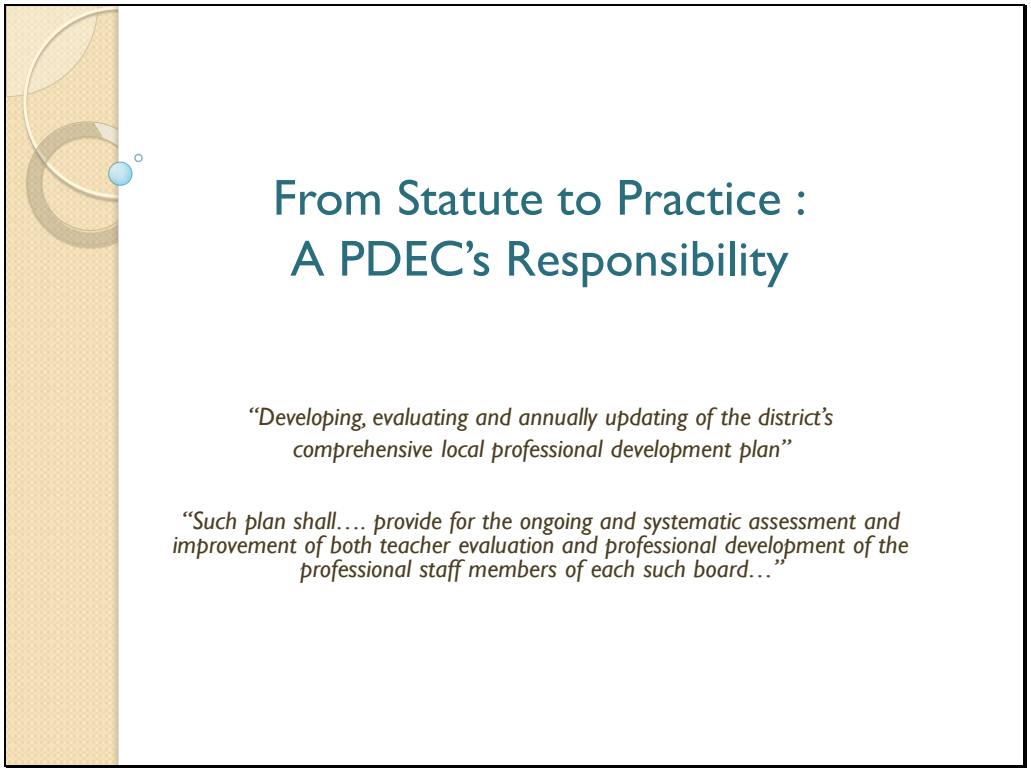
Slide 1

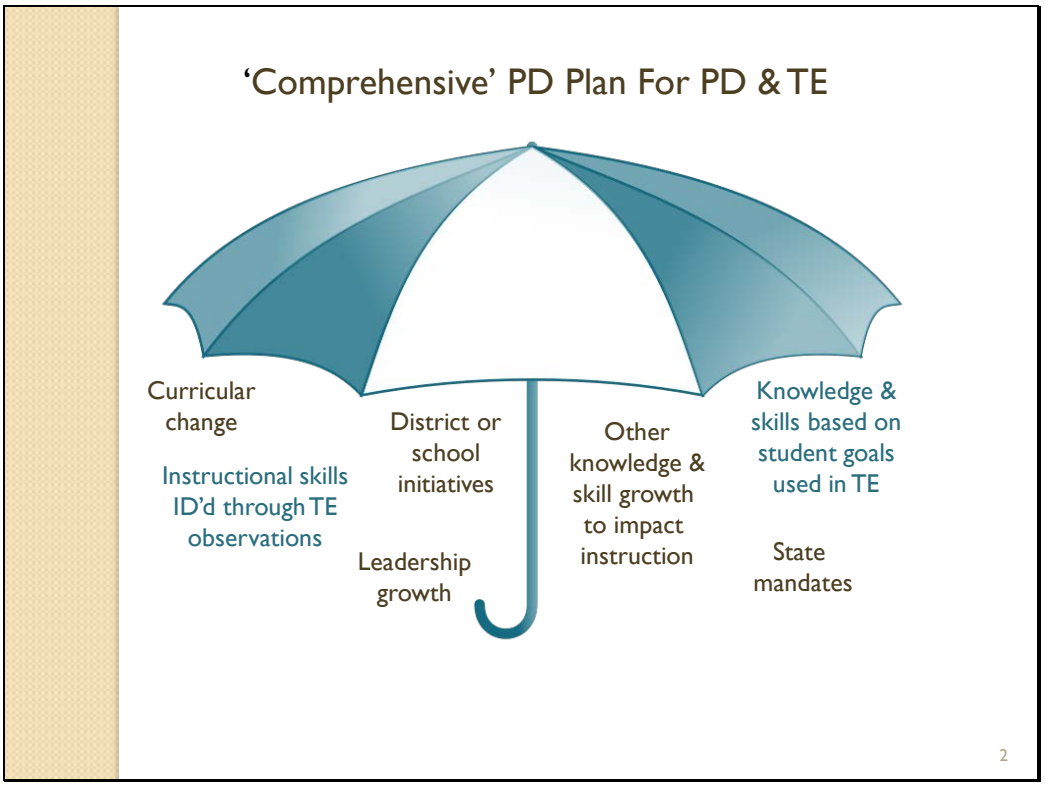


Statute now requires that districts establish one Professional Development and Evaluation committee (PDEC). Until now in most districts, the PDEC has focused only on developing an educator evaluation plan for the district. But that's a small part of what statute requires the PDEC to do; it's time for each PDEC to expand their practice in districts.

This presentation will provide you with concrete ideas for your PDEC to discuss so they can clearly establish some working strategies and understand the most important responsibilities they can and should take on.

Let's begin by looking at the statutory language shown here, which requires the PDEC to develop, evaluate, and annually update a comprehensive PD plan that includes teacher evaluation. The question is, what makes a PD plan comprehensive?

Slide 2



How teacher evaluation links to and informs PD is one small part of a comprehensive plan. Under the PD umbrella comes the need to systematically and thoughtfully plan PD for other purposes, such as those shown here.

Curricular change, for example, always requires that teachers and administrators have opportunities to learn about the changes themselves, how they align with district and school goals, how they'll shape the scope and sequence of curriculum within and across grade levels, how they align with content area standards, what using the new curriculum requires of teachers and their practice, and how the changes will impact student learning.

When districts plan new initiatives – such as the use of a competency-based report card – teachers and administrators need to engage in PD to learn how to appropriately use the process.

Sometimes teachers need to update their content knowledge or learn new skills that will enhance instruction.

State mandates often require that teachers spend time learning what those requirements are and how they must incorporate content into the curriculum.

With the growing variety of roles teachers play in their schools – such as working as a literacy coach – professional development to support the teacher's leadership growth is always needed.

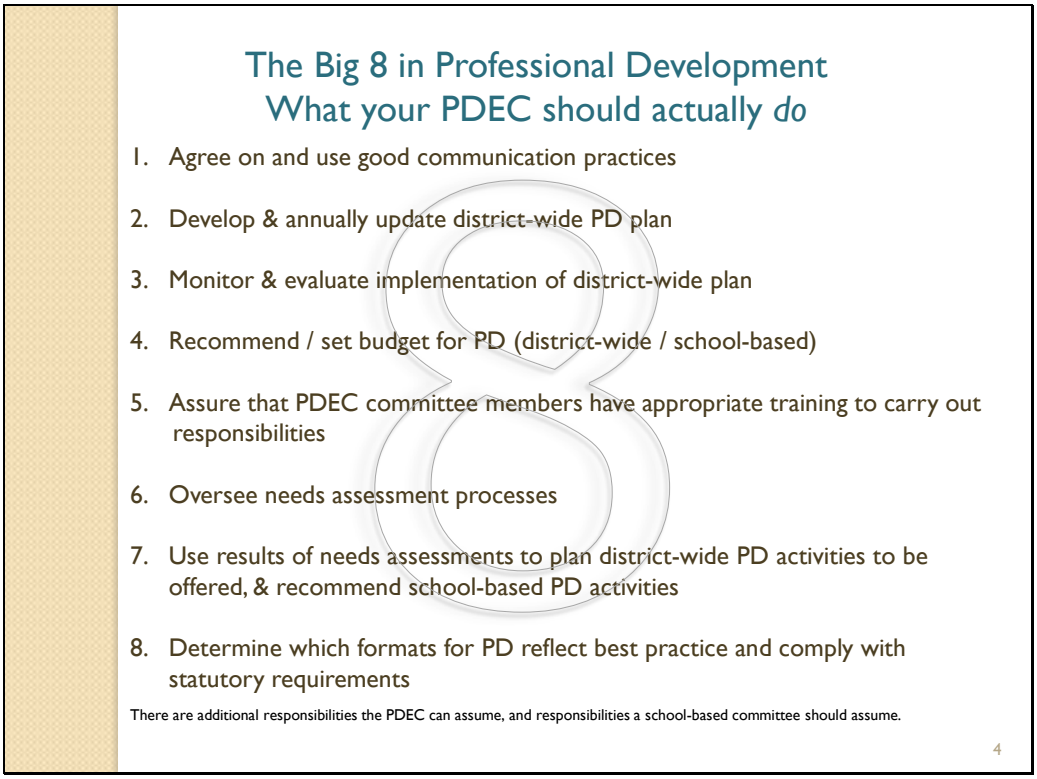
A truly comprehensive PD plan includes avenues through which these needs are addressed and appropriate PD opportunities are offered.

