

**MPEA – Standard II PBL  
Superintendent**

**I. Standard and Indicators for Standard II**

**II. Problem II “Building Skills in a Learning Community”**

- Product Specifications
- Guiding Questions
- Resources
- Key Terms
- Support Materials
- Notes to Instructor
- Other
- Critical Needs Information
- Performance Criteria
- URLs
- Pilot Test Information

## **Standard II PBL**

*A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.*

### **Key knowledge and performance concepts in Standard II**

- *Student Growth and Development*
- *Applied Learning Theories*
- *Motivational Theories*
- *Curriculum Design*
- *Effective Instruction*
- *Measurement and Evaluation and Assessment*
- *Diversity*
- *Change Process*
- *Technology*
- *Staff Development*
- *Culture*
- *all individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect*
- *professional development focused on student learning with the school vision and goals*
- *barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed*
- *diversity is considered in developing learning experiences*
- *life long learning is encouraged and modeled*
- *there is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff*
- *technologies are used in teaching and learning*
- *multiple opportunities to learn are available to all students*
- *the school is organized and aligned for success*
- *curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programs are designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined*
- *curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies*
- *the school culture and climate are assessed on a regular basis*
- *a variety of sources of information is used to make decisions*
- *student learning is assessed using a variety of techniques*
- *multiple sources of information regarding performance are used by staff and students*
- *a variety of supervisory and evaluation models is employed*
- *pupil personnel programs are developed to meet the needs of students and their families.*

## **Problem II**

### **“Building Skills in a Learning Community”**

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#### **Scenario:**

You are the newly appointed Assistant Superintendent for Instruction of a district trying desperately to create a school district that utilizes cutting edge processes for developing teacher skills support student learning. The district has been successful in many of its endeavors and the superintendent in particular has created an organization that prizes collaboration, innovation and professionalism.

The board is supportive, the community is involved and the feeling of unity of purpose is everywhere. The only problem is that student achievement is not increasing at a rate commensurate with the climate. You think you know why.

As you reviewed the district staff development program, you found that the majority of staff development efforts were based upon exploratories. You counted no fewer than 26 separate “in-service” or “workshop” topics. The staff development activities were anywhere from three hours to one day and were led by some of the top consultants in the nation. They were the classic, “Drop In, Drop Off, and Drop Out” staff development. Teachers’ knowledge bases were increased but nothing made it into classroom practice. In other words the teachers could “talk the talk” but they couldn’t “walk the walk”.

Teachers and administrators are not married to the current arrangement. They enjoy the intellectual challenge of current system but realize that there must be a better way to affect teacher behavior in classroom and ultimately raise student achievement. They will support a plan that makes sense and has a promise of success.

After sharing your observation with the superintendent, you have been given the “green light” to design a staff development program that is consistent with the “learning community philosophy” that has been created in the past several years in the district. The superintendent wants a proposal submitted to the district’s advisory council (administrators, teachers, community members, parents, and some students) in two weeks.

Money, within reason, is not an issue. After all, the price tag just to bring in 26 consultants was almost \$65,000. It has intimated that as much as \$250,000 might be available at the district level but the superintendent would also like you to research potential grant opportunities that could augment this amount. Final budgetary considerations will be made when you make your proposal and you are almost certain that the \$250,000 figure is probably not going to happen.

There is no staff development department to speak of. In the past, everything was set up through your office and the topics selected for staff development seemed to come from your predecessor or the recommendations of persons returning from national conferences.

While there are number of appropriate tacks you could take, the superintendent has asked that you start your research with the “learning communities” concepts of DuFour and Eaker and spread out from there. The superintendent specifically has requested that the proposal include the following:

**Product Specifications:**

A proposal for a comprehensive staff development plan based upon the tenets of “the Learning Community” with:

- A. A definition of “Learning Communities”
- B. A research-based rationale for the staff development plan submitted including:
  - a. References to a recognized set of standards for staff development.
  - b. Specific reference as to how collaboration and teacher efficacy will be enhanced.
  - c. Specific reference as to how continuous improvement will be enhanced.
  - d. How staff development will be related to student achievement issues.
- C. A schematic overview of the organizational structure for delivery and governance of staff development in the district.
- D. Specific processes that will be used to create “Learning Communities”.
- E. A list of key personnel needed in the staff development including:
  - a. Recommended new positions.
  - b. Recommended role changes in existing positions.
- F. Brief job descriptions for any of the above positions.
- G. A proposed budget for the program including a list of potential resources. External funding (grants, partnerships, endowments etc.) for financing the staff development efforts should include:
  - a. Contact persons.
  - b. Prospects for support.
  - c. Attractiveness of the resource (stipulations, matching funds, fit with district, etc.)
  - d. Some ideas on how to evaluate the staff development program.

