

Making Time for Teacher Professional Learning

The purpose of this tool is to review how time is organized for teachers to engage in professional learning and capacity building.

In the Alliance's February 2, 2016, webinar, *Teaching for Deeper Learning for All Students* (<http://all4ed.org/webinar-event/feb-2-16/>), panelists stress that teachers should be organized in collaborative teams and focused on student outcomes that demonstrate deeper learning. They acknowledge supportive policies such as use of time, collaboration, and professional learning.

For example, shared planning time can be used as a foundation for a strong school culture that supports deeper learning. Teachers need time to develop their practice, adapt to new learning, and debrief and reflect with their peers and colleagues. Sufficient time should be set aside for professional learning so these strategies can develop, evolve, and become part of a teacher's individual practice that ultimately will drive an effective plan for professional learning. Sample strategies include

- designating time in the school day and week for educators to collaborate and connect (e.g., twenty minutes a day for Twitter, an hour a week for an online community of practice, face-to-face review of student work, etc.);
- building in teacher planning time when developing instructional approaches or strategies. (e.g., when doing an interdisciplinary unit, provide opportunities for teachers to share facilitation responsibilities to

free up time for selected team members to collaborate, etc.);

- scheduling coordinated department planning times on a weekly basis;
- developing a coaching program in which staff members immersed in connected learning can be paired with staff who are not; and
- providing time for weekly professional learning communities.

Conversation Starters

- Do teachers have time within the regular school day for professional learning and sharing? How is it organized?
- Is the time teachers have sufficient for personal learning? What are the challenges and opportunities for making time available?
- Does the district have policies in place (e.g., early student release once a month, shared planning times) to support teacher professional learning? If not, what policies might be needed?
- Does the district support practices such as communities of practice, critical friends, and so on, by providing teachers time within the school day to participate?

