

# Guidance for Professional Learning

Recommendations for meeting the Quality Professional Learning Standards

California Collaborative for Educational Excellence  
Rev 11.29.2022

# Introduction

Professional learning is a must. It's also a challenge. California has standards for what high quality professional looks like and requires. But how do we meet them? We at CCEE have examined key frameworks and concepts that can support the design, delivery, and evaluation of high-quality professional learning. Using those frameworks, we have developed this guidance as the foundation of our support for professional learning.

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence has created this guidance document to:

- Guide our own design, delivery, evaluation, and iteration of professional learning aligned to the Quality Professional Learning Standards
- Share that guidance to the field at large to support the design, delivery, evaluation, and/or selection of QPLS-aligned professional learning.
- Set clear expectations for CCEE partners with respect to professional learning initiatives.

## Defining Professional Learning

Professional learning (PL) is a term that is both widely used and broadly interpreted. California Education Code (EC 41490.4), in describing the requirements for the CA MTSS project, states that high quality professional learning...

*...shall include, but not be limited to, professional learning that is content-focused, incorporates active learning using adult learning theory, supports collaboration in job-embedded contexts, uses models and modeling of effective practices, provides coaching and expert support, and offers opportunities for feedback.*

This passage emphasizes the need for learning within the context of the work environment (job-embedded), incorporating strategies that support adult learning as well as systems and practices that promote transfer of that learning into authentic practice. In a 2009 report from the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and School Redesign Network at Stanford University, professional learning is described as "a product of both externally-provided and job-embedded activities that increase teachers' knowledge and change their instructional practice in ways that support student learning." The authors of the report make recommendations for designing professional learning, including the use of active learning, collaboration, incorporation of data, peer observation, and coaching<sup>1</sup>.

Taken together, these descriptions emphasize ongoing learning and improvement, supported by intentionally deployed systems and resources, and adds the end game – helping students learn and thrive, with the added purpose of developing and enhancing a community of educators that have the will and skill to continuously improve. What is certainly clear is that professional learning is more than one discrete workshop, an idea echoed by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) in their research brief, *Effective Teacher Professional Development*<sup>2</sup>.

## The Quality Professional Learning Standards (QPLS)

The [Quality Professional Learning Standards](#) "present the elements of a quality professional learning system that, if well implemented, will benefit educators focused on increasing their professional capacity and performance"<sup>3</sup>. The QPLS were developed by a team of educators from across the educational landscape - CA Dept. of Education (CDE), county offices of education (COEs), institutes of higher education (IHEs). These standards apply to selection, design, implementation, and evaluation of

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<sup>1</sup> (Chung Wei et al., 2009)

<sup>2</sup> (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017)

<sup>3</sup> (California Department of Education, 2015, p. 1)

professional learning. Taken as a whole, they describe indicators of a highly effective professional learning ecosystem.

The QPLS are broken into seven key standards professional learning designers and consumers can use to inform the quality of professional learning within the state of California:

- **Data** – *Excellent professional learning utilizes data from an array of sources to steer goals, design, and outcomes of the learning experience.*
- **Content and Pedagogy** – *Excellent professional learning equips educators with specific evidence-based and effective skills and competences that support student learning.*
- **Equity** – *Excellent professional learning focuses on closing achievement disparities between student groups by giving educators an understanding of historic unjust educational structures, strategies to increase access, and skills for creating culturally responsive pathways for students to achieve equitable educational outcomes.*
- **Design and Structure** – *Excellent professional learning utilizes evidence-based and effective strategies that facilitate educator's understanding of needed content and experiencing instruction that models best practice.*
- **Collaboration and Shared Accountability** – *Excellent professional learning supports educators in developing a shared purpose and sense of collective responsibility to create high quality learning experiences and engage in best practices on behalf of students.*
- **Resources** – *Excellent professional learning equips educators in how to manage, utilize, and/or distribute resources to achieve educational goals on behalf of students.*
- **Alignment and Coherence** – *Excellent professional learning understands the contexts the focus skills and strategies the learning sites in and how to connect the learning with these broader contexts to promote sustainability and organizational consistency.*

## Meeting the QPLS

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance in how to leverage a variety of related guidelines, constructs, and research to develop, sustain, monitor, and augment a PL ecosystem to meet the high standards set by the QPLS. We seek to strengthen the awareness and capacity of the field so that anything delivered under the banner of professional learning includes the intentional application of evidence or research-based systems, environments, and assets that support positive student outcomes by enhancing the capacity and context of educators and support staff to act in ways that lead to those outcomes.

Let's unpack that.

CCEE's vision is to transform public education so that every student is inspired and prepared to thrive as their best self in the world. Therefore, professional learning must have the intention of positively impacting the lives and futures of students, and that intention must be informed by substantial research, compelling evidence, or, preferably, both.

