

The PD Curator



HOW TO **DESIGN**
PEER-TO-PEER
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
THAT **ELEVATES TEACHERS AND TEACHING**



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Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction: A Case for Peer-to-Peer PD	xi
Chapter 1: Building Foundations for Professional Learning	1
Chapter 2: Make It Inclusive: Preparing for Professional Learning	12
Chapter 3: Make It Participatory: Structuring Professional Learning	39
Chapter 4: Make It Cohesive: Organizing Professional Learning.....	71
Chapter 5: Make It Effective: Assessing Professional Learning.....	89
Chapter 6: The Self-Reflective Curator	108
Conclusion: Stepping into the Curator Role.....	120
References.....	122
Index.....	125
About the Author	128



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Introduction: A Case for Peer-to-Peer PD

My former colleague Sharan was one of those absolutely *brilliant* teachers, yet for a long time, I didn't know this from actually watching her teach. We didn't have a culture of peer observation (even though we wished we did). Sharan and I were discussing this one day, and we agreed that we would try to start a new trend of popping into one another's classrooms. A few mornings later, when she was teaching and I wasn't, I visited her.

I learned a ton. I thought my sense of pacing was good, but she managed to pack more learning into 45 minutes than I would have thought possible. Her students always began with what she called a cognitive warm-up (which I won't describe because I'm hoping she'll write her own book about it). Next, Sharan had her students write diary entries from the perspective of either Romeo or Juliet right after they met. Every student had actively participated in two different meaningful activities, and it was only 10 minutes into the period.

The diary entries also springboarded into the main lesson on foreshadowing. Sharan's students defined *foreshadowing* in their own words, offered examples of foreshadowing from *Romeo and Juliet*, and then read the prologue to Act II. Her students quickly pushed their desks against the walls, formed a circle, and read the text several different ways to begin to understand its meaning. Sharan then had her students get into pairs, sit on the floor (where they'd been standing in a circle), and analyze the prologue. She also harkened back to the beginning of the lesson by asking how the prologue foreshadowed later developments in the act. By the time I was headed downstairs to teach my class, I'd taken five pages of notes.

One of the best ways to learn how to be a better teacher is by watching, listening to, and experimenting with the practices of great teachers. I started to think about other colleagues I could learn from. From Abena, I could learn how to raise the issue of justice from within the curriculum, ask appropriate questions, and push students to discuss them within a safe environment. From Vincent, I could learn how to use music to help students better understand the content—and more generally, how to create a stimulating atmosphere for learning. From Elizabeth, I could learn how to keep students focused on respecting their diverse thinking processes over finding a “right” answer. I also thought about what my colleagues could learn from observing me.

Meanwhile, our school was spending thousands of dollars a year sending teachers to conferences and institutes and bringing in high-priced consultants to tell us about the latest education fads. Sometimes these consultants gave us nothing but jargon and slideshows, and we were left wondering why their paychecks were so much larger than ours. But even when the presentations advanced our thinking and gave us clear takeaways, the message was still that *this person* was the expert . . . which meant *we*, the teachers, were not.

I don’t want to sound ungrateful; lots of schools and districts make teachers fund their own whiteboard markers, so high-quality professional development (PD) is out of reach for far too many. It’s important for teachers to stay current and not get so trapped in our own bubbles that we miss opportunities to learn from innovators outside our schools. But what about the innovators inside our schools? Why couldn’t we learn from them?

I was lucky enough to have a department chair who encouraged teachers to learn from one another and created opportunities for us to learn together at our meetings. That was how I found out about some of Sharan’s practices and why we originally ended up talking about observing each other. But then it was up to us to find time to visit each other’s classrooms.

It was also up to us to keep our minds busy when we sat through speaker after speaker who talked about stuff that didn’t directly relate to our experience or that we already knew—or that someone in the room could have presented better. No wonder so many of us spent those sessions texting, emailing, doodling, or whispering to one another. It’s not especially respectful when teachers behave this way, but it’s also understandable. Teachers have very little patience for PD sessions that lack relevance to their students and subject, when purportedly new information and strategies are just repackaged versions of the same old same old, when a high-priced consultant tells

them what they already know and lacks interest in their own perspectives, or when they have no opportunities to generate and share ideas.

Right around the time I was noticing how much untapped talent my school had, I joined Twitter. There, I found a huge community of teachers who were actively seeking professional growth. I started participating in Twitter chats, which is when a large group of users discuss a predefined topic at a specific time, and quickly discovered there are chats on every topic imaginable—from assessment to game-based education to LGBTQIA+ equity. There are chats for teachers of every grade level and subject, and there are chats for teachers in specific states and districts. In every case, teachers use their “free time”—time that could be spent with their families or leisure pursuits—so they can learn not from an edu-celebrity but from one another. Why can’t we also do this within the confines of the school day and with our own colleagues instead of with a bunch of internet strangers?

