

# ED321155 1990-00-00 Managing Your Professional Development: A Guide for Part-Time Teachers of Adults. ERIC Digest.

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## Managing Your Professional Development: A Guide for Part-Time Teachers of Adults. ERIC

# Digest.

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Professional development is a continuing process consisting of activities that enhance professional growth. It may include workshops, independent reading and study, conferences, and consultation with peers and experts. Since its primary purpose is to benefit the individual, professional development should be planned and managed by the individual. As a part-time teacher of adults, you may develop your professional development plan in consultation with your supervisor, and you may receive help from others in evaluating and modifying teaching practices. On the other hand, since you may be working in relative isolation from other teachers and administrators, you may need to take sole responsibility for your professional development (Jones and Lowe 1982). Whether you work collaboratively or individually, you should be involved in identifying your professional development needs and in deciding what strategies to use to address those needs. Developed in conjunction with the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, this ERIC DIGEST provides information that you can use in planning and managing your professional development. First, the following aspects of professional development are covered: developing a plan, identifying resources, and receiving feedback. Some research- and practice-based guidelines that can be used in managing your professional development activities conclude the Digest.

## ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Taking charge of your professional development means that you will take responsibility for planning and carrying out a number of activities. Three important aspects of professional development--developing a plan, locating resources, and receiving feedback--are described here.

### DEVELOPING A PLAN

Developing a plan for professional development is essential because it will encourage you to address your professional self-improvement activities in a proactive manner. It will also provide a framework for the discipline and commitment needed to achieve the planned changes inherent in any professional development program (Jones and Lowe 1985).

The Personal Professional Development Model (Jones and Lowe 1982, 1985) is a planning process that has been used successfully by part-time teachers in achieving their professional development goals. The model consists of four phases: initiating, planning, managing, and evaluating. Three of the stages are reflective, that is, they involve contemplation and reflection to answer a series of questions. In only one stage--managing--is there activity. Each phase is accomplished by addressing a series

of steps as follows:

#### Initiating Phase (Reflective)

- What do I hope to accomplish?
- What are my learning objectives?
- What is my potential payoff?

#### Planning Phase (Reflective)

- What resources are available to me?
- What will be my learning activities?
- How will I judge the success of this project?

#### Managing Phase (Active)

- Complete each activity in the planning phase
- Organize and interpret data
- Record progress and/or report findings

#### Evaluative Phase (Reflective after the fulfillment of plan)

- To what extent did I achieve my objectives?
- To what extent did I select and pursue appropriate learning activities?

- What are my learning needs now? (Jones and Lowe 1985, p. 82)

Answering the questions in the initiating and planning phases can help commit you to a plan of action for your professional development. The managing and evaluative phases can be used to describe the outcomes of your project.

Teachers who used this model reported a number of advantages. First, they accomplished more because the model contributed to their organization and discipline in achieving their objectives. The model also provided structure and emphasized their responsibility for their own learning. Finally, the model reduced procrastination (Jones

and Lowe 1985).

## IDENTIFYING RESOURCES

Successful implementation of a professional development plan requires resources. You will need to identify the resources to carry out your professional development plan. These resources might include print and nonprint materials, staff development opportunities, and other adult educators.

In New Mexico, adult basic education teachers engaged in self-directed professional development activities found human resources to be of key importance in their projects. Books and articles were also essential in their learning, and several used structured activities such as workshops or classes in accomplishing their goals (Smith and Bowes 1986).

## RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Another important aspect of professional development is feedback. Feedback is necessary in order to see what progress you are making toward your goals and objectives. Although self-assessment can be one means of receiving feedback, it is important to involve others in this process as well. Adult basic education teachers have identified receiving feedback in a nonthreatening environment as a key element in successful professional development efforts (Lowe 1990a; Smith and Bowes 1986).

## GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The following guidelines for managing your professional development are derived from research and practices cited in the literature (Bowes 1984; Jones and Lowe 1985, 1990; Lowe 1990a,b; "Principles and Techniques for Effective ABE Staff Development" 1988; Smith and Bowes 1986).

1. Prepare for professional development activities by defining what is to be learned; deciding how to proceed; selecting methods, activities, and resources; securing your supervisor's support; and thinking through logistical considerations such as time, place, and pacing. This advance planning will help ensure success.
2. In developing your plan, begin by writing only one or two sentences about what you hope to accomplish and stating no more than three objectives. You will avoid frustration by not attempting too much at one time.
3. Be aware that such factors as lack of time, resources, or administrative support may deter or hinder your professional development. Acknowledging that such factors exist is the first step in overcoming them.
4. Form a network of individuals who can provide ongoing feedback on the types of

changes you are trying to make. The network can include other teachers in your program, your supervisor, and professional colleagues you have met at conferences and staff development activities.

5. Attend a professional conference as a part of your plan for professional development. Conferences are excellent places to meet people who have similar interests and to find out about new resources. Since conference attendance alone is not likely to change your performance, develop follow-up and reinforcing mechanisms such as keeping in touch with the people you meet, acquiring and using the resources, and so forth.

6. Enlist the assistance of colleagues at your work site. They can provide the support, resources, and ongoing feedback required to implement new practices.

7. Make on-site visits to other programs. These visits can enhance your understanding of teaching practices and expand your professional network.

8. Select one of your peers to be your partner in learning a new technique or procedure. Working in pairs provides an opportunity to practice and receive feedback in a nonthreatening environment.

9. Join an adult education professional association. Professional associations provide publications such as newsletters and journals that serve as resources. They also sponsor conferences and workshops that offer opportunities for professional networking. For more information about professional associations in adult education, contact the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education, 1112 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Suite 420, Washington, DC 20036.

10. Become familiar with the resources available through the ERIC system. ERIC, the Educational Resources Information Center, is a federally funded information system that collects and disseminates information on all aspects of education. A number of ERIC Clearinghouses provide free or low-cost resources that can be used to support your professional development. For more information on ERIC resources, contact the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090.

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