Next, that positive impact is a result of a change in adult behavior – the teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, etc. must do something they could not do before, or at least, not as effectively – that provides better support to students. For example, if a group of 9th grade Algebra teachers increase their use of mastery-oriented feedback, an evidence-based strategy that has been shown to improve student performance, students in those classes are likely to learn more, as evidenced by formative and summative assessments.

To implement that behavioral change, the adults in question need the requisite knowledge, skills, opportunities, resources, and system supports to act in a new way. Therefore, professional learning must include both knowledge and skill acquisition as well as support for authentic transfer of learning –

engaging in the desired behavior. Time, resources, actionable feedback, opportunities for knowledge sharing and reflection, and more are needed for learners to turn their newfound knowledge and skills into authentic, impactful change.

CCEE breaks the designed elements of a professional learning ecosystem into three components: systems, environments, and assets.

- **Systems** are the organizational processes and practices that foster, sustain, evaluate, and communicate improvement. For example, the use of intentional, sustained coaching is a system for supporting professional learning.
- **Environments** are the places where learning is happening. These may be designed learning experiences, such as workshops, seminars, online courses, coaching sessions, book studies, etc. They may also be ad hoc interpersonal interactions among learners– sharing ideas, asking questions, collaborative planning, etc. Finally, there is the working environment where learners put their learning into practice, often generating new insights, and questions, in the process.
- **Assets** are discrete supports that can be accessed and applied at the time and discretion of the individual learner. These might include: microlearning, exemplars, rubrics, templates, checklists, books, and more.

Taken together, these systems, environments, and assets comprise a complex learning ecosystem that must be designed, deployed, monitored, and revised as needed to best leverage the most important part of all, the people working and learning within that ecosystem.

## About the Framework

Working together with thought partners across the state, we have curated several frameworks and strategies, each with a strong foundation in research and/or evidence and woven them together to illustrate a detailed *how* of meeting the *why* and *what* described in the QPLS. These include: Adult Learning Theory; effective, sustainable coaching; Guskey's Five Critical Levels, Universal Design for Learning, and an emphasis on supporting learning where it happens. This guidance represents CCEE's first step in supporting the design and delivery of high-quality professional learning across the state.

### ***Who is it for?***

This guidance document is intended for individuals and teams seeking to promote better outcomes for students through a more comprehensive approach to professional learning. These include:

- Professional learning and technical assistance providers
- Local education agency leaders and teams seeking to augment and evaluate their professional learning ecosystem

### ***How should it be used?***

This framework is intended to inform the design, selection, delivery, and/ or evaluation of professional learning, recommending best practices and providing rubrics to support design and evaluation. Some guidance focuses on the macro level – how to create, sustain, and improve professional learning ecosystems that positively impact student outcomes. Others focus on the micro – recommendations and rubrics for specific professional learning environments and assets.

# Guidance for Professional Learning

- **Start with the end in mind.** Determine the needed improvement in student outcomes and backwards map from there. [Guskey's 5 Critical levels](#) serves as an excellent backwards planning tool that also supports evaluation from end to end.
  - **Level 5:** Set clear, challenging, measurable goals for improved student outcomes.
  - **Level 4:** Determine the necessary behavioral changes adults must make to support those outcomes. This determination should be based on research and/or evidence that demonstrates a strong correlation between the proposed behavior change and the target outcome. Establish means of observing, supporting, and evaluating the degree to which the adults are engaging in the new practice.
  - **Level 3:** Determine what supports adults will need (coaching, time, job aids, collaboration space, psychological safety, etc.) to make and sustain the change. Establish means of monitoring the creation, distribution, and ongoing maintenance of these systems, environments, and assets to gauge organizational support for the proposed change.
  - **Level 2:** Determine the learning supports adults will need for the initial acquisition of knowledge and skills.
  - **Level 1:** Determine how to ensure learners perceive each asset as being of high quality, relevant to their needs, and useful in solving their problems.