**Guiding Questions (for use in guiding your thinking):**

- A. What is a “Learning Community”?
- B. What effect does creating a “Learning Community” have on staff development?
- C. Where does one go to find standards for staff development?
- D. How does one build in processes that support collaboration, efficacy, and continuous improvement?
- E. What general teaching paradigms should be learned and used by the majority of teachers? Why?
- F. What kind of staff development organization is best? District-based? School-based? A combination?

- G. If exploratories have served a useful purpose in the past, should they be eliminated? How can you keep a staff development program from becoming stagnant?
- H. Are there models of staff development available to look at in your state? In your area? In the nation? Where can you find out about them?
- I. How do you make a staff development results-oriented; able to make a difference in student achievement?
- J. How does one evaluate a program of this type? What should be the "bottom line"?

**Resources:**

Texts:

- 1. Professional Learning Communities at Work – Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker, National Education Service, Bloomington Indiana 1998 ISBN 1-879639

Journals:

- 1. Educational Leadership – Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- 2. Journal of Staff Development – National Council for Staff Development

Internet Resources:

- 1. Community for Learning: Building on Diversity – Basic information concerning Learning communities and school reform <http://www.temple.edu/lss/cfl.htm>
- 2. Creating Learning Communities – An on-line resource center for Learning communities <http://www.creatinglearningcommunities.org/>
- 3. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory – Comprehensive site for building learning communities including lengthy text on all elements of learning communities. <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change34/3.html>
- 4. The Learning Place – Australian site dedicated to building learning "Professional Learning Communities". Great source for research and research summaries on elements of learning communities. <http://www.learningplace.com.au/>
- 5. Missouri DESE site on Missouri Professional Learning Communities <http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divimprove/sii/prolearning/index.htm> Other state departments and their potential resources may be found at <http://www.ccsso.org/seamenu.html>
- 6. Pacific Resources for Education and Learning – PREL has several resources on building learning communities located on this site. <http://www.prel.org/>
- 7. The George Lucas Foundation – Changing information but a source of numerous articles on parent participation, school reform and school improvement. <http://www.glef.org/>
- 8. Successlink – Includes a "best practices" section which addresses staff development, teaching, and learning that might assist in this case. <http://www.successlink.org/>
- 9. The National Staff Development Council – A leading organization in standards for staff development. <http://www.nsd.org/>

10. Pathways to School Improvement – Sponsored by NCREL, Pathways offers articles on critical issues concerning school improvement. Topics include Family-Community and Leadership. <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/>
11. The National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform (NCCSR) - NCCSR is the central gateway to good information on comprehensive school reform. NCCSR collects and disseminates information that builds the capacity of schools to raise the academic achievement of all students. <http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu>

**Key Terms:**

- Capacity
- Cognitive Coaching
- Content-Specific Pedagogy
- Continuous Improvement
- Efficacy
- Empowerment
- Informed Optimism
- Job-Embedded Staff Development
- Peer Coaching
- Productive Leadership
- Productive Pedagogy
- Reflection
- Results-Oriented Staff Development
- Shared Leadership
- Shared Values