Twitter chats and rogue peer observation sessions are just two examples of teachers seeking more meaningful professional learning from and with one another. Other forms of peer-to-peer PD include edcamps, where participants just show up and share their expertise (Edcamp Foundation, n.d.); pineapple charts, which are ways teachers let colleagues know they’re doing something cool and worth watching; #ObserveMe signs, which invite people into classrooms to offer feedback; and book clubs, which happen in person and online.

However, even though today’s teachers have more choices than ever in what and how they learn, personalized PD creates its own set of problems. First, given a choice, people often gravitate toward what’s familiar, easy, comfortable, or fun (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999; Waltz & Follette, 2009). Teachers might seek PD in the very areas in which they’re already strong and avoid PD in the areas that would be most beneficial to them—out of a fear of exposing their weaknesses, a lack of interest (which contributed to their lack of skill in the first place), or a belief that they already know as much as they need to in a given area.

Second, just because teachers are the ones creating their own professional learning events doesn’t mean those events are good. Just as there can be a boring, incoherent, and ultimately worthless keynote speaker, there can also be a boring, incoherent, and ultimately worthless edcamp session, Twitter chat, or book group. The events teachers create for themselves, or at least those they choose for themselves, won’t necessarily include diverse perspectives or give everyone a way to contribute. Arguably, education

consultants create better sessions simply because they have more practice and opportunities for participant feedback.

Finally, if each teacher goes off on his or her own personal PD journey, then there's no *shared* journey. Colleagues don't necessarily discuss their learning, learn together, or learn from one another. The learning events don't necessarily build on each other in an intentional way or change practice at the school level.

This book is about how professional learning experiences can become more inclusive, participatory, cohesive, and effective—and about the role you, as a leader, can play in creating those experiences. That role isn't so much administrative as it is *curatorial*—selecting content, creating a process for how people interact with it, fitting the pieces together into a meaningful whole, and discovering whether the event has been successful.

When I first started teaching, I'm not sure I'd ever used the word *curate*. I knew what it meant, but since I didn't work in a museum or the art world, I don't think I ever had occasion to say the word out loud.

Now, everybody is talking about curating. We curate our news feeds, our playlists, our weekends, and our sock collections. In this book, we'll explore what it might mean to curate professional learning.

Some professional curators lament the fact that *curate* has become a buzzword, used whenever anyone selects and assembles a bunch of stuff they like. They argue that curation is a more serious and demanding pursuit than picking out tapas for a dinner party or not-obnoxious people to follow on Instagram. They want to give the word *curate* back to museums, art, and artifacts. It seems like this gripe has less to do with which things can be curated and more to do with what the act of curation entails.

Although I'm not usually one to get excited about etymology, the word *curate* has a history that matters for purposes of this book. *Curate* comes from the Latin verb *curare*, meaning "to take care of." Curation is care. At a museum, curators care for the collection. They know about each photograph, gown, or fossil. They can tell you what an object is, point out details, and explain how it was found or made. They know how to preserve and protect it. They know how to display it so others can appreciate it. Increasingly, they care not just for the objects themselves but for the people who come to view, understand, admire, honor, interrogate, and learn from them.

Curators design ways for people to interact with objects and with one another, creating an immersive intellectual, emotional, and social experience—or at least the potential for one—while attending to people's needs. The artwork and artifacts, and the

experience they contribute to, need to be accessible to and respectful of everyone. As a PD curator, you're not just giving teachers an exciting menu of options to choose from—or even weeding out the boring and pointless ones. You're caring for the professionals and for the profession.

Each chapter of this book includes practical tools and protocols you can use alone or in combination to help you become a curator of meaningful in-house professional learning. Along the way, we'll explore some of the psychology behind tapping into the expertise and interests of a diverse faculty, accounting for the vulnerability that peer-to-peer PD invokes, building professional learning units, and supporting teachers as they adopt and adapt new practices.

Chapter 1 discusses how to *structure* teachers' schedules to make time for in-house professional learning, along with how to set up their spaces to create a learning culture. Rather than encouraging large-scale changes, this chapter offers suggestions for how to use the resources you already have at your school.

Chapter 2 is about how to make professional learning *inclusive*. Just as museum curators can legitimize artists by including their work in a show, PD curators have the power to legitimize the work of diverse teachers and the entire teaching profession. Instead of only looking to “thought leaders” and hot topics for material worthy of study, you can discover talent inside your school building and deliberately elevate teachers' voices. The tools in this chapter are designed to help you build your awareness of faculty expertise, interests, goals, and needs, which you can then leverage in peer-to-peer PD.

