

## Implementation of the Master Plan for Statewide Professional Staff Development for 2013-2014 An Evaluation Study



**Patricia Cahape Hammer, December 2014**

The state board is required to “institute a system for the coordination and delivery of high-quality professional development,” (W. Va. Code §18-21-1), including defining goals and standards for professional development, and roles and responsibilities for state and regional professional development providers. Accordingly, the board is required to establish an annual master plan for professional development in public schools across the state, to include the “state board-approved plans for professional development by the State Department of Education, the Center for Professional Development, the state institutions of higher education and the regional educational service agencies to meet the professional development goals of the state board” (W. Va. Code §18-21-4). The state board is also required to establish processes for evaluating the “effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the statewide professional development plan” and submit its report to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability” (W. Va. Code §18-21-4). As in previous years, the board charged the West Virginia Department of Education’s (WVDE) Office of Assessment and Research with the responsibility of conducting the evaluation.

In response to these requirements, the goals of this evaluation are to study the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of the statewide master plan for professional development (PD Master Plan) by investigating seven questions:

*With regard to effectiveness,*

- EQ1. What was the level of implementation for the PD Master Plan, overall and by individual providers?
- EQ2. What were the impediments, if any, to its full implementation?
- EQ3. To what extent did providers’ offerings reflect the WVBE Standards for Professional Learning?

EQ4. To what extent did providers’ offerings reflect research-based professional development practices?

*With regard to efficiency,*

EQ5. To what extent did providers collaborate in the delivery of professional development, thereby reducing duplicative efforts?

*With regard to impact,*

EQ6. How well did providers’ offerings address the WVBE’s 2013-2014 Goals for Professional Learning?

EQ7. What was the impact of the professional development offered through the 2013-2014 PD Master Plan on educators’ knowledge, practice, and attitudes?

### Methods

#### Population studied

The unit of analysis for this study was the individual provider required by W. Va. Code §18-21 to participate in the PD Master Plan. This provider group included the following organizations and agencies:

- Center for Professional Development (CPD)
- Two of the required ten public institutions of higher education (IHEs) with teacher education programs
  - » Fairmont State University
  - » Marshall University (two programs: Clinical Studies and Professional Development Schools and the June Harless Center)
- All eight regional education service agencies (RESAs)
- Eleven offices in the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) that provide professional learning experiences to educators across the state, including the Offices of
  - » Assessment, Accountability, and Research
  - » Career and Technical Accountability and Support

- » Career and Technical Instruction
- » Early Learning
- » Federal Programs
- » Institutional Education Programs
- » Instructional Technology
- » Professional Preparation (Certification)
- » School Improvement
- » Secondary Learning
- » Special Programs

To investigate the performance of these 23 organizations and agencies we surveyed the participants in the professional development sessions they offered, to gain their views about the quality of their learning experiences. This population included, among others, district central office staff, school administrators, general and special education teachers, instructional support teachers, school librarians/media specialists, and paraprofessionals.

### Research design

To investigate the seven evaluation questions, we collected data from providers in the form of session reports, which required providers to report for each session they conducted, such information as the alignment of the session with the seven state Board Standards for Professional Learning, the beginning and ending dates, the duration and attendance for the session, its format and county location, and e-mail addresses for participants. The reporting year was divided into three collection periods: July 1 through November 30, 2013, December 1, 2013 through April 30, 2014, and May 1 through June 30, 2014. E-mail addresses submitted during the first two data collection periods were used in a survey of participants conducted in two parts, with one random sample of unique participants surveyed in January 2014 and a second sample in June 2014. It should be noted that participants in professional development that took place during the third data collection period (May 1–June 30, 2014) were not surveyed because of the difficulties involved in collecting data from educators during the summer months.

In addition to the session reports and the participant survey data, extant documents were used, especially Board policies, in order to put certain aspects of the study into context (see back page for a summary of research questions, indicators, and sources of data).

### Findings

Based primarily on more than a thousand sessions reports and over 4,700 usable participant survey responses (50.5% response rate), major findings for 2013-2014 include the following, arranged here by effectiveness, efficiency, and impact:

### Effectiveness of the Master Plan

- The PD Master Plan included more topics (479), sessions (1,056), and participants (33,196) than in previous years.
- Regarding the effectiveness of providers in meeting the Board Standards for Professional Learning, overall, the standards that providers most often believed they had met were Standard 7 (“Aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards”) and Standard 5 (“Integrates theories, research, and models of human learning into learning designs to achieve its intended outcomes”). The two standards providers least often reported meeting were Standard 4 (“Uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning”) and Standard 6 (“Applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change”).
- Regarding the extent to which providers’ offerings reflected five research-based professional development practices, overall, there was the greatest agreement that the professional development had focused on content and content pedagogy. Active learning scored lowest; second lowest was respondents’ estimation that the session had provided sufficient duration and timespan to allow them to apply what they were learning. Participants were largely in agreement that the professional development had been well aligned (coherent) with their own needs and those of the school and district, and that it had been delivered to allow for participation with colleagues (collective participation).
- Providers’ session reports seemed to confirm the findings about duration and timespan above. Of the 33,000 attendees reported by providers, about 5,700 educators participated in professional development lasting at least 30 hours; another 5,400 had from 14 to 29 contact hours—durations shown by research to be the minimum needed to change teacher practice and impact student learning. The remaining two-thirds of participants attended sessions ranging from 1 to 13 hours. About half of all sessions began and ended on the same day.

