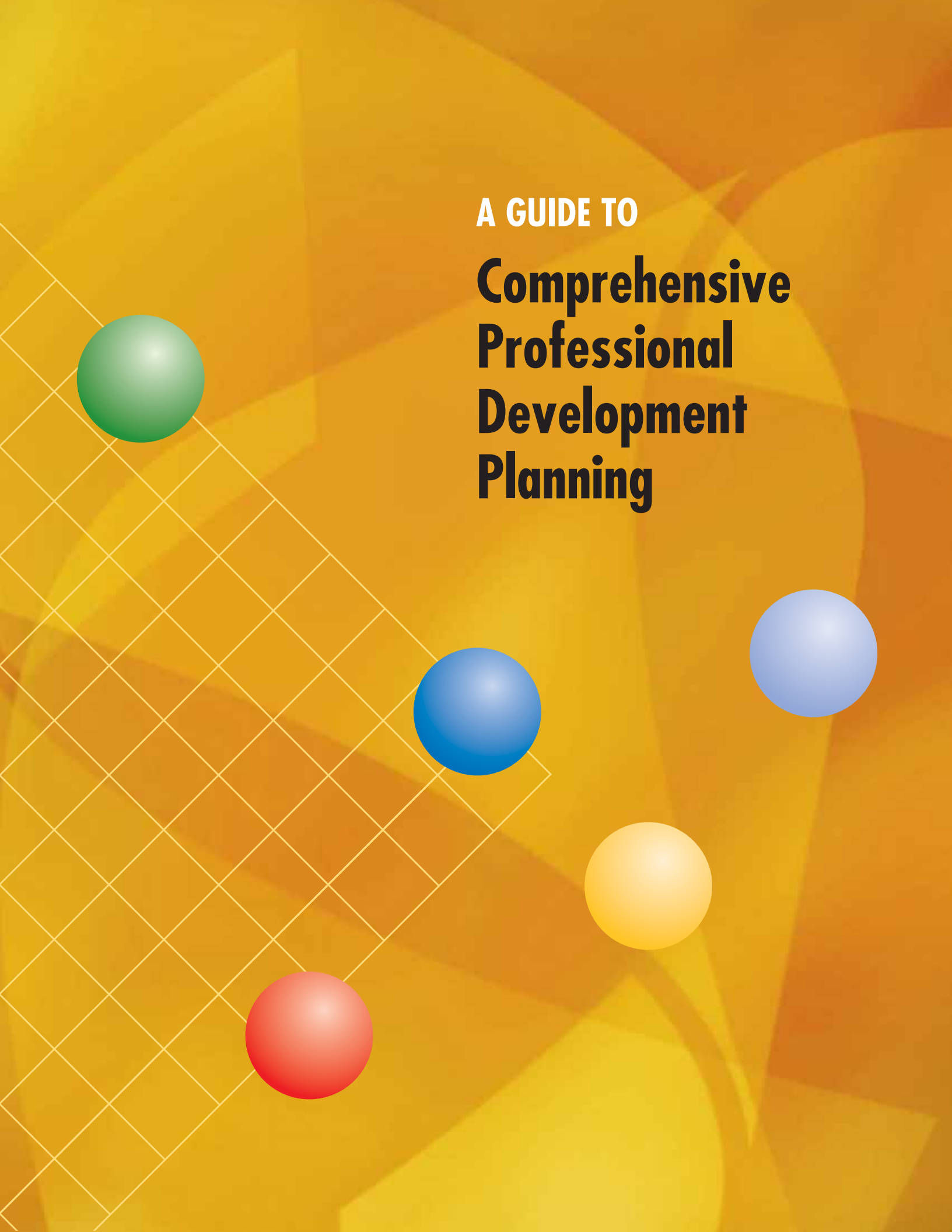
A GUIDE TO

Comprehensive Professional Development Planning



A Message from the Education Partners

This guide has been developed by a committee of Alberta's education partners and is intended to support school jurisdictions and schools in the development of comprehensive professional development plans. Professional development (PD) is the wide range of activities school jurisdiction staff engage in individually and collectively to improve their practice and enhance student learning. PD programs and resources for school staff members are provided by a number of organizations, including school jurisdictions, the Alberta Teachers' Association, Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia, Alberta Education and faculties of education at Alberta universities.

It is our hope this guide will support a process of collaborative conversation and planning among education partners at the community level. To do this, the guide asks key questions about how to develop a comprehensive professional development plan. The answers to the key questions will be determined locally because each jurisdiction's unique circumstances should influence the components of the plan. Throughout the document the term *jurisdiction* refers to Alberta school authorities, including private and charter schools. The term *jurisdiction staff* refers to certificated teachers and school administrators, non-teaching staff and others identified by the jurisdiction or school in its comprehensive PD plan.

