model will also introduce teacher-driven personal professional learning goals that provide opportunities for teachers to network with other teachers with similar assignments either within their schools or family of schools. It is deemed urgent to restructure our system to accelerate successful implementation of the renewed model of professional learning for PEI educators, to achieve improved student learning and achievement. The implementation of this model positions PEI to be as comparable in educational excellence to the recognized high-performing countries and educational jurisdictions that strive for continuous and ongoing improvement.

### **Restructured School Calendar**

Currently days that are allocated to professional development of teachers are not embedded within the workday of teachers, are splintered in purpose, and are not conducive to ongoing learning for educators. The most significant issue is that the days available for professional learning are not systemically organized to benefit teaching and learning. Random and sporadic professional learning days without a clear ongoing intentional purpose cannot be expected to successfully embed the imperative process of continual professional learning and system improvement. Not only are the days ineffective to extend teaching excellence, they lack the potential capacity to significantly impact learning and achievement of all PEI students. Other than the specific and consistent positive feedback from educators regarding the value of the two school-based professional learning days, the *PEI Perspective 2012* research findings clearly indicated there was strong consensus that the other days allocated for professional learning throughout the school calendar led to frustration as teachers' professional needs were not being met.

Professional learning days for PEI educators are currently “*stand-alone*” one-or-two-day events. While each event may be planned collaboratively with educational partners, an overall, long-term fluid plan is not in existence, and an alignment to educational priorities is missing. Many teachers feel the days are ineffective and believe their time would be more productive spent with students. In the *PEI Perspective 2012*, teachers stated that the days were not helping them grow their craft or deepen their understanding of how to help their students learn. Teachers did, however, voice the urgent need for the kind of professional learning that helps achieve the goals of high quality, rigorous learning opportunities for each and every PEI student. Teachers have the will; they want professional learning days to help them grow the skill.

Within the new model, all professional learning days will be resituated within the school calendar. The placement of professional learning days will enable and nourish an environment that generates motivation for learning and teacher confidence. As well, this environment will provide a platform to embed the ongoing process of professional learning in pursuit of teaching excellence and student achievement. Also, additional professional learning days for teachers will be intentionally added prior to and within the school year. The days added prior to September will occur during the last week of August prior to Labour Day. Within the current calendar, teachers work two days prior to the first day for students. The purpose of these two days will remain unchanged. The three additional days will be available for in-servicing of new curriculum, meeting with teachers that are new to grade level, providing support for teachers new to the system, and for overall preparation by teachers to be ready for students. The earlier start-up in August will be offset by allocated days off during the school year in order to maintain the same total number of work days.

Next, three key types of learning will occur during the professional learning days that are placed regularly throughout the school year:

1. In-servicing of new curriculum
2. School-based professional learning
3. Personal professional learning goals

### **In-Servicing of New Curriculum: An Instructional Development Approach**

During the past few years, the DEECD have taken intentional steps to reduce the overall number of outcomes within subject areas during the curriculum development process to minimize the complexity of the curriculum. This newly developed curriculum has a focus on rigorous, higher-order thinking skills, and it is more manageable for teachers, providing clear targets for instruction and student learning. The process of demystifying the curriculum facilitates a deeper understanding of the meaning of outcomes; the depth and breadth of the curriculum outcomes are indicated by a set of achievement indicators that lend themselves to high impact instructional strategies, as well as appropriate assessment strategies. In-servicing of curriculum will occur on identified Professional Learning Days prior to and during the school year. Curriculum in-service will follow a three-component approach used successfully by some other provinces. The purpose

of the instructional development approach of flipped learning will be to provide support to teachers prior to and during the implementation of new curriculum.

**Component 1 (self-study):** During the initial component of this new instructional development approach, teachers will gather information about the new curriculum and/or resource. This is a necessary component of any new implementation, but face-to-face interaction is not required to transmit information effectively. It is recommended that Component 1 occur during the spring of the school year preceding implementation. This component is completed individually or in small groups. If small groups are preferred, meetings can be virtual or, where geography permits, face-to-face. This half-day session will be guided with an information package, which would normally include, but not be limited to: multimedia resources, professional literature, practical examples, etc. Multimedia video sessions will be guided by specialists. There will be opportunities to pause when necessary or if participants wish to reflect on the content being presented. The overall purposes of Component 1 include:

- Provide an overview of the contents of the information package
- Provide an overview of the new curriculum document and/or resources
- Explore and become familiar with the curriculum guide and resources (directed by the online multimedia package)

Teachers either on their own or with a small group reflect on the multimedia content but will have further opportunity for discussion during Component 2.

