

Creating time for CPD

Propositions

- Professional development of staff creates the expectation that, because of the importance of CPD, resources will routinely be made available for CPD activities. It is likely to have the greatest impact when this expectation matches reality, particularly through the allocation of time.
- Effective CPD is strongly linked with a school's ability to think creatively about their use of time.
- Time for CPD needs to be planned well in advance.

Issues

- Traditionally, schools have found it difficult to 'find time' to support in-school provision for the professional development of staff.
- In the past much professional development has taken place by attending external sessions, with little time to disseminate, implement and develop new practice.
- The challenge for current leaders of CPD is to find time for in-school CPD as part of the day-to-day functioning of the school.

Effective approaches

1 Timetable the school week for the learning of staff and pupils

Establishing professional learning as a feature of everyday school functioning requires staff routinely to work together. Effective schools adopt approaches which consider timetabling as an activity that is not only about timetabling the learning of pupils, but also includes timetabling collaborative sessions for the professional development of staff.

- Timetable key staff such as a 'teaching and learning group' so that they have time to work together, e.g. for two or three periods a week.
- Timetable staff in groups, such as coaching trios, so they have some planned time together and some time to observe each other in class (see video sequence 4).
- Timetable common non-contact time for departments so they can use this time specifically for professional development. Such time is best programmed in advance for the term or year.
- Timetable one session in the school week as a professional development session. Some schools plan for a later start on occasions, others plan a non-teaching session at the end of the day. In both situations all staff have the opportunity to work together in different groups.
- Timetable staff to develop coaching and mentoring teams and skills.

'We have a late start on a Wednesday every two weeks. This provides staff with the opportunity to meet in groups and pursue their professional development programmes. The CPD groupings include Middle leaders (established middle leaders, new middle leaders and aspiring middle leaders), Experienced teachers, EPD (Early Professional Development) as well as particular interest groups.'

Deputy headteacher

'After some negotiation as a school we timetabled some continental days into the school calendar with pupils finishing at 2.00 pm and staff engaging in CPD from 2.30 to 5.30 pm.'

Headteacher

Another school negotiated with its staff to have a short series of longer days starting at 8.30 am and finishing at 5.30 pm, but with no expectation of homework being set or marked during this CPD week. Crèche facilities were made available.

2 Make best use of existing time

There are many existing opportunities where time could be better used and focused on professional development.

Staff meetings

- Provide a starter session where a teacher models a teaching or learning strategy.
- Have a regular spot which enables a team or individual to report on one aspect of their CPD and its impact on pupil learning and achievement.
- Make all aware of CPD opportunities and resources available and who is doing what on a regular basis.
- Use staff meetings to create awareness of relevant research findings and distribute supportive articles to all staff.
- *Team/departmental meetings*
- Ensure that agendas schedule sharing practice about teaching before the routine transmission of information.
- Make sure team meetings focus for at least of their time on professional collaboration and development, rather than on information dissemination which can be done by other means.
- Ensure CPD discussions address school, team and individual needs.
- Ask for minutes that include the evaluation of CPD activities (see pages 49–51) and share significant findings across the school.
- Encourage teams to suggest improvements to school CPD systems.
- *School closure days*
- Use days to:
 - focus on the school improvement plan and the improvement of classroom practice
 - introduce and raise awareness of effective ways of raising pupil achievement
 - use an external keynote speaker to inspire staff
 - share expertise within the school by asking staff to report back on the impact of the professional development or research they have been doing
 - ensure that across the year there is a balance in addressing school, team and individual needs.

- Involve representatives from different school teams in planning the days.
- Make sure 'listening sessions' are appropriately balanced by 'thinking and doing' sessions.
- Differentiate inputs where appropriate so that staff do not waste time on aspects where they already have skills.
- Break the day into manageable sessions.
- Allow time for teams to consider the implications for themselves.
- Provide time for teams and individuals to action-plan and consider how they carry ideas forward.
- Provide time for an effective plenary to share thoughts from all teams.
- Plan for collaborative days on common issues with other schools so that similar teams can develop and share ideas together.