**Support Materials:**

- District Information sheet - enclosed

### Notes to Instructor:

- 1 The following ISLLC criteria are supported by this problem. You can enhance the students experience by assuring that either appropriate instruction in these areas has been given, or additional resource made available to support student decision-making.
  - a. *Applied Learning Theories*
  - b. *Effective Instruction*
  - c. *Measurement and Evaluation and Assessment*
  - d. *Change Process*
  - e. *Culture*
  - f. *Staff Development*
  - g. *Barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed*
  - h. *Professional development focused on student learning*
  - i. *The school is organized and aligned for success*
  - j. *A variety of sources of information is used to make decisions*
- 2 You have several options in using this case. First you can assign this case individually or in groups, either will be okay. Second, you can have students use the optional district profile or you can have them review and use their own districts to set the parameters for the exercise. Lastly, you may modify the project to give more or less direction or requirements.
- 3 This assignment may be given after a discussion of learning communities or the concept can be introduced by the project itself. If the project introduces the topic, you may wish to provide a more directed reading list and modify the terms list to cause students to understand the broader aspects of learning communities. An in-depth study of Dufour and Eaker's work is preferable.
- 4 When the students make their proposal you may wish to force them to do some prioritization by reducing the amount of money available for the staff development program they have developed. This will cause them to think deeply about the program they have developed and work on their prioritization and communication skills as well as force them to better utilize outside funding sources. You can select a predetermined amount or reduce each proposal by a specified percentage, 20% for instance. Then have the students resubmit their proposals along with a rationale for cuts and changes. This will increase the realism for students and introduce them to adjusting to unanticipated input.
- 5 As written, the project should take 6-9 hours of classroom time over a two-week period.

### Other

You can have students present their findings to the class as they might at a board meeting. A separate list of criteria for the presentation could be used to assess the students' communication strategies, tact, presentation skills etc. The "board members" (class mates) could give feedback to the presenters on the appropriateness of the presentation.

When the students make their proposal you may wish to force them to do some prioritization by reducing the amount of money available for the staff development program they have developed. This will cause them to think deeply about the program they have developed and work on their prioritization and communication skills as well as force them to better utilize outside funding sources. You can select a predetermined amount or reduce each proposal by a specified percentage, 20% for instance. Then have the students resubmit their proposals along with a rationale for cuts and changes. This will increase the realism for students and introduce them to adjusting to unanticipated input.

You could also present information on how to evaluate instructional paradigms for determining their utility for helping students and raise the expectations for the selection of the base instructional paradigms in the project. The students could provide specific rationales as to why each paradigm was selected, proposed evaluation criteria and expected results. You could offer more "district information" to assist in their decision-making. For instance, low teachers expectations for certain sub-groups in the student population may lead to a program recommendation such as TESA.

**Critical Needs Areas Addressed:**

- #3 Ensuring all students, especially at-risk, children with special needs and gifted students are successful in school.
- #5 Providing information, which will assist public school administrators and teachers in understanding the process of [site-based] decision making.

<b>Performance Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
Applied Learning Theories	Learning paradigms selected have no distinguishable rationale for implementation or are not recognized as effective practices in the research.	Learning paradigms selected have general rationale for implementation. Research supports inclusion on a general basis.	Learning paradigms selected have specific reference to expectations on student learning contained in rationale for implementation. Research supports inclusion as an effective practice.
Effective Instruction			
The school is organized and aligned for success	Staff development plan is disconnected with other aspects of the district.	Staff development provides a good district-wide organizational pattern. Good structural alignment within the program	Staff development not only provides good structural alignment within the program but recognizes the need to align with existing processes within the district (supervision, evaluation, orientation etc.)

Change Process	There is no reference for the need to consider change theory.	References are to change theory only in the context of the organization.	Documentation includes references to change at all levels of the organization as well as individuals.
Culture	No reference is made to establishing a results-oriented culture.	Culture is addressed only in the context of the status quo.	Present culture is considered and recommendations include references to establishing a results-oriented culture in the future.
Staff Development	Staff development plan is not standards based or consistent with effective staff development practices needed for the exercise.	Staff development plan is standards based and consistent with effective staff development practices needed for the exercise.	Staff development plan is comprehensive. It exceeds normal expectations for staff development programs though its innovative structures or processes.
Measurement and Evaluation and Assessment	There is no reference to measurement, evaluation or assessment present or future.	There is reference to measurement, evaluation or assessment issues for consideration in future staff development endeavors.	A comprehensive approach to data gathering is included with a strong emphasis on student learning as a major outcome.
Professional development focused on student learning	Student learning is not the ultimate focus of the staff development plan.	Student learning is stated as the focus of the program.	Processes and program evaluation is predicated upon student learning as the ultimate focus of staff development.
Barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed	There is no reference to student barriers to learning. Funding sources do not address potential fiscal problems.	Reference is made to student barriers. Funding sources are mentioned	Identification of barriers, past and future is a major part of the staff development. Grants partnerships etc. are listed which will address fiscal and other programmic issues.
A variety of sources of information is used to make decisions	Research is not consulted	Research is used in a limited capacity. There is no reference to	Evidence of research and recommendations from learned