**Component 2 (collaborative study):** During the second component of this approach, teachers will have an opportunity to develop or extend collaborative discussions with colleagues pertaining to teaching and learning related to the new curriculum. It is recommended that Component 2 occur during the spring of the school year preceding implementation. However, it must take place after participants have gone through Component 1 and had time for reflection. It is recommended that teachers meet in groups of 2-8 people, depending on geographic location or family of schools. While only two teachers may be available to meet in small rural schools, larger schools may join with another school for a rich discussion. If Component 1 was held in a small-group format, this provides an opportunity to build further capacity by joining another school. As in Component 1, meetings can be virtual or, where geography permits, face-to-face meetings can be arranged. The group should decide on a facilitator for the session. This half-day meeting is intended to be collegial where teachers discuss, ask questions, and work through exploratory activities. The agenda of Component 2 should evolve from needs emerging during Component 1. It could include:

- Opportunity for reflection and follow-up on the multimedia piece from Component 1, curriculum guide, and/or new resources
- Opportunity to discuss and answer any questions arising from Component 1
- Attention to the beginning topics of the course, including drilling down to specific initial lessons

- Opportunity to discuss and recommend suggestions for the topics to be discussed/covered in Component 3

**Component 3 (curriculum specific learning network):** During the third component of this approach, teachers will have an opportunity to meet face-to-face in a large group session. This full-day session is recommended to take place in the fall or early in the school year of implementation of the new curriculum. This session will be structured to meet the needs as submitted by groups who worked together in Component 2. This day will be planned and organized in consultation with the school boards and DEECD specialists and will be responsive to teacher feedback gathered after Component 2. Teachers, principals, vice principals, curricular committees, coaches, school department heads, and other educators may be participating or facilitating the day. It is essential that key support staff attend Component 3 to ensure that teachers will receive ongoing assistance with implementation and know who to reach out to for subsequent support. Component 3 will not be introducing the material; instead the day will delve into key instructional and assessment strategies. Attention will focus on teaching and learning and provide practical support for implementation. The agenda for Component 3 will be generated from and will incorporate suggestions from teachers during Component 2. Component 3 will quite often bring families of schools together within one geographic area.

This new instructional development approach of offering in-service to teachers, specific to new curriculum and /or resources, is the starting point in developing a network of support within schools, within families of schools, or within geographic areas. The multimedia part of the curricular package provides teachers with an ongoing, consistent resource that can be accessed at any time. It offers a professional learning resource that can be used continuously.

- The resource can be referred back to at any time during the implementation year or during subsequent years
- The resource will be available to teachers who receive a late assignment, substitute teachers, new hires, principals, vice principals, etc.
- The in-service approach provides teachers time to talk about their work and recognizes the need for teachers to work together
- The approach also extends the initial learning of a new curriculum and situates teacher learning in a position much more prepared for implementation
- Component 3 can specifically address teachers' needs as learners since agenda will address needs identified in Component 2

Overall, this approach to in-service will provide a more thorough understanding of newly implemented curriculum and will help to ensure that teachers are ready to be even better instructional leaders in their classrooms. More in-depth introspection of curriculum, instruction, and assessment are possible using this approach. It also gives principals an overview of what they can expect to see during curriculum delivery in classrooms, and further increases

accountability of instructional leaders to support teachers. By viewing multimedia videos, those in positions of leadership within schools, such as principals, vice-principals, coaches, or department heads also learn about PEI curriculum, effective instruction strategies, and appropriate assessment practices.

The DEECD will provide a key leadership role in this approach to curriculum in-service. The multimedia component will provide a legacy of curriculum in-service, and will be designed and produced by the DEECD. The DEECD will provide mileage for teachers to attend the Component 3 session. Curriculum specialists will develop the information package for teachers. Also, discussion questions and a feedback form will be provided for teachers. The videos will be housed in a virtual professional learning library with continuous access for educators. Teachers are able to review any portion of the curriculum using the videos to coincide with their instructional needs throughout the school year. The videos also provide important support for substitute teachers or teachers who are hired on short-term contracts during the school year in order to support continuous student achievement.

The school boards will also participate in the three-component approach to in-service. The school boards will be responsible for organizing and overseeing small groups of teachers who work together during Component 2. The school boards will receive the feedback and comments from teacher groups arising from Component 2. The school boards, with support from the DEECD, will provide leadership in planning and delivery of the session for Component 3.