## Provide clarity of purpose and process.

- Make a clear, compelling case for why the change is necessary and how the organization will intentionally and consistently support adults to make the change.
  - Connect every aspect of the professional learning ecosystem – the systems, the environments, the assets – to improved student outcomes.
  - Remove friction in the accessing, navigating, and leveraging of ecosystem components so that learner energy can be directed at meaningful improvement
- **Incorporate principles of [Universal Design for Learning](#) and [Adult Learning Theory](#).**
- Set firm goals and allow for flexible means of achieving those goals, in both the macro and the micro
    - i. Provide flexibility in the demonstration of learning within environments
    - ii. Provide flexibility in the demonstration of learning transfer in authentic practice
  - Foster emotional connection, support learning, and provide clear direction and opportunity to transfer that learning into impactful practice.
- **Address all areas where learning can happen.**
- [Learning at work](#) happens in a variety of environments – formal, informal, and just-in-time. Learning supports should be intentionally designed and delivered to enhance learning in all three environments, rather than focusing on one or two<sup>4</sup>.
  - [Coaching](#) is a powerful driver of transfer of learning, turning new knowledge and skills into intentional, sustainable, impactful change<sup>5</sup>.
- **End-to-End, not one and done**
- Evaluate the PL effort from end-to-end using a multilevel model such as [Guskey's 5 Levels](#)
  - Allow for flexibility of evidence for demonstrating learning and transfer, allowing for [learner variability](#) and different contexts for application.
  - Professional Learning providers should make provisions for end-to end learning, even if it is not within that provider's capacity or mandate to directly support all stages. For instance, a PL provider may only be directly supporting initial learning (level 2), but should consider what tools, templates, rubrics, etc. might be provided to those admins, coaches, and teacher teams charged with supporting, monitoring, and evaluating transfer of learning and measurement of student outcomes.

## Alignment – QPLS and Guidance Elements

This Guidance for Professional Learning brings together a variety of frameworks and principles to provide clarity in how to meet the high expectations of the QPLS. These include adult learning theory (or andragogy), Universal Design for Learning, Guskey's Five Critical Levels, best practices in coaching, and a focus on all the environments in which workplace learning happens. Table 1 illustrates how the various elements in the guidance support achievement of the various Quality Professional Learning Standards. Reading left to right, you can see which elements support the achievement of a particular standard. Only significant connections have been highlighted – an individual framework may not directly support every standard; however, taken together, each standard is supported.

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<sup>4</sup> (Beich, 2017; Center for Creative Leadership, 2020; Owens, Lisa & Kadakia, Crystal, 2020; Pontefract, 2016)

<sup>5</sup> (B. R. Joyce & Showers, 1981, 1996)

Table 1. Guidance Elements and QPLS Alignment

Quality Professional Learning Standard	Guidance Elements				
	<a href="#">Adult Learning Theory (ALT)</a>	<a href="#">Universal Design for Learning (UDL)</a>	<a href="#">Guskey's 5 Levels</a>	<a href="#">Where Learning Happens</a>	<a href="#">Coaching</a>
<b>Data</b>	Data can inform self-directed decision-making as well as communicating the relevance of the PL. Further, data can tap into intrinsic motivation by illustrating need, progress, etc.	Data can reveal barriers in the learning environment as well as the breadth of learner variability present in the classroom/ school/ district. Data also allows for the monitoring of progress — a key concept to UDL.	Data element D emphasizes measurement of participant perceptions, learning, and transfer (Guskey levels 1-3).	Important data can be gleaned from educator experiences on-the-job, which is noted in element B of this standard.	Data provides a reference point to inform coaching conversations.
<b>Content and Pedagogy</b>	PL that builds practitioners' knowledge of content and pedagogical practice can be most effective if the relevance to the practitioner's work is clear and the lessons are readily applied to visible effect.	Delivering universally designed professional learning models practices and builds practitioner capacity in ways that align with all three elements of this standard, particularly A.3-4, B.1,3, C.1-4	By emphasizing measurement at every level, individuals, teams, and the organization are accountable for elevating content knowledge and effective practice to improve outcomes for students	Practitioners need social learning to effectively apply their learning, share knowledge and questions, and deepen their practice. Further, they need tools, templates, and other support for just-in-time learning.	Coaching has a significant and demonstrable positive effect on transfer of learning into practice.
<b>Equity</b>		Universally Designed PL embraces variability among learners, providing high	Emphasis on/ evaluation of organizational support		Coaching with an equity lens can surface barriers and

		expectations for all paired with flexible, supportive paths to meeting them.	of professional learning and transfer of learning can illuminate barriers to equitable access to PL		increase access and supports to students who need them
<b>Design and Structure</b>	Adherence to principles of ALT facilitates the relevance and authenticity of the learning by drawing clear lines between the learning objectives and measurable impact for students and incorporating authentic problems of practice.	Universally Designed PL establishes and sustains participant motivation, models differentiation and accessibility, and allows participants to play to their unique talents, strengths, interests, and experience.	Guskey's multilevel model facilitates backwards design, beginning with the positive outcomes for students intended by the initiative and emphasizes changes in practice as well as organizational support for that change.	Providing PL support in formal, social, and just-in-time learning supports job-embedded, ongoing learning that can develop educator capacity as required by this standard.	Feed-back and ongoing, job-embedded support are hallmarks of effective coaching and are required by this standard.
<b>Collaboration and Shared Accountability</b>	A culture of collaboration and shared accountability is enhanced through allowance for self-determination, a clear purpose, and valuing the varied experience, talents, and perspectives of the staff	UDL helps PL designers identify and address barriers to collaboration. Further, UDL emphasizes clear, challenging goals, self-regulation, connection to authentic practice, and effective planning and progress monitoring. Working in community is also a key strategy to engagement within UDL experiences.	Having a comprehensive evaluation plan can make clear individual and collective expectations, as well as how they connect to student outcomes. Further, Guskey evaluates not only educator learning and transfer, but the organization's effectiveness in supporting such change.	Providing time and support for practitioner collaboration supports social learning and on-the-job transfer.	
<b>Resources</b>		UDL emphasizes the baseline requirement of accessibility	Guskey's level 3 measures	Emphasizing the spectrum of	Locally developed coaching supports



