The Superintendent’s Quality Professional Learning Standards

The QPLS support the creation of a coherent system of professional learning policies and activities that leads to improved educator knowledge, skills, and dispositions and, ultimately, increased student learning results. The seven broad standards serve as a foundation for the content, processes, and conditions essential to all educator professional learning. Three to five major elements for each standard, along with indicators of practice, describe criteria for quality professional learning. Together, the professional learning standards, elements, and indicators help educators and stakeholders make decisions about what quality professional learning is and how it should be supported.

The standards are not meant to be used to evaluate any educator in any aspect of his or her work. Rather, the QPLS are intended to help educators, local educational agencies, and the state develop and contextualize professional learning system goals and plans. Working from this common vision, everyone connected to increasing educator excellence—teachers; principals; district, county, and state education agency staff; university professors; professional learning and technical assistance providers; and policymakers and other stakeholders—can transform California’s professional learning system into one that ensures that every student benefits from an excellent teacher and principal.

Data
Quality professional learning uses varied sources and kinds of information to guide priorities, design, and assessments.

ELEMENT A: ADDRESSING STUDENTS’ CAPABILITIES AND NEEDS
Quality professional learning is continuously informed by multiple measures of student data.

ELEMENT B: ADDRESSING EDUCATORS’ CAPABILITIES AND NEEDS
Quality professional learning develops from an understanding of educators’ current capacity and future development needs.

ELEMENT C: PROGRAM/SCHOOL QUALITY
Quality professional learning uses schoolwide information to determine the current policies, practices, and outcomes that are the most essential priorities for educators’ professional learning.

ELEMENT D: CONTINUOUS REVIEW OF QUALITY AND IMPACT
Quality professional learning continuously improves through regular and long-term review of its purposes, components, processes, and outcomes.
Content and Pedagogy

Quality professional learning enhances educators’ expertise to increase students’ capacity to learn and thrive.

ELEMENT A: CURRICULUM CONTENT AND MATERIALS
Quality professional learning builds educators’ knowledge and understanding of subject-matter curricula and materials so that all students meet content and performance expectations and are ready for college and careers.

ELEMENT B: PEDAGOGY
Quality professional learning expands educators’ instructional and assessment skills, practices, and behaviors so that all students meet content and performance expectations and are ready for college and careers.

ELEMENT C: LEARNING SUPPORT
Quality professional learning develops educators’ attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions to ensure that all students have differentiated support to meet content and performance expectations and are ready for college and careers.

Equity

Quality professional learning focuses on equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for all students, with an emphasis on addressing achievement and opportunity disparities between student groups.

ELEMENT A: ACADEMIC EQUITY
Quality professional learning increases educators’ capacity to improve learning outcomes for all students, focusing on those with special needs; those with cultural, racial, and linguistic differences; those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds; and those in foster care.

ELEMENT B: SYSTEMIC EQUITY
Quality professional learning helps educators develop equitable and inclusive policies and align them with implemented practices.

ELEMENT C: CLIMATE EQUITY
Quality professional learning facilitates safe, fair, and respectful school environments for all students and improves educators’ understanding of the cultural, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs of each learner.
Design and Structure

Quality professional learning reflects evidence-based approaches, recognizing that focused, sustained learning enables educators to acquire, implement, and assess improved practices.

ELEMENT A: FOCUS AND TIME
Quality professional learning is purposeful, focused, and sustained over time.

ELEMENT B: EMBEDDED IN PRACTICE
Quality professional learning provides many opportunities for educators to analyze their practice and apply new learning.

ELEMENT C: DIFFERENTIATION
Quality professional learning is relevant—building on the skills, knowledge, and learning needs of educators across career stages, grade levels, assignments, and contexts.

ELEMENT D: ACTIVE AND VARIED METHODS OF LEARNING
Quality professional learning employs diverse, research-based learning designs, with an emphasis on the active engagement of educators.

Collaboration and Shared Accountability

Quality professional learning facilitates the development of a shared purpose for student learning and collective responsibility for achieving it.

ELEMENT A: COLLABORATIVE CULTURE
Quality professional learning builds a culture of collaboration and mutual trust by facilitating opportunities for educators to work together to strengthen their practice and improve student learning.

ELEMENT B: SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY
Quality professional learning builds the capacity of educators to commit to shared ownership and accountability for effective professional practice and student learning.

ELEMENT C: EXTERNAL NETWORKS
Quality professional learning includes external collaborations that provide effective options for educators with diverse experiences and needs to improve their practice.
Resources
Quality professional learning dedicates resources that are adequate, accessible, and allocated appropriately toward established priorities and outcomes.

**ELEMENT A: FISCAL CAPITAL**
Quality professional learning is supported by sufficient, sustainable funding leveraged from both current and new sources.

**ELEMENT B: HUMAN CAPITAL**
Quality professional learning utilizes various sources of expertise and experience to address individual and collective learning goals.

**ELEMENT C: TIME**
Quality professional learning maximizes time for educators to engage in learning and collaboration, both within and outside of the school day.

**ELEMENT D: EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS**
Quality professional learning ensures the availability of a variety of tools so that educators have equitable access to relevant and effective learning opportunities.

Alignment and Coherence
Quality professional learning contributes to a coherent system of educator learning and support that connects district and school priorities and needs with state and federal requirements and resources.

**ELEMENT A: POLICIES AND REGULATIONS**
Quality professional learning integrates policy expectations into strategies that are focused on identified needs within local contexts.

**ELEMENT B: DISTRICT AND SCHOOL ALIGNMENT**
Quality professional learning provides ways for districts and schools to link educators’ growth goals, expertise, and resources across multiple initiatives, programs, agreements, and improvement efforts.

**ELEMENT C: PROFESSIONAL CAREER CONTINUUM**
Quality professional learning is a part of a seamless system that provides increasingly more complex opportunities for educators to learn and practice skills that advance expertise throughout their careers, and that makes leadership roles available as educators progress.

This is a summary of the publication, *The Superintendent’s Quality Professional Learning Standards* (California Department of Education, March 2015), available at https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/qpls.asp. For planning, implementation or evaluation of professional learning programs and activities, please consult the full document that includes additional information.

This summary was prepared by the California Comprehensive Center at WestEd.