The planning and implementing of professional learning sessions regarding curriculum in-service for teachers is a collaborative effort between school board personnel and the DEECD. Curriculum specialists at the DEECD provide input into the multimedia legacy video by identifying teachers in consultation with school boards who model innovation classroom practices that would offer valuable professional learning experiences for teachers. Components 2 and 3 of the approach are planned jointly by school board personnel and the DEECD to collect feedback about the curriculum in order to respond to future implementation needs and support.

The planning and development of high quality multimedia supports will be produced simultaneously with the development of new curriculum. The initial emphasis of the three-component approach will therefore align with the DEECD and school boards achievement goals for PEI students to attain excellence in literacy and numeracy. During the first year of transitioning to the three-component approach, the DEECD will focus on multimedia production to support any newly implemented curriculum for Language Arts and Mathematics. Also important to note, the extent and depth of in-service provided for teachers on specific curriculum will be aligned to the priorities identified by the DEECD and school boards.

### **School-Based Professional Learning**

In PEI, school-based teams work collaboratively to improve teaching excellence and student achievement. No other type of professional learning identified in the literature increases the capacity to change educational systems. Systemic change does not occur by recognizing a good teacher here and there but rather by ensuring that all educators are given professional opportunities to continuously learn, try out, reflect upon, adjust, incorporate, and become adept in the most current and effective educational practices alongside supportive colleagues. Within schools and classrooms, practice becomes a collective endeavor and teachers work collaboratively instead of in isolation. Teachers who are masters of their craft share their insights with fellow colleagues and student achievement becomes the focus. Teachers' voices from the *PEI Perspective 2012* are compelling as they describe the profound positive effect that they believe school-based professional learning has on practice. Respondents experienced a sense of relational trust as they worked within school teams. A trusting and safe environment is a key determinant of the potential success of collaborative teams.

PEI teachers are clear about their commitment to school-based professional learning within collaborative teams. However, they made suggestions to improve the process. Teachers identified the need for increased and continuous involvement of principals, vice principals, and informal school-level leaders. They also identified the need for reliable current information on effective professional practices. In consideration of these needs, the importance of distributed leadership within schools is evident. Distributed leadership can include principals, vice-principals, coaches, literacy lead teachers, department heads, teacher librarians, resource room teachers, or others within schools that have informal leadership roles. Formalizing the role of support for professional learning in these job descriptions will help to ensure that teachers in collaborative teams receive the levels of support required.

In order to respond to the voiced need that school-based teams need continuous professional resources, a virtual library will be developed and maintained by the DEECD. It will make available with up-to-date pamphlets and videos that describe and demonstrate high impact strategies that affect student learning and achievement. The DEECD will continue to support and foster the role of professional learning teams for educators that are collaborative and emphasize respect, capacity building, shared responsibility, collective commitment, and intentional actions.

### **Personal Professional Learning Plan**

Teachers are at the center of their own professional learning. When teachers receive a teaching assignment, they are responsible to ensure all students learn the prescribed outcomes in that curricular area. Accountability for the student learning of outcomes is shared by the DEECD, the school boards, within schools, and by school principals to ensure every student is provided with the opportunity to achieve the prescribed learning outcomes. With this accountability comes responsibility to provide support for teachers to be curriculum, instructional, and assessment experts.

Teaching is a professional designation. Like other professionals, there is an expectation and responsibility that a teacher will continue to stay abreast of current effective practices throughout the lifespan of their years in the profession. It is unrealistic to expect a teacher to be finished learning after receiving a Bachelor of Education degree or receiving a permanent position with a school board. While many supports will be in place for teachers, it is required that teachers (and principals) be responsible to develop and carry out *Professional Learning Plans* every year. Also, teachers request self-directed opportunities for professional learning. The *Professional Learning Plans* will afford educators that opportunity.

The *Professional Learning Plans* will describe, in detail, the personal professional learning goals of each teacher, or group of teachers. Plans will align with school goals and will support teacher and student learning. Plans are to be submitted to the principal soon after teachers receive their assignment for the upcoming school year. It is the responsibility of the principal to discuss the proposed plan with the teacher, to determine suitability of the proposed plan, to monitor the plan and portfolio development, and to provide feedback and input to the plan throughout the year. Teachers may either work independently on the plan or choose to network with another teacher, or small group of teachers within their family of schools who are interested in working on the same *Professional Learning Plan*. The school board will be responsible to ensure that principals support teachers' *Professional Learning Plans* and contribute expertise and guidance. Time is allocated within the school calendar specifically for the *Professional Learning Plans*.