If all of these aspects go into creating a comprehensive PD plan, what is it that the PDEC should actually *do* when it comes to professional development planning, without being overburdened and overwhelmed by how much there is that needs to be done?

Slide 3

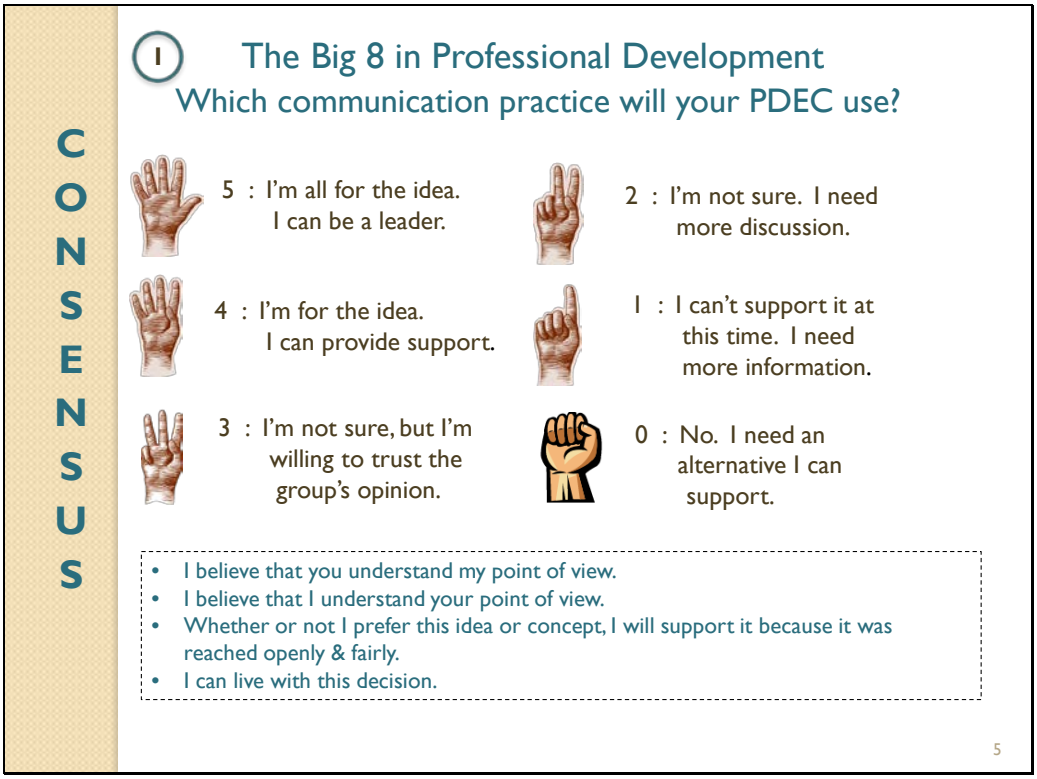
There are 8 primary responsibilities the PDEC should have in planning and overseeing PD. This presentation will provide an overview of those responsibilities, many of which may well require further training of PDEC members.

Slide 4



These 8 responsibilities are somewhat sequential in nature and can help the flow of the work the PDEC does. Good communication processes and a clear understanding of the statutory requirements for PD are essential as a starting point. We'll look at each of these separately.

Slide 5

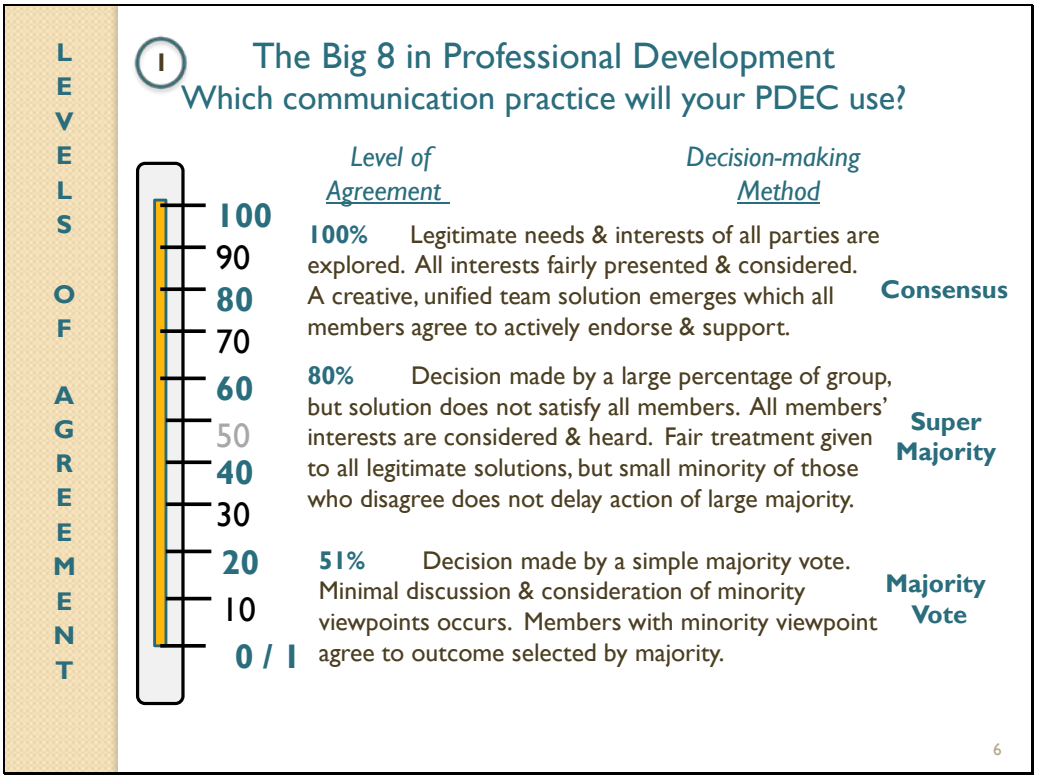


The term consensus is often misunderstood and misused. Merriam's dictionary defines 'consensus' as "the state of being of one opinion about something."

'One opinion' implies that everyone who is part of the decision-making agrees with the decision made. During discussions about the PD plan, it's helpful for the PDEC to gauge how members are thinking about a concept or proposal that's part of the plan. When used during discussions, this fingers-and-fist method of showing where you stand on an idea gives other PDEC members a better idea of how close they are to consensus, and encourages further questions for and from those who need more information or discussion. It's simple and it works, as long as all PDEC members understand what each finger symbol means.