Chapter 3 is about how to make professional learning *participatory*. Just as many museum curators don't simply display work but rather invite active engagement, PD curators can provide teachers with safe, authentic, and flexible ways to learn from and with one another. This chapter contains six ways to structure professional learning so teachers will find it relevant, dynamic, and enriching for their personal practice and relationships. Each of these professional learning structures includes a step-by-step process, reflection questions, and suggestions for how you can support teachers who use them.

Chapter 4 is about how to make professional learning *cohesive*. Good curation, whether of art, artifacts, or PD, involves more than selecting things that go together and pleasing the audience. It also involves designing a set of experiences that build on one another and move in a clear direction. This chapter shows how to create a meaningful professional learning series or unit so that instead of being one-and-done, each

PD event contributes to a larger outcome. The chapter discusses two kinds of PD units, gives examples, and explains how to create your own based on priorities at your school.

Chapter 5 is about how to make professional learning *effective*. For any curator, assessing how well the curated content worked depends on what we mean by *working*. This chapter offers three different definitions of what we might mean by effective PD and includes assessment tools based on each of those definitions.

Finally, whereas the first five chapters focus on how to curate professional learning, **Chapter 6** focuses on why that work might be worthwhile to *you*—even with everything else you have to do. It includes self-reflection exercises to help you bring your own values to the work of curating inclusive, participatory, cohesive, and effective PD.



Building Foundations for Professional Learning

When my daughter, Allison, was a toddler, my mother-in-law took us to the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan. The photos from that outing make Allison look like an art connoisseur as she posed in front of different paintings. But, really, we zipped through the galleries since she had little interest in just looking at the art. I felt bad. We were at one of the greatest museums in the world, with seemingly all the time in the world, to see art that was there for the seeing, and my kid just wanted to go to the café. Still, even with her refusal to “do” the museum, she understood, as a toddler, what “doing” the museum would have meant. That’s because the environment was arranged to encourage a very particular set of actions—looking at and lingering over paintings.

Museum curators are experts at arranging environments to influence how people relate to the things on display—and to one another. Art historian Svetlana Alpers (1991) calls that special way of focusing attention “the museum effect—turning all objects into works of art” (p. 26) and catalogs a dizzying number of decisions that exhibition designers make to create the museum effect:

The way a picture or object is hung or placed—its frame or support, its position relative to the viewer (Is it high, low, or on a level? Can it be walked around or not? Can it be touched? Can one sit and view it or must one stand?), the light on it (Does one want constant light? Focused or diffuse? Should one let natural light and dark play on it and let the light change throughout the day and with the seasons?), and the other objects it is placed with and so compared to—all of these affect how we look and what we see. (Alpers, 1991, p. 31)

In other words, designing a museum exhibition is more than just putting art or artifacts on view; it's also about designing an environment that encourages a particular type of viewing.

School environments are not necessarily designed with adult learning in mind. (We might argue they're not even designed with children's learning in mind, but that's a topic for a different book.) No school I've ever visited has a room called "the professional learning center," and I've never seen a teacher's schedule that has a dedicated PD period.

Unlike museums that might devote an entire room to a single object and encourage visitors to spend as much time looking at it as they wish, time and space in schools are scarce. Even if you like the professional learning ideas presented in this book, you won't actually *use* them if you don't think you're set up to do so. Therefore, before we turn our attention to leading in-house professional learning, let's explore how to make time and space for it.

There's nothing I can do or say that will give you more hours in the day or more square footage in your building. Instead, this chapter will offer ways to help you use the time and space you *do* have for professional learning.

Making Time for Peer-to-Peer PD

When I started working at a school we'll call the Isidore Topial School, I was excited to learn that teachers met often in different configurations. In the middle school division, most of us taught four sections of the same course, which meant we had to prepare just one set of lessons and assignments. That freed up time to give more substantive feedback on student work, give extra help to students who needed or wanted it, talk to parents, and meet with one another.

Our weekly schedules included two grade-level team meetings during school hours. One was called "student review" because we discussed individual students about whom we had concerns, shared strategies that worked for them, and developed plans for supporting them further. The other meeting had no special title (although in the early years, it was called *nonstudent review*). At those meetings, we planned for our advisory periods, field trips, guest speakers, family conferences, and anything else we did as a grade level outside our academic classes. Over time, as those programs became more entrenched, we stopped feeling like we needed that second meeting and eventually discontinued it.