Another important aspect of the *Professional Learning Plan* is to create a forum for the public to learn about what teachers do during professional learning days throughout the school year. Teachers will have a chance to convey to the public and fellow colleagues their professional goals, their ongoing work, and that of their students. In the past, transparent information to parents and the public regarding the benefits of what happens on professional learning days has been challenging. This forum will demystify the professional learning process and instill public support and confidence. It will provide an effective tool to engage parents in the work of schools. The opportunity to share evidence of quality practice and dialogue with others is imperative.

The *Professional Learning Plan* must have evidence of:

- Student learning of the curriculum outcomes specific to the teaching assignment
- Alignment to the school goals
- Instructional strategies conducive to student-level and curriculum outcomes
- Explanation of how teachers will collect ongoing data through the use of the formative assessment process
- Summative assessment of student learning to determine success of goals and plans

A portfolio of ongoing progress will provide opportunities for feedback, as well as show evidence of the progress and success of the *Professional Learning Plan*. The portfolio will provide a clear outline of goals for student learning, an explanation of the actionable part of the

plan carried out throughout the year, samples of student work, marking of student work, and a conclusion to determine the success of the plan as evidenced by student learning.

Educators will come together at the end of the school year to share their *Professional Learning Plans* and celebrate their accomplishments with fellow colleagues and the public. This celebration of principal, teacher and student learning will strongly support the dissemination of effective practices, grow continuous capacity-building of content and pedagogical expertise, and contribute significantly to the ongoing development of quality education professionals in PEI.

### **Literacy and Numeracy Data**

We know PEI students must attain excellence in literacy and numeracy if they are to be competitive in today's world economy. Educational partners are in agreement that achievement goals must focus on the priority areas of literacy and numeracy. They recognize that a focus on improving levels of literacy and numeracy gives powerful leverage to influence student learning in all other disciplines. This means that by strengthening the focus on literacy and numeracy, improvements of students' reading, writing, and math skills will ensure a strong foundation for future learning across many subject areas.

*Educational partners are in agreement that achievement goals must focus on the priority areas of literacy and numeracy. They recognize that a focus on improving levels of literacy and numeracy gives powerful leverage to influence student learning in all other disciplines.*

In recognition of the important relationship between student achievement and assessment, the second recommendation in the report, *Excellence in Education a Challenge for Prince Edward Island: Final Report of the Task Force on Student Achievement*, clearly recommends the implementation of common assessments at the end of Grades 3, 6, and 9 followed by specific subjects at high school. The Assessment Unit was created within the DEECD and was tasked to initiate a Provincial Common Assessment program. The first Primary Literacy Assessment and Intermediate Mathematics Assessment were administered in May and June of 2007 respectively. Since that time, literacy and numeracy assessments have been added at the elementary and intermediate levels. Plans are now developing for literacy and numeracy assessments in high school.

The data provides important information to educators and parents about PEI students' literacy and numeracy levels. The Assessment Unit in the DEECD creates reports on student learning to parents, schools, and school boards. Analysis of yearly results, as well as the examination of trends over time, provides educators with the necessary information to make evidence-based decisions when setting goals for learning. Also, requests are received continually from school boards, schools, and other educational committees, to further disaggregate the data so the

learning needs of students are transparent and educators are better able to make informed decisions about where and how to allocate resources and support. The results of the *Provincial Common Assessments* provide critical information about where students are at in the learning processes of reading, writing, and mathematics. The information holds significant capacity to inform us about what we are doing well and how to improve. Therefore, it is certainly noteworthy, that the results of the Provincial Common Assessments provide reliable and invaluable feedback that informs and directs the professional learning needs of Island educators.

Currently, the DEECD, the school boards and PEI schools are becoming more knowledgeable and comfortable using the *Provincial Common Assessment* data, along with school-based data, to help set school board and school learning goals to improve teaching and learning. As described earlier in this paper, some initiatives such as the moderated marking and *the Grade 9 Math Project* have been formative in nature and have been initiated in response to the analysis of provincial data. However, after six years of collecting provincial data, the response to the *Provincial Common Assessments* is not systemic or procedural. It is now timely for the DEECD, with input from school boards, to develop a policy with strategies to optimize the capacity of *Provincial Common Assessments* with the goal to impact teaching practice and, ultimately, student learning and achievement.

