

## Handout 2: Contextual Factors Influencing Professional Development

Many contextual factors influence teacher professional development.<sup>1</sup> Review the four categories of contextual factors—teachers, materials and instruction, school culture and logistics, and professional learning—and the related prompts. Reflect on your current goals and priorities for mathematics professional learning in your school division. Pick one of these priorities and consider the factors that will influence the professional development related to that priority in your school division. Review the factors and respond to the prompts in the table below. Consider focusing in on one grade span (i.e., PK–5, 6–8, 9–12) as you answer the questions. You will be provided an opportunity to reflect on your responses and share your reflections with other participants in the chat during the webinar.

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<sup>1</sup> Loucks-Horsley, S., Stiles, K.E., Mundry, S., Love, N., & Hewson, P.W. (2010). *Designing professional development for teachers of science and mathematics*. Corwin.

**Table 1. Contextual factors influencing professional development**

*Teachers*

1. What do you see as teachers’ strengths in mathematics content?

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2. What do you see as teachers’ pedagogical strengths?

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3. What specific barriers have teachers faced when implementing new practices in their classrooms?

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4. What positive or negative experiences have teachers had with professional development?

*Materials and instruction*

1. Are there any issues with curricular materials being available to all teachers?

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2. Are there concerns about whether the curricular materials are focused, rigorous, and coherent?

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3. Are there concerns about whether the curricular materials are implemented as intended?

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4. What are key ways that the learning environment is conducive to all students’ participation and collaboration?

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5. What, if any, barriers prevent students—including those living in poverty, who are English learner students, and those with special needs—from having full access to rigorous curricula?

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6. What, if any, barriers prevent students from engaging in problem-solving and developing reasoning skills during instruction?

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**Table 1. Contextual factors influencing professional development**

*School culture and logistics*

1. Are school structures in place that support collaborative practice—for example, time for teachers of the same content and/or grade levels to meet during the school day, ready access to relevant student learning data, opportunities for professional learning tied to classroom practice?

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2. In what ways, if any, are teachers involved in ongoing inquiry into beliefs about students and their capacities?

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3. In what ways are assumptions about race, socio-economic status, educational, and linguistic differences among students talked about openly and examined critically

*Professional learning*

1. How much do teacher teams focus their discussions on mathematics teaching and learning?

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2. In what ways do teachers share their practice with others?

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3. In what ways do teachers work collaboratively to solve instructional challenges?

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4. Is reflective dialogue a norm?