

## Out-of-School Time Professional Development Workshops: An Evaluation Framework

### Introduction

“For many years, educators have operated under the premise that professional development is good by definition, and therefore more is always better. If you want to improve your professional development program, the thinking goes, simply add a day or two.”<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Guskey’s statement applies to out-of-school time (OST) professional development activities as well as those designed for classroom teachers. Many OST administrators believe that diverse professional development activities significantly enrich staff, programs, and students. Although this is a sound premise, little research has been done to link trainings, technical assistance, and other forms of professional development to subsequent application, retention, and impact. This document attempts to define and provide a simple framework for designing, implementing, and evaluating OST professional development workshops.

### Overview

1. Professional development is defined differently by different people in different fields.
  - a. **The Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC)** defines professional development as workshops, conferences, technical assistance, resource centers, peer mentoring, electronic listserves, and other supports designed to promote improvement, enrichment, and achievement in OST staff, programs, and students.
  - b. Workshops are important components of a larger and more comprehensive professional development strategy.
2. There are two basic types of OST professional development workshops. These provide:
  - a. Content which is transferred directly to students (such as hands-on-science and creative dramatics). These workshops present specific content as well as methods for imparting that content to students. This type of workshop is more frequently offered to direct-service staff.
  - b. Theoretical/contextual/reference information (such as positive youth development and cultural sensitivity). These workshops are intended to provide participants\* with background information and application suggestions. This type of workshop is often offered to administrative as well as direct-service staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Guskey, T.R. *The Age of Our Accountability*. Oxford, Ohio: National Staff Development Council, Journal of Staff Development, Fall 1998 (Volume 19, No. 4)

3. This document does NOT apply to professional development workshops which:
  - a. Are designed and implemented for administrative staff who have no direct contact with students (such as fundraising and strategic planning).
  - b. Supply specific, as-needed, and often emergency information (such as first aid and crisis intervention).

### **Front-End Evaluation**

Front-end evaluation, planning evaluation, preformative evaluation, formative research, needs assessment, and market research are methods used to gather information before designing OST professional development workshops. These are implemented to gauge/serve needs and interests and to increase the likelihood of participation, application, and long-term impact.

1. Techniques for gathering pre-workshop information include personal interviews, phone interviews, mail-in surveys, on-line surveys, and focus groups. Simple incentives (such as registration discounts and or teaching materials) help increase the number of participants and percentage of responses.
2. Interviews, surveys and focus groups are designed and implemented before creating or advertising a workshop series, course, conference, or other training venue. All are less likely to be conducted prior to developing a single workshop.
3. Interview, survey, and focus group participants should be previous attendees, potential attendees, and/or others' workshop attendees and include administrators (who influence their staff's participation) as well as direct-service staff.
4. Questions should address workshop content, skill development, learning environments, application strategies, and other important considerations.
5. Questions should be direct ("Rate the following list of possible topics.") as well as indirect ("List the three most useful workshops you attended last year.").
6. Questions should address past experiences ("What workshop formats have you found most useful in the past?") as well as future preferences ("What topics would you like to see offered in the future?").
7. Questions phrased in the negative yield interesting results. Examples include, "Why don't you attend professional development workshops?" and "What are 5 reasons you *don't* use what you learn in workshops?"

Other types of front-end evaluation do not directly involve potential participants. For example, specific OST program and student outcomes may be the sole basis upon which professional workshops are designed. These outcomes are driven by federal, state, and school district standards; funder priorities; social service mandates; and other factors independent of participants' perceived needs or interests.

### **Basic Ingredients**

OST professional development workshops should contain certain research-based principles, elements, and techniques. Incorporating these will encourage participant engagement and future application. These best practices include:

1. Providing comfortable learning environments. Attention should be given to the physical climate, materials, equipment, and layout necessary to maximize workshop participants' comfort, attentiveness, and engagement.

2. Providing respectful learning environments. OST workshops should provide environments in which all needs, opinions, backgrounds, and cultures are valued and respected.
3. Incorporating participant experiences. Adult learners enter workshops with genuine, diverse, and practical experiences. Through pre-workshop surveys and/or on-going opportunities, OST workshops should solicit and build upon participants' professional backgrounds.
4. Including opportunities for self-direction and self-reflection. When possible, OST workshops should allow participants to set their own learning objectives, assimilate new information at different rates, and plan for individual usages.
5. Encouraging real-life applications. Incorporating state standards, addressing school district curriculum, and allowing time for participants to develop application strategies are three ways of maximizing the relevance and usefulness of OST workshops.
6. Facilitating active involvement. Adults, as well as children, assimilate information more successfully when they are actively involved. OST workshops should include hands-on activities and, when possible, opportunities for participants to "teach" one another during the training session.
7. Promoting teamwork. Teamwork in OST workshops includes recruiting teams of participants from individual sites, facilitating small-group activities within the training, and/or encouraging teams of participants to work together after the workshop sessions.
8. Addressing different learning styles. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences proposes that different people synthesize knowledge in different ways. Varying activities, media, formats and "textures" helps engage all participants as well as keep the interest of individuals throughout workshop sessions.

### **Goals and Objectives**

OST professional development workshops should have six goals, all of which can be measured with assessment processes and evaluation tools.