The DEECD, with input from educational partners, will develop and implement a policy that sets out procedures responsive to the *Provincial Common Assessment* data in order to support student learning, teacher professional learning, school development, and educational interventions, including how to support schools with low performance trends.

### **Instructional Leadership Program**

Strong instructional leadership influences student learning and achievement. This influence is second only to that of high quality teaching. Therefore, it is imperative that instructional leadership is expected, developed, and sustained across all elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools. The key expectation for leaders within this model is that principals, themselves, need to be lead learners and model the power of lifelong professional learning. Lead learners are experts in the teaching and learning processes. These skills encompass current and evolving understanding of curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment to guide teacher development and practices that improve student learning and achievement within a continuously improving education system.

The DEECD will form a committee with educational partners including school boards, PEITF, UPEI, Faculty of Education and other PEI educators with leadership expertise to develop an *Instructional Leadership Program* for PEI principals, vice-principals, and interested teachers. Informal discussions have taken place among different partners, but it is crucial that the PEI educational community come together to implement a program that enhances the student-centered leadership skills of in-school leaders. The committee must also consider the criteria necessary for educators to aspire to become formal leaders in schools. Of significant importance

is the criteria used to determine how the education system on PEI hires principals and vice-principals. Currently, many principals hold Masters level education but this advanced degree may or may not prepare principals for the work that needs to be done in schools relevant to instructional leadership.

The implementation of an *Instructional Leadership Program* will define the expectations of skills, knowledge, and mind-set required by principals and vice-principals and ensures they are prepared to meet the demands of leading Island schools.

### **Financial Resources**

To allow the renewed model of professional learning to be implemented across PEI's education system, it is imperative that the present financial resources to support professional learning for teachers be examined. The DEECD will work with educational partners to develop an equitable process to allow financial resources to support professional learning to move more directly to schools and classrooms where teaching and learning is occurring. This does not mean that DEECD and school boards do not require financial resources to support their work with teachers, but rather a realization that professional learning will be approached differently and the financial resources will need to follow the model. It also does not mean that additional financial resources need to be allocated to professional learning, but rather a redistribution of the present financial resources be undertaken. Investing in professional learning is the key to ensuring that schools become learning communities where teachers work together, learn from each other, and share best practices for effective teaching and learning.

### **Collaborative Working Relationships**

It is imperative that the DEECD work collaboratively with the school boards, the Home and School Association, the PEITF, Faculty of Education, UPEI, and other educational partners to help parents, guardians, and communities understand that effective professional learning is fundamental to realizing high-quality education for our youth in PEI. To do this, all partners must have a clear understanding of the direction in which the renewed model of professional learning is moving. This will require a concerted effort by the DEECD to reach out and collaborate with all educational partners to develop a clearer understanding of the importance of professional learning of teachers. As a school system, all educational partners have a shared responsibility to improve student achievement and, by working together to refine and communicate this renewed model of professional learning, PEI students will achieve their full potential. Sustained school improvement will be secured through the collective work of teachers and through their shared professional knowledge.

*The enduring bond  
between meaningful  
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## **Conclusion**

Effective professional learning is a way of thinking. All educators need to be vigilant about building expertise to create positive effects on achievement for all students (Hattie, 2012).

High quality professional learning is ongoing, embedded, relevant, and intentional. Effectiveness is evident when the focus is intensive and it occurs over time. High quality effective learning must help educators to interpret events in progress, monitor learning, test hypothesis, solve instructional problems, have respect for all involved, be passionate about teaching and learning, and, overall, reduce the complexity of teaching and learning.

The pathway to successfully implement the renewed model of professional learning is well underway in PEI. Mindsets of educators are shifting toward a model that must focus on professional learning; one that has utility in the classroom and one that makes common sense. The enduring bond between meaningful professional learning and improving student learning and achievement is no longer contestable.

## **2013-2014 School Year**

Discussions are currently underway with key educational partners and political leaders to ensure the DEECD immediately introduce a school calendar that restructures current days as well as adds an additional four school-based days within the school year. This restructuring of the school calendar will guarantee that the province nurtures a public education system that has the capacity to demonstrate continuous growth of teacher excellence, instructional leadership, and ongoing improvement in student learning and achievement.

Currently, school-based collaborative work is happening in PEI schools. In the new model, additional time will be allocated for schools to develop and accomplish their target goals. Time will be inserted in a meaningful way to respect and instill the cycle of professional learning.