In addition to the grade-level meetings, we also had one weekly after-school meeting where the full faculty came together to hear presentations or have discussions in small groups. Occasionally, we met with our colleagues who taught the same subject at department meetings, the agendas for which department chairs had the autonomy to set. During these meetings, the group would make decisions (such as whether to order new materials), discuss schoolwide initiatives (such as how we planned to use a summer book within our content area), or plan for future instruction (such as how to teach about an upcoming election).

Topial also had two in-service days per year, which was when we could come together with teachers from the elementary and high school divisions (though we didn't always do that). Beyond attending these mandatory meetings, many teachers chose to meet in various configurations. For example, when I taught 6th grade English, I frequently met with the other 6th grade English teacher. I also volunteered for various committees and task forces.

Although Topial had an ideal structure for peer-to-peer professional learning, we rarely engaged in it during our meetings. Some team leaders and department chairs tried, but they either didn't do it often enough (or meet often enough) for the learning to feel routine, or they faced resistance because they were perceived as pushing their own agendas. If one 7th grade team leader asked her team to keep meeting twice a week to do PD together but another team leader only met once a week, it felt unfair. There were even teachers who approached our union reps to ask if they had to attend what they perceived as *extra* meetings when they were already going to so many—most of which felt unnecessary. Sometimes it seemed as if the only thing we did more often than go to meetings was complain about them!

There will always be people who simply don't want to do what they perceive as *more work*. For many of us, though, the issue was the meetings' content rather than their frequency. We attended *lots* of meetings to hear information that could have been relayed in emails. We talked about the same students repeatedly without changing our methods of intervention, let alone our curricula or pedagogies. We listened to out-of-touch guest speakers tell us things we already knew or that wouldn't work at our school. We listened to administrators blame and shame us without reflecting on their own practices—or worse, they offered vague praise without appreciating the excellence within our ranks. We listened to the same few white people pontificating. So many meetings were a waste of time at best.

At one point, frustrated by all those meetings, we (ironically) organized our own meeting to come up with better ways to use all that meeting time! We brainstormed topics we wanted to explore together. Although our principal told us we could form professional learning groups, he made attendance mandatory and the work itself directionless. That satisfied no one; those who thought there were already too many meetings felt like the learning groups just added to their workload, whereas those who wanted to do more purposeful PD felt like they were designed to appeal to the lowest common denominator and appease an angry faculty. In the end, our grassroots attempt at in-house PD faded away—like so many other initiatives.

For our purposes, we can learn two lessons from my former school's numerous meetings:

- **No matter how often teachers meet, it's important to prioritize peer-to-peer professional learning during those times.** That doesn't mean *every* meeting must be used that way, but the more time you devote to PD, the more actual learning you make possible—and the more meaningful those meetings feel.
- **If you want to do peer-to-peer professional learning, you need to build time for it into the schedule and calendar.** That doesn't mean the only way to do this work is the way my former school did, by having teachers meet three times per week, plus twice a year for in-service days. But the more time you allocate for teachers to meet with one another, the more time you have for PD.

Using Scheduled Meetings

If your school has in-service days or scheduled late starts, you can use those for in-house PD. You can also devote any full-faculty or departmental meeting time to professional learning. If you typically use meeting time to distribute information, you can send out that information in an email or video instead. (You might worry that some teachers won't read the email or watch the video, but the truth is that some teachers won't listen at a meeting either, and sending information digitally allows you to track clicks.) If teachers use meeting time to plan curriculum or programs, discuss individual students, analyze data patterns, or make decisions, then you might feel like there's no time left for peer-to-peer learning. In that case, you can make a values-based decision about whether it would be worthwhile to take time away from some of these important activities so teachers can learn from one another.

Arranging Substitute Coverage

Another option is to arrange substitute coverage for classes while teachers engage in professional learning together. If your school offers substitute coverage for teachers who attend offsite conferences, why not do the same when teachers attend in-house PD events? Odds are you won't be able to provide subs for the whole faculty at the same time, but most of the PD formats presented in this book occur in small groups, and these groups don't need to meet concurrently.

Creating Opt-In PD Events

Alternatively, teachers can meet after school or during summer break, in person or virtually, using an online meeting platform or social media chats. If you ask teachers to work outside their usual schedule, pay them for their time.

Structuring Teachers' Time

Figure 1.1 has a set of questions to help you reflect on how your school structures teachers' time beyond their contact hours with students. There is no right or wrong answer to any question. However, if any of your responses make you at all uncomfortable, notice that feeling, because it might mean you're out of alignment with your values.

At this point, maybe you feel like you could make the time for in-house professional learning—whether by using the meeting time you already have or by tweaking your schedule to create that time—but you have a feeling that your faculty isn't ready to use their time that way . . . or you can't convince the person who makes scheduling decisions to do this because *they* don't think it's going to work. That's because time is only one structural consideration that shapes what will and won't work in a school.