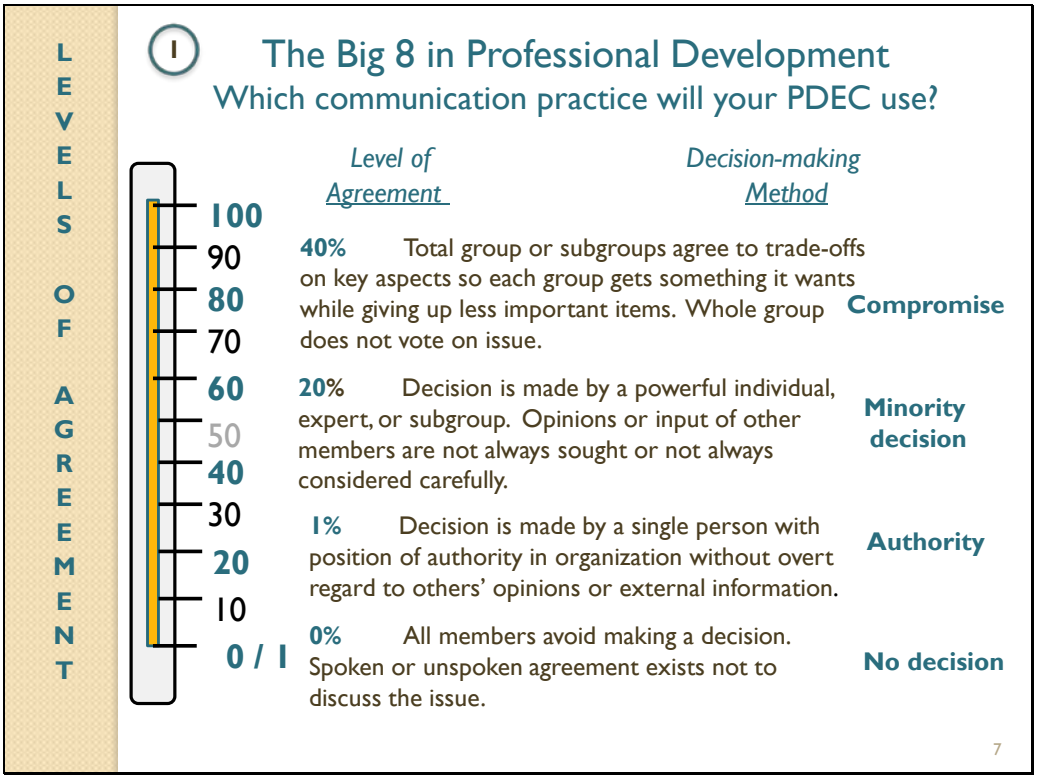
The 4 criteria that consensus includes, shown in the box at the bottom of the page, allows for people who hold different views to express those and suggest alternatives, and encourages PDECs to think more creatively and openly about making decisions that everyone can support. Reaching true consensus means that no one will try to undermine the group's decision, and with full support, buy-in later on will be more likely.

Slide 6



Consensus is very different from voting. When a group votes, even with a super majority decision, some members aren't satisfied with the decision. With a majority vote, some viewpoints might not be heard, and even though the minority may agree to the outcome, there is still a chance that later on they will become dissatisfied because of this, which can lead to less support for the outcome and, perhaps, some attempts to undermine it.

Slide 7

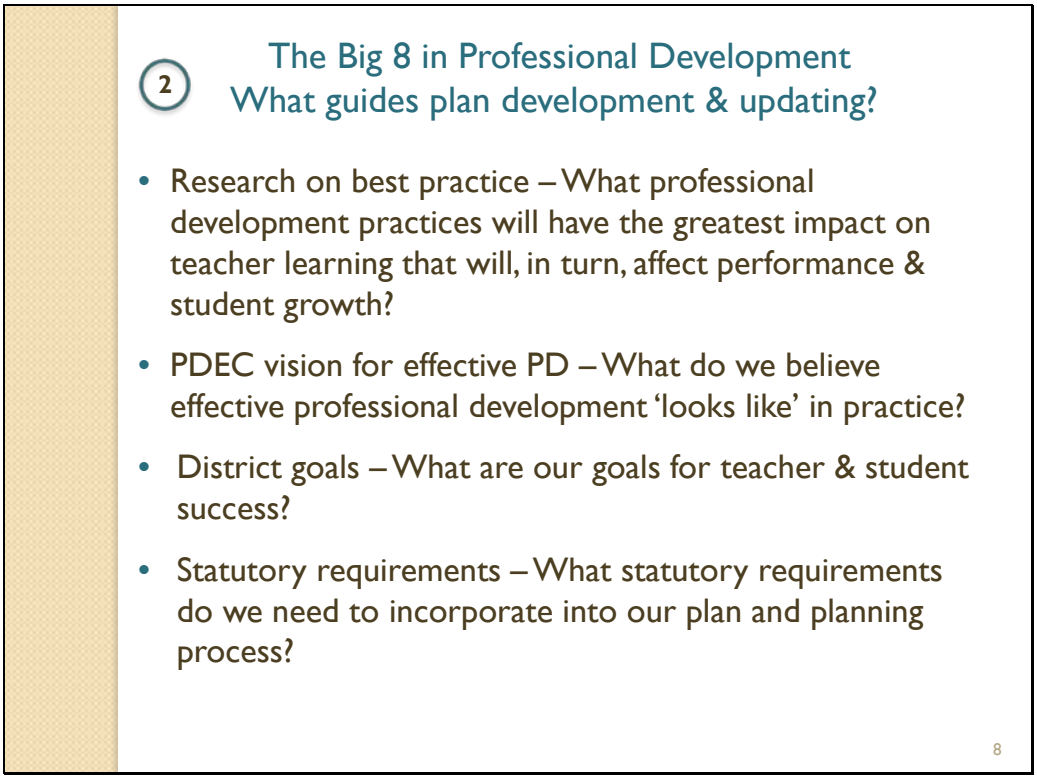


Sometimes it's important to compromise, but it's much more important to reach consensus, because people often regret giving up something they wanted to have happen.

Decisions made by a minority or a single individual, or avoiding making a decision, will most likely lead to more problems when action based on the decision is implemented because of people not agreeing with the decision.

For all of these reasons, laying the groundwork for how the PDEC will communicate and make decisions is one of the most important things the group can do.

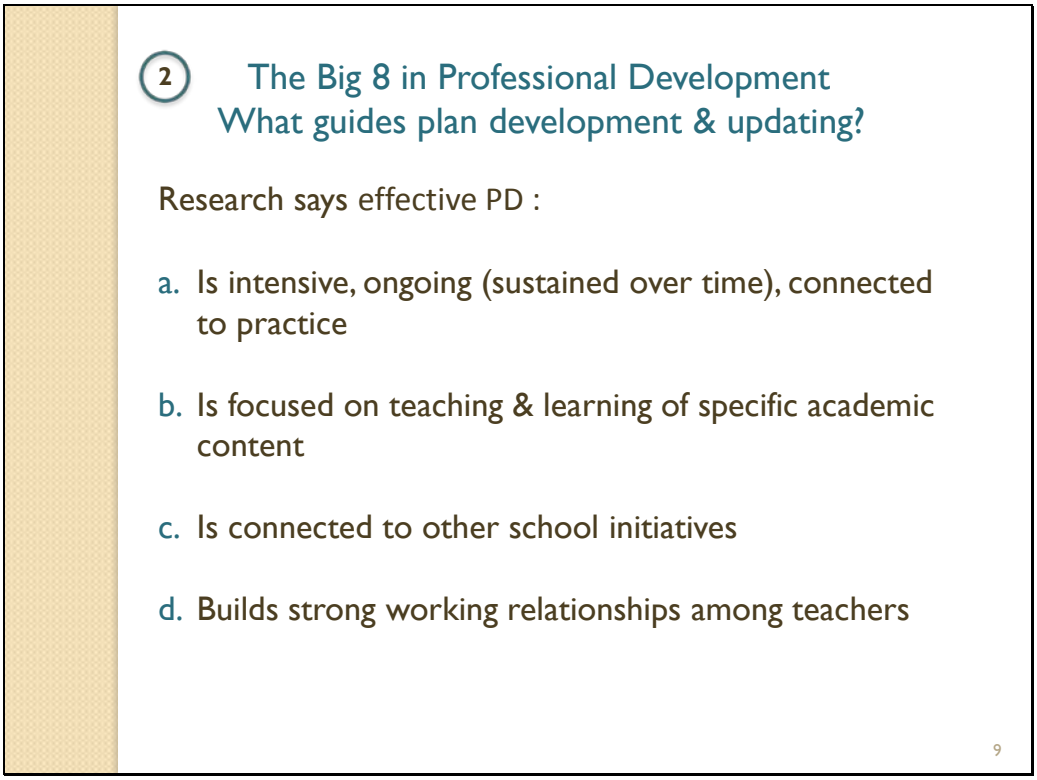
Slide 8



Developing the framework for the PD portion of the comprehensive plan is based on 4 major factors, the most important of which is what research says about best practice in teaching and learning. Understanding the PD practices themselves incorporates several things, as we'll see shortly. It's helpful for the PDEC to read and discuss summaries and articles that describe research findings; one caution is to assure that any research done more than 8-10 years ago is supported by more recent research.

Once the PDEC develops a vision for PD in the district, and is clear on what the district goals and statutory requirements are, the groundwork has been laid.