All teachers will develop teacher-driven *Professional Learning Plans* within the scope of school, school board, and DEECD goals. Teachers may work independently on their *Professional Learning Plan*, or they may choose to network with others. The opportunity for all teachers to work collaboratively in meaningful ways is crucial. Specialized teachers such as physical education teachers, music teachers, or same-subject teachers also must have time to collaborate with other educators with like assignments within their family of schools, or, if necessary, within a broader geographic vicinity if they so choose.

Educational partners have begun preliminary discussions around the need to develop and implement a strategy that sets out procedures responsive to the *Provincial Common Assessment* program. While ad hoc in creation, many exemplary projects have responded to provincial literacy and numeracy data. The Instructional Development and Achievement Team at the DEECD will lead the collaborative process, along with support from French and English Curriculum Teams and other educational partners, to develop a Provincial Assessment Strategy

which encompasses response to provincial data as well as embeds sound formative assessment practices within schools and classrooms.

The three-component approach to curriculum in-service will commence immediately. The 2013-2014 school year will serve as a transition year, in that curriculum that is ready for implementation will not be delayed if a multimedia component is unavailable. In such situations, a traditional form of in-service will be provided. However, one of the initial tasks of the Instructional Development Team at the DEECD will be to work side by side with Curriculum Teams to prioritize and forecast the work required to support educators with upcoming curriculum implementation in the key areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. A timeline will be communicated to school boards as soon as possible.

Plans for discussing how to best support and extend the instructional leadership skills of PEI principals and vice-principals are already in place. Recently, the Faculty of Education, UPEI, initiated a gathering with PEI educational partners to collect thoughts, views, and comments regarding the creation of instructional leadership seminars. The seminars must ensure leaders garner the skills, knowledge, and the mindset required by principals, vice-principals, and interested teachers so they are prepared to meet the demands of leading PEI schools now and in the future.

The DEECD will form a committee with educational partners including school boards, PEITF, UPEI, Faculty of Education and other PEI educators to support, monitor and evaluate the implementation of actions required to transition to a renewed model of professional learning for educators on Prince Edward Island. The renewed model reflects the perspectives of PEI educators regarding current and future professional learning needs. It aligns to a robust body of research that unequivocally states that the most important investment of time and money that political and educational leaders can make is improving the skills and knowledge of teachers. Teaching excellence is the most influential factor related to student learning and student achievement. We now possess clear and undeniable research evidence regarding how to extend and support teacher excellence. Therefore, it is incumbent upon PEI politicians and educators to take a courageous stand to support the renewed model of professional learning. PEI decision-makers have a moral responsibility and the authority to take immediate action.