		of materials, spaces, and tools for expression while guiding for increasing levels of equity through high expectations, firm goals, and flexible options and support.	organizational support and change, which includes the degree to which adequate resources were allocated and distributed.	learning environments allows for practice-embedded learning as well as making time and space for social and formal learning.	enhance the human capital of the LEA. Further, effective coaching programs that leverage internal expertise facilitate peer-to-peer learning.
<b>Alignment and Coherence</b>	ALT emphasizes connecting new learning to what is relevant to the practitioner, including connecting that learning to other initiatives.	Universal Design for Learning is, at its core, a mindset for improvement that maintains high expectations for all while allowing different pathways to meeting those expectations. Staff who develop capacity to operate in this fashion can apply this new UDL lens to all their work.	Guskey's level 3 emphasizes organizational support and change, which includes the degree to which goals and policies are in alignment. Further, Level 5 focuses on student outcomes, reinforcing the overall purpose of the effort - to improve outcomes for students.		Building capacity for coaching can improve the effectiveness of other efforts outside the particular PL initiative.

# Quality, Relevance, and Usability

The CCEE uses the lens of quality, relevance, and usability (QRU) to evaluate its professional learning environments and assets.

- **Quality** refers to both the design of the learning as well as the actual content, including but not limited to:
  - Clarity of goals and objectives
  - Basis in research and/or evidence
  - Inclusion of evaluation mechanisms for applicable levels (see [Guskey](#))
- **Relevance** connotes the level of applicability to a participant's context. As relevance is variable, this core can change based on the target audience. For example, an e-learning module targeting district leaders would have high relevance for cabinet-level learners, but lower relevance for teachers and para educators.
- **Usability** represents the extent to which the knowledge and skills conveyed by the learning can be readily applied to improve practice. Content that is highly esoteric and theoretical, though potentially interesting, may be less useful unless paired with clear, actionable guidance for converting the abstract into impact.

QRU was initially applied to discrete learning assets (webinars, videos, etc.) as well as the vetting of proposals. QRU is now being applied to the breadth of our professional learning work, with clear alignment to the [QPLS](#) and indicators of quality, relevance, and usability developed for a variety of learning delivery methods.

## QRU Rubrics

We have developed a series of rubrics that align our quality, relevance, and usability (QRU) evaluation criteria with the [Quality Professional Learning Standards](#). Each rubric targets a common PL delivery model – instructor-led trainings, facilitated collaborative learning sessions, microlearning videos, and asynchronous online modules. These rubrics can be used for a variety of purposes, including:

- Informing design efforts
- Self-assessment of current professional learning environments and assets
- Evaluating professional learning proposals
- Providing feedback to professional learning providers to augment professional learning support

Connections to QPLS are represented by an abbreviated standard, the element letter, and indicator number. Example: Content.A.1. represents Content and Pedagogy, Element A, Indicator 1.

Each of these rubrics uses a 20-point scale. Environments and assets scoring 15 or higher are of high QRU. Quality comprises half the total weight of the scoring (10 of the total 20 points). Relevance and usability might be augmented by the end user, using their knowledge and experience to contextualize the environment or asset to their context or audience. Quality, which includes the basic concept, its foundation in research and/or evidence, and use of best practices, is crucial to the value of the learning and beyond the influence of the end user.

**Instructor-led training (ILT); virtual instructor-led training (VILT):** Commonly referred to as training or workshops, these types of learning opportunities are synchronous and delivered to groups, usually by one or more people (trainer, facilitator, presenter, etc.).