Orienting Teachers to Learning

Although museum visitors might quickly infer the rules of engagement—as Allison did at a very young age—they still need time to figure out which exhibits they want to visit, how long they'll stay in each one, how to get around the museum, and so on.

Professors John Falk and Lynn Dierking (2018) explain that first-time museum visitors behave differently than people who visit frequently: “Much of the first-time

FIGURE 1.1

Questions About Structuring Teachers' Time

- Which of the following does your school use?
 - During-school meetings
 - Before-school meetings
 - After-school meetings
 - Late starts
 - Early dismissals
 - In-service days
- In what configurations do teachers meet?
 - Full faculty
 - Subject-area departments
 - Grade-level teams
 - Interest groups (such as committees or task forces)
 - Professional cohorts (such as for new teachers)
- What is supposed to happen at these meetings? What actually happens?
- Do these meetings occur daily? Weekly? Monthly? A few times a year? Why that frequency?
- Could at least some of these meeting times be used for professional learning?
- How often *could* different types of meetings occur? Whose permission would you need to hold meetings more frequently?
- Is there ever resistance to teachers meeting? If so, where is that resistance coming from?
- Who creates teachers' schedules? Why that person or group?
- How does the person or group that creates teachers' schedules decide who's free at the same time? Are there, or could there be, periods when those who teach the same subject or grade level are available? If not, how might the teachers who *are* available at the same time form professional learning cohorts?
- What is the process for proposing changes to the schedule? For deciding on changes? For evaluating whether the changes had the desired impact?
- When was the last time the schedule was tweaked or overhauled? Why then?
- Do teachers call those times when they're not teaching free periods? Planning periods? Prep periods? Something else?
- What might happen if a period called *professional learning* appeared on teachers' schedules?

museum visitor's attention is absorbed in orientation, way-finding, behavior modeling, and general efforts to cope with novelty. The frequent museum visitor, by comparison, knows where they are going and how to behave; they are able to focus more on exhibitions than are first-time visitors" (p. 52).

Maybe you've witnessed similar "efforts to cope with novelty" when educators not used to learning together attempt to do so. Topial had four divisions—two lower schools, a middle school, and an upper school—but we hardly ever all met together. Even when meetings were on my division's campus, I wasn't used to being there for that purpose and with that group of people, so there was a sort of disorientation I had to get over. I wasn't sure where to sit because my familiar colleagues were spread throughout the room, interspersed with people I recognized but didn't know, with people I didn't even recognize, and with people I'd talked to in the past but whose names I'd forgotten. As a result, at least some of the mental energy I could have devoted to learning was spent searching for people I knew, observing how those I didn't know were reacting to the presentations, and looking for potential allies in my learning and work.

We know that people need time to figure out their surroundings and find their way. That's why many schools have an orientation for first-year students. Kindergartners might have a week of half-days so they can get used to their classroom and its routines—and so they can start getting acquainted with their teacher and classmates. Incoming high school students also have an orientation day so they can find their way around the building and meet their teachers before starting any academic work.

But even though we use the word *orientation* to refer to such events, it's more of a psychological process. We orient ourselves to our physical, temporal, and social contexts. That is, we get used to the building, schedule, and groups in which we find ourselves. It's not that we *can't* do any learning or work before we've gotten used to those surroundings; even first-time museum visitors look at, appreciate, and remember the art—but it's a different overall experience. If we want teachers to engage fully in peer-to-peer PD and get more out of it, then we might consider how we structure their day-to-day physical, temporal, and social contexts to orient them toward learning from and with one another.

Structuring Interactions to Promote Learning

Before I started working at Topial, I was at a place we'll call the Wile School. At Wile, we didn't have nearly as many meetings as we did at Topial, but teachers' time and spaces were structured in a way that encouraged more informal learning interactions.

Wile faculty members who taught in the same department shared an office. As a 6th and 7th grade history teacher, I had a desk in the humanities office. There was a math department office, a language department office, a science department office, a music department office, and so on. The space where I spent most of my nonteaching time was

also the space where teachers of English, history, geography, writing, cultural studies, and other humanities courses spent *their* nonteaching time.

In the humanities office, each of us had a desk, along with shelves where we could store our materials. We also had a small conference room with a round table where we could have longer discussions if we needed quiet. The conference room was lined with books we could all use. Wile's departmental offices were set up as ideal spaces for us to talk about curricular alignment, pedagogical best practices, individual students' growth over time, ideas for projects, and culturally sustaining teaching—so that's what we did. Just as museums structure space for engagement with art, Wile structured space in ways that encouraged conversations about teaching and learning.