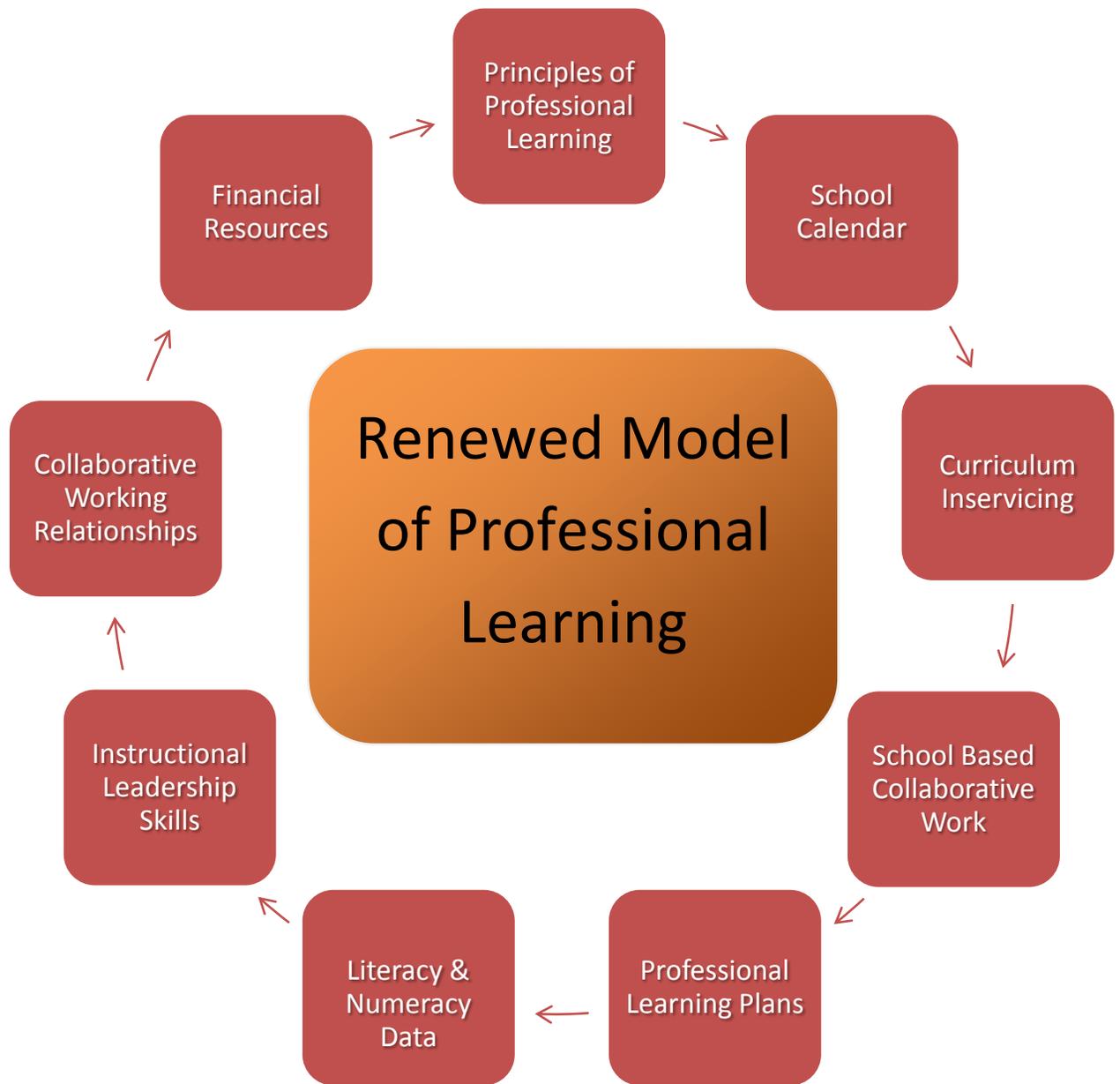


Figure 2: DEECD’s Renewed Model of Professional Learning

## SECTION 5: PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE RENEWED MODEL FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Evaluation research is done to determine the effectiveness of a program. Specifically, it is done to determine the relative merits of various products, programs, and approaches used in education, and to make decisions about these products, programs, and approaches (Mertler & Charles, 2011). Conducting an evaluation requires an organization to invest valuable resources, including time and money. However, the benefits of a well-planned, carefully conducted evaluation greatly outweigh its costs. As this renew model for professional development is implemented, it is important to consider a framework for evaluating the success of this model. By doing so, this will allow the DEECD and its partners to determine the extent to which the purpose of the model is being met.

*Evaluation research is done to determine the effectiveness of a program. Specifically, it is done to determine the relative merits of various products, programs, and approaches used in education, and to make decisions about these products, programs, and approaches (Mertler & Charles, 2011).*

The primary purpose for doing an evaluation of the proposed model of professional learning is to identify opportunities and possible areas of improvement, and to provide the DEECD and its partners with reliable information from which to build on strengths and opportunities. The proposed model of professional learning is a complex and comprehensive process with the aim of systematic change; therefore, it is essential to provide a degree of flexibility when evaluating this model.

### ***Evaluation Design***

This type of evaluation needs to be grounded in a mixed methods approach, and will evaluate if the model of professional learning is meeting its stated purpose. Quantitative data needs to be collected and analyzed over the first three years post-implementation of the model. “Effective evaluation is not an ‘event’ that occurs at the end of a project, but is an ongoing process which helps decision-makers better understand the project; how it is impacting participants, partner agencies, and the community; and how it is being influenced/impacted by both internal and external factors” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook, 2004, p.3). The yearly collection of data is necessary to study the ongoing effects and to enable necessary adjustments. This data needs to include, but is not limited to, the provincial student achievement data on literacy and numeracy, and a survey distributed to schools that will replicate the *Professional Development Survey 2012*. The results of the survey will be compared to the results of the *Professional Development Survey 2012* to see if attitudes or perceptions among teachers have changed.