		obtaining information from stakeholders.	societies including state departments and national standards. Provisions for including stakeholders in the process are present.
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**Optional District Information:**

Your school district is located within a medium rural community of approximately 26,000. The district has a population of approximately 37,000 with elementary attendance areas in several smaller towns in an eight-mile radius. The community is well educated, relatively young and very supportive of education. They have become accustomed to research-based, innovative “cutting edge” practices of the school and are proud of the reputation of being a “lighthouse” school district. The population has maintained a fairly steady growth pattern that has kept the population of your school stable over the past decade. The principal cause of growth in the community is the proximity to a much larger metropolitan area of 250,000 where many of your patrons work in higher education and other professional endeavors. Minority populations are relatively small with Hispanic children representing approximately 5%, African-American children representing approximately 4%, and Asian children representing approximately 2%, of the school age population in your district. The Hispanic population is essentially a newcomer and language and culture have been an issue. Other minority populations have scored as well as or better than the district means.

In the district, the average school building is approximately fifteen years old with the newest school being three years old and the oldest approximately 30 years ago. A single 80 year old building houses an alternative education program.

There are ten elementary schools (K-5, four of which are in outlying towns), all with approximately 300 students, 4 middle schools (6-8, all of which are main population center) with approximately 500 students and three high schools (9-12, all of which are main population center) with approximately 1000 students each. Total enrollment is approximately 7800 students with just over 430 teachers. There are 32 administrators in the district.

Facilities are such that you could house any program you desire within the district. The alternative school is only at 50% utilization of facilities and the central office has an entire floor that was built to provide for expansion or leasing.

The staff is professionally mature with an average of 12 years of experience in the district. 70% have their master’s degrees 10% have doctorates in their subject area. Because of the nearness of the university, the education levels of the population and the number of “at-home” spouses in the district, you have a waiting list of applications to teach in the district and an almost unlimited number of substitute teachers, all with degrees in the areas they substitute in.

This is a good district, committed to excellence, supportive of innovation and wanting ever so much to get even better. You wake up each morning thanking your lucky star that you work there.

**Pilot Test Information**

"Building Skills in a Learning Community" Class				
Question	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not Helpful
1	4	5	0	0
2	6	3	0	0
3	5	4	0	0
	Highly effective	Effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective
4	3	6	0	0
5	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immersion and involvement take you beyond knowledge level. Being an active participant improves ones grasp of standards</li> <li>• Application aids retention</li> <li>• Questions and topics really helps (2)</li> <li>• Deepens awareness of ISLLC</li> <li>• Gives real situation to focus standards on.</li> </ul>			
6	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't give specific documents to include</li> <li>• A lot of information to sift through</li> <li>• Money issues may not be true to most school districts</li> </ul>			

"Building Skills in a Learning Community" Instructor				
Question	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not Helpful
1	1			
2	1			

3	1			
	Highly effective	Effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective
4	1			
5	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good experience for my students. The questions and topics really helped the students see real world application as well as research basis of the standards.</li> </ul>			
6	Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The money issue was the only thing that the students had trouble with. Some didn't think that it was true to their own district. Personally I liked the "carte blanche" approach since it allowed students to think big and see what model programs can be like.</li> </ul>			

**Author Notes:**

The money was the only issue that seemed to bother the students. The instructor raised a good point about money issues sometimes, narrowing a vision. To aid in the realism for the students I included more references to it being a proposal and that prioritization and budget cuts would be made at the end. I also added information to the instructor's notes and the "other" section, recommending that they cut the students budget at the last minute and have them resubmit the proposal. This way the task would be a more realistic as well as more thought-provoking.