The planning process described in this guide is founded on the belief that collaboration among education partners is essential to the delivery of effective PD at the school and system levels. Collaboration supports the delivery of effective PD, which in turn leads to improved professional practice and enhanced student learning.

- Alberta Education
- Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia
- Alberta School Boards Association
- Alberta Teachers' Association
- College of Alberta School Superintendents
- Faculties of Education, Alberta Universities

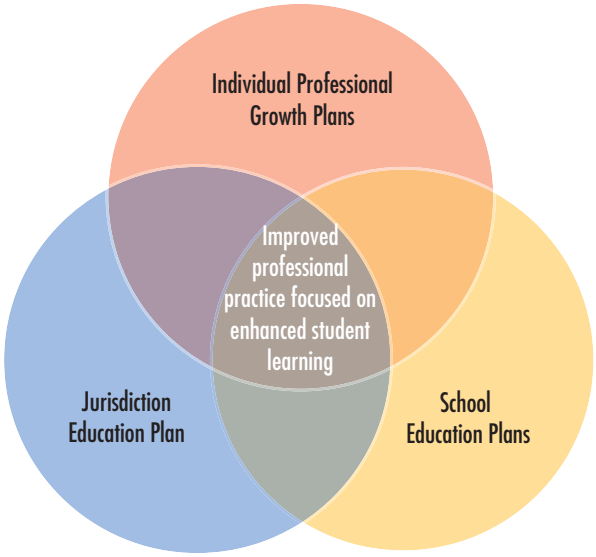
Why develop a comprehensive plan for professional development?

The primary purpose of public schooling is to promote student learning. Research has shown student learning is enhanced when jurisdiction staff have access to effective professional development. Professional development should focus on enhancing professional practice and leadership capacity at both the school and jurisdiction levels.

In Alberta, provincial education policy and regulations require all jurisdictions and schools to develop an annual education plan that takes provincial priorities into account. The education plan includes the specific goals set by each school and jurisdiction for the year, the methods to achieve those goals and the measures that will determine if the goals have been achieved. A comprehensive plan for professional development will assist in achieving these goals and measures.

In addition, provincial policy requires all certificated teachers to develop an annual personal professional growth plan based on a self-assessment of their learning needs relative to the Teaching Quality Standard and considering the school, jurisdiction and provincial education plans.

Many factors affect the development of a comprehensive PD plan. It is important to note while some of the professional development needs of staff, school and jurisdiction will overlap, each will have unique needs. To be effective professional development must be integral to the day-to-day operation of a school. Since resources are limited, PD must be well planned in consultation with all education partners to ensure resources are used efficiently. Research tells us change occurs over time. Therefore, for PD to be effective it must be systemically planned, systemic, supported and sustained. A comprehensive PD plan mindful of these factors should result in school improvement and enhanced student learning.



Developing a Shared Vision for Professional Development

An effective comprehensive plan for professional development should be based on a shared vision developed in a collaborative process carried out by the education partners involved in the implementation and delivery of the plan. Those education partners may include:

Jurisdiction Level
Jurisdiction administration
School principals
Teachers
Support staff
Trustees
Local ATA
Teachers' Convention Board
Regional consortia
Post-secondary institutions
Other organizations as appropriate

School Level
School administration
School leadership team
Teachers
Support staff
School council
ATA PD Committee
Jurisdiction administration
Others as appropriate

An effective PD planning process begins with a review of the literature on quality professional development, discussions about jurisdiction and school needs, and the role of various education partners.

When this background research has been completed, the PD planning committee will then be ready to develop a shared vision for professional development that includes

- core belief statements, including statements as to the purpose of professional development,
- a vision for effective professional development at the jurisdiction and school levels, and
- operational guidelines to support the development and implementation of the plan.

This collaborative approach fosters commitment to a plan that should provide a range of ongoing and related activities. Taking the time to develop a shared vision for professional development will help meet the needs of all parties and address unique contextual issues of the classroom, school and jurisdiction.

PD Planning Based on Your Evidence

From the time you begin to develop your comprehensive PD plan through to completion of the action plan, data or evidence should inform each step. *Data* is the information (both quantative and qualitative) used as a basis for reasoning, discussion or calculation. In education we use a wide range of data to study trends, identify issues, measure the results of initiatives, target interventions and verify assumptions. By collecting and analyzing data in the planning and implementation phases of the PD plan, you can use resources wisely, support the development of professional practice and measure the results of the plan. Thomas Guskey, author of *Evaluating Professional Development,* identifies three major purposes of data in the PD design process: planning, formative evaluation and summative evaluation.

1. Planning

Data collected for planning helps you examine local contextual variables, identify PD priorities and decide on and articulate your ultimate goal.