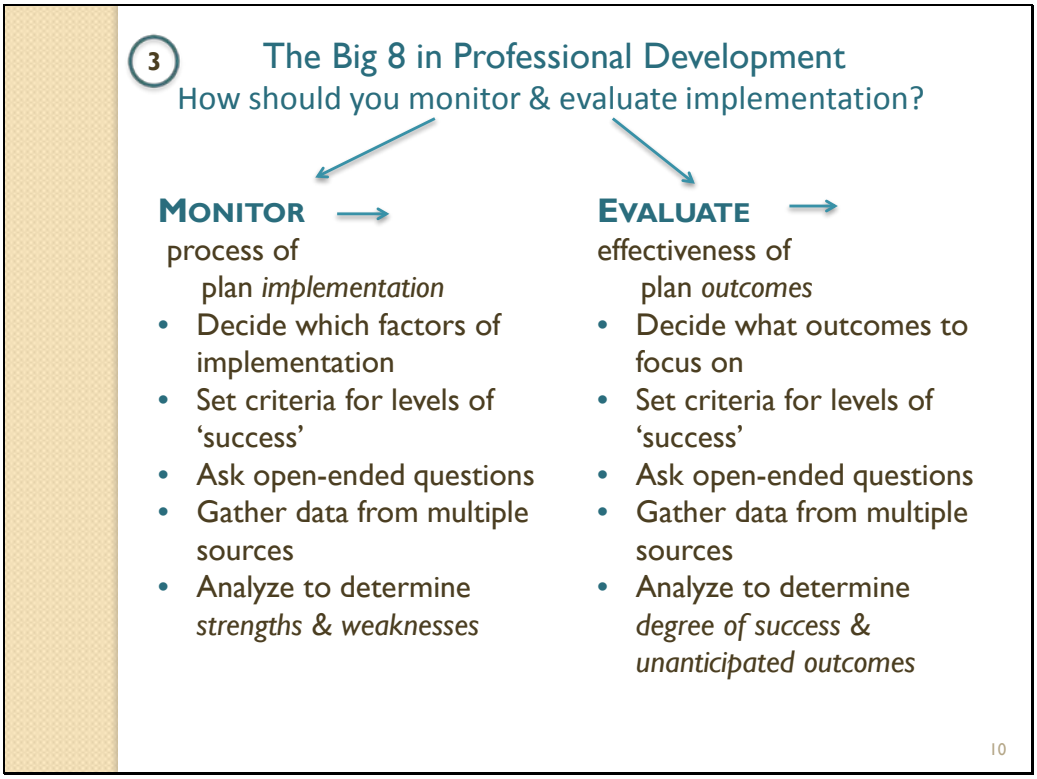
Slide 9



The 4 primary characteristics of effective professional development shown here are the result of an extensive study of PD conducted by Learning Forward in February 2009. It is one of the most comprehensive status reports ever compiled about teacher professional learning. Data was taken from several sources and closely analyzed, giving a clear comparison of how PD is approached in the United States and several other countries.

The one thing a PDEC has to be cautious about, however, is the term 'academic' content. This doesn't mean that all teachers – including specialists such as guidance counselors, school library-media specialists, and school social workers – should focus their PD on subject-area content that is traditionally thought of as being 'academic,' such as math or reading. The PDEC needs to think more broadly of how the responsibilities and the role a specialist plays in the school relate to student growth that will impact learning. When viewed from that perspective, the 'academic' nature of a specialist's PD will appropriately link to both the student AND specialist learning needs.

Slide 10

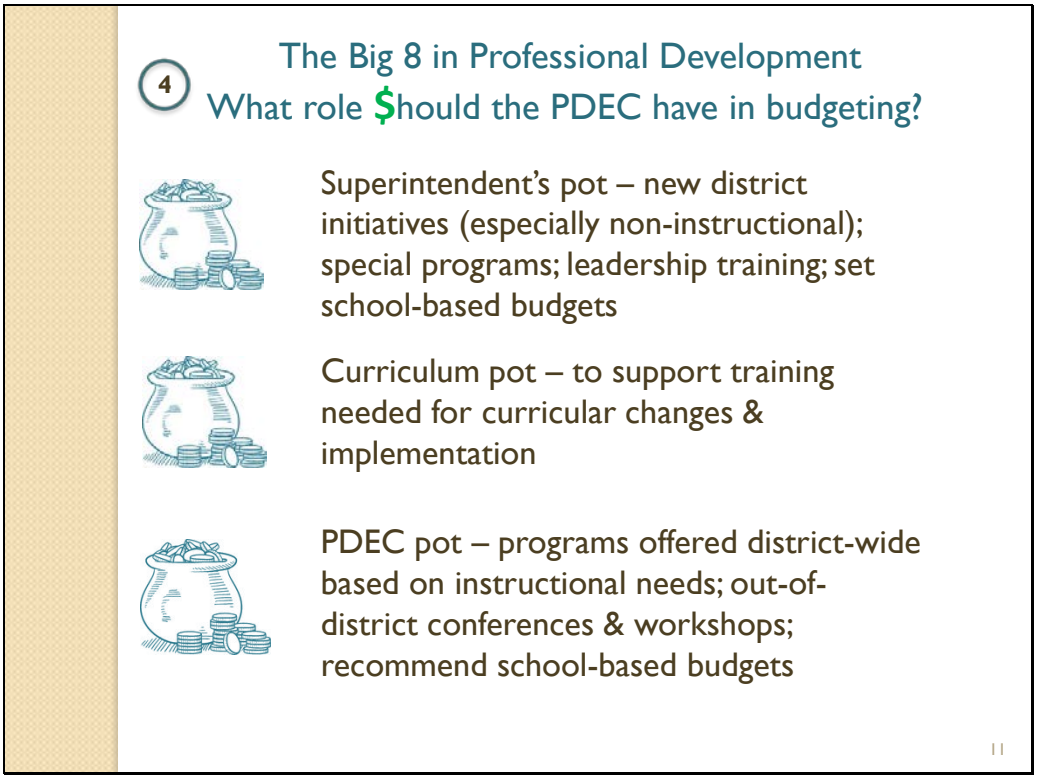


There is a big difference between monitoring and evaluating professional development, and these processes should be used on a continuous basis. Monitoring the implementation basically asks "How are we doing in using the processes we said we'd use to plan and implement PD?" Effective monitoring 'along the way ' – rather than at the very end of a year or more – can allow the PDEC to make changes based on what works or doesn't work. Taken collectively, a series of snapshots of implementation processes can tell a lot about what to continue to do and what to change.

Evaluation, on the other hand, basically asks "Did the processes we used get us the results we wanted?" Evaluating for effectiveness of the outcomes can be both short- and long-term. Short-term outcomes should correspond to short-term objectives of any PD effort; if we know along the way whether or not we're getting the results we wanted, and we can link those more clearly to the processes we used, we have a better chance of assuring that the PD opportunities offered were appropriate.

When we evaluate, it's also important to look carefully at any unanticipated outcomes, as those can provide a great deal of insight into how PD impacts teacher and student growth.

Slide 11



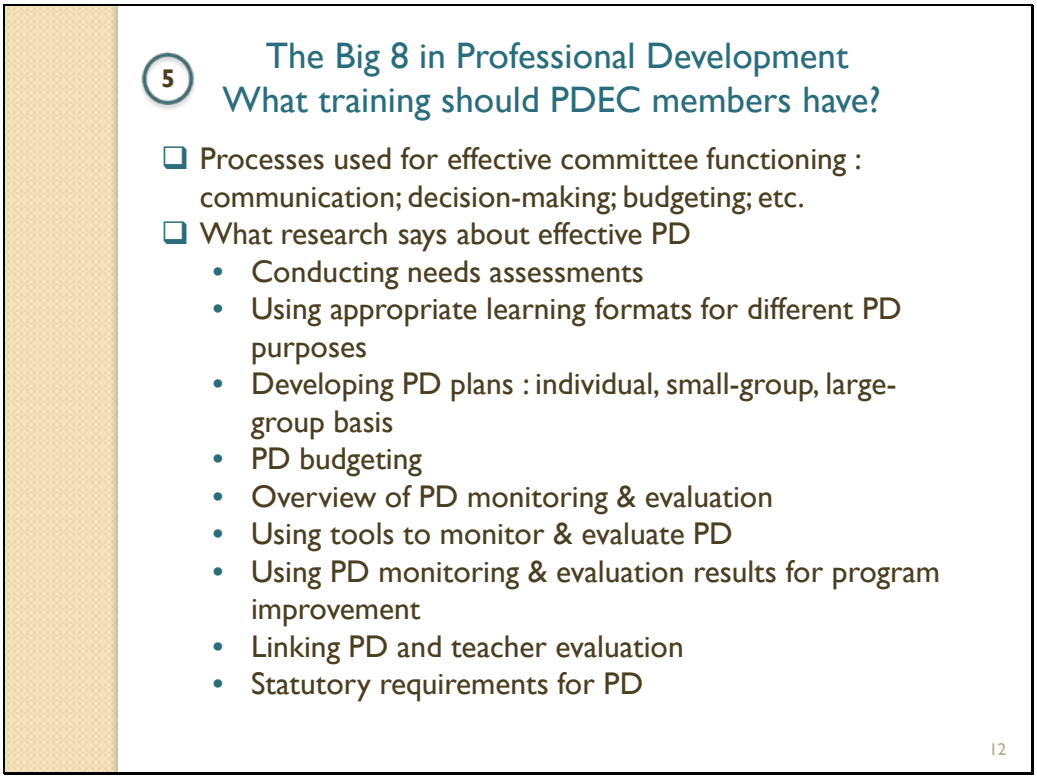
Money is always a factor in planning and implementing PD, and how the spending of money is planned and implemented is crucial.

