Planning Template for Remote Professional Learning

The following tool can help school and LEA leaders plan remote professional learning opportunities for educators, from identifying priority topics through evaluating outcomes. The tips interspersed throughout provide research-based advice on specific components of remote professional learning with examples in the area of remote teaching.

# Step 1. Select priority topic/s

Using the table below, leaders can list potential training topics for educators and determine which topics should be high priorities to include in professional learning.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Professional learning topic | Priority level for your school/s (high, moderate or low) | Evidence for priority level(based on quantitative/qualitative information, student indicators, and multiple stakeholders) | If the topic is selected, which educators should participate? |
| *Example: Student engagement in virtual learning* | *Example: High* | *Example:* *During Spring 2020 virtual instruction at Middle School X, teachers reported that among students who participated in virtual learning, fewer than half of students in most classes regularly responded to teacher prompts in class; and 35% of assignments were submitted on time.**Parent feedback cited lack of student engagement in online learning as a top concern in Spring 2020.**Department heads recently surveyed their teachers and reported that overall about 40% of teachers feel confident in their ability to engage students remotely.* | *Example: All teachers will participate; use follow-up virtual “walkthroughs” to identify teachers who can benefit from additional professional learning on this topic.* |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Selected topic for the professional learning opportunity:**

While remote professional learning can address a variety of topics—and is not limited to content about remote instruction—the following list includes training topics that experts and practitioners recommend for schools shifting to remote/blended learning for students.[[1]](#footnote-1)

* Student engagement in remote learning
* Differentiated and personalized instruction in remote learning
* Learning needs of students with disabilities (including adapted and/or modified online materials and activities to meet student needs)
* Meeting students’ social-emotional needs through remote instruction
* Approaches to adapting curricula, assessment, instruction and materials to remote or blended instruction
* Implementing LEA “core” programs specific to ELA and math at elementary and middle school levels in a remote learning environment
* Effective administration of specific universal screening instruments, benchmark assessments, and diagnostic assessments from Beginning of Year through Middle of Year to End of Year
* Administering local assessments, including unit/chapter assessments to students remotely
* Formative assessment techniques in remote learning environments
* Effective feedback to students on assignments and other assessments
* Using student learning data from remote assessments to inform instruction
* Assigning, monitoring and using homework effectively to improve student learning in a remote learning environment
* Online academic integrity for students
* Student safety in remote learning, e.g., student privacy and educator reporting of neglect/abuse (see “[Online safety and digital citizenship](https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/Pages/PositiveLearningClimates.aspx)” section for resources)
* Effective communication with students and families (modes, frequency, content, and tone of communications)

# Step 2. Set goals

Develop a SMART goal for the professional learning opportunity’s outcome: a goal that is **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ctionable, **R**esults-Focused, and **T**imed. Goals should include student-level outcomes.

*Example:*

**Goal/s for student-level outcomes:***Example: In online synchronous lessons at Middle School X, students will have options to interact with classmates and respond to teachers through spoken, written and visual modes (e.g., emojis). By the end of Week 2, all students will participate at least twice per full-group lesson. In brief monthly surveys, the rate of students reporting that online synchronous lessons are usually engaging and easy to follow will increase and reach 90% by early November.*

**Goal/s for other outcomes (e.g., educators, leaders, families):**

# Step 3. Identify facilitators

**Names/roles of professional learning facilitator/s:**

**Name of partner organization or 3rd party provider, if applicable:**

**What training, if any, will they need in facilitating online professional learning?**

**How often, and through what modes, will facilitator/s respond to ongoing questions and communications from participants? How will participants be engaged?**

**Tip:** In remote adult learning, thorough and timely communication with the facilitator can make the learning more effective—particularly if learning occurs over a series of activities—and helps build connections and community.[[2]](#footnote-2) **If a 3rd party provider is facilitating remote professional learning**, you may build into the contract a provision for sufficient communication and engagement with individual participants (e.g., frequency of online “office hours” or responses to participants’ messages).

# Step 4. Plan specific activities within the professional learning opportunity

**Tip:** When deciding whether a given portion of professional learning should by synchronous or asynchronous, consider how critical real-time interactivity is to build focal skills. Such interactive tasks can include role-playing or troubleshooting a common challenge. This can take place through technology tools such as breakout rooms that promote participant interaction. Other tasks can easily occur asynchronously, such as educators sharing lesson plans that apply a focal skill or viewing a recording of an exemplar lesson and responding on a group discussion board. Also consider that **asynchronous activities** **allow educators to personalize the goals and timing of their learning**.[[3]](#footnote-3) However, **synchronous activities can provide more flexibility** *within* the learning opportunity; facilitators and participants can make on-the-fly adjustments as needed.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Checklist for incorporating effective practices into components of remote professional learning**

[ ]  [Rationale for synchronous, asynchronous or blended delivery](#_Determining_what_to)

