



Differentiated Professional Development in a Professional Learning Community

Linda Bowgren, Kathryn Sever

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Schools and districts that function as professional learning communities (PLCs) have a keen understanding of the connection between teacher learning and student learning. They know that when teachers acquire new knowledge and successfully transfer that knowledge to their classroom practice, student learning improves. They know that continuous, collaborative, job-embedded learning is the model of professional development that is most likely to achieve that result. But Linda Bowgren and Kathryn Sever maintain that PLCs have generally overlooked one crucial element: differentiation for teacher learners. The authors have seen firsthand that adding differentiation to the mix greatly increases the chances of improving practice, which ultimately sustains the development of the professional learning community. *Differentiated Professional Development in a Professional Learning Community* presents the research and the strategies that will enable PLCs to implement targeted differentiated professional learning. The core of the differentiation process is the three-step model the authors call I Do, We, You Do. Teacher leaders/trainers carry out the first step by introducing and demonstrating new strategies to the teachers who will be implementing them in their classrooms. They then begin differentiating the teachers learning by determining what each individual needs to reach the point of using the strategies independently. During Step 2, teachers receive the most appropriate types of support for example, coaching, peer observations, co-teaching until they are ready to teach the strategies to their students (Step 3). But the cycle does not end there. The teachers return to their collaborative teams, share their progress and challenges, examine student work, analyze data, and help their colleagues use the strategies more effectively in their classrooms. As teacher learners grow their expertise, the PLC becomes stronger, and student learning reaches ever-higher levels. In addition to thoroughly explaining the process of differentiated professional development, Bowgren and Sever show it in action. Based on their extensive combined teaching and administrative experience in a PLC district, they allow readers to observe demonstrations, coaching sessions, and team meetings and to listen in on teachers conversations as they adapt to the challenges of continuous learning. These glimpses into the workings of a PLC engaged in implementing differentiation are among the book's greatest strengths.

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