If a PDEC has the responsibility to develop a plan, then they should have the authority to distribute some funds to help support that plan. If all district funding is controlled solely by 1 or 2 people, it sends the PDEC the message that there is no trust that they can make sound decisions to fund the plan they develop.

The 3 suggested funding pots shown here serve different purposes, all of which complement the others and play an important role in the comprehensive plan. For example, it's the responsibility of the district curriculum office to oversee curricular changes, so funding for those should be decided by that office, as the curriculum director works with the PDEC to determine how curricular-related PD will fit into the overall district plan. Being composed of representatives of all the schools, the PDEC can gather information on schools' PD needs and determine if there are PD programs that should be offered across schools and funded through the PDEC pot. Having the 'big picture' of district versus school PD needs then enables the PDEC to recommend how much funding each school may need to support its PD activities.

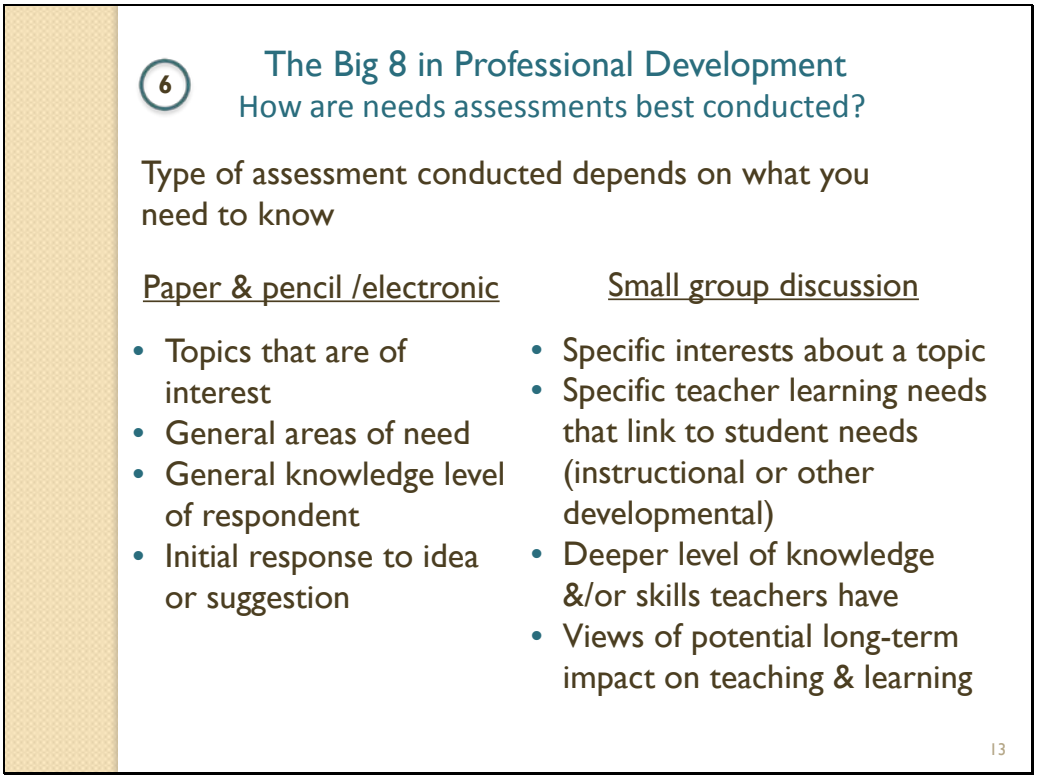
Giving the PDEC control of a pot of money is often met with resistance from central office, but a system of checks and balances for spending, and a willingness to try such a system on a small scale to begin, can show how much this practice can contribute to the effective working of the PDEC.

Slide 12



All too often, PDEC members volunteer their time to serve on the committee but don't receive the training they need to do the job effectively and efficiently. This results in certain tasks not being done well, not being done at all, or being done by only one person, who then becomes overwhelmed by the workload. Not all PDEC members have to learn how to do everything; there are many ways to bring others onto sub-committees who take on some of the tasks. But all PDEC members should have a basic understanding of the topics shown here.

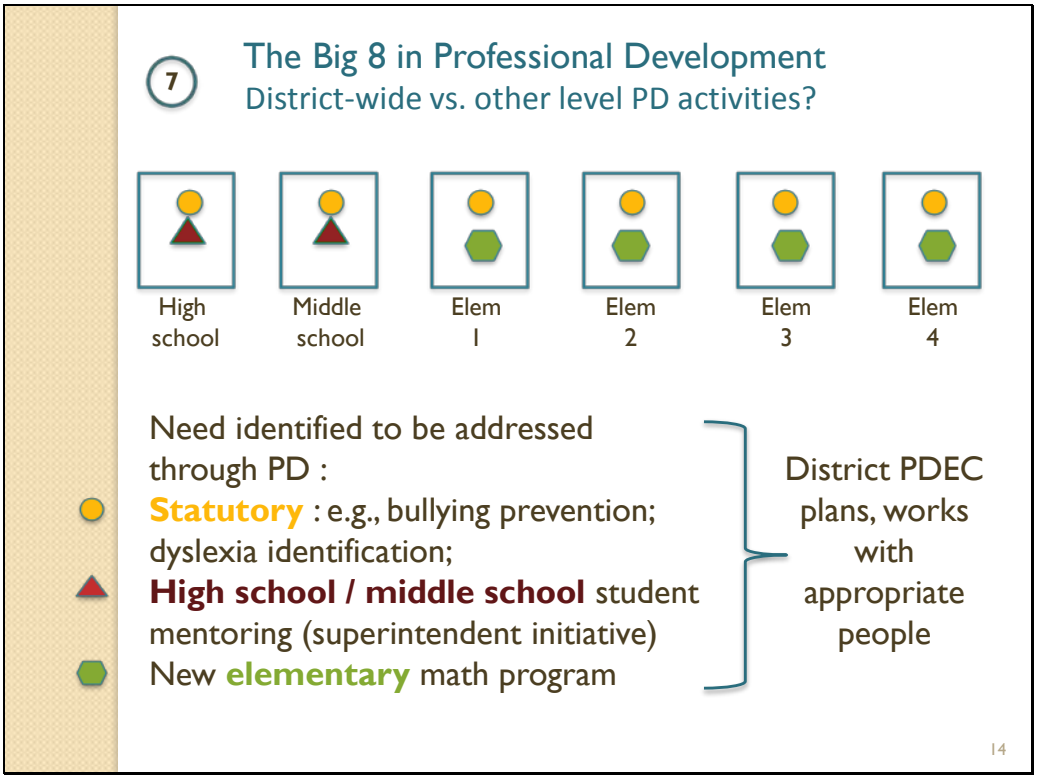
Slide 13



All too often, written needs assessments don't get to the heart of what a teacher *really* needs in order to have a significant impact on instruction to advance student learning; they yield shallow information. This is because teachers complete the needs assessments in isolation, without having discussions with their teaching colleagues about what student data shows, their students' learning needs, how they already teach concepts that address students' learning needs, and where the gaps are.