At Wile, most faculty meetings were by grade level. Precisely because we *didn't* share an office but shared students, we needed time to discuss their needs as individuals and to plan grade-level programming such as field trips, special events, assemblies, and our advisory program. We sometimes had department meetings; however, most conversations about curriculum and instruction occurred in our offices. It almost wasn't necessary for us to have formal meetings, because we were together so often.

I say *almost* because we weren't *all* together all the time. During any given period, some of us were teaching, meeting with students, or arranging our classrooms. Still, by virtue of spending so much time working near the people who taught the same subject as I did, I had many opportunities to talk about teaching with my peers—and to grow as a designer of learning experiences.

At Topial, I rarely had opportunities to discuss curriculum and instruction as a member of the English department unless I created those opportunities for myself. Faculty offices were grouped by grade level, not by academic department. As a 7th grade teacher, I had a desk in the 7th grade office. Our desks were around the perimeter, facing the walls, so we had our backs to one another when we worked. A small table where we might have worked collaboratively was in the middle of the room, so any conversations held there would have distracted colleagues who needed silence. As a result, the table quickly became a repository for lost items. There were no common bookshelves or materials—only places for our individual belongings.

Topial's 7th grade faculty office's overall setup encouraged large-group conversation, but what were those conversations about? We didn't share a common curriculum; rather, we shared students and a principal, so that was what we talked about. (More accurately, that was what we *complained* about.) One by one, most of my colleagues

decided that they preferred to work in their own classrooms or the library because the faculty offices felt too negative or antisocial. More than one person called them *toxic*.

Looking back, I wish I had started a conversation about how faculty spaces were designed, how we used those spaces, and what changes we might have made. Even though I didn't have the power to make those changes, I could have proposed them and started the discussion. Changing the space would have been easier than changing our faculty culture, though, because once we associate a place with a particular purpose or set of behaviors, it's hard to relate differently to that space—or relate differently to one another within that space.

Still, the arrangement of a space tells us how to behave there. Just walk into any auditorium; the rows of seats facing a stage or screen tells you you're supposed to sit quietly while watching and listening to whatever is in front of you. Likewise, go into any museum and notice how its designers structured the environment to encourage a particular type of behavior: focused seeing.

Wile structured adult schedules and spaces to encourage teachers to learn from one another in informal interactions. So even though we didn't have many established meetings, we were primed for a peer-to-peer learning program because we were having a lot of those conversations anyway. Building the foundations for peer-to-peer learning isn't just about carving out time for it. It also involves thinking critically about how the school is set up to be a learning environment so the leap to more formalized in-house PD is as small as possible.

Figure 1.2 has a set of questions to help you consider how your school structures teachers' interactions in ways that might encourage (or discourage) peer-to-peer learning. Again, these questions don't have right or wrong answers, but notice any discomfort you feel as you respond, because that might be a signal that your school is not set up in a way that reflects your values.

Starting Small

By now, it might sound like I'm arguing that the only way to make peer-to-peer PD work is to redesign your school schedule and faculty workspaces. That's not the case. You might want to make small tweaks, but drastic overhauls aren't necessary—and often aren't possible.

If there's one message to take away from this chapter, it's this: *use what you have*. Use available time for professional learning. Set up existing spaces to encourage

FIGURE 1.2

Questions About Structuring Teachers' Interactions

- Where do teachers go when they're not teaching (assuming there's ever a time when they're not teaching)?
- What are those spaces called? The lounge? The break room? The office? Consider how the name of a space might send messages about what people do there. Is there a space you could rename the *professional learning center*, for example?
- Are those spaces for everyone, encouraging people to drift in and out as they need to, and to sit wherever they choose, or are people assigned to specific places?
- If teachers have dedicated offices or other places to go, how do they share those spaces? Is it by the grade level they teach? The subject? Is it random?
- Based on who shares a given space, what kinds of conversations are likely to occur? What kinds of conversations actually occur?
- How are adult spaces arranged? Are there individual desks? Small tables? How are these positioned relative to each other? Do teachers face one another?
- What resources are in those spaces? Is there a bookshelf with professional literature? A bulletin board with pictures or projects? A table where magazines the school subscribes to are laid out?
- How are those resources organized? Maintained? Kept up to date?
- What kinds of technology do teachers have access to? Does each teacher have a dedicated device or do they share?
- What digital tools encourage and enable colleagues to communicate with each other? Are all teachers trained in how to make full use of these tools? Who provides trainings? How often is training offered?

professional learning. Most importantly, just start *doing* professional learning with your faculty. You don't need to download a museum's app, preorder tickets, and look up all the works of art online to visit a museum; you can just go. Similarly, one of the best ways to build a foundation for in-house PD is to start doing in-house PD.

