



## Planning Professional Development: Getting Started

Professional development can be a powerful and rewarding opportunity for teachers to improve their skills and expand their knowledge. Building and district administrators often play a key role in teachers' professional development by assisting teachers with procuring the skills, knowledge and support they need to develop and sustain place-based learning. Here is one approach to consider when planning professional development:

### 1 Define the near-term scope of place-based education in the classroom, building and/or district.

#### TEACHERS:

- Review curriculum and standards documents that relate to your teaching assignment.

#### ADMINISTRATORS:

- Review building and district curricula and instructional plans.

### 2 As appropriate, create a long-term goal for place-based education in the classroom/building/district.

#### TEACHERS:

- Identify possible opportunities for place-based education, based on your analysis.

#### ADMINISTRATORS:

- Determine which teacher(s), classroom(s), grade level(s) and subject area(s) could be involved in the near term.
- Approach affected teachers to gauge their willingness and get their feedback.

### 3 Assess readiness and needs.

#### TEACHERS:

- Review the basics of what is involved in facilitating place-based education.
- Assess your current practice through the lens of place-based education. Make a list of areas of practice that you want to improve. This list might include building your content knowledge, strengthening certain elements of your instruction or something else.
- Determine how much time you can invest in 1) participating in professional development about place-based education and 2) implementing place-based education with students as part of your instruction. Then prioritize your list of needs.
- Meet with your administrator and other participating teachers to discuss your individual and/or collective needs. Remember that launching or developing your place-based practice doesn't happen all at once – it's a process. But you can get started right away!

#### ADMINISTRATORS:

- Review the basics of place-based education, focusing on how building- and district-level support can advance this practice.
- Review your building's and district's policies (e.g., those related to field trips; release time for teachers to attend professional development events or work with peers in teams) to ensure that these are supportive of place-based education.
- Identify potential sources of funding for teachers' professional development in the school's budget and external partners' contributions.
- Meet with participating teachers to review the needs of individuals and teams. Highlight relevant, supportive policies and potential funding.

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**Identify specific professional learning opportunities that relate to identified needs. Seek guidance from external support providers who may know of helpful resources (e.g., mentors, networks, associations or other professional communities of practice related to place-based education).**

**TEACHERS:**

- Have a broad view of professional development: It's more than in-service workshops and conferences. Be creative!
- If you are experienced with place-based education and wish to "learn more as you go," identify specific professional learning opportunities that relate to your high-priority needs.
- If you are new to place-based education and don't have easy access to a coach or a mentor, consider starting with foundational training in place-based education.

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

- Have a broad view of professional development: It's more than in-service workshops and conferences. Think outside the box!
- Be on the lookout for professional development opportunities related to place-based education and inform teachers about them.
- Remember there is strength in numbers, so cultivate a team approach to place-based education within the building or district.

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**Invest and participate fully in professional development.**

**TEACHERS:**

- Effective professional learning should involve time for teachers to discuss and reflect with colleagues and others. Be a good listener and contributor; take time for individual reflection about how you can incorporate what you learn into your practice. Sometimes even small "teacher moves" can make a big difference in students' engagement and learning.

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

- Provide time and support for teachers to participate in their chosen professional development activities.
- Position teachers to share with other teachers' key learnings from professional development. Sharing among teachers is a proven method of professional development and can build a sense of community among staff.
- Share information with other administrators, the school board, parents and students, and the broader community about teachers' efforts to improve their place-based education practice. This sends a clear message to all involved that lifelong learning is valued and important, and that everyone in the school is a learner.

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**Incorporate what you have discovered and learned into your practice.**

**TEACHERS:**

- Make use of what you've learned. Try out new strategies and tools – and use new resources. Keep track of what works and what doesn't. Seek help when you need it.

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

- Provide time and support for teachers to try new strategies and use new resources.
- Check in with participating teachers to gauge progress, identify problems and brainstorm solutions.

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**Assess results and celebrate success.**

**TEACHERS:**

- Do your best to assess the impact of place-based education on students' academic achievement and attitudes about learning.
- Adjust your practice based on achievement data and student feedback.
- Take time to celebrate with your students and community partners. Identify the positive outcomes and work together to solve any persistent issues.

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

- Inform the community about students' place-based education efforts.
- Lend support to public events that celebrate students' place-based projects.
- Document the results of place-based education in your building or district, and make the work visible to other educators.