Evidence of Quality, Relevance, Usability	QPLS Connections	Value	Score/Evidence/Notes
Includes content and practices with a strong basis in research and/or evidence.	Content.B.1 Design.D.3	2	<b>QUALITY: ___/10</b>
Training has a clear scope and sequence that highlights key concepts and chunks content into manageable sections with frequent opportunities for practice, collaboration, feedback, reflection	Design.A.3,4 Design.B.3 Collaboration.A.2	2	
Has an equity focus, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity of access</li> <li>High expectations and requisite supports for all students</li> <li>Inclusion and belonging</li> </ul>	Content.C.1-4 Equity.A.1-3 Equity.B.1-3 Equity.C.1-4	2	
Has clear, measurable learning goals and objectives that connect to improvement in student outcomes	Design.A.1	2	
Clear evaluation process for assessing participant' perceptions of training and achievement of stated learning goals and objectives	Data.D.1	2	
Designed using best practices, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>allowing for participant autonomy and choice</li> <li>including relevant and authentic problems of practice</li> <li>allowing for differentiation by content, role, experience, etc.</li> <li>providing opportunities for participants to work in community</li> <li>clarity of purpose and language</li> </ul>	Design.B.1,3 Design.C.4 Design.D.2,4	4	<b>RELEVANCE: ___/5</b>
Student, educator, and/or organizational data are used in the selection and/or delivery of the training	Data.A.1-4 Data.B.1-2 Data.C.1-3	1	
Increases participants' knowledge and skill for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing support to peers/subordinates so they can improve in their knowledge and practice</li> <li>supporting students in a specific content area (e.g. math)</li> <li>facilitating and assessing learning</li> <li>differentiating instruction</li> </ul>	Content.A.1-4 Content.B.1-4 Content.C.1-2	2	<b>USABILITY: ___/5</b>
Uses tools, media, and facilities that are accessible to all participants	Resources.D.3	2	
Provides guidance for immediate, authentic application to practice	Content.B.2. Design.B.2	1	

**Micro-Learning Video:** A discrete resource focusing on a chunk of content and delivering it in a succinct presentation that can be viewed at will and on multiple platforms (desktop, tablet, phone, etc.)

Evidence of Quality	QPLS Connections	Value	Notes/Evidence/Questions
Includes content and practices with a strong basis in research and/or evidence.	Content.B.1 Design.D.3	3	<b>QUALITY: ___/10</b>
Has an equity focus, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity of access</li> <li>High expectations and requisite support for all students</li> <li>Inclusion and belonging</li> </ul>	Content.C.1-4 Equity.A.1-3 Equity.B.1-3 Equity.C.1-4	3	
Has clear, measurable learning goals and objectives that connect to improvement in student outcomes	Design.A.1	2	
Has an evaluation process for assessing participant' perceptions of the video	Data.D.1	2	
Target audience (role, content area, etc.) is clearly defined and communicated	Design.A.1	2	<b>RELEVANCE: ___/5</b>
Purpose/problem of practice clearly defined, significant, and current	Design.A.1 Design.B.1	2	
Student, educator, and/or organizational data are used in the exploration of the problem/topic.	Data.A.1-4 Data.B.1-2 Data.C.1-3	1	
Increases participants' knowledge and skill for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing support to peers/subordinates so they can improve in their knowledge and practice</li> <li>supporting students in a specific content area (e.g., math)</li> <li>facilitating and assessing learning</li> <li>differentiating instruction</li> </ul>	Content.A.1-4 Content.B.1-4 Content.C.1-2	2	<b>USABILITY: ___/5</b>
Uses language, tools, media, and facilities that are accessible to all participants	Resources.D.3	2	
Provides guidance for immediate, authentic application to practice	Design.B.2	1	

**Facilitated collaborative learning session:** This category includes any meetings with defined structures for collaborative learning related to a problem of practice, such as a professional learning community (PLC).

Evidence of Quality	QPLS Connections	Value	Notes/Evidence/Questions
Incorporates evidence-based and/or research-based approaches to addressing identified problem(s) of practice	Content.B.1 Design.D.3 Collaboration.A.1,4	3	<b>QUALITY: ___/10</b>
Has an equity focus, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity of access</li> <li>High expectations and requisite supports for all students</li> <li>Inclusion and belonging</li> </ul>	Content.C.1-4 Equity.A.1-3 Equity.B.1-3 Equity.C.1-4	3	
Has clear, measurable learning goals and objectives that connect to improvement in student outcomes	Collaboration Design.A.1	2	
Has an evaluation process for assessing participant' perceptions, learning, and transfer of learning ;	Data.D.1	2	
Designed using best practices, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>allowing for participant autonomy</li> <li>including relevant and authentic problems of practice</li> <li>collaboratively developed norms and expectations for interaction and participation</li> <li>clarity of purpose and language</li> </ul>	Design.B.1,3 Design.C.4 Design.D.2,4	4	<b>RELEVANCE: ___/5</b>
Focused on mutually-held problem(s) of practice; establishes norms and coping mechanisms for handling disagreements and/or setbacks	Collaboration.A.1	1	
Increases participants' knowledge and skill for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>providing support to peers/subordinates so they can improve in their knowledge and practice</li> <li>supporting students in a specific content area (e.g. math)</li> <li>facilitating and assessing learning</li> <li>differentiating instruction</li> </ul>	Content.A.1-4 Content.B.1-4 Content.C.1-2	2	<b>USABILITY: ___/5</b>
Uses language, tools, media, and facilities that are accessible to all participants	Resources.D.3	2	
Provides guidance for immediate, authentic application to practice	Design.B.2	1	

