



McREL helps Florida districts better implement and evaluate professional development



The Challenge

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) requires that school districts provide effective professional development (PD) for teachers. To help schools fulfill that requirement, the state developed Protocol Standards with four strands— planning, learning, implementing, and evaluating—that spread across the district, school, and educator levels.

While gathering feedback from the districts, however, it became clear that schools were strong in planning and learning, but they lacked the same effectiveness in implementing and evaluating PD. FDOE used their Race To The Top funds to help educators at all levels across the state improve their capacity to implement and evaluate their individual school's PD needs, as identified through the reviews conducted by the state in each school district. That's when McREL came into the picture.

Strategic Solution

McREL's team designed and developed eight technical assistance modules that covered the issues that schools and districts needed to address while redeveloping their PD systems. Adapted from Success in Sight®, **Balanced Leadership**®, and data-driven decision making content, these modules addressed a range of topics, including assessing need, monitoring implementation, and evaluating impact. Once the modules were approved by FDOE, McREL consultants delivered the content over several months to PD and program directors from across the state, and then provided implementation support by creating multiple methods for cross-district collaboration, offering feedback on the redesign, and serving as thought partners.

Results

Participants in the technical assistance sessions cited the modules' activities and frameworks as being most beneficial to their learning. Denise McLaughlin, the PD specialist for Florida's Okaloosa County School District, said Module 5, *Monitoring Progress and Evaluating Impact of Professional Development*, had a significant impact on their work because it provided a "detailed and intricately defined system" which gave them a clear, common language to use. McLaughlin added that the tools from Module 8, *Designing a Professional Development Plan*, were helpful in creating a new PD plan specific to her district. Bette Zippin, director of PD support in the Broward County Public Schools, said that her district adapted a number of McREL tools and processes, resulting in "new insights into processes and procedures about professional development."

Next Steps

FDOE approved all modules and PD plans in September of 2013, and McREL has continued to help district trainers understand the concepts and tools by offering one-day sessions and other technical assistance. "The process is ongoing," said McLaughlin. "I don't see an end to this work." She has posted a set of charts from each module in her office and said, "I refer to them every single day to make sure we are staying on track in our work."

McREL is planning on scaling up the work so that other states going through the redesign of their professional development systems can benefit from the lessons that Florida has learned.