

Trends in Professional Development for Globally Minded Educators

 blogs.edweek.org/edweek/global_learning/2016/06/trends_in_professional_development_for_globally_minded_educators.html

By Guest Blogger

Today, Jennifer Williams, a literacy specialist at [Calliope Global](#) and adjunct professor at [Saint Leo University](#), examines current teacher professional development strategies and how they can be leveraged to create a global PD plan.

By guest blogger Jennifer Williams

Inspirational. Empowering. Relevant. Customized. Collaborative. Supercharged. Fun! All words used by educators when asked to describe their ideal type of professional development. Many of today's educators are seeking alternatives to traditional forms of professional learning in an effort to enrich their practice and support student success in the classroom. Globally minded educators are finding a host of innovative ways to design their professional development (PD) plans to meet the needs of instructional learning objectives. Sophisticated, self-directed models allow teachers to truly view the world as their learning spaces and harness the transformational power of both collaboration and new technologies. Armed with voice and choice, educators are able to examine global perspectives and incorporate both formal and informal activities to extend their understandings of the world. Recent trends in modern professional development are revolutionizing the process of learning for teachers and shifting practice in classrooms around the world.

Trend #1: Backward Design Planning

Current models of professional development are actionable. Charged with a clearly designed, intentional purpose, many educators are looking at the end goal that connects to a larger vision and working backwards to create PD plans. Once purpose is defined, educators can strategically match learning opportunities to objectives and create action steps to achieving knowledge on topics. For instance, a globally minded educator seeking to create an international audience for student writing may look to better understand both standards of practice and tech tools for collaboration. In this example, a teacher customizing a year-long PD plan may select an online conference for learning more on international writing standards, a book study on global collaboration with Professional Learning Network (PLN) peers, and expert interviews with educational consultants from several ed-tech companies. With an intentional focus on gaining skills and competencies, this educator can effectively meet stated goals to best support instruction and student learning.

Trend #2: Responsive to Multiple Learning Styles

Lecture-style, one-size-fits-all PD is being reimaged with modern formats that respond to varying learning styles. Educators today looking for flexible options to match schedules and personalized needs are finding choices that are hands-on, social, and multimodal, incorporating text, audio, video, and graphics. These learner-centric offerings empower educators to take charge of professional growth in their search for natural connections between content, experience, and available resources. If we move beyond mandated PD that is designed-for-many and viewed as sit-and-get direct instruction, then personalized experiences connecting educators to their core beliefs about teaching and learning in



global education can become a reality. Personalized and matched to multiple learning styles, many global educators are participating in the #100DayChallenge, an open-ended call to action allowing participants to select one growth activity to complete daily for 100 days. Committed to extending knowledge of global topics in education and overall personal happiness, many teachers are choosing to complete the challenge by watching one [TEDTalk](#) of their choice each day and then documenting learning in the form of sketchnotes. These visual representations of how concepts are understood are then shared on social media, such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, for discussion and extension. Diverse contexts such as these bring together multiple learning styles for a better and more authentic learning experience that can be scaled for global learning.

Trend #3: Crowd-Sourced Learning

Participatory learning opportunities are bringing focus to the importance of the collective input of educators gathered through crowd-sourcing practices. By incorporating the voices of many and enlisting all educators in the decision making process, learning experiences can essentially put teachers at the center of their own learning. Educators seeking to bring the world to their classrooms and bring their classrooms to the world can dive deeply into relevant dialogue with peers and experts and can have the ability to apply new learning to school designs in real time. In turn, these practices are personalizing professional learning—making the peer-to-peer learning movement the "PD of choice" for many educators. As part of this shift, [Edcamps](#) as "unconference events" are quickly becoming primary components of PD plans for many educators of the world. With Edcamps, learning is participant-driven as sessions for the day are determined organically with teachers themselves indicating topics on which they want to learn and topics on which they want share. Edcamps are free and open to all educators worldwide, and learning is centered on the passions and questions relevant in the lives of attendees and their learning communities.

Trend #4: Micro-Credentialing & Digital Badging

In addition to being empowered to design personalized plans for professional growth, educators are now charged with also determining how learning will be demonstrated and validated for recognition. Evidencing practices, such as micro-credentialing and digital badging, can serve to document professional growth in ways that are universally recognizable for educators around the world. These competency-based models provide systems that can continuously recognize professional learning and sharing of best practices regardless of time, place, or rate of learning. Global educators seeking to document skills and competencies in PD plans in a practical and focused manner can earn micro-credentials through multiple organizations and agencies. Once an appropriate program is selected, an educator can follow steps of (1) selecting skills or competencies for development, (2) collecting and organizing evidencing materials (e.g., class videos, photos capturing work, video logs of progress, field notes, etc.), and (3) submitting evidence in the form of a portfolio or digital artifact to showcase development of specified skill. Following submission, field experts review provided documentation to ensure established standards of mastery are met, and recognition is awarded. Often times, digital badges are offered to serve as a recognizable validation of accomplishments, positioning educators as valued resources in their global learning networks.

Trend #5: Sustained Inquiry

For a true shift in practice, educators need to be supported with space and time to develop depth of knowledge over extended periods and across multiple learning environments. Sustained inquiry allows for educators to approach questions in their worlds through an iterative process of design thinking with trial, evaluation, redefining, and reimagining. Learning can be collaborative, networked, and continuous, and by working together in connected spaces (both within schools and within virtual PLNs), educators can work together with others to gain understandings from diverse ideas and perspectives and reflective thinking. Viewed by many as the mainstay of connected learning and sustained inquiry, [Twitter](#) has evolved to be a virtual space enabling educators to take ownership over their professional growth. Educators with personalized Professional Learning Networks are establishing cultures of transparent sharing in 140 characters or less. Addressing challenges, exploring new practices, and celebrating successes, inspired educators of the world are exemplifying sustained inquiry with use of hashtags and Twitter chats, such as [#gloaledchat](#) and [#edchat](#). More, with Twitter as an entry point for dialogue and discussion, many educators are extending conversations with new colleagues of the world to other networked platforms, such as blogging, [Voxer](#), [Periscope](#), [Instagram](#), and even collaborative study trips, for further exploration.

Set to develop a professional development plan for learning and growth, globally minded educators can thoughtfully and purposefully explore topics that are significant in the worlds of their students and their own lives as professionals. These new trends in global PD are not only characterized as providing purpose and motivation, but also serve to empower educators with autonomy and agency to revolutionize the landscape of education and positively change the practice of how educators access and share information for professional growth.

Connect with [Jennifer](#) and [Heather](#) on Twitter.

Sketchnote courtesy of [Amber McCormick](#).