

Professional Development (PD) – Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Professional Development?

Sometimes called staff development, professional development is the term used to describe a variety of opportunities to continually learn, update, and improve the knowledge and skills of any professional. The purpose of staff development is to help personnel become more individually and collectively effective in helping all students achieve the intended results of their education.

2. What is the benefit of professional development days?

Research clearly documents the relationship between effective professional development for teachers and improved student learning. Research also says the teacher, and their qualifications, are the single most significant factor in determining student achievement. Some research indicates the teacher's qualifications account for 40-90% of a student's success on achievement tests. Research also says that a well-prepared teacher can be stronger than influences on student background factors (poverty, language, minority status). Effective PD is the key to student success. Dollars spent on PD will have a greater impact on student learning than any other dollars spent. True professional development is focused on student outcomes, paired with changing teacher practice. It's active engagement of teachers, over a period of time. To change a practice, much research indicates a minimum of 30 hours focused around one area of learning. By hosting District planned professional development days in Francis Howell, we ensure that PD is delivered by a skilled group of practioners who are equipped with both the content knowledge and the practical application.

3. How many PD days are there in Francis Howell?

The 2016 – 2017 District calendar has nine PD days, and the 2017-2018 District calendar has six PD days.

4. **What is the cost vs. benefit of additional days?**

In addition to the contracted day, much of the PD costs are primarily associated with “1% funds.” The state requires that each school district spend at least 1% of its basic state aid on professional development programs. These funds are administered through the District Professional Development Committee (a district committee comprised of teachers and administrators), in accordance with state statute. Costs for PD outside of the required 1% funds have been reduced significantly in the past two years (74% reduction in 15-16 and 82% reduction in 16-17). All monies tied to District professional development on PD days during the 16-17 school year come from the required 1% funds. Professional development benefits are typically measured in student outcomes, such as test scores and those indicators outlined in our accreditation points.

5. **What do teachers say about the PD they receive in Francis Howell?**

In 2015 – 2016:

- 95.8% of certified staff members surveyed agreed/strongly agreed that building professional development was a good use of their time.
- 96% of certified staff members surveyed rated building professional development as excellent or good.
- 85% of certified staff members surveyed rated District professional development as excellent or good.
- The PD survey participation rate on average was 69%.

2016– 2017 as of December:

- 94.4% of certified staff members surveyed rated building professional development as excellent or good.
- 93.1% of certified staff members surveyed rated District professional development as excellent or good.
- For the five District PD days as of December, the PD survey participation rate was 58%.

6. Do you have a mentor program for new teachers in addition to your Professional Development Days?

State statute requires a PD plan for the first two years of teaching for any teacher who does not have prior teaching experience. In FHSD we provide a week of orientation to the district for those new to FHSD and those also new to teaching. We also offer our teachers new to the field a two-year mentor program with our District instructional coach. The program provides push in and pull out (2-3 release days for PD with the coach in small job alike groups) professional development throughout the school year. ALL expenses (release time, coach stipend, etc.) for this program comes from the required 1% funds.

7. How can the required “1% funds” be spent?

To meet statutory requirements, 100% of professional development funds must be:

- Used for professional development
- Spent on activities consistent with the District Professional Development Plan developed by the District Professional Development Committee (DPDC) in collaboration with administrators
- Clearly related to the objectives of the district Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP)
- Used for professional learning activities approved by the PDC and the board of education
- Tied directly to the identified student and educator learning goals and objectives.

One percent professional development monies should be committed to long term, job-embedded activities that impact student achievement as determined by measurable outcomes.