



Smithtown Central School District

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District Position Paper

Topic: Professional Development

Research has shown that teaching quality and school leadership are the vital factors in positively impacting student achievement and professional development is the method with which districts seek to provide educators with the tools to continuously improve. In education, professional development refers to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning that assist teachers, administrators and other educators in furthering their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. Professional development comes in many forms and covers many topics, and given the complicated nature of teaching and learning, it is challenging for a district's leaders to orchestrate a system of workshops and courses that will be deemed valid and necessary by all of the educators within a school system. As a result, it is imperative that districts strike the right balance between administrator driven and an educator selected professional development. As professionals who work directly with our students, our educators must have a significant level of autonomy in choosing what learning will most be most effective.

It is important that professional development is aligned with district, building and personal goals that are designed to realize the full potential of the work we do with and for students. Initiatives at the district level (e.g. technology integration) often require systematic and sustained professional learning opportunities for our educators at all levels. Additionally, department and building administrators may develop professional learning opportunities to support subject or building-specific initiatives. We also encourage our faculty, as skilled professionals, to have a voice in their own learning goals as well as the professional development opportunities that may be helpful in realizing their goals.

Our teaching staff members have the contractual right to select professional learning opportunities that meet their own needs. However, they are expected to use sound judgment in their selection and must refrain from promoting their individual personal and political views.

Going forward, we will continue to align the district's approach to professional development with the goals we have for our district, our teachers, our students, and the families we serve. The work being done to develop the district's Strategic Plan will serve as a roadmap to help inform future professional development initiatives and goals aimed at providing the best possible classroom instruction and student learning opportunities. Data derived from the surveys associated with the Strategic Plan will provide feedback as to the effectiveness of our approach to professional development and allow us an opportunity to continuously improve our practice.