

The Board of Education of Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School District 233 (H-F) has three major goals: the development and implementation of a coherent curriculum, the improvement of student learning and achievement, and the increase of coordinated professional development activities. The specific objectives within this third goal are to provide training for faculty on the effective use of classroom time, review all teacher observation post-conference forms to ascertain professional development needs, examine results of standardized measures to determine student learning goals and the professional development necessary to achieve them, and support a comprehensive professional development plan that is tied to improved student achievement.

Homewood-Flossmoor High School's professional development plan addresses teachers' needs through seven major avenues: professional development community (PLC) teams, institute days, H-F University (HFU) summer workshops, peer coaching, new teacher induction, advanced studies and professional organization involvement, and the observation process.

1. **Professional Learning Community (PLC) Teams:** Through their PLC teams, teachers work with other teachers, in groups of approximately five members, for one hour every other Friday morning. Additionally, PLC teams have meeting time set aside for them on institute and in-service days. Each team sets a SMART goal to improve student achievement in a particular course or group of courses and then works towards achieving that goal throughout the semester, or even the entire school year. PLC team members utilize a variety of resources, from consulting colleagues to researching professional literature, to help them meet their goal.
2. **Institute Days:** Homewood-Flossmoor High School reserves its October and March institute days for teachers to attend breakout sessions on a variety of topics in the areas of best instructional practices, unit and lesson design, and support systems to improve student achievement. The breakout sessions, which are nearly always facilitated by H-F staff members, provide teachers with the opportunity to share information and ideas across disciplines. In addition to cross-disciplinary breakout sessions, departments are given time during these fall and spring institutes to provide workshops and special trainings for their faculty members.
3. **H-F University (HFU):** Each summer, Homewood-Flossmoor High School offers a host of daylong and half-day workshops for teachers called H-F University, or HFU for short. Many of these workshops are extended versions of institute day breakout sessions and, thus, most – and oftentimes all – of the presenters are H-F staff members. H-F teachers earn either a stipend or credit on the salary scale for their participation and completion of a project to demonstrate their learning. HFU courses are also offered to teachers from outside of District 233 for a nominal fee.
4. **Peer Coaching:** Homewood-Flossmoor High School fields a team of literacy coaches (6 reading specialists) and content coaches (4 teachers in the core subjects of English, Math, Science, and Health/PE/Drivers Ed) who assist teachers infuse literacy strategy instruction into their lessons at least twice weekly, as required by

H-F's school improvement plan. H-F also has a team of four technology coaches who assist teachers utilize technology to enhance teaching and learning. All coaches earn stipends for their work.

5. **Year-Long New Teacher Induction Program:** Certified staff members new to H-F experience a week-long summer workshop during which they become familiar with H-F's vision, mission, and goals; develop an understanding of the school's culture; learn H-F's expectations for professionalism and student success, and get to know the larger school community. All new teachers are also matched with model teachers. The pairs meet regularly throughout the school year to discuss a wide range of topics, as well as observe one another in the classroom. Additionally, they attend monthly meetings with the other new and model teachers to hear from guest speakers, share experiences, and discuss best practices.
6. **Advanced Studies and Professional Organization Membership:** Homewood-Flossmoor High School encourages teachers to seek advanced degrees, as well as to be involved with their professional organizations. District 233 advances teachers on the salary schedule for their post-bachelor's degree work, and it subsidizes their attendance at outside workshops and conferences as well.
7. **Observation Process:** Administrators and department chairs currently utilize the Bellon formal observation process, which like Charlotte Danielson's utilizes a pre-observation conference, the classroom observation, and a post-observation conference to assist teachers in improving their practices within three domains: planning and motivation, instructional management, and instructional delivery. In addition, administrators and department chairs frequently make brief, informal classroom visits both to assist teachers with their reflective practice and gain a broader understanding of teaching and learning within departments and across the school.

In addition to the above seven avenues of professional development described above, Homewood-Flossmoor High School supports an ongoing culture of learning by providing teachers copies annual H-F Reads selections. Recent H-F Reads teacher selections include *Teach Like a Champion* by Doug Lemov (2012), *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* by Charlotte Danielson (2013), and *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do* by Claude M. Steele (2014).

Finally, in the fall of 2014, eighteen H-F staff members began training to become certified as National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPT) teachers through a cohort program offered by the National Board Resource Center (NBRC) at Illinois State University in conjunction with the Illinois State Board of Education.

Overall, Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School District 233 considers itself to be a community of learners, agreeing whole-heartedly with this statement by Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, and Robert Eaker (2008):

The best professional development occurs in a social and collaborative setting rather than in isolation, is ongoing and sustained rather than infrequent and transitory, is job-embedded rather than external, occurs in the context of the real work of the school and classroom rather than in offsite workshops or courses, focuses on results...rather than activities or perceptions, and is systematically aligned with school and district goals rather than random. (369-370)

Thus, through collaborative, continuing, and focused professional development, the teachers of District 233 continually enhance their knowledge and hone their skills to improve student achievement, therefore, moving H-F ever closer to achieving its mission to improve the quality of each student's life through the educational experience at Homewood-Flossmoor High School.

Reference

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (2008). *Revisiting professional learning communities at work: New insights for improving schools*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.