**Asynchronous online learning (learning path, online course)**

Evidence of Quality	QPLS Connections	Value	Notes/Evidence/Questions
Incorporates evidence-based and/or research-based approaches to addressing identified problem(s) of practice	Content.B.1 Design.D.3 Collaboration.A.1,4	2	<b>QUALITY: ___/10;</b>
Has an equity focus, including (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equity of access</li> <li>• High expectations and requisite supports for all students</li> <li>• Inclusion and belonging</li> </ul>	Content.C.1-4 Equity.A.1-3 Equity.B.1-3 Equity.C.1-4	2	
Has clear, measurable learning goals and objectives that connect to improvement in student outcomes; highlights key vocabulary and/or symbols essential the goals and objectives	Collaboration Design.A.1	2	
Has an evaluation process for assessing participant perceptions and learning/goal proficiency; options for submitting evidence of transfer highly preferred	Data.D.1	2	
Designed using best practices, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• allowing for participant autonomy</li> <li>• including relevant and authentic problems of practice</li> <li>• clarity of purpose and language</li> <li>• opportunities for self-assessment and reflection through use of tools (i.e. rubrics, checklists, etc.)</li> <li>• interaction/collaboration with peers</li> </ul>	Design.B.1,3 Design.C.4 Design.D.2,4	4	<b>RELEVANCE: ___/5</b>
Differentiated to support various roles or targeted for specific audience	Design.A.1	1	
Increases participants' knowledge and skill for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing support to peers/subordinates so they can improve in their knowledge and practice</li> <li>• supporting students in a specific content area (e.g. math)</li> <li>• facilitating and assessing learning</li> <li>• differentiating instruction</li> </ul>	Content.A.1-4 Content.B.1-4 Content.C.1-2	2	<b>USABILITY: ___/5</b>
Uses language, tools, media, and facilities that are accessible to all participants	Resources.D.3	2	
Provides guidance and tools that support immediate, authentic application to practice	Design.B.2	1	

# Appendix A: The Framework Elements

This section contains brief overviews of each framework elements along with a crosswalk to quickly describe how each support meeting the QPLS

## Adult Learning

Malcolm Knowles pioneered the study of andragogy - leading the learning of adults<sup>6</sup>. His work highlights some of the key differences between andragogy, leading the learning of adults, and pedagogy, leading the learning of children. These principles are both research-based and common sense; however, they run counter to many common professional learning practices.

1. **Experience:** Adults bring their own life and work experiences to the learning environment
2. **Self-directedness:** Adults need autonomy in their learning, preferring to make decisions rather than be passive recipients of information.
3. **Need to know:** Adults come to the learning with a problem they want to solve and need to see how the learning will help them in this pursuit.
4. **Readiness:** Adults are, or should, be ready to learn. They have developed skills for learning and connecting that learning to their own context.
5. **Orientation to learning:** Adults want learning that is obviously and immediately transferrable; there is no time for "someday this will come in handy" or "you'll need this in college"
6. **Intrinsic Motivation:** Adults don't, or shouldn't, need to be convinced that learning is worthwhile - they seek to learn so that they can improve their practice and achieve their goals.

These principles are assumptions that some critics argue are a bridge too far for some learners. Cultural and/or experiential dispositions towards what professional learning "looks like" may be impediments to learning in a self-directed manner. Applying the UDL framework to the design and implementation of the PL can mitigate these barriers by anticipating them and providing flexibility and support.

### *Resource for further learning:*

[What is adult learning theory?](#)

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<sup>6</sup> (Knowles et al., 2015)

## Coaching

Coaching is an essential element of a highly effective professional learning ecosystem, supporting the transfer of new knowledge and skill into sustained improvement in performance. Through observation, collaboration, modeling, planning, and discussion, educators are better able to engage in authentic changes in practice.