However, if teacher needs assessments are conducted through small group discussions of teachers who teach the same grade level and/or content, they look at data together, and they discuss all these factors, a much more clear picture of exactly what teachers need can be drawn. This is a process teachers can easily learn to use by going through it once or twice. From there, it's much easier for appropriate PD to be planned, whether by the small group of teachers themselves, the school PD committee, or the district PDEC. Who ultimately uses the needs assessment results to plan PD will depend on how many teachers, within or across schools, have the exact same need.

Slide 14

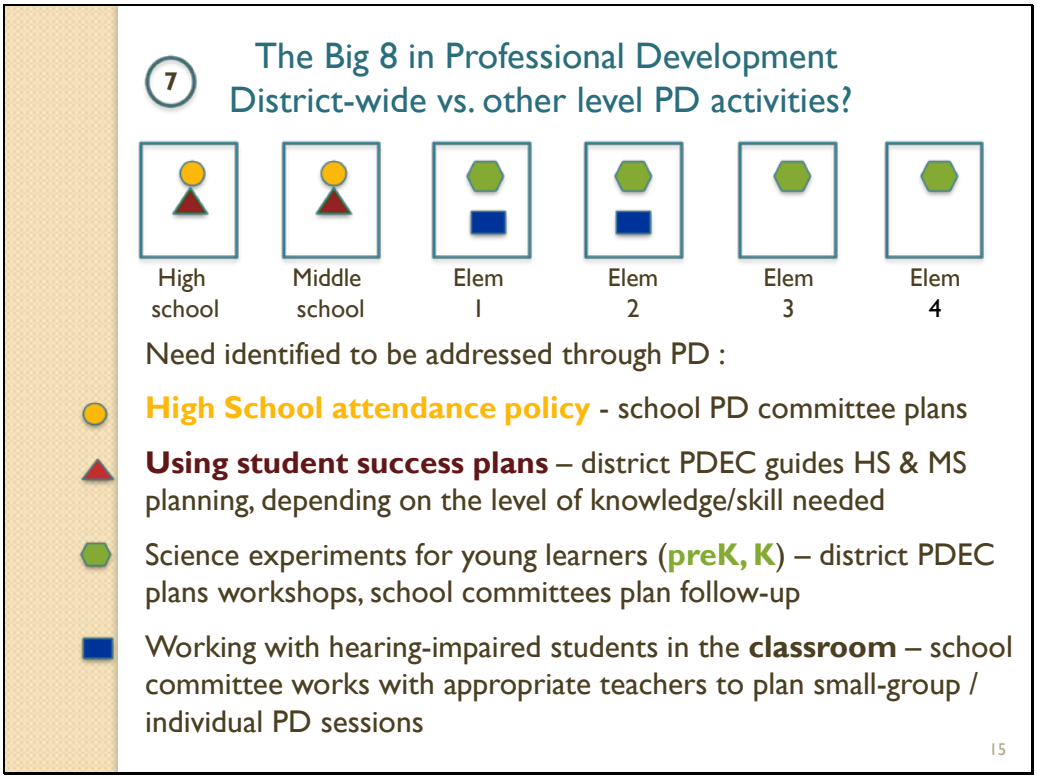


In this example, PD pertaining to a topic that is more 'generic,' like the statutory requirement for PD related to the identification of dyslexia, can probably be addressed most efficiently by the PDEC.

In the case of the need for PD to address a student mentoring program at the middle and high schools, the PDEC would work with the appropriate teachers in those schools to determine if the PD program for all teachers involved should be the same, if the program should be the same for teachers in certain roles in both schools, or if each school would best be served to plan and implement the program on their own.

The same holds true for the implementation of a new elementary math program shown in this example. While the new program will be used by all teachers, whether the PD will be the same for all teachers, different for groups of teachers within or across schools, or a combination of the two, should be based on how the teachers involved learn best.

Slide 15



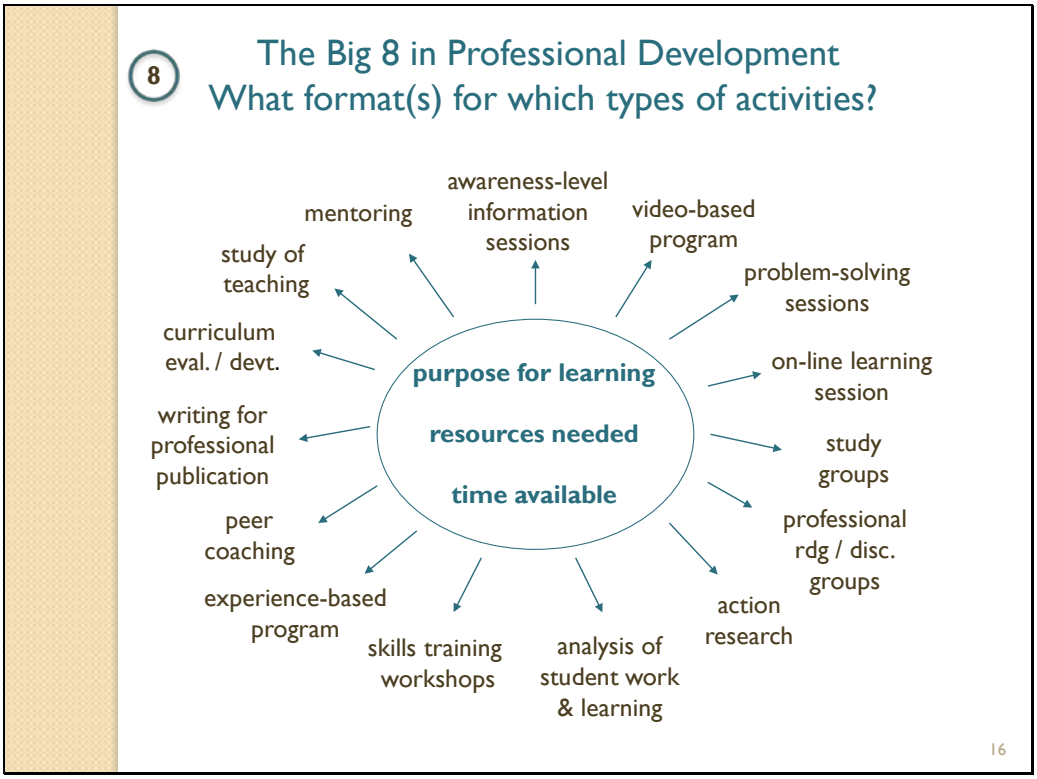
In these examples, the district PDEC may have little or no involvement in the design and plan for PD. In the first example of the high school attendance policy, the middle and high school PD committees can plan more appropriately for their teachers, based on what teachers at different levels need to know. In the second example, the district PDEC might be able to provide some assistance and resources for the middle and high school PD committees. However, with a wide range of needs, based on which teachers have more responsibility for working with student success plans, most planning should be done by those who are closer to the implementation of the program.

In the third example, since all preK and kindergarten teachers in all of the elementary schools need to learn about using science experiments with young learners, the district PDEC can help the school-based PD committees plan workshops or other learning experiences, based on what the teachers' needs are, and help assure that teachers receive appropriate follow-up.

In the last example, because the needs of the teachers involved may be so specific and individualized, there really is no place for the district PDEC to plan; this is best left to the school PD committee to handle, by working with those teachers involved to help them plan appropriately.

The key to using personalized planning lies in having PD committee members who recognize, for various situations, who should be involved in the planning process, and how PD committees can help provide resources and support.

