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CANADA'S SCHOOLNET LEARNING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES



PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

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P R O F E S S I O N A L

Reports on reviews of professional development supported by SchoolNet and its partners reveal a variety of approaches. Here are some examples.

In schools across Canada there are several innovative programs that demonstrate how technology can enhance student learning. Issues such as access, connectivity, lack of content and technical support continue as obstacles. It is clear, however, that effective professional development of teachers is key to widespread thoughtful and effective integration of technology in classrooms. The primary focus of professional development programs for teachers has shifted from learning technology skills to how technology can be used as a tool to enhance teaching and learning.

Action Research: teachers are teamed with faculty of education staff and students, sometimes as part of accreditation courses, to investigate new models of ICT and share their findings in action research projects, e.g., Avalon West School District and Memorial University, NF

Cascading lead teachers from a group of schools receive intensive training and become part of an ongoing professional development network enabling them to return to their schools to provide ongoing on-site support to their colleagues, e.g., Telus Learning Connection, AB

Collaborative Learning Projects teachers and student teachers develop their ICT skills and knowledge by working with colleagues and students on on-line collaborative projects, e.g., École les Compagnons-de-Cartier, Ste-Foy, PQ

Mentoring a central team of highly skilled and knowledgeable mentors work directly with teachers in classrooms and follow up with ongoing on-line mentoring, e.g., Teacher Mentoring Project, NB

Networks: a virtual centre is created as a place for teachers to access digital resources and to participate in professional dialogue, e.g., Education Network of Ontario, ON

Teacher Centre: a resource centre is established to provide workshops modelling best practice, learning resources and access to consultants' expertise. The centre is often complemented by an on-line component e.g., Department of Education, PEI

Whatever the approach, professional development programs are more likely to succeed if they include some or all of these features:

- ◆ Inclusion of teachers in the design of their own learning
- ◆ A mix of various types of interaction and learning styles (face-to face workshops, on-line discussion and mentoring, multimedia presentations) that model effective classroom instruction
- ◆ Objectives that are achievable given the access to technology and support available in the teachers' classrooms and in school laboratories
- ◆ Opportunities for on-line interaction and collaboration among teachers as part of a professional development network to explore questions and to share resources and ideas
- ◆ Access to expertise, information and resources consistent with the required curriculum
- ◆ Development of a school and school district culture that supports innovation and change
- ◆ Partnerships and collaboration among schools, school districts and faculties of education to share resources and build a critical mass of participants
- ◆ Sustained support from the school, the school district and the community and their commitment to technology as a long term priority
- ◆ Opportunities for teachers to innovate, engage in collaborative action research and to share findings
- ◆ Long-term transitional approaches that include a variety of follow-up activities
- ◆ Ongoing monitoring and assessment of success

This brochure is one of five describing the activities of the Working Groups of the SchoolNet National Advisory Board. Through the efforts of Industry Canada's SchoolNet, a collaborative initiative of federal, provincial and territorial governments, the private sector and the education community, Canada became the first nation in the world, on March 30, 1999, to connect its schools and public libraries to the Information Highway. SchoolNet is part of Connecting Canadians, the Government of Canada's strategy to keep Canada among world leaders in connecting its citizens to the Internet. The other brochures in this series are Connectivity, Research, Measurement, and Social Issues.

To obtain additional brochures, the full report on professional development or more information on Canada's SchoolNet, visit www.schoolnet.ca or contact:

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