### *Coaching and Transfer*

Training Components	Outcomes		
	Participants who demonstrate knowledge in the classroom	Participants who demonstrate new skills in the classroom	Participants who use new skills in the classroom
Theory and Discussion	10%	5%	0%
... + Demonstration in Classroom	30%	20%	0%
... + Practice and Feedback in the Classroom	60%	60%	5%
...+ Coaching in the Classroom	95%	95%	95%

Adapted from Joyce and Showers, 2002<sup>7</sup>

### *Characteristics of Effective Coaching Systems*

Research into coaching has revealed several essential characteristics for effective coaching<sup>8</sup>:

- Available to practitioners at all levels of ability and experience
- Utilizes a collaborative, peer-to-peer approach
- Sustained, cyclical, and job-embedded
- Driven by student and educator performance data
- Focused on continuous improvement rather than evaluation

### *Resources for further learning:*

[3 Models for Instructional Coaching](#)  
[The Evolution of Peer Coaching](#)

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<sup>7</sup> (B. Joyce & Showers, 2002)

<sup>8</sup> (Coggins et al., 2003; B. Joyce & Showers, 2002; Shanklin, 2006)



## Guskey's 5 Critical Levels

Ensuring professional learning is impactful requires a systemic evaluation plan, allowing us to monitor and adjust the throughline from the initial perception of the adult learners all the way to student outcomes. Too often, professional learning has been measured by auditing expenditures, tallying attendance, and surveying audience perception of the experience. Those indicators, while important, are woefully inadequate when determining if more students are better off as the result of the professional learning. For a more comprehensive approach, the CCEE suggests Thomas Guskey's Five Critical Levels model – an adaptation of the Kirkpatrick New World model<sup>9</sup>. The five levels are:

1. Participant's reactions to the professional learning experience
2. Participant's learning
3. Organization support and change
4. Participant's use of new knowledge and skills (behavior transfer)
5. Student Outcomes

This multilevel approach allows for more than evaluation – it can also serve as a backwards mapping tool to inform the design of the professional learning initiative<sup>10</sup>. This might look like asking and answering the following questions:

- **What is the measurable improvement we want to see in the lives of students (Level 5)?**  
Examples might include increased academic achievement, lower rates of absenteeism, increased sense of belonging, etc.
- **What does the existing research and/or evidence tell us the adults in the system need to do differently to produce those outcomes (Level 4)?**
- **What organizational supports need to be in place for the adults to make that behavior change (Level 3)?** Examples might include clear expectations for practice, coaching and actionable feedback, reinforcement of progress, and access to the requisite curricula, tools, templates, etc.
- **What new knowledge and skills do the adults need to make the desired behavioral change (Level 2)?**
- **What set of professional learning environments and assets are necessary to develop the new knowledge and skills (Level 1)?**

*Resources for further learning:*

[Gauge Impact with 5 Levels of Data Planning Professional Learning](#)

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<sup>9</sup> (Guskey & Roy, 2014)

<sup>10</sup> (Guskey & Roy, 2014)

## Learning At Work

Effective professional learning systems support learning where and when it happens<sup>11</sup>. Traditional efforts have relied heavily on formal learning environments (in-person or virtual workshops, seminars, courses, etc.). However, we know that much of the impactful learning happens away from the formal environment and closer to the actual work. Over the past few decades, the focus of professional learning has expanded to encompass not only the formal learning but also the social and just-in-time learning environments. Learning support should be aligned across these environments.

Experts disagree on the distribution of total learning among these three environments. The 70:20:10 model proposes that 70% of learning happens as people are doing the work (Just-in-time), 20% during informal learning, and 10% in formal learning<sup>12</sup>. Meanwhile, others support the 3-3-3 model, with equal thirds in each<sup>13</sup>. The common thread between these perspectives is the understanding that learning happens in more than one environment and that we should support the whole spectrum, not just one or two aspects. The QPLS agrees, emphasizing job-embedded, collaborative, on-going professional learning over singular formal learning experiences.

For example, let's imagine ABC Elementary is implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The teachers may attend a formal learning event, such as a two-day workshop or online course. UDL should then be incorporated into the coaching and collaboration (informal learning) so that the new knowledge acquired in formal learning is being reinforced and transfer is being supported. This may include practicing to use tools and templates, such as the UDL Guidelines or the UDL Flowchart. These and other tools will ultimately support teachers in the flow of their work (just-in-time). Coaches might also use UDL look-for's to support teachers during and after practice.

Further, we should encourage pathways for the learning during the actual work to then inform the social and formal learning. Providing mechanisms for sharing experiences, artifacts, lessons learned, etc. can boost the impact of informal learning as well as inform future iterations of the formal learning. For example, if a teacher develops a tool or work-around and finds it valuable, coaches and peers should encourage the teacher to share that with their colleagues. If the colleagues find similar value, consider incorporating into the formal training of future cohorts.

