

International American School Professional Development Policy

Aim

To allow for greater collaboration between teachers to gain deeper insights into their practice.

Background

To date professional development has been either directed to the whole body of staff or has been experienced by individual teachers. Often PD has been seen by both teachers and administrators alike as a passive activity in which knowledge and understanding is received from others and taken on board. If we see PD as learning and development, it is fairly obvious that these activities are not going to move us on as a community of learning.

Community of Learning

This is the idea that as a school we are a learning institution that must see all members of our community - teachers, students and administrators - as learners. Thus, for teachers we must perceive learning as a continuous process and not one that ended when they received their teacher certification.

Types of Knowledge and Understanding

There are four types of these and it is important for teachers to consider all of these when they are reflecting on their work:

1. Subject Knowledge and Understanding - The set of subject specific knowledge and understanding that every teacher needs to have dependent upon the academic discipline that they teach.
2. Pedagogical Knowledge and Understanding - The general knowledge and understanding that all teachers need to have in order to actually run their lessons and function as an educational professional. Some of these may be specific to particular subject groups because of the situations that arise in those types of subjects.
3. Subject Curriculum Knowledge and Understanding - The actual knowledge and understanding of how students are to be taught and assessed according to the curriculum that this being followed.
4. Professional Knowledge and understanding - Areas of knowledge and understanding that go beyond the classroom and benefit performance, communications and working relationships as a whole, including emerging knowledge fields like Stress Management and Mindfulness.

How Do I Grow as a Teacher?

There are various sources that we can look at to assess our own professional practice:

- Student feedback
- Peer feedback
- Formal observation
- Reflective activities
- Elot data

Student Feedback

One of the most valuable sources of feedback for teachers is from their students. Students can produce different types of data that are useful for teachers:

- Critical incidents - these are things that happen at school that can be the focus of critical reflection that allow for professional learning. PD and reflective opportunities given to teachers should allow for these incidents to lead to professional learning.
- Survey data - teachers are encouraged to make use of data from their surveys they conduct with students and the data gained from formal whole school surveys.
- Performance data - through faculties, departments and whole school reflection sessions teachers and administrators are expected to use students performance data for assessment of both programs and instruction.

Peer Feedback

Peers can be a valuable source of feedback for teachers. One of the most important roles that peers have is to listen and contribute ideas. Accordingly, the importance of staffroom dialogue must be recognised by teachers and administrators as an important source of professional and contextual knowledge.

Peer observations are seen as a great way of stimulating professional learning. What is best about them is that the frameworks that are used allow for a contextualisation of the common peer dialogues into a formal structure of assessment. Their use allows for learning for both the observer and the observed. There are two observations of peers observations each academic year at IAS one in the autumn and one in the spring. The arrangements for these are as follows:

- In the general staff meeting the pairs for observations are announced and the observation form is explained.
- Teachers are asked to meet before the observations to discuss the observation form and any items they do not understand on them.
- Observations are done which are followed by a meeting in which the teachers discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the observations.
- Completed observation forms are sent to the Principal along with a proposal for professional development before their next peer observation.
- A reflection on the training will be sent to administration once completed.

Formal Observation

The purpose of lesson observation is to assess the quality of teaching and learning in a given lesson, and give constructive feedback to the teacher that is observed. Observations will be conducted in keeping with the standards established in the document Lesson Observations Protocol. Having been observed teachers can expect:

- A brief discussion at the end of the observation in which they receive a general picture of the observation. This discussion is also an opportunity for the teacher to give any information that they would like to share about the lesson observed, dynamics in the group etc.
- Within a week a formal meeting in which they are given formal written and verbal feedback on the lesson. This meeting is vital for establishing and renewing a positive working relationship amongst faculty and administration. It is also an opportunity for teachers to express their own self-assessment and offer any needed critique of working conditions.
- In the case of the lesson being Satisfactory level or below, teachers will be provided with assignments or steps to take in order to improve the quality of teaching they are providing. This will be followed up by an additional observation that will be conducted to check if the problems have been remedied.

Formal observations are scheduled twice a year in line with the Staff Evaluation Policy. Formal observations can be performed by members of both the Senior Leadership Team and Middle Leadership Team.

Reflective Activities

Teachers, students and administrators can gain a great deal from reflective activities. Accordingly, we incorporate these into the school calendar. Whole school reflective sessions are done with teachers in August and June of each academic year. Faculties also incorporate these activities into planning, observations and assessments.

Eleot Data

There are two main Eleot cycles each year. Data from these is used as the basis for reflection by administration and faculties. The data allows for the setting of targets for each semester.

Development Cycles

August:	Formal PD, planning and reflection sessions
September:	Formal Observations
October:	Eleot walk-ins
Oct-Dec:	Peer Observations

November: In-school training day
February: Eleot walk-ins
March: In-school training day
March-April: Peer Observations
May-June: Reflection, exit interview and target setting

Sharing Professional Learning

All teachers returning from a formal professional development training are expected to provide a short training/debriefing session in which they explain useful practices that they have learned to the either their faculty or the staff as a whole. These sessions are organised during the regular teacher meetings as per the school calendar.

Peer Marking and Collaborative Planning

The Faculties meet monthly to collaborate on shared curriculum and instructional goals throughout the year: HUM (English Language Arts, Social Studies, Geography, History, Psychology); SMI (Science, Math, ICT); MFL (French, German, Polish); CAS (PE, Music, Art). Faculties engage in regular peer marking of student work across subject disciplines and in accord with common assessment criteria. This practice allows for teachers to entertain meaningful dialogue about how they apply criteria and arrive at various distinctions in “quality”. These dialogues ensure that teachers are not assessing their work in the dark, and that they receive positive criticism where necessary. Additionally, Faculties are tasked with collaborative planning to ensure both vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment as well as the inclusion of interdisciplinary projects.