'We wanted to introduce Assessment for Learning across the school because we were aware of the impact it can have on lower attainers, of which we have many on intake. We discussed this and the reasons in our CPD committee, which has a representative from all school teams, including non-teaching staff. The day was planned jointly, with team leaders planning how they would follow up the keynote speech, and action plans were brought to the next CPD committee where the implications for school and team development plans were discussed. This gave us an opportunity to estimate the resources needed to make implementation effective.'

Senior leader

Another school decided to disaggregate three of the traditional training days to provide a series of fifteen one-hour after-school sessions spread throughout the academic year under the theme of 'Talking about Teaching'. The school concludes: *'The provision of regular sessions every few weeks gives greater flexibility.'*

3 Develop systems to increase access to CPD

- Provide systems for staff to access CPD materials in their own time: for example, the availability of, or access to, the school's website, intranet, professional development library (electronic, DVD and books).
- Provide all staff with information about the Key Stage 3 National Strategy publication *Pedagogy and practice: teaching and learning in secondary schools* (DfES 0423-2004 G) and how they can use this in different ways to support their own development.
- Employ an administrative assistant to search and update information about access to professional development for school staff.

One school has established a Professional Development Centre (converting a small and underused classroom) to encourage action-based research amongst the staff. As well as the conventional display of information about educational developments, INSET courses and initiatives etc. on notice boards, this facility offers access to the Internet with weekly website suggestions posted by the CPD leader. The most exciting feature, however, is the school's own website which has a dedicated section on research and good practice. Here staff involved in developing teaching and learning, for example, can post lesson plans, ideas, resources etc. There is also a FAQ section and a message board which is particularly well used by NQTs and those early in their careers. Another exciting possibility is a direct link with

their closest HEI who will be asked to provide support to small-scale research projects of mutual benefit.

4 Make use of workforce reform

The issues of guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA) will, in particular, give teachers the time and opportunity to work individually and collaboratively on professional activities – giving time for reflection, professional development, extending subject and pedagogical knowledge.

- Consider how cover supervisors can enable groups of staff to work together on
- CPD activities.
- Use support staff to improve ICT systems to support CPD.
- Integrate the deployment of support staff and teachers to increase flexible approaches to class timings and class sizes. This can include teachers leading seminars; giving lectures to larger groups of pupils; tutorials and one-to-one teaching; and self-directed learning supported by teaching assistants and ICT.
- Involve support staff in observing the impact of changes to teaching approaches and discussing findings with teachers.
- Plan CPD into some of the time during examinations when teachers are not required to teach.

'As a department we wanted to improve our use of questioning, and used the Teaching and Learning unit 7, Questioning. We discussed this with our teaching support assistants and involved them in our training. At an early stage we asked them to spend some time logging how, as teachers, we used questioning, and the number of closed and open questions we used. We then discussed as a team what we should do to move forward and how we could collectively make best use of the Questioning unit. The CPD leader made sure that time was made available for us to achieve this.'

Subject leader

How do staff feel about the way time is currently used for professional development?

Review your school's current use of time for staff development with a really critical eye to explore with the staff their perceptions of its best and worst use.

This analysis could reveal deep-seated values and views. Leadership teams can make significant cultural shifts by recognising perceptions and making positive responses to concerns.

Reviewing the timetable

Consider with other members of the senior management team, in the light of the discussions generated by this material, whether your timetable for the next year could adopt some more creative uses of staff time. Consider this at different levels: whole-school, departmental and individual.

Workforce reform

Consider the implications of the workforce reform for your school. How might it help your school to find more CPD time for its staff without imperilling the quality of pupil learning or causing relational difficulties with professional associations? You might like to explore what is said about the workforce reform on www.teachernet.gov.uk to help you.