



**ACT 48
PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATION
PLAN GUIDELINES**

Revised January 17, 2017

I. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring that all Pennsylvania children receive the high-quality education that they deserve requires an effective teacher in every classroom and school and district leadership that is focused on raising achievement. The Commonwealth's educators – from the classroom teacher to the district superintendent – are the most important components of Pennsylvania's strategy for educational success.

As professionals in an ever-changing knowledge-based society, the state's educators are required to continuously upgrade their skill-set – just as it is an expectation for lawyers and doctors. Pennsylvania's professional development law, known as Act 48 of 1999, describes the requirements that apply to all certified educational professionals.

The professional education plan of each school entity shall be designed to meet the education needs of that school entity and its professional employees, so that they may meet the specific needs of students. Professional development must be based on sound research and promising practices, and it must be part of an approved plan for building educators' skills over the long term.

Each school entity in Pennsylvania – including school districts, intermediate units, area career and technical centers and charter schools, the Scotland School and the Scranton State School for the Deaf – is required to submit a Professional Education Plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The Pennsylvania Department of Education will approve or reject each plan; a plan that is rejected must be revised and resubmitted. The Professional Education Plan sets out each school entity's strategy for training school personnel at all stages of their careers. School entities are required to examine their student-level data, determine their professional education goals from the data, design an action plan with activities that meet their identified needs, and then evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

All certified educators must then complete every five years 180 hours of professional development that is related to an area of the professional educator's assignment or certification and, if the educator is employed by a school entity, complies with their school entity's plan. The 180-hour requirement can be met with six college credits, six credits of continuing professional education courses, 180 clock hours of continuing professional education, or any combination of collegiate studies, continuing professional education courses or other programs, activities or learning experiences equivalent to 180 hours. For the purposes of calculating hours and credits, one credit of collegiate study or continuing professional education course is equivalent to 30 hours of continuing professional education.

This document is intended as a guide to help school entities and educators meet the professional education requirements of Act 48 and – most importantly – continue their professional growth in order to increase the achievement levels of the Commonwealth's students.

II. PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION CRITERIA

In evaluating each school entity's Professional Education Plan, the Department of Education will determine whether plans meet the following criteria:

A. Professional development decisions are based on student needs and evaluated using student data. Approved professional development:

- A1. Uses disaggregated student data to determine educators' learning priorities
- A2. Is evaluated to show its impact on teaching practice and student learning

B. Professional development activities have content that will increase student learning. Approved professional development:

For classroom teachers, school counselors and education specialists:

- B1. Enhances the educator's content knowledge in the area of the educator's certification or assignment
- B2. Increases the educator's teaching skills based on research on effective practice, with attention given to interventions for struggling students
- B3. Provides educators with a variety of classroom-based assessment skills and the skills needed to analyze and use data in instructional decision-making
- B4. Empowers educators to work effectively with parents and community partners

For school and district administrators, and other educators seeking leadership roles:

- B5. Provides the knowledge and skills to think and plan strategically, ensuring that assessments, curriculum, instruction, staff professional education, teaching materials and interventions for struggling students are aligned to each other as well as to Pennsylvania's academic standards
- B6. Provides leaders with the ability to access and use appropriate data to inform decision-making
- B7. Empowers leaders to create a culture of teaching and learning, with an emphasis on learning
- B8. Instructs the leader in managing resources for effective results

C. Professional development is provided through a process that is most likely to result in sustained school improvement. Approved professional development:

- C1. Is set out in a plan that is updated annually by the Act 48 Committee after the committee critically evaluates the prior year's
 - student data,
 - professional education activities, and
 - the feedback/evaluation of those activities
- C2. Is based on knowledge of adult learning styles
- C3. Is tailored to each stage of an educator's career, differentiating between the needs of novice and experienced professionals

III. ALLOWABLE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

In order to meet the Content criteria outlined in Section II, a school entity's Professional Education Plan must comply with the following:

Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Educators (including Special Education)

To receive Department approval, a school entity Professional Education plan must include strategies for all classroom teachers to enhance their content area knowledge and pedagogical skills, with particular attention to the needs of diverse learners who are below proficient or below grade-level.