Slide 16

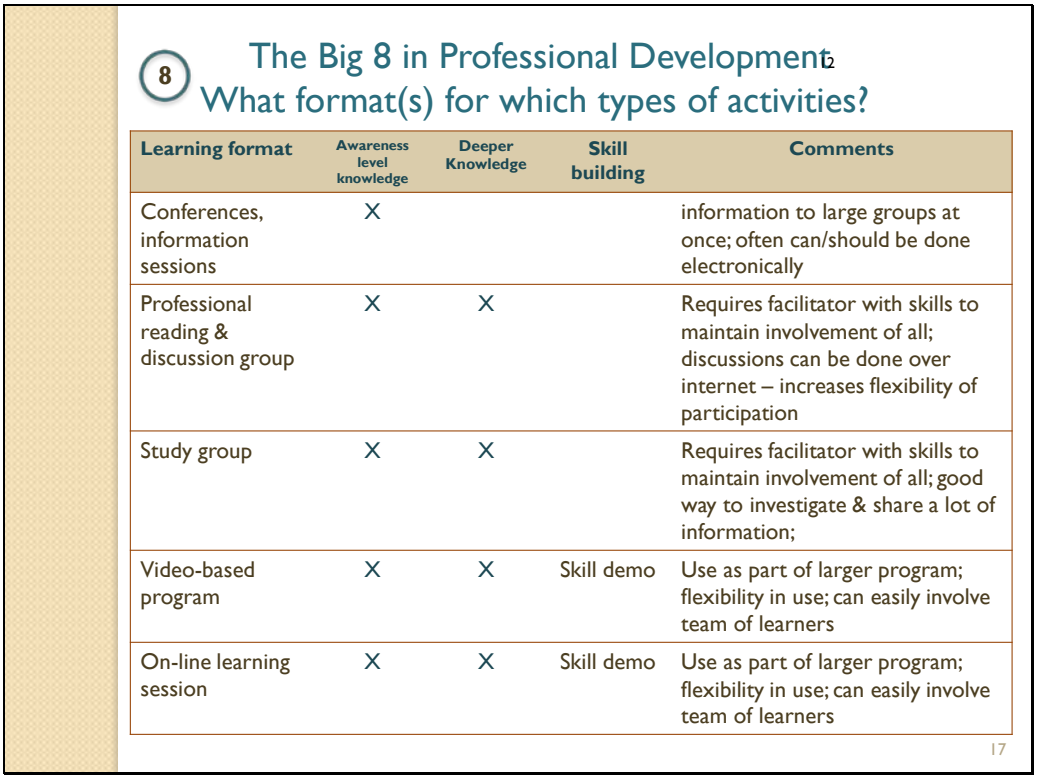


One of the biggest PD problems many teachers speak about is that everyone is expected to do pretty much the same thing……choose from a menu of workshops or work with their data team. Even if the content may be somewhat different for different groups of teachers, the formats offered are the same.

Why does this occur? The root issue is usually a lack of understanding of how much more effective the planning process can be if it's done by the participants, and/or a lack of trust that teachers know how to plan their own learning and connect it to student learning needs and school and district goals. As a result, one person, or a very small group of people, plans PD for all the teachers in a department, school or across grade levels. It's easier for the planner, but often not as effective for the learners.

The formats shown here are just some of those that can be used in an effective PD program. Different formats have different purposes, and that is one of the primary things that should be kept in mind when learners design a professional growth plan. In a comprehensive plan that's more personalized for a teacher or small group of teachers, more than one format is usually used at different steps along the way. We'll look at these formats in more detail on the next slides.

Slide 17



The Big 8 in Professional Development
What format(s) for which types of activities?

Learning format	Awareness level knowledge	Deeper Knowledge	Skill building	Comments
Conferences, information sessions	X			information to large groups at once; often can/should be done electronically
Professional reading & discussion group	X	X		Requires facilitator with skills to maintain involvement of all; discussions can be done over internet – increases flexibility of participation
Study group	X	X		Requires facilitator with skills to maintain involvement of all; good way to investigate & share a lot of information;
Video-based program	X	X	Skill demo	Use as part of larger program; flexibility in use; can easily involve team of learners
On-line learning session	X	X	Skill demo	Use as part of larger program; flexibility in use; can easily involve team of learners

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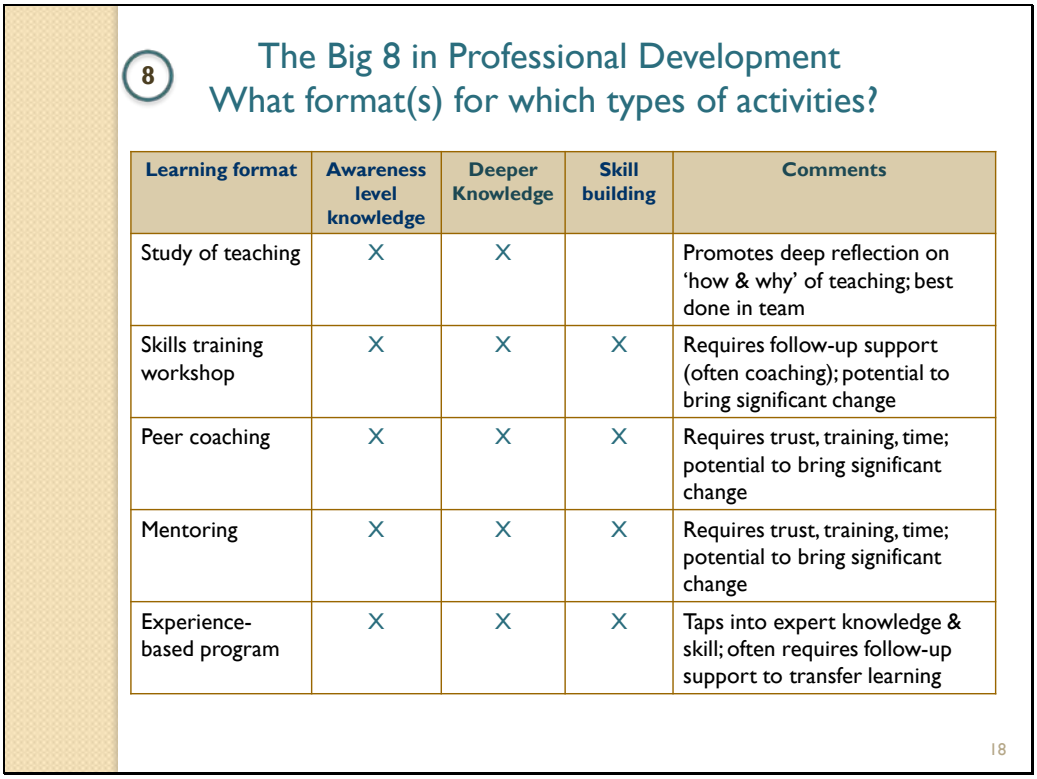
Note that some formats can serve multiple purposes, like a video based program. Depending on the content itself, a video can be used solely to build awareness level knowledge, deeper knowledge, or can demonstrate skills. The video itself would only be part of the complete program.

Slide 18



The Big 8 in Professional Development
What format(s) for which types of activities?

Learning format	Awareness level knowledge	Deeper Knowledge	Skill building	Comments
Study of teaching	X	X		Promotes deep reflection on 'how & why' of teaching; best done in team
Skills training workshop	X	X	X	Requires follow-up support (often coaching); potential to bring significant change
Peer coaching	X	X	X	Requires trust, training, time; potential to bring significant change
Mentoring	X	X	X	Requires trust, training, time; potential to bring significant change
Experience-based program	X	X	X	Taps into expert knowledge & skill; often requires follow-up support to transfer learning

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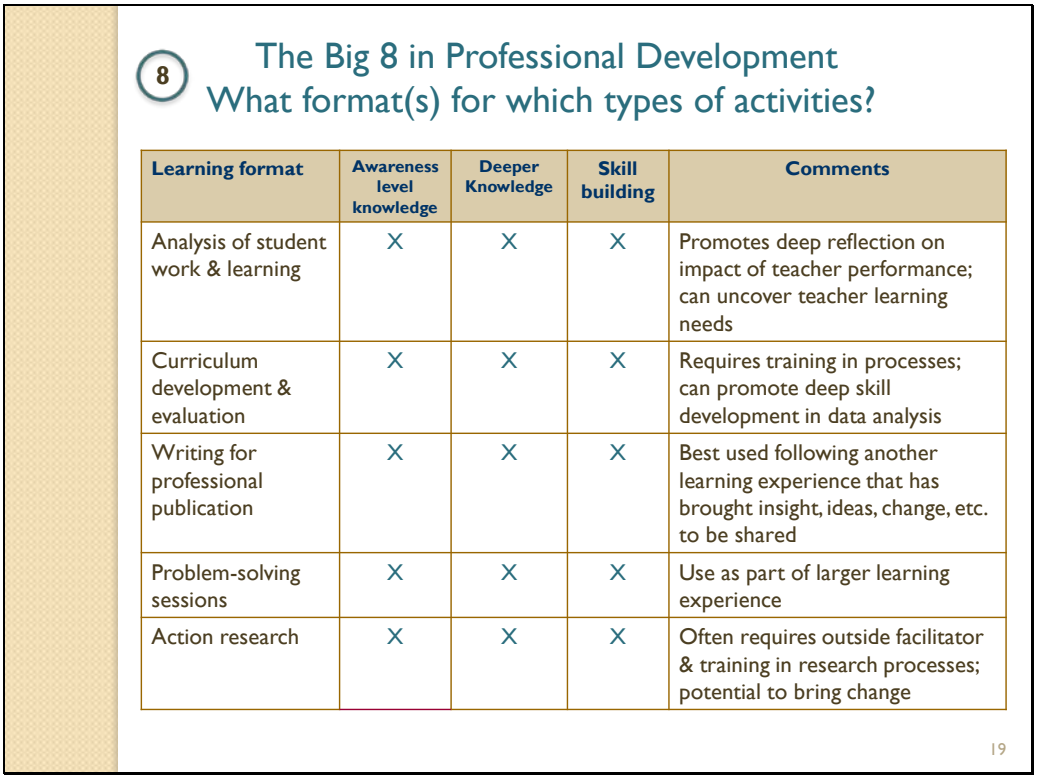
Formats that are used as part of a program that is expected to bring significant change to teaching and learning require much more time from the learner, supporting the notion that true professional growth doesn't occur through a one-time-one-size-fits-all approach.