- What are the provincial priorities?
- How well are your students learning?
- What are your system needs?
- What are your school needs?
- What are your staff needs?

2. Formative Evaluation

During the planning phase you will identify potential sources of data that can be collected to affirm the plan, determine what changes are necessary to achieve success and decide if you are on the right track.

- What indicators show the program is proceeding as planned?
- What indicators show progress?
- Are any adjustments necessary?

3. Summative Evaluation

In evaluating and reporting on your PD program you will need to determine how well you have achieved your goals.

- How well did the program meet its goals?
- How well did the program meet participants' needs?
- What are the indicators of improved practice and enhanced student learning?

Evidence-Based PD Planning Cycle

The model below represents a systematic planning process that combines the art and science of PD program development. The art is the creativity and imagination necessary to produce an innovative and effective PD program; the science is necessary to systematically develop a program that meets participant, school and jurisdiction needs, achieves its goals and can be evaluated using data. In many ways this model is similar to the professional inquiry and action research processes. It can be used to plan for one professional development activity or to develop a multi-year curriculum implementation plan. It may take a few months to complete the cycle, or, in the case of a large-scale change, a few years.

Effective professional development requires thoughtful planning over time in a cyclical and recursive process. At both the jurisdiction and school level there may be multiple PD plans in different stages of implementation at any given time. For example, implementation of two curricula, an AISI project, training for new technology and a school improvement initiative could all be under way in one school simultaneously.

Steps in the Evidence-Based PD Planning Process

STEP 1

Conduct Environmental Scan and Participant Needs Assessment

Input data collected in the first step provides insight into student learning and critical information for instruction including provincial initiatives, programs of study, available resources, student and teacher demographics and other contextual variables. Data for the environmental scan and participant needs assessment can be collected from such sources as existing documents and reports (including student learning and achievement data) and through such processes as participant surveys and focus groups. The following questions will help you through this step of the plan.

- What are the provincial priorities?
- What are the jurisdiction's needs and priorities?
- What are the school's needs and priorities?
- Are there unique contextual issues that need to be considered?
- What do you know about student learning?
- What are the individual professional development needs or goals of staff?

Analyze Input Data

Analyze data from different perspectives:

- What trends or themes emerge from the aggregated data?
- What unique needs emerge from desegregation of data?

STEP 2

Develop PD Program Goals

At this step, the committee should establish priorities based on analysis of the input data and develop a manageable number of goals.

- What are the top priorities from the analysis of the data?
- Have the goals been developed as SMART goals? (**s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**chievable, **r**ealistic and **t**ime-targeted)
- Do you have the resources to effectively address the goals?

Explore the Alternatives

Before deciding on what action to take, reviewing the literature and contacting PD partners will assist in identifying the best approaches and practices to achieve the goals.

- What can we learn from the literature about how to achieve the goals?
- How have others approached these goals?
- What activities have been planned by other PD partners to address these goals?

STEP 3

Identify Possible PD Strategies

After scanning the environment, assessing participants' needs and developing goals, the committee is ready to develop focused, comprehensive, ongoing PD programs.

A PD program includes the set of strategies and activities to address a single goal (see page 8). Consider the following questions prior to selecting PD strategies.

- How can the planning committee capitalize on similarities and reduce overlap with the other PD partners' programs?
- Which delivery models best address your goals and meet participants' needs?
- What resources must be designated to successfully achieve the goals?
- How will professional development be ongoing and sustained?
- How will the impact of your PD plan be measured?

Determine Data Sources Consistent with Goals and Strategies

An important step at this stage is to identify evidence required to determine successful program implementation and outcomes. Effective implementation requires gathering data on the following five questions related to evaluation, as specified by Guskey (2000).

- What is the overall response of participants to the program?
- What did participants learn from the program?
- What organizational resources were provided to support the desired change?
- Are participants applying the new knowledge and skills?
- Did the program influence practice and, therefore, student learning?

STEP 4
Finalize Action Plan and Measures

The committee is now ready to finalize the comprehensive PD and action plan. The plan should be detailed enough to serve as a guide for implementation and evaluation.

- Does the plan contain evidence-based goals and strategies, timelines, evaluation strategies, data sources and the necessary resources?
- Are there any reporting requirements for the PD plan?

Plan Approval and Communication

Once the plan has been finalized it may need to be approved by the principal or superintendent and/or the board and should be communicated in a timely manner to stakeholders.

- Does the plan need approval?
- How will you communicate the plan to stakeholders?

STEP 5
Implement Action Plan

The success of your plan relies on careful attention to details during implementation.

- What strategies are in place to support your committee?
- How will you maintain communication with participants?
- How will your committee maintain communication with PD providers?
- How will your committee recognize and celebrate success along the way?