[ ]  [Active learning (“engages teachers directly in designing and trying out teaching strategies”)[[5]](#footnote-5)](#_Active_learning_in)

[ ]  [Frequent opportunities for participant interaction with facilitator/s](#_Opportunities_for_participant)[[6]](#footnote-6)

[ ]  [Frequent opportunities for participant interaction with one another](#_Opportunities_for_participant_1)[[7]](#footnote-7)

[ ]  [Practice and observation of focal skills—both during and after the initial professional learning activity](#_Practice_and_observation)[[8]](#footnote-8)

[ ]  Opportunities for anonymous input and questions from participants (e.g., a continuously open and anonymized Google Form or other survey tool)[[9]](#footnote-9)

## Activity 1 description:

Agenda (note what will be synchronous or asynchronous):

Focal skill/s or knowledge:

Instructions/notes for facilitator/s:

Instructions for participants:

Materials to use (videos, virtual handouts, etc.):

## Activity 2 description:

Agenda (note what will be synchronous or asynchronous):

Focal skill/s or knowledge:

Instructions/notes for facilitator/s:

Instructions for participants:

Materials to use (videos, virtual handouts, etc.):

**Tip:** Professional learning community (PLC) formats lend themselves well to remote professional learning. Teachers can easily engage remotely with role-alike colleagues from other schools or LEAs. They can continue using the same online platforms they already use for informal support and collaboration with colleagues (e.g., group chats or closed social media pages). Virtual PLCs can include both synchronous and asynchronous elements.[[10]](#footnote-10) A set of PLC activities and protocols focused on the shift to digital learning are available from [The Danielson Group](https://danielsongroup.org/blog/blog/2020/05/07/supporting-teacher-learning-development-during-remote-instruction).

# Step 5. Consider logistics

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Remote platform/ technology to be used | Technology training available for participants | Resources for ongoing tech support for participants (may include staff who are skilled with the technology) | Back-up plan/s if the technology does not work as planned |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Tip:** Provide various modes for participants to communicate, which can enhance learning. For example, participants can respond to the facilitator or one another using a text chat, emoticons or even gifs—all of which can be a means to humanize virtual interaction among adult learners.[[11]](#footnote-11) Using various virtual participation approaches models for educators the communication modes they can use with their own students. Additionally, leaders can easily record participant communications, and analyze them to learn more about educators’ questions, concerns and learning progress.

**Audio communication mode/s for participants:**

**Written communication mode/s for participants:**

**Other visual communication mode/s for participants:**

# Step 6. Plan the evaluation of professional learning

The following table[[12]](#footnote-12) can help plan an effective evaluation of professional learning.Some evaluation levels—particularly Level 5—may not be observable soon after the professional learning.

A sample of a completed table is available in this [article by Thomas R. Guskey](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar02/vol59/num06/Does-It-Make-a-Difference%C2%A2-Evaluating-Professional-Development.aspx).

## Evaluation Level 1: Participants’ Reactions

| What questions are addressed? | How will information be gathered? | What is measured or assessed? (refer to SMART goals) | How will information be used? |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What was positive about this professional learning experience? |  |  |  |
| What suggestions do you have for improvement/enhancement? |  |  |  |
| Did the content make sense? |  |  |  |
| How relevant was it to your work? |  |  |  |
| Was the leader knowledgeable and helpful? |  |  |  |
| Was the virtual environment conducive to learning? |  |  |  |

## Evaluation Level 2: Participants’ Learning

| What questions are addressed? | How will information be gathered? | What is measured or assessed? (refer to SMART goals) | How will information be used? |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills? |  |  |  |

## Evaluation Level 3: Organization Support & Change

| What questions are addressed? | How will information be gathered? | What is measured or assessed? (refer to SMART goals) | How will information be used? |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Was implementation of new knowledge and skills advocated, facilitated, and supported? |  |  |  |
| Are participants aware of how organizational leaders are supporting implementation of focal skills and practices? |  |  |  |
| Were barriers to implementation addressed quickly and efficiently? |  |  |  |
| Were sufficient resources for implementation made available? |  |  |  |
| Were successes recognized and shared? |  |  |  |
| What was the impact to the organization? |  |  |  |
| Did it affect the organization's climate and procedures? |  |  |  |

## Evaluation Level 4: Participants’ Use of New Knowledge & Skills

| What questions are addressed? | How will information be gathered? | What is measured or assessed? (refer to SMART goals) | How will information be used? |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Did participants effectively apply the new knowledge and skills to their practice? |  |  |  |

## Evaluation Level 5: Student Learning Outcomes

| What questions are addressed? | How will information be gathered? | What is measured or assessed? (refer to SMART goals) | How will information be used? |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What was the apparent impact on students? |  |  |  |
| Did student outcomes change? |  |  |  |
| Did inequities in student outcomes change? |  |  |  |
| Did indicators of students’ well-being change? |  |  |  |
| Did other student outcome goals (e.g., engagement or attendance) change? |  |  |  |

**Tip:** Remote professional learning opportunities in which adult learners assess their own learning and practice are associated with greater learning outcomes for participants, and the participants tend to report higher satisfaction. Participants share self-assessment results with leaders, who can then track individual and overall learning progress.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**Self-assessment questions for participants to respond to at the end of the professional learning** (may be tied to outcome goals)**:**

* How will I apply this information to my practice as an immediate turnaround?
* How will I apply this information for long term planning and change?
* How will I monitor the success of the application of this information?
* How could this information change my practice?
* Where do I need additional supports?
* What related training opportunities do I now need?