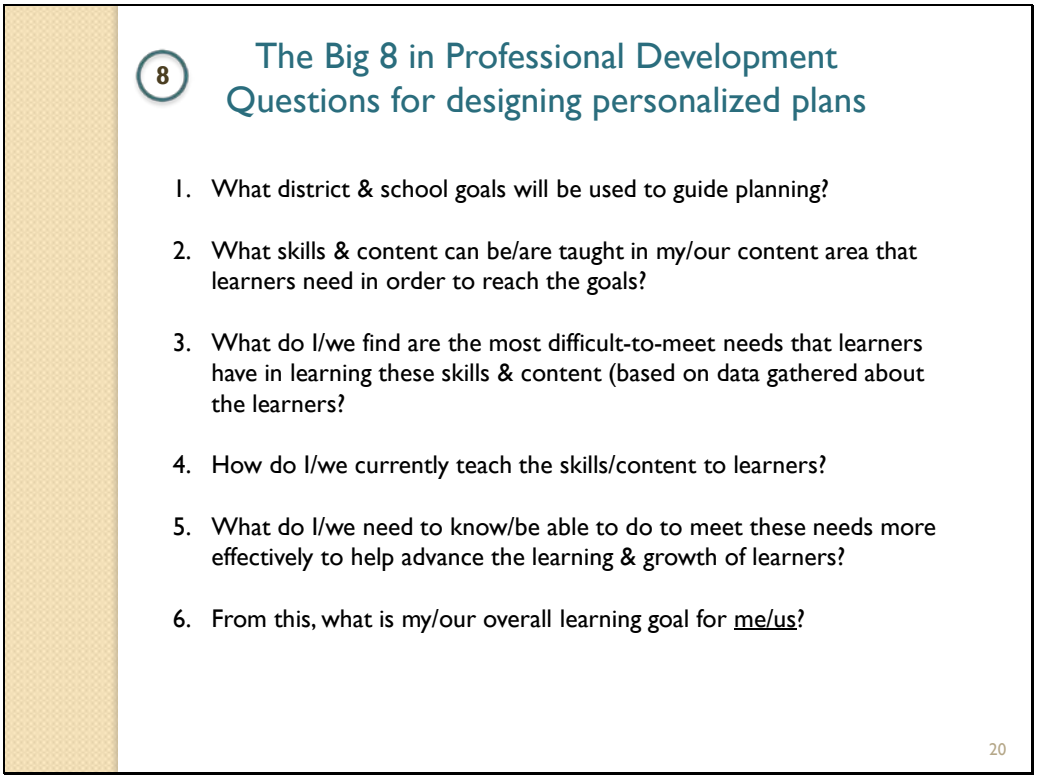
Slide 19



Learning format	Awareness level knowledge	Deeper Knowledge	Skill building	Comments
Analysis of student work & learning	X	X	X	Promotes deep reflection on impact of teacher performance; can uncover teacher learning needs
Curriculum development & evaluation	X	X	X	Requires training in processes; can promote deep skill development in data analysis
Writing for professional publication	X	X	X	Best used following another learning experience that has brought insight, ideas, change, etc. to be shared
Problem-solving sessions	X	X	X	Use as part of larger learning experience
Action research	X	X	X	Often requires outside facilitator & training in research processes; potential to bring change

Many of the best formats to use for professional growth also require that teachers learn how to use the process involved, which is best done with a team. This means a different approach for allocating PD dollars in the district. Rather than use PD dollars to bring in workshop presenters on separate days, those same dollars can be spent on facilitators who work with teams over time to teach them how to use learning formats that can be combined into a comprehensive professional growth plan.

Slide 20

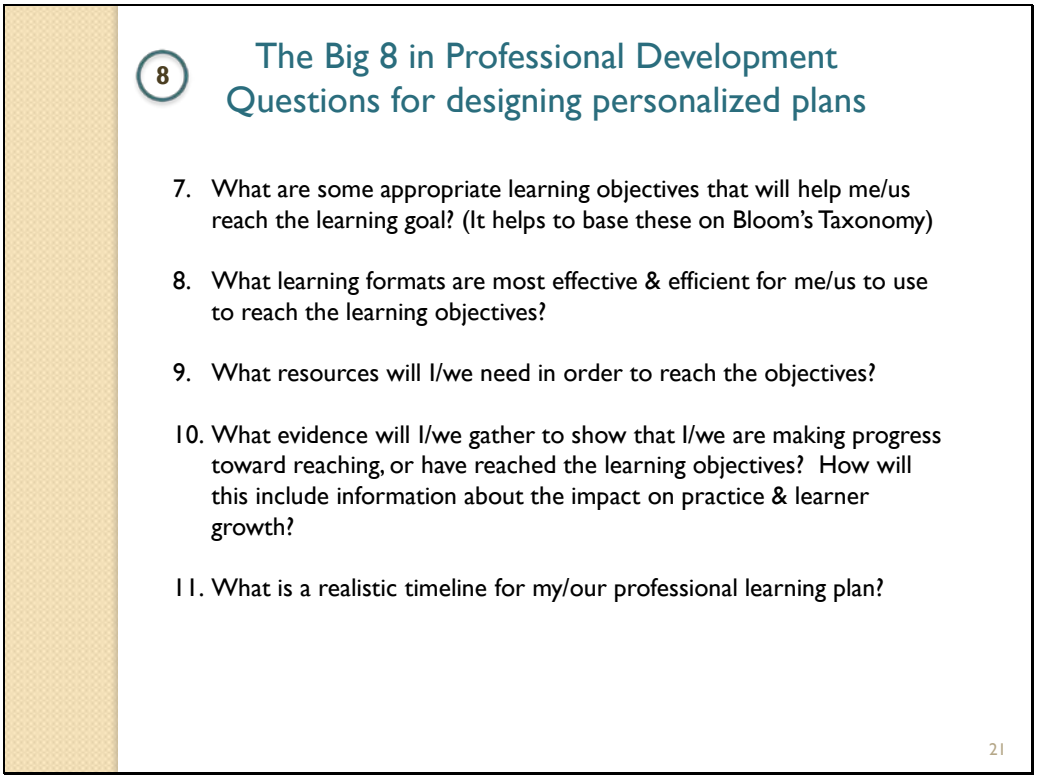


In planning professional development (PD), it's important to begin by looking at the 'big picture' of district and school goals, then linking learner and teacher learning needs to those goals. Best practice calls for PD to be more individualized, connected to the content & skills that are taught to learners, sustained over time, and job-embedded. The following steps can be used to plan PD on an individual, small-group, or whole-school level.

As used In Step 2, the term 'content area' refers in a broad sense to the academic, social, emotional, or psychological areas in which educators work, and how that 'content' is reflected in the educator's responsibilities within the school.

It's important that, as part of the process, teachers look carefully at how they already teach the skills and content to learners, since that may be one area in which they need to enhance practice in order to have the impact they seek.

Slide 21



Bloom's Taxonomy can help set levels of learning through which the teacher progresses. This helps assure that the teacher gains new knowledge and skill, applies what is learned, and analyzes and evaluates the impact of using what was learned. This is known as transfer of learning. When designing a personalized plan, if the teacher thinks of what that progress of transfer 'looks like' in practice, and identifies good evidence to show that transfer is taking place over time, the chance of the learning experience having a positive impact is greater.

Slide 22

If a well-trained and well-functioning Professional Development & Evaluation Committee embraces the authority and responsibility of these 8 areas, the potential for PD to create and sustain change in the district is great. But in order for this to happen, there has to be true collaboration – in spirit and action – among all educators in the district, and leadership that supports it.

CEA has resources that can help local associations work with district administrators to promote these practices, and we encourage your local to speak with us about them. Change begins with the individual, and you're the individual who can lead the way to change for your district PDEC.