Adapting Educator Professional Learning to a Virtual Environment
Summary of Strategies

Planning

Developing Content

Develop courses that are experiential and leverage learners' background knowledge and professional experience.

Consider these characteristics when developing online course content:

- Integrate theories, research, and models of human learning. For example, use Bloom's Taxonomy or Webb's Depth of Knowledge to build complexity over time in learning activities.

- Model teaching strategies.

- Prioritize, monitor, and coordinate resources used in online course content.

- Develop and encourage educators to reach full leadership capacity.

- Include opportunities for educators to implement the strategies they have learned.

Align online professional learning with school improvement goals and think about whether these goals have shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consider how to restructure professional learning to deliver content in manageable chunks, while supporting the independent tasks participants will use to apply the content.

Give teachers the opportunity to take courses online for credit towards license renewal, professional development hours, etc.

Provide sufficient resources for participants to understand the professional learning goals and intended outcomes, but not so many that participants are overwhelmed.

Plan ahead by considering multiple scenarios. What kind of teacher professional learning will be necessary if students return to school in the fall and what kind of teacher professional learning will be necessary if they don't return to in-classroom instruction until 2021?

When planning how to model teaching strategies, use high-quality teaching videos available online to share with your teachers.

Including Participant Voice

Consider administering an online survey to get a sense of each participant's context so that you can develop activities that incorporate their existing experience and strengths.

Provide participants with a voice in the development of experiences and input on how they might be adjusted over time to take feedback into account.

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Creating a Development Team

Convene an online learning development team of adult learners.

- When grouping adult learners into online learning development teams, remember that they come with a wide range of experiences, strengths, and comfort levels with technology.

- Adult learners are more motivated and engaged when they identify their own learning goals and can influence the direction of their team's learning.

- Ensure as wide a range of representation as possible on this team, including administrators, staff developers, teachers from a range of grades and subjects, and district or school technology personnel if available.

- Try to include digital natives on the team in addition to staff who may be less comfortable with technology.

- Focus your online learning development team on three phases of content development:

1. Content analysis (who will participate in this training? What skills need to be developed, and at what level? What is the intended outcome?).

2. Content design (develop a presentation strategy).

3. Content development (technical considerations, including platforms, whether content is delivered synchronously or asynchronously etc.).

Implementation

Presentation Strategies

Use more self-directed and asynchronous methods, with participants coming together periodically as a community to debrief and discuss course content and consider its applicability to their practice.

Present online content in a variety of formats to help deepen and facilitate understanding, as all learners learn in different ways.

- Formats can include video conferencing, pre-recorded video presentation, print, or virtual study groups or book clubs.

Focus on problems and solutions, as adult learners are interested in immediately applying new knowledge and skills to their practice. Provide feedback and scaffold teachers' learning.

Incorporate updated and relevant research on evidence-based instructional practices.

Resource Implementation

Try assigning each participant a peer "buddy" with whom to regularly check in, debrief content, and share learning and best practices.

Create professional learning communities committed to continuous and sustainable improvement.

Participant Considerations

Encourage participants to pursue different angles or interests related to the topic at hand and present their findings to the group.

Instill collective responsibility by promoting shared leadership (i.e., by assigning participants to the development team, asking participants to facilitate specific topic-area discussions, etc.).

Encourage active participation to support the social nature of learning.

Supplement district- or school-developed professional learning with existing free or low-cost resources.

Provide sustained support for initial implementation and throughout the professional learning experience.

Promote collaboration among educators.

Be flexible in how participants engage with and demonstrate their knowledge.

Follow-up

Use a variety of sources and system data to assess and evaluate learning.

- Ensure long-term lasting change through continuous professional learning support.
- Provide feedback for educators promptly and personally in different formats (written, video, or virtual meetings etc.).
- Administrators might consider attending a cross-section of online lessons to determine if specific issues are rising to the surface to be addressed and to provide feedback to teachers.
- Consider scheduling "office hours" or weekly drop-in virtual hangouts so that participants can check in with trainers and peers as needed.
- Consider using instant messaging platforms for feedback, which may also provide a medium for real-time communication. Provide parameters around their use.

References

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