# Appendix

## Determining what to offer synchronously v. asynchronously for remote adult learning:[[14]](#footnote-14)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Synchronous learning may be preferable… | Asynchronous learning may be preferable… |
| To build community and connectionsTo keep some learners more engagedTo discuss a complex topic and avoid miscommunication or misunderstandingTo allow participants to problem-solve or practice a skill collaborativelyIf facilitators want to adapt the learning activities in real time to meet participants’ expressed needs (e.g., elaborate on and practice a skill that participants indicate is confusing)To allow for immediate feedback to participants and responses to questions | If participants’ schedules do not allow for a common learning timeIf participants wish to rewind or review materials at any timeTo allow participants to collaboratively review, revise or comment on materials, such as sample lesson plans or assessmentsIf participants have diverse learning needs and will participate in only the most relevant lessons/modulesTo avoid real-time technical difficulties or security breachesTo allow facilitators time to thoroughly consider/research responses to participants’ questions |

## Active learning in remote professional learning opportunities

### Active learning for educators:[[15]](#footnote-15)

* Engages educators as active, rather than passive, participants
* Requires educators to design and practice focal teaching strategies as part of the professional learning opportunity
* Involves interactive activities and authentic classroom artifacts
* Is relevant to teachers’ classroom contexts
* Is embedded in teachers’ ongoing practice
* Is research-based and associated with improved student outcomes

### Examples include:[[16]](#footnote-16)

* Coaching to support specific skills
* Ongoing feedback on teacher practice
* Analyzing and reflecting on new teaching strategies
* Engaging teachers in the same learning approaches that their students will use
* Analyzing teaching materials to determine how best to use them and to identify potential challenges
* Practicing new teaching strategies or materials by role-playing with colleagues
* Collaboratively analyzing student work, lesson plans, or case studies
* Reflecting on what was learned in the professional learning opportunity and how it can impact students

## Opportunities for participant interaction with facilitator/s in remote professional learning[[17]](#footnote-17)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Examples of synchronous interactions | Examples of asynchronous interactions |
| Real-time online polls to check participants’ understanding or preferencesQuestions or responses in a chat boxEmojis to show understanding or preferencesVirtual office hours with facilitators to ask questions or problem-solveFacilitated group discussions during a professional learning activityCoaching and/or feedback conversations | Surveys to check participants’ understanding or preferencesLesson plans, student work, or recordings of participants teaching, submitted to the facilitator for feedbackWritten feedback from facilitators and written reflections from participantsOngoing individual or group text chats with the facilitator |

## Opportunities for participant interaction with one another in remote professional learning[[18]](#footnote-18)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Examples of synchronous interactions | Examples of asynchronous interactions |
| Role-playing of skills and strategies in virtual break-out roomsDiscussions of a case study or problem of practiceDiscussions to analyze a lesson plan, student work, or recording of a lessonMeetings to plan how to implement learnings from a professional learning activity (e.g., applying a new strategy across the science department) | Message board to reflect on a case study or problem of practiceShared written reflections on an article, book chapter, etc.Shared document to analyze and comment on a lesson plan, student work, or recording of a lessonOngoing group text chats to share ideas or troubleshoot problems of practice |

## Practice and observation of focal skills

Effective professional learning aims for educators to gain or improve specific skills and engages the educators in observing and practicing these skills as part of the professional learning activity. Approaches to practicing skills can include:[[19]](#footnote-19)

* Viewing and collaborative discussion of lesson videos or real-time demonstration lessons
* Facilitated walk-throughs and analysis of lesson plans, materials, or assessments
* Virtual observations of colleagues implementing the skills in a lesson
* Structured, collaborative analysis of sample student work or teachers’ own student work
* Individual or collaborative planning of units, lessons or assessments that apply focal skills

To monitor and enhance the impact of professional learning on educator practice and student outcomes, professional learning facilitators and/or other leaders should continue to observe participants’ implementation of the focal skills. Approaches to remote observation can include: [[20]](#footnote-20)

* Real-time virtual “walkthroughs” from mentors, coaches or leaders
* Analysis of recorded lessons
* Review of lesson plans, materials, assessments, student work, or other artifacts

Note that all approaches to observation should involve high quality feedback and opportunities for observers and educators to discuss the feedback.

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