## Efficiency of the Master Plan

- The Legislature's call for decentralization of professional development seemed to be reflected in the trends for the four major providers in the Plan, with the WVDE decreasing their number of offerings and participants from the previous year, while the RESAs' slate of offerings rose dramatically, as did their participant counts. CPD continued its trend upward for both topics and participants, while IHES remained stable. Still, the WVDE reported the greatest number of both sessions held and participants in attendance.
- RESAs and WVDE offices operated very collaboratively, partnering with each other and IHEs. According to CPD session reports, they worked almost completely independently of other providers. It should be noted, however, that CPD, like the RESAs, seeks input from the WVDE and others when setting its slate of offerings.

## Impact of the Master Plan

- While all four of the Board Goals for Professional Learning received coverage, Goal 2 ("Increase deep content knowledge and proficiency in designing and delivering standards-driven instruction and assessments") was the focus of about 80% of sessions (n = 858) with 73% of attendees (n = 24,233).
- The participant surveys showed a high level of general agreement—at least 75%—that the sessions they attended had been helpful in meeting the Board goal with which it was aligned.
- According to retrospective self-reports, the professional development had large effects on educators' knowledge of the PD topic, and moderate effects on their practice and attitudes/beliefs.

## Limitations of study

The response rate for this study was lower than usual (50.5%), which may have introduced sampling bias. Further, respondents were asked to recall PD sessions they had participated in at some point in the past—up to 5 months prior to the survey—so there is a possibility of temporal bias. The use of a retrospective pretest/posttest methodology to assess changes in knowledge, behavior and skills, and attitudes and beliefs poses some concerns, including the possibility of inflated estimations of impacts on respondents' knowledge, practice, and attitudes/beliefs.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on these findings, we make the following recommendations.

*In keeping with the Board Standards for Professional Learning,*

- Increase use of a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning, and
- Increase application of research on change and sustain support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

*With regard to the use of research-based PD practices,*

- Increase active learning during professional development sessions, and
- Provide sufficient duration (30 or more hours) and timespan (weeks or months) to allow participants opportunities to apply what they are learning.

Based on factors present in the larger context of professional development in the state, we recommend that the West Virginia State Board of Education and Department of Education

- Bring all ten of the public IHEs with teacher education programs into the PD Master Plan (two participated in 2013-2014).
- Promote the Board's Standards for Professional Learning at the school and district level, so they will better guide educators' planning.
- Consider adoption of a model for professional development providers that aligns with and supports local learning communities working to adopt the Board's Standards for Professional Learning.
- Revisit the purposes and possible uses of the PD Master Plan to guide professional learning—aligning it with the Transforming Professional Development Initiative.
- Consider ways to put the evaluation of the PD Master Plan to better use—reshaping the evaluation and its purposes as the plan itself is reshaped.

---

The full report is available on the WVDE Office of Research website:

<http://wvde.state.wv.us/research/reports2014.html>

---

Table 1. 2013-2014 PD Master Plan Evaluation Questions, Indicators, and Data Sources: Alignment with Legislative Mandate

<b>Legislative Mandate</b>	<b>Evaluation Question</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	EQ1. What was the level of implementation for the PD Master Plan, overall and by individual providers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of PD offerings that were planned versus the ones delivered</li> <li>Participation in the evaluation of the PD Master Plan</li> <li>Number of participants served</li> </ul>	2013-2014 PD Master Plan Session Report database (online system)
	EQ2. What were the impediments, if any, to its full implementation?	Reasons given by providers for why some planned sessions were not held	Providers' responses to query
	EQ3. To what extent did providers' offerings reflect the WVBE Standards for Professional Learning?	Proportion of PD offerings that address each of the seven standards: (a) learning communities, (b) leadership, (c) resources, (d) use of data, (e) learning designs, (f) change and implementation, and (g) outcomes	2013-2014 PD Master Plan Session Report database (online system)
	EQ4. To what extent did providers' offerings reflect research-based professional development practices?	Proportion of PD offerings that had the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Content and content pedagogy focus;</li> <li>Coherence with teachers' professional needs, school goals, and state standards, curriculum, and assessments;</li> <li>Active learning, including time for planning implementation;</li> <li>Collective participation of teachers or administrators from the same district, school, grade level, content area, or specialization; and</li> <li>Duration (at least 30 hours) and timespan (over months or years)</li> </ul>	2013-2014 PD Master Plan Session Report database (online system) (duration/ timespan) WVBE PD Master Plan Participant Survey 2013-2014
<b>Efficiency</b>	EQ 5. To what extent did providers collaborate in the delivery of professional development?	Number of sessions that were offered in partnerships among the PD Master Plan providers	2013-2014 PD Master Plan Session Report database Board policy documents for RESAs and CPD
<b>Impact</b>	EQ6. How well did providers' offerings address the WVBE's 2013-2014 Goals for Professional Learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of PD offerings targeting each of the goals overall</li> <li>Participant reports of PD's helpfulness in meeting board goals</li> </ul>	2013-2014 PD Master Plan Provider Session Submissions database (online form) WVBE PD Master Plan Participant Survey 2013-2014
	EQ7. What was the impact of the professional development offered through the 2013-2014 PD Master Plan on educators' knowledge, practice, and attitudes?	Participant views of the impact of the PD on their own knowledge, practice, and attitudes	WVBE PD Master Plan Participant Survey 2013-2014