



Walking the WIRE

GREAT CPD IS ALL ABOUT BALANCE – AS DAVID WESTON EXPLAINS...

While most teachers and school leaders agree that CPD is crucial to a school's success and development, it can be harder to reach a consensus on what it should entail or look like. All school leaders want their staff to participate in good quality CPD that develops them as individuals and makes a measurable and significant contribution to whole school improvement, but it can be hard to identify the best way to go about this.

As part of our efforts to resolve this, Bluewave.SWIFT and the Teacher Development Trust (TDT) recently held a roundtable event in London for secondary school leaders to discuss what a CPD 'ideal' looks like and how schools can work towards it.

CPD in practice

A school's current context will impact on its approach to CPD. One of the schools at the roundtable, the Manor Academy in



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Nottinghamshire, has completely transformed its CPD since it was placed in special measures. As part of the Academy's new approach to CPD, they established semi-autonomous learning bodies called teaching and learning communities that are expected to commit to three hours of dedicated CPD per week.

Assistant Headteacher Rob Gladwin, who leads professional development at the

Academy, outlined the transformational effect of the new approach, explaining: "Members of staff from different faculties are part of these and they use them to talk about professional development needs. They help each other with their professional development. Our mantra is that the majority of answers can be found within our institution."

Schools in challenging circumstances are more likely to manage their staff more closely, while more successful schools may feel able to allow teachers greater freedom and input in their CPD.

However, Rob Gladwin has learnt from experience that in any context, teachers need to be able to address their own CPD needs. Rob admits that when Manor Academy was in special measures, CPD was largely managed from the top down but this is not sustainable long term: "It's about allowing people to address their own needs and being supportive of that".

Another challenge schools are facing is balancing internal CPD needs with the external

"THE HEADS OF THE FACULTY TEAMS ARE THE SUPPORTERS IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NOT THE JUDGES. YOU NEED THAT SEPARATION."

pressure of Ofsted. The school leaders who attended the roundtable agreed that it is

important not to use Ofsted pressure as a driver for professional development.

Ashley Harrold, Deputy

Headteacher of Blatchington Mill School, said the needs of the school should be foremost.

"As soon as you pass on responsibility to Ofsted you lose authority,"

he commented.

"We have

moved as far away as we can from Ofsted frameworks for accountability and the results are going well. There are processes where a rigid framework needs to happen but then you often get to a plateau in how to really crack the perfect teaching and learning environment."

Donna Casey, Deputy Headteacher at the Manor Academy, added: "We are starting to get to the point where we don't live and die by our Ofsted criteria – and instead, by doing right for our students. But it's a real journey to get there."

The role of research

The roundtable discussion then moved on to what the research says. According to the evidence, the most effective thing leaders can do is help staff to improve themselves. Debate broke out when the subject of lesson observations arose, and it was agreed that they

★ CPD IN ACTION

Case study:

Blatchington Mill School in Brighton and Hove is part of the National Teacher Enquiry Network. As part of their membership, they took part in a CPD Peer Audit, based on an anonymous staff survey, alongside self-evaluation and a visit.

Ashley Harrold, Deputy Headteacher, notes the importance of using different models to improve individual teachers: "We have lead professionals for teaching and learning in a subject area and teacher learning communities. I split it into eight areas of what I think makes great teaching."

The audit highlighted these lead professionals as a real strength of the school's approach, allowing the school to balance the needs of individuals and wider development plans well. As a result of the audit, there will also be an increased emphasis on using research and journals in discussion and to underpin curriculum development.

are most beneficial when used in a supportive and developmental way. Alternatives to traditional observations were discussed, including Lesson Study, a process of collaborative research, planning and observation to address a particular need in the classroom.

Lesson Study is a key element of the Teacher Development Trust's National Teacher Enquiry Network (NTEN), a collaborative partnership of schools and colleges that have come together to focus on innovation and improvement through highly effective and evidence-based staff professional development and learning, supported by rigorous research and development.

Nick Hindmarsh, Headteacher at the Dartmouth Academy in Devon, stated the importance of separating judgement – which is inherent in the performance management process – from the developmental aspects of observation and other professional development. By keeping the areas separate,

★ HOW TO MAKE CPD COUNT

KEITH WRIGHT OF BLUEWAVE.SWIFT SUGGESTS SOME PRACTICAL STEPS TO REFRESH YOUR SCHOOL'S APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- **Get up to date.** Get rid of paper and pen and use the online systems available to ensure you have the business intelligence that will inform your decision making about CPD.
- **Evaluate.** Scrutinise CPD activities for short, medium and long term impact and revisit them regularly. If there is no expectation at individual or leadership level, ask why you are investing in it.
- **Plan.** Make sure that staff CPD has a clear pathway of progress over the short, medium and long term.
- **Get real.** Insist upon CPD activities having a 'source'. If a colleague is insisting upon a particular piece of CPD, ask why it needs to happen and what it is linked to in the wider context. Is it professional

standards? The school development plan? Performance management objectives? Whole school reporting? Career development focus?

■ **Be demanding.** Even if the topic isn't that enthralling, don't allow your staff to engage with dull, dry uninspiring providers. If the learning is fun the retention of knowledge will be better. Get feedback from your staff and listen to them!

■ **Ask the right question.** When thinking about evidence of impact, don't ask the question 'how and where did this CPD activity make an impact?' Ask instead, when contributing evidence to individual and whole school initiatives 'which, if any, of my CPD activities helped me to achieve this?'



teachers feel better supported and more confident in their CPD.

“In our school, performance management observations are done by me and two deputy heads,” he explained. “The heads of the faculty teams are the supporters in professional development and not the judges. You need that separation.”

Evaluate your CPD efforts

CPD needs to be reviewed and evaluated to ensure it is improving standards and is being implemented properly. The school leaders we met with agreed on the need to look closely at both how they evaluate their practice and what good practice looks like in their schools.

“We have to keep evaluating what we do to keep progressing,” said Donna Casey. “I think as

teachers, we are often not very good at doing that. We need to be able to say that that’s not right, move on, and change that.”

The challenges of some CPD approaches were also discussed. For example, sharing best practice between schools can sometimes be ineffective; knowledge needs to be transferred in a meaningful and useful way, taking cultural and contextual differences between schools into account.

School leaders agreed that accountability was an important factor in professional development – but also, that it needed to apply to all players in the professional development hierarchy.

Ashley Harrold stressed that ultimate responsibility for good CPD provision lay with senior leaders. “If staff do not have

access to a programme that meets their needs then you are on rocky ground as senior leaders of not providing what they need,” he said.

For details of Lesson Study and the TDT’s National Teacher Enquiry Network go to: teacherdevelopmenttrust.org/teacher-enquiry-network
The round table discussions are detailed in a new white paper published by Bluewave.SWIFT in association with the Teacher Development Trust including contributions from secondary leaders as well as case studies and practical advice. To download the free paper, visit: bluwaveswift.co.uk/whitepaper