Qualitative data needs also be collected. Participants for this study needs to include all relevant stakeholders associated with the model of professional learning including: school-based administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Targeted focus groups will be conducted with each identified group of stakeholders. These sessions need to be held with participants at during and at the conclusion of the evaluation period. The focus groups will be used to discuss data drawn from the surveys, and to discuss each group's experiences and perceptions related to teaching and learning on PEI.

One noteworthy point to make when considering data collection and analysis is the possibility of an implementation dip. It is important that all stakeholders involved with the execution of the renewed model of professional learning be prepared for an implementation dip. An implementation dip often occurs when new skills are first being practiced. In certain cases, change can be difficult and messy. It is possible that many stakeholders may be discouraged while adjusting to the renewed model of professional learning, and may be tempted to return to old ways. Also, data collection that takes place during this adjustment stage may yield unfavorable results considering the initial stages of this process may be the most complex and difficult for some. It is important that time is given to work out the possible bumps and kinks of adapting to a renewed model of professional learning. Finally, "it is vital that participants be informed about this dip and that evaluation of either program or individuals not occur until implementation problems have had a chance to be resolve" (Sparks, 1993, p.13).

### ***Findings and Insights***

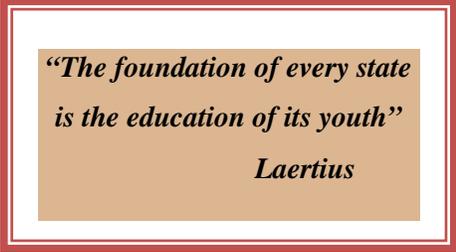
Evaluation findings will be used to improve the model of professional learning, evaluate the effectiveness of the model, and generate new knowledge. New insights gained from the evaluation will need to be communicated to all relevant stakeholders. "A commitment to ongoing dialogue and more interactive forms of communication will not only increase ownership and motivation to act on what is learned, but will also assist in refining the evaluation design, questions, methods, and interpretations. It is important to be creative and innovative in reporting evaluation findings. A variety of techniques can be used, such as visual displays, oral presentations, summary statements, interim reports, and informal conversations" (W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook, 2004, p 97.). However, the most important part of the evaluation is for the DEECD and its partners to act on the findings and insights gained through the process.

The *Professional Learning Report* is based on solid research and good practice. With that being stated, in order to receive positive feedback from the evaluation process, it is important that the following events take place. First, the actions in the report have to be implemented, system wide. Second, key stakeholders have to understand and support the implementation process. Third, teachers have to be given the opportunity for effective professional learning. Fourth, and finally, teachers need to make appropriate adjustments to their teaching, based on the professional learning they receive. The above mentioned events are not intended to simplify this process. This

is indeed a complex initiative, and as the renewed model for professional learning is implemented, it will be necessary that all stakeholders provide continued effort, and make appropriate adjustments in order to move forward and grow, so improved student learning can occur.

## SECTION 6: CONCLUSION

Examining trends, anticipating new paradigms, and successfully managing change in turbulent times are the challenges educational leaders must face (Sparks, 1993). It is necessary for educators to be students of the change process and move forward and grow as the world continues to change and develop. This is an essential step educators must be willing to make in order to teach our youth to be productive citizens in the 21st Century, and for them to develop the necessary skills



*“The foundation of every state  
is the education of its youth”  
Laertius*

to become lifelong learners. “The foundation of every state is the education of its youth”. This statement, made by Greek philosopher, Diogenes Laertius, is as true today as it was thousands of years ago. Within a PEI context, the impact of this quote means that educational leaders and stakeholders have a collective duty to provide the best education possible to our youth, because our children are our future. The opportunity of a renewed model of professional learning, with emphases on high quality learning and development for teachers and educational leaders, offers an opportunity to focus on PEI students.

Results from the *PEI Perspective 2012*, indicated that changes were necessary regarding PEI’s current model for professional learning. This renewed model of professional learning was created to respond to the feedback received from educators. This model was created so students and educators are able to move into their futures effectively. Quality professional learning is about extending the current skills and practices of our teachers and meeting the 21st century, ever-changing educational needs of teachers and students. The actions, research, and findings within this report, provides a sound process to provide professional learning opportunities that are in line with educational priorities, effective practices, and current research. At present, PEI’s educational system is proudly staffed with hard-working, devoted educators, who have a passion and unremitting energy for teaching. Indeed, these teachers are dedicated to their profession; however, it is necessary to further empower and support teachers with effective and innovative pedagogical skills, so that they can continue to meet the diverse needs of their students and are more equipped for the future.

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