Content Area

All early childhood, elementary and secondary educators will be expected to participate in content-specific professional development within their area of certification or assigned work over the course of the Professional Education Plan. All teachers certified in Special Education are encouraged to obtain at least half of their required hours for Act 48 in one or more academic content areas.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Building knowledge of literacy, mathematics and science-specific content
- Building knowledge of specific content in other areas covered by the Pennsylvania academic standards, for teachers who are assigned to those areas
- Curriculum development aligned with Pennsylvania standards
- Data analysis training (all aspects of assessment and evaluation)

Teaching Practices

All early childhood, elementary and secondary educators will be expected to participate in professional development activities that advance high-quality classroom instruction over the course of the Professional Education Plan.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Training in assessing students and analyzing student data to implement effective change in instruction
- Observing exemplary school and classroom practices and collaboratively designing instructional strategies based on analysis of the observed experience
- Training to align and embed literacy, mathematics and science standards and instructional strategies within other academic content areas
- Acquiring technology skills and designing strategies to integrate technology into the instructional setting
- Creating shared lessons that help students learn specific skills that assessments identify as weak or lacking
- Acquiring secondary strategies to increase student engagement and personalize learning
- Training in how to create safe and welcoming learning environments
- Improving understanding of the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of all learners.
- Developing knowledge and skills in how to involve families and other stakeholders in the educational process
- Training in dealing with non-academic issues that may affect learning (grief counseling, intervening in student-on-student harassment, etc.)
- School or district-wide planning (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, gifted education, school improvement, interventions for struggling students, technology, student support, and wellness)

Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

All teachers certified in early childhood, elementary or secondary education (including special education) should participate in continued education focused on enhancing their ability to teach diverse learners in inclusive settings – with a focus on students who are below proficient or below grade-level – i.e., those who, because of gender, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, learning styles, limited English language proficiency or disabilities, may have academic needs that require varied instructional strategies to help them learn. An inclusive setting is the placement of students with disabilities and English language learners in a regular classroom setting.

School and District Administrators

All Act 48 activity must meet the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership (PIL) core standards, as described in criteria B5 through B8.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Training to facilitate staff analysis of student work
- Training related to strategies, curricula and programs that meet student academic needs
- Effective coaching practices for proven strategies that boost student performance
- Identifying the needs of student subgroups and effective strategies for meeting those needs
- Training to implement state school improvement planning processes
- Collaborative work with parents and community partners to develop collective efforts focused on the achievement rate of student subgroups
- School- or district-wide planning (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, school improvement, interventions for struggling students, technology and student support, wellness)
- Training on legal issues, governance and Board/Superintendent relationships

Professional Development Options Applicable at All Levels (Pre-K – 12)

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for students
- Training that provides an understanding of the cultural context of relationships, issues and trends in a multicultural, diverse society
- Study of developmental disorders
- Training to disaggregate data in relation to student achievement
- Working with instructional teams to develop curriculum/lesson plans
- Training that builds capacity to collaborate with teams of teachers, school leadership and parents
- Design and implementation of a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program
- Training in the facilitation and evaluation of advisory programs
- Training that deals with special needs like homelessness, adolescent depression, etc.
- Career development program: planning, organization, implementation, administration and evaluation
- School or district-wide planning and team planning activities (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, gifted education, school improvement, interventions for struggling students, technology, student support, and wellness) with other professional employees, where those professional employees are receiving Act 48 credit.

Educational Specialists, excluding School Counselors

<http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=22599&teachingNav=|93|94|>

Educational specialists, other than school counselors, must participate in professional development activities that enhance their ability to meet the demonstrated needs of the students and families they serve in order to increase the ability of students to succeed academically.

Content knowledge for education specialists may include training in how to reduce health problems and prevent health risk behaviors that delay student learning.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Identifying the health and social services needs and assets of students, families, schools and communities by using various types of data
 - Training to acquire health risk reduction and prevention strategies
 - Study of school-based health programs at state and national levels
 - Student Assistance Program training
 - Learning how to implement school-wide programs and classroom management strategies designed to improve student conduct
 - Studies related to cross-organizational professional development on social and health services issues
 - Prevention training on contemporary health issues affecting school age children
 - Training for emergency preparedness: CPR/AED training and certification updates
 - Professional education programs that grant Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for purpose of licensure
- School- or district-wide planning (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, gifted education, school improvement, technology and student support, wellness)