1. Participants' Satisfaction:
  - a. Participants enjoy the workshop.
  - b. Participants value the workshop.
2. Participants' Comprehension:
  - a. Participants learn the content.
  - b. Participants learn skills for teaching or applying the content.
  - c. Participants learn the importance/ relevance of the content.
3. Organizational Integration:
  - a. Participants' organizations value the workshop experience.
  - b. Participants' organizations provide mechanisms for implementing the workshop experience.
4. Workshop Application:
  - a. Participants apply the workshop experience to their OST programs.
  - b. Participants effectively apply the workshop experience to their OST programs.
5. Workshop Extension:
  - a. Participants extend the workshop experience to other programs, students, curricula, and/or situations.
  - b. Participants share the workshop experience with peers and colleagues.

6. Student Achievement:
  - a. Participants' students are positively impacted within their OST programs.
  - b. Participants' students are positively impacted outside of their OST programs.
  - c. Participants' students demonstrate advancement toward and achievement of desired outcomes.

### **Workshop Example**

“Maps, Mapping, and Mapmaking” is a professional development workshop which involves participants in mapping activities. Designed by OSTRC staff, it targets OST direct-service providers who work with students in grades 3 – 12.

1. Goal 1: Participants are satisfied with the workshop.
  - a. Sample objective for enjoyment: Participants enjoy the mapping workshop.  
Sample indicator: Participants praise the mapping workshop, instructor, and physical environment.  
Possible measurement tool: Participants complete a post-workshop satisfaction survey.
  - b. Sample objective for perceived value: Participants believe that the mapping workshop was a productive use of their time.  
Sample indicator: Participants state that they are inspired to teach mapping in their OST programs.  
Possible measurement tool: Participants complete a post-workshop group interview.
2. Goal 2: Participants learn content, teaching skills, and relevance to student achievement.
  - a. Sample objective for learning content: Participants recognize and understand the function of basic map features.  
Sample indicator: Participants locate, identify, and explain the purpose of the key, scale, and north directional arrow on a street map.  
Possible measurement tool: Participants create accurate maps which include keys, scales, and north directional arrows.
  - b. Sample objective for learning skills: Participants learn teaching methods which demonstrate how a three-dimensional world can be illustrated by a 2-dimensional map.  
Sample indicator: Participants implement the “Mt. Peter” activity, which leads students through the conversion of three-dimensional mountains into 2-dimensional topographic maps.  
Possible measurement tool: The workshop facilitator observes peer-to-peer teaching exercises conducted during the workshop.
  - c. Sample objective for learning relevance: Participants understand that the ability to read maps can help empower and enhance student independence.  
Sample indicator: Participants explain why being able to read a street map will help their students feel more comfortable/confident traveling outside of their neighborhoods.  
Possible measurement tool: Participants complete a short essay at the end of the workshop.
3. Participants' organizations support and integrate the workshop experience.
  - a. Sample objective for organizational value: Participants' supervisors believe that the mapping workshop was a productive use of staff time.

- Sample indicator: Participants’ supervisors recommend the mapping workshop to other OST supervisors and their staff.
- Possible measurement tool: At the end of the semester or season, participants’ supervisors complete a questionnaire.
- b. Sample objective for organizational integration: Participants’ supervisors eliminate barriers to implementing the mapping workshop activities.
- Sample indicator: Participants’ supervisors designate funds to purchase maps and compasses for the OST programs.
- Possible measurement tool: At the end of the semester or season, participant supervisors complete a questionnaire.
4. Participants apply the workshop experience to their OST programs.
- a. Sample objective for application: Participants teach mapping activities in their OST programs for the first time.
- Sample indicator: Participants implement orienteering activities in their OST programs.
- Possible measurement tool: Students report on whether or not mapping activities have been introduced into their programs.
- b. Sample objective for effective application: Participants effectively teach mapping activities in their OST programs for the first time
- Sample indicator: Participants successfully follow the directions for and deliver the “Marvelous Mapping” activity presented in the workshop.
- Possible measurement tool: External monitors “rate” the quality of the activity implementation.
5. Participants adapt, extend, and share the workshop information and activities.
- a. Sample objective for extension: Participants customize activities taught in the mapping workshop to their own programs and students.
- Sample indicator: Participants extend the “Marvelous Maps” activity to having students locate and plot neighborhood youth programs.
- Possible measurement tool: At the end of the semester or season, participants self-report on the number and details of embellished mapping activities.
- b. Sample objective for sharing: Participants share workshop activities with OST program co-workers.
- Sample indicator: Participants photocopy the “Marvelous Mapping” activity instructions and distribute these to OST program co-workers.
- Possible measurement tool: At the end of the semester or season, OST program co-workers complete a questionnaire.
6. Participants’ students demonstrate advancement toward and achievement of desired outcomes.
- a. Sample objective for student impact within programs: Participants’ students recognize and understand the function of basic map features.
- Sample indicator: Participants’ students locate, identify, and explain the purpose of the key, scale, and north directional arrow on a street map.
- Possible measurement tool: Participants’ students create accurate maps which include keys, scales, and north directional arrows.
- b. Sample objective for student impact outside of programs: Participants’ students use maps to assist them with everyday activities.

Sample indicator: Participants' students use street maps to determine distance and travel time from their homes to the homes of friends living in other neighborhoods.

Possible measurement tool: Participants' students record their data in their journals.

- c. Sample objective for student achievement of desired outcomes: Participants' students demonstrate increased self-confidence.

Sample indicator: Participants' students travel outside of their neighborhoods with increased frequency.

Possible measurement tool: At the end of the unit or semester, participants' students present slide shows of excursions taken outside of their neighborhoods.

## Conclusion

Out-of-school time professional development activities, and workshops in particular, can be effective components of a coordinated staff and program improvement strategy. This paper invites OST staff to further define, develop, implement, and evaluate those strategies.

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