### ***Three Environments – formal, social, and just-in-time***

**Formal Learning** involves a structured, goal-directed approach to learning, with key learning outcomes and led by a trainer or facilitator. Depending on the type and local factors, formal learning may or may not be job-embedded. Examples include:

- Instructor-led training (ILT), in-person or virtual (VILT)
- Courses, in-person or online
- E-learning modules
- Structured, facilitated learning communities
  - Communities of Practice (COP)
  - Professional Learning Community (PLC)
- Seminars or Webinars
- Conference presentation
- Instructional rounds
- Lesson studies

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<sup>11</sup> (Center for Creative Leadership, 2020; B. R. Joyce & Showers, 1981; Owens, Lisa & Kadakia, Crystal, 2020; Pontefract, 2016)

<sup>12</sup> (Center for Creative Leadership, 2020)

<sup>13</sup> (Pontefract, 2016)

**Informal** is the semi-structured/unstructured, interpersonal learning that occurs, typically between peers or as part of coaching/mentoring relationship. Depending on the type and local factors, informal learning may or may not be job-embedded. Examples include:

- Impromptu conversations between educators (“Hey Malik, can you help me figure out...)
- Professional learning networks
- Hotlines and Help desks
- Drop-in coaching/office hours
- Mentoring
- Collaborative planning
- Coaching session (reflecting on practice, collaborative problem-solving, etc.)

**Just-in-time** is the learning that happens in the authentic practice; i.e. as educators are doing the hard work. The point of formal and informal learning is to promote transfer of learning into practice. Just-in-time learning is inherently job-embedded learning; Josh Bersin, a thought leader in the professional learning realm calls it “learning in the flow of work”<sup>14</sup>. Examples of ways to support for just-in-time learning include:

- Templates
- Checklists
- Exemplars and non-examples
- Micro-learning content (short how-to articles or videos that focus on a single topic or skill)
- Coaching (during planning and/or instruction)
- Self-assessments/reflection guides

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<sup>14</sup> (Bersin, 2018)

# Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework for teaching and learning based on what science tells us about how people learn<sup>15</sup>. Developed by CAST (formerly known as the Center for Applied Special Technology – now just “CAST”), UDL allows us to provide learning environments that support every learner to be successful without the expectation that every learner will meet goals in the same way. The application of UDL can be informed and reinforced by considering Malcolm Knowles key assumptions about adult learning.

## ***Learner Variability***

Decades of research in cognitive neuroscience and psychology have demonstrated that every learner is unique in the ways that they learn, a concept called **learner variability**<sup>16</sup>. Because of variability, one-size-fits-none when it comes to learning. Culture, experience, biology, context, content, and time all impact a person’s learning, and that amalgamation of variance cannot be encompassed with the boundaries of a rigid instructional design<sup>17</sup>.

The concept of learner variability can appeal to a learner’s sense of individuality; however, it can also make the job of facilitating learning among a group of unique learners seem much more complicated. A common misconception about UDL is that it requires facilitators of learning to design individualized learning experiences for each person; this is both incorrect and impossible at scale.

Rather than focusing on how learning might be individualized externally by a designer, facilitator, etc., UDL proposes empowering learners to drive the individualization of their learning. In UDL circles, a common saying is “Firm goals, flexible means.” By developing clear, challenging goals, anticipating barriers to achievement of those goals, and then providing options and support to mitigate those barriers, we can allow learners to exercise autonomy and ownership of their learning.

## ***Basis for UDL***

UDL is rooted in cognitive neuroscience, which has revealed that there are three groups of networks, three super networks, that work together to support learning. This interactivity is important to consider, as traditional methods have often treated them as working in isolation or as unrelated to learning<sup>18</sup>.

- **Affective Networks:** These engage the *why* of learning and drive our emotional commitment to the learning.
- **Recognition Networks:** These deal with the *what* of learning, allowing us to perceive, process, and connect new learning to prior knowledge as well as future application.
- **Strategic Networks:** These networks handle the *how* of learning - the use of tools and materials, the creation and communication of new knowledge, and the strategic application of learning to meet or exceed goals.

Until recently, UDL was primarily applied to the learning of K-12 students. However, use of UDL is growing in higher education and professional learning. This is because UDL is not founded on how kids learn, but how people learn<sup>19</sup>. The underlying research of the framework can be leveraged to support adult learning. Considering the diversity of experience, context, role, etc. that compounds the innate variability of our learners, UDL must be implicitly and explicitly incorporated into our professional learning work.

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<sup>15</sup> (CAST, 2022)

<sup>16</sup> (CAST, 2018; Meyer et al., 2014)

<sup>17</sup> (Meyer et al., 2014)

<sup>18</sup> (Meyer et al., 2014)

<sup>19</sup> (CAST, 2022)

***Resources for further learning:***

[CAST](#)

[Universal Design for Learning Guidelines](#)

[The UDL Journey Guide](#)

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