Monitor and Collect Process/Outcome Data

Collecting formative data to monitor implementation of the plan is critical to success.

- What is the overall response of participants to the program?
- What did participants learn from the program?
- What organizational resources were provided to support the desired change?
- Were the resources adequate and appropriate?

STEP 6
Revise Action Plan as Required

Based on the evidence collected about the PD program or new emerging needs, the action plan may need to be revised.

- What does the formative evaluation data indicate?
- Should the program strategies be adjusted?
- How will the program changes be communicated to stakeholders?

Monitor and Collect Process/Outcome Data

As strategies are completed, your committee will collect evidence of program success.

- Are participants applying their new knowledge and skills?
- Is the program influencing practice and student learning?

STEP 7
Undertake Summative Evaluation

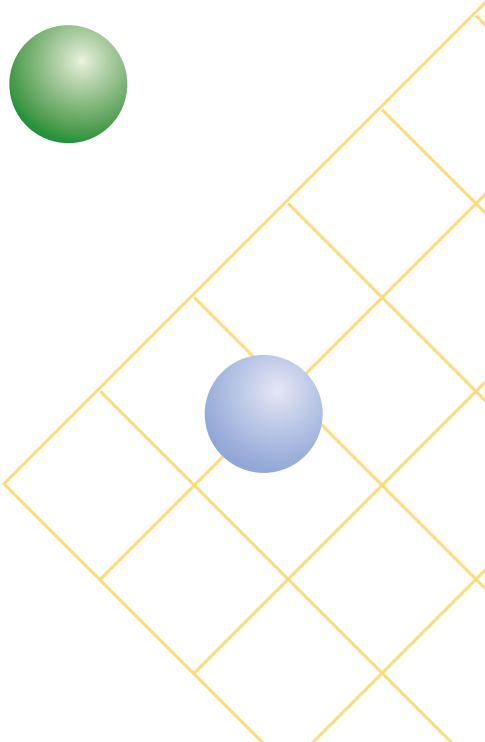
Although your committee has been collecting evidence throughout the implementation of the program, summative data allows for the completion of this PD planning cycle.

- Did the program meet its goals? (eg, student learning)
- Did the program meet participants' needs? (eg, enhanced practice)

Final Report and Recommendations

The final report should include an overview of the program, a judgment of the program's success and recommendations for future PD planning. This report should meet reporting requirements and be shared with stakeholders.

- Did you celebrate what worked well?
- Did you examine what didn't work and why?
- Did you identify what should be done next?



Professional Development Strategies and Activities

When designing a comprehensive professional development program, PD planning committees need to consider a broad range of activities. Planning and selection of activities should balance the needs of the individual, the school and the jurisdiction. The following are some examples of PD activities that can be combined to create an ongoing program.

Action research
Book study
Classroom/school visitation
Collaborative curriculum development
Conference audio tapes
Conferences
Curriculum mapping
Curriculum symposium
Data analysis
Examining student work
Focused conversations
Hosting a student teacher
Individual professional growth plans
Integrated curriculum planning
Internet research
Journaling
Lesson study
Mentoring a colleague
Online curriculum network
Online PD programs
Peer coaching
Post-secondary courses
Professional books and journals
Professional organizations
Professional portfolios
Selecting curriculum resources
Self-reflection
Specialist council memberships
Study groups
Summer institutes
Teachers' convention
Video conferencing
Viewing educational videos
Workshops

Support Resources for Comprehensive Professional Development Planning in Alberta

Alberta Education (www.education.gov.ab.ca)
Aboriginal Services Branch
Curriculum Branch
French Language Services Branch
Learner Assessment Branch
Learning and Teaching Resources Branch
Learning Technologies Branch
School Improvement Branch
Special Programs Branch
Stakeholder Technology Branch
System Improvement and Reporting Division
Teacher Development and Certification Branch

Alberta Regional Professional Development Consortia (www.arpdc.ab.ca)
Calgary Regional Consortium (www.crcpd.ab.ca)
Central Alberta Regional Consortium (www.carc.red-deer.com)
Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (www.erlc.ualberta.ca)
Learning Network (www.learning-network.org)
Northwest Regional Learning Consortium (www.nrlc.net)
Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium (http://people.uleth.ca/~sapdc)

Alberta Teachers' Association (www.ata.ab.ca)
Local PD committees
Professional development publications
Professional development staff
Professional library (online catalogue)
Specialist councils
Teachers' conventions

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Recommended Reading

Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). *A Framework for Professional Development in Alberta.* www.teachers.ab.ca/NR/rdonlyres/D39070F9-34AB-42D0-ABA4-67916EA5DF14/0/PD_ Framework.pdf.

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