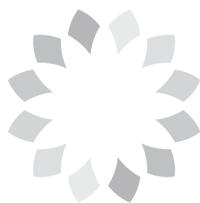
One event, or one group trying out the practices described in the upcoming chapters, is a start. Even using one strategy to determine what teachers want to learn about—or what they can contribute to one another's learning (which you'll hear much more about in the next chapter)—is a start. Taking one small step isn't just better than doing nothing; it begins orienting teachers to the fact that their professional environment is a learning environment.

Over time, you might find that you can do more. You might find that teachers who try in-house PD once ask to do it again. Or you might find that teachers who hear about colleagues in other departments learning from and with one another want their own departments to do it too. You might even find that teachers suggest ways to use time

and space you haven't thought of. If teachers start asking for in-house PD, building it will still require work, but you might find that work more satisfying when you know your faculty cares about it as much as you do. You might even discover that some teachers are willing, if not eager, to share the workload.

Onward

This chapter asked you to consider how your school's systems and structures are already conducive to peer-to-peer learning, and what you might change to make it more conducive to that learning. It explored different ways to accommodate in-house PD within the school schedule and to orient teachers toward learning together. Ultimately, we saw that what's more important than making time and space is to use the time and space you have and just get started. In Chapter 2, we'll see *how* to get started by eliciting all teachers' expertise and learning goals.



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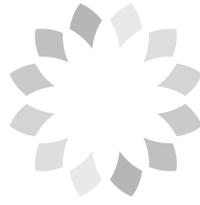
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Index

The letter *f* following a page number denotes a figure.

- abstract terms, 32
- active engagement. *See* participation
- activism, 12–13
- Alpers, Svetlana, 1
- appreciation, 27–29, 100
- assessments of PD, 92–103
- attention, focusing, 1–2

- Bard Institute of Writing and Thinking, 69
- Bedford, Leslie, 79–80
- Bell, Lee Ann, 13
- bias, 12–13, 65
- bringbacks, 61–66

- celebrations, 87
- Circles of Compassion worksheet, 115*f*
- classroom observations, 14–16, 58–59
- cohesiveness
 - importance of, 71–72
 - professional learning units and, 73–77
- compassion, 114–116
- compensation
 - opt-in events, 5
 - presenters, 43
- continuous learning, 100
- core values, 29–30
- Core Values Assessment tool, 20*f*, 29–31
- council protocols, 43–49

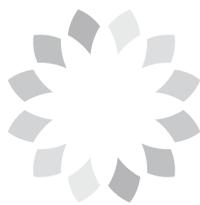
- creativity, 17, 66
- curation and curators, xiv–xv, 12–13, 120–121
- curiosity, 79–80

- Deictic Questions tool, 20–24, 20*f*
- Dierking, Lynn, 5–6
- digital information, 4
- disruptive behavior, 113–116
- diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practitioners, 57–58

- effectiveness
 - assessing, 92–103
 - defining, 90–92
 - excellence and, 106–107
 - improving, 103–105
- emotions. *See also* vulnerability, 108–109, 113–116
- essential questions, 78–80
- exclusion, 14
- exemplar studies, 49–53
- expectations, 16
- expertise
 - exemplar studies and, 58
 - self-identification of, 17–19
 - of teachers, 15, 17–19, 22*f*
 - tools for eliciting, 19–38
 - visibility of, 15

