

# [ Taking a Critical Look at Professional Development ]

By: Jane Kennedy

Teachers understand that if we want learning to occur, we must have a well-developed lesson plan. We do this before we head into the classroom. However, how often do we receive a well-planned lesson when we are the students? Have you ever wondered during a professional development presentation, “Does this facilitator place any emphasis on a well-planned lesson that is built for me to learn and implement the content?” As teachers, we know that there are certain phases that must be addressed if we want our students to learn. As adult students, do we receive the same support?

The Elevated Achievement Learning Model is made up of five phases: setting the Learning Context, stating the Learning Outcome, engaging in the Learning Process, producing the Learning Demonstration, and implementing the Learning Application. These five phases help answer the following questions: Why is the learning important? What will my students learn? How will my students learn it? How will my students show that they have learned it? How will my students continue to use this learning?

Let’s reflect on your latest professional development. Did you receive the support you needed to own the content? This exercise will not only remind you of the critical attributes of excellent professional development but also help you fill in the gaps when something was lacking.

## **Learning Context: Why is the learning important?**

During this phase the facilitator specifically introduces what teachers will be learning, why it is important to learn it, how this learning connects to previous learnings, and how they will apply what they have learned in the future.

- As I reflect on my most recent professional development:
- Was it clear what we would be learning and why it was important we learned it?

Did we understand how this new information related to our previous trainings and how we would apply this new learning?

### **Learning Outcome: What will I learn?**

During this phase the facilitator specifically introduces what and how teachers will be learning during the Learning Process phase and how they will demonstrate their learning during the Learning Demonstration phase.

As I reflect on my most recent professional development:

- Were we provided with a clear objective for the session?
- Did we up front understand what would occur and why this process would be specific to the identified objective?
- Did the facilitator tell us exactly what we would do to show our new knowledge?

### **Learning Process: How will I learn it?**

This is the phase of learning where teachers are actively engaged in learning the content or skills required by the identified objective. During this phase, the facilitator will introduce the session and will inform teachers about the way in which they will be learning the content. The facilitator will frequently assess learning and adjust as needed.

As I reflect on my most recent professional development:

- Were we actively engaged in the learning process?
- Was it clear that the process was designed with the outcome in mind and delivered in such a manner to reflect that outcome?
- Did the facilitator check for our understanding throughout and adjust accordingly?

### **Learning Demonstration: How will I demonstrate that I have learned it?**

This is the phase of learning where teachers produce work that shows they can perform the skill or process independently and accurately.

As I reflect on my most recent professional development:

- Was there a clear expectation of demonstrating learning, beyond a session evaluation?



- Did we understand specifically what we were accountable for and how that it would be measured?
- Were we even provided the opportunity to demonstrate our new learning?

**Learning Application: How will I continue to use this learning?**

This phase connects previous and current learning to subsequent learning as teachers retain the skill or process for future use, apply the skill or process in a variety of ways, and transfer the skill or content into other situations.

As I reflect on my most recent professional development:

- Was there a connection between this session and any previous sessions?
- Did we understand what training might follow and why?
- Did we understand how this learning could be extended beyond today?

As you reflected on the questions above and the answer to any of the questions was “no”, you need to ask “why”? You need to ask why best practice is not being utilized in the delivery of professional development as it is expected to be in every classroom lesson. You are provided with only a few rare opportunities for professional growth. You must insist that each one be the best it can be. The days of Ice-Breaker activities, Sit and Get PD, and evaluation form fill-out before departing must be a thing of the past.

**We know better and must insist on better.**