Professional Development

Our new contract gives us a voice in planning professional development that meets our needs as individual teachers and for the school as a whole. Each chapter’s professional development committee will consist of the UFT chapter leader and an equal number of members chosen by the union and by the principal. The committee will meet regularly with your school’s administration to plan and review professional development. You should also involve your contract-implementation committee and all of your chapter’s members in this process. Here are some ideas to help you plan.

Questions you and your administration may want to consider:

• What are the needs of your school community?
• How will the professional development committee get input from all staff members about what they feel the needs are?
• What are the special challenges that have been presented to your school community as a result of the implementation of Common Core? How can you best address them?
• What is the instructional focus of your school as a whole? How can it be supported through professional development?
• Are there new initiatives, curricula or materials in your building? How could teachers be provided with support for implementing these new approaches?
• What areas of professional development are needed to address these various needs?
• Which professional development structures can you use to accomplish your goals?
• What kind of professional development do your functional chapter members want that is appropriate to their job titles and which will help them accomplish their goals?

Possible areas of professional learning:

• Use your chapter’s collective knowledge, experience and information to focus on and discuss student learning.
• Study a new topic to support a school, grade or department need, such as strategies to support ELLs in academic vocabulary development.
• Share successful strategies and methodologies with colleagues.
• Use professional development structures to create or build a learning community within the school.
• Determine a schoolwide need and create approaches to address that need, such as through parent engagement and involvement.

Possible professional development structures:

• Grade-level planning
• Teacher-led study groups
• Analysis of student work
• Action research
• Case discussion
• Lesson study
• Work sessions
• Professional book study

Consider which possible professional development structures or methods could best support staff in learning new content, strategies and skills. Schools are not limited to any one structure. Be careful that any new structures do not turn into extra work or paperwork for members.

**Here is one possible school scenario:**
This school has identified the need to support English Language learners in academic vocabulary development. The professional development committee meets and decides that the staff should implement the following professional development plan:

• First Monday of each month – Hold a professional book club using a book of strategies to support the development of the ELL students’ academic vocabulary.
• Second Monday of each month – Hold a professional work session, such as a colleague-led discussion on the RAND strategy for ELL instruction.
• Third Monday of each month – Look at student work, such as by using a protocol to analyze ELL students’ use of academic vocabulary in writing.
• Fourth Monday of each month – Hold an instructional-planning session to develop strategies for classroom instruction.