

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
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The Fort Smith School District will develop and implement a plan for professional staff development and in-service training based on local educational needs and state educational goals. This plan will provide education and training for Board of Education members, school and District administrators, teachers, and support staff on a continuing and regular basis throughout the school year. Teachers will be involved in the development of the plan for their own in-service education. All programs for professional development and in-service training will be evaluated by the participants in each program.

Professional development means a coordinated set of planned learning activities for teachers and administrators which are standards-based and continuous. Professional development will result in individual, school-wide, and system-wide improvement designed to ensure that all students demonstrate proficiency on the state academic standards. Approved professional development will be linked to the school's improvement plan, demonstrate research-based best practice, and be subject-specific and site-specific as often as possible.

The purpose of professional development is to improve teaching and learning so that all students demonstrate proficiency on the state academic standards. Improvement of student achievement will be the prerequisite goal of all professional development.

- A. In order to be consistent with regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education and the Arkansas Department of Education, acceptable professional development activities will meet the following criteria:
1. Approved professional development activities, whether individual or school-wide, will be based on the improvement of student achievement on state criterion-referenced examinations and other related indicators as defined by the Arkansas Department of Education.
  2. All approved professional development activities will relate to the following areas: content (K-12); instructional strategies; assessment; advocacy/ leadership; systemic change process; standards, frameworks, and curriculum alignment; supervision; mentoring/coaching; instructional technology; principles of learning/developmental stages; cognitive research; and building a collaborative learning community.
  3. To be eligible, professional development activities must produce teaching and administrative knowledge and skills designed to improve students' academic performance.

4. Approved professional development activities may include approved conferences, workshops, institutes, individual learning, mentoring, peer coaching, study groups, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification, distance learning, internships, and college/university course work.
  5. Administrative faculty meetings and administrative, organizational, or clerical work in the classroom or on school improvement activities will not count as approved professional development.
  6. Certified employees in positions not directly related to instructional activities will still be responsible for completing fifty-four approved hours of professional development each year. However, the focus of their professional development may be in areas specifically related to their job assignments.
- B. Each member of the teaching staff will acquire fifty-four hours of professional development training each year during the period of June 1 - May 31.
- C. An employee who misses any part of regularly scheduled professional development activities for any reason (such as sickness) must make up that time in other approved professional development activities so that the fifty-four required hours are earned by each certified employee of the School District during that school year.
- D. A minimum of forty-two hours of professional development training will be offered during required professional development days at the school building or district level. Teachers will be required to attend all forty-two hours of contract-time professional development unless excused by the building principal.
- E. The remaining twelve hours may be obtained through any of the methods listed below:
1. A three-hour graduate level college credit course will be counted as fifteen hours of professional development if the college credit is related to and enhances the teacher's knowledge of the subject area in which the teacher is currently teaching or is part of the requirements for the teacher to obtain additional certification in a subject matter that has been designated by the ADE as having a critical shortage of teachers. These hours must be approved by the Superintendent or designee.

The ADE identifies each year which subject areas and levels are teacher shortage areas. No more than fifteen professional development hours earned through college credit may be applied toward the fifty-four hour minimum requirement in any contact per year.

2. Professional workshops, meetings, conferences, or institutes - Number of hours training must be specific.
  3. A certificate or documentation of participation will be required of all teachers desiring credit for attending meetings in this category.
  4. Continuing education courses - Number of hours training must be specific and documented.
  5. Textbook Selection Committee - A maximum of six hours training per school year will be granted for this activity.
  6. Strategic Planning/ACSIP/Title I/Professional Advocacy Committees - A maximum of six hours training per school year will be granted to the teacher. A maximum of nine hours training per school year will be granted to the chairperson.
  7. Development and implementation of approved evaluation professional growth plans - A maximum of three hours per school year will be granted for this activity. In cases in which a certified employee is participating in an awareness or remedial plan, the principal or supervisor will determine qualifying activities and assign professional development accordingly.
- F. Documentation for individual staff members' professional development training will be maintained by year at the individual school building level. Upon the acquisition of seventy-eight professional development hours, a staff member may request from his or her supervisor a waiver from subsequent professional development requirements. A minimum of twenty-four of the seventy-eight hours must be earned during off-contract time. The waiver will permit the teacher to be absent from the building at those times specifically approved by the principal or immediate supervisor. A separate request should be submitted for each required activity for which a waiver is desired. Factors involved in the decision to grant a waiver will include state regulations, district requirements, and the relationship of the professional development activity to the strategic goals of the building or department.
- G. Staff members who fail to acquire the ~~sixty~~ fifty-four hours training in each designated year will lose one day's pay or pro-rata share for each six hours of professional development training in which they are deficient.

- H. All mandated state standards involving professional development are subject to ongoing review and may change at the discretion of the Arkansas Department of Education. Therefore, the Fort Smith School District will comply with any changes at the state level that either increase or decrease professional development requirements.

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