- faculty. *See* teachers
 Falk, John, 5–6, 89–90
 feedback, 59
 filters, 16
 flexible leading, 100
- Gilbert, Paul, 116
 Goodlander, Mabel, 85
 grade-level meetings, 2, 8
 Growth Tracker tool, 20*f*, 34–38
- Hayes, Steven, 103, 104
 higher-level thinking, 80
 humor, 17
- I-here-now perspective, 20–24
 inclusivity, 12–13
 informal interactions, 7–9, 10*f*
 information sharing, 4
 inquiry-based professional learning, 73–78
 in-service days, 4
Inside the Lost Museum (Lubar), 71
 interactions, structuring, 10*f*
 intervision groups, 58–61, 62*f*, 96*f*
- judgment, 59
- knowledge base expansion, 14
 Knowledge Discovery tool, 20*f*, 32–34
- late starts, 4
 leadership values
 - applying, 111–118
 - defining, 109
 - examples of, 110*f*
 - recognizing, 109–111
 “Learning Timeline” exercise, 25
 lower-level thinking, 80
 Lubar, Steven, 71, 87
- McTighe, Jay, 78–79
 meaningful professional learning experiences, 97–100
 meetings
 - grade-level meetings, 2, 8
 - in-house PD during, 3–4
 - ideas for, 4
 - lessons learned from, 4
- Miller, William, 104
 multiple-baseline studies, 102
 museum effect, 1–2
- novelty, coping with, 6–7
- observations
 - limitations of, 14–16
 - supervision and, 58–59
- office spaces, 7–9
 opt-in events, 5
 orientations, 7
 outlier ideas, 32–33
- participation
 - responsibility and, 69–70
 - risk taking and, 66–68*The Participatory Museum* (Simon), 39, 69
 perspective, 20–24
 planning tools. *See* tools
 power dynamics, 58
 presenters
 - compensation for, 43
 - inclusivity and, 13
- privilege, 58
 professional learning units
 - creating, 73
 - direction for, 80
 - inquiry-based professional learning, 73–78
 - planning tools, 80–82
 - practical considerations, 84–87
 - types of, 82–84
- project-based professional learning, 73–78
 protocols
 - council protocols, 43–49
 - “Represent and Respond” protocol, 33
- psychological perspective, 20–24
- qualities of action, 109
 questions
 - about schedules, 6*f*
 - Deictic Questions tool, 20–24, 20*f*
 - essential questions, 78–80
- recognition, 29
 Reilly, Maura, 12–14
 “Represent and Respond” protocol, 33

- resources, 63, 85
- Responding to Disruptive Behavior exercise, 113–116
- “A Revision of Bloom’s Taxonomy” (Krathwohl), 80
- risk taking, 66–68, 81, 83*f*, 108–109
- Rollnick, Stephen, 104
- routinizing professional learning, 72–73
- satisfying professional learning experiences, 97–100
- schedules
- meetings, 2–4
 - opt-in events, 5
 - questions about, 6*f*
 - structuring, 5, 6*f*
 - substitute coverage and, 5
- Secret Appreciators tool, 20*f*, 27–29
- self-reflection
- on bias, 13
 - To-Do List Appraisal exercise, 111–113
 - Growth Tracker tool, 20*f*, 34–38
 - Responding to Disruptive Behavior exercise, 113–116
 - Significant Moments in My Life as an Educator tool, 20*f*, 24–27
 - Values Alignment Check exercise, 116–118
- Significant Moments in My Life as an Educator tool, 20*f*, 24–27
- Simon, Nina, 39–40, 69
- social media, xiii
- strengths. *See* expertise
- subjunctive mood, 79–80
- substitute coverage, 5
- summer break, 5
- supervision, 58–59
- teachers
- appreciation for colleagues, 27–29, 100
 - cultural shifts and, 100–103
 - curiosity of, 79–80
 - expertise of, 15, 17–19, 22*f*
 - interactions among, 7–9, 10*f*
 - meetings, 2–5
 - needs of, 23*f*
 - office spaces, 7–9
 - teachers (*continued*)
 - recognition of, 29
 - schedules of, 2–5, 6*f*
 - supporting, 103–107
 - values of, 111–118
 - weaknesses of, 24
 - Teach Meaningful* (Porosoff), 25
 - team building, 119
 - time. *See* schedules
 - timeline exercise, 24–27
 - To-Do List Appraisal exercise, 111–113
 - toolbox shares, 53–58, 94*f*
 - tools
 - bringbacks, 64*f*–65*f*
 - Core Values Assessment tool, 20*f*, 29–31
 - council protocols, 46*f*–47*f*
 - Deictic Questions tool, 20–24, 20*f*
 - for eliciting teacher expertise, 19–38
 - exemplar studies, 51*f*–52*f*
 - Growth Tracker tool, 20*f*, 34–38
 - intervision groups, 59*f*–60*f*, 62*f*, 96*f*
 - Knowledge Discovery tool, 20*f*, 32–34
 - professional learning units, 80–82
 - Secret Appreciators tool, 20*f*, 27–29
 - Significant Moments in My Life as an Educator tool, 20*f*, 24–27
 - toolbox shares, 54*f*–56*f*, 94*f*
 - workshops, 44*f*, 95*f*
 - Twitter chats, xiii
 - Two-for-One Teaching* (Porosoff & Weinstein), 33
- units. *See also* professional learning units, 73
- unspoken power dynamics, 58
- values
- applying, 111–118
 - defining, 109
 - examples of, 110*f*
 - recognizing, 109–111
- Values Alignment Check exercise, 116–118
- vulnerability, 40, 66–68, 81, 83*f*, 108–109
- Wiggins, Grant, 78–79
- Wilson, Kelly, 109, 111
- workshops, 40–43, 44*f*, 95*f*



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