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Mission and Principles of Professional Development

**Prepared by the U.S. Department of Education's
Professional Development Team**

Professional development plays an essential role in successful education reform. Professional development serves as the bridge between where prospective and experienced educators are now and where they will need to be to meet the new challenges of guiding all students in achieving to higher standards of learning and development.

High-quality professional development as envisioned here refers to rigorous and relevant content, strategies, and organizational supports that ensure the preparation and career-long development of teachers and others whose competence, expectations and actions influence the teaching and learning environment. Both pre- and in-service professional development require partnerships among schools, higher education institutions and other appropriate entities to promote inclusive learning communities of everyone who impacts students and their learning. Those within and outside schools need to work together to bring to bear the ideas, commitment and other resources that will be necessary to address important and complex educational issues in a variety of settings and for a diverse student body.

Equitable access for all educators to such professional development opportunities is imperative. Moreover, professional development works best when it is part of a system wide effort to improve and integrate the recruitment, selection, preparation, initial licensing, induction, ongoing development and support, and advanced certification of educators.

High-quality professional development should incorporate all of the principles stated below. Adequately addressing each of these principles is necessary for a full realization of the potential of individuals, school communities and institutions to improve and excel.

The mission of professional development is to prepare and support educators to help all students achieve to high standards of learning and development.

Professional Development --

- *Focuses on teachers as central to student learning, yet includes all other members of
 - the school community;
- * Focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement;
- *Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals,
 - and others in the school community;
- * Reflects best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership;
- * Enables teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential elements in teaching to high standards;
- * Promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools;
- * Is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development;
- * Requires substantial time and other resources;
- * Is driven by a coherent long-term plan;
- * Is evaluated ultimately on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning; and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts.

Professional Development Team. (1995, July 5). *Mission and principles of professional development*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

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