The research is clear that the quality of the educator is the most important factor in student achievement. Educators and students go hand in hand as learners. Far from viewing staff development as a benefit or a convenience, it is required for professionals to continually update and expand their existing knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions in order to keep up with current research and perform at the highest levels.

The SSDEC also recognizes that to improve the performance of the South Slave schools requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to staff development region wide. To achieve universally high expectations for all students requires ambitious improvements in programming, instruction, assessment, leadership practices, and support systems. Effective staff development is an integral part of the overall improvement strategy. It is the key to supporting significant school and system improvements that increase performance of all staff and students.

Staff must have access to opportunities to keep current with new developments in their respective fields in order to stay motivated to become the best employees they can be. The SSDEC supports a staff development strategy that is based on current research, and is integrated with existing GNWT and Collective Agreement provisions.

The following principles form the foundation for our philosophy on staff development. We believe that:

- The SSDEC shares in the responsibility of providing in-service coinciding with the development and implementation of new curriculum and programs
- Staff development initiatives should be seen as an opportunity to encourage, involve and empower local educators
- Staff development should be linked to current or future practice
- The focus of program staff development should be on improving student learning
- Staff development is the key to building effective learning communities and enhancing leadership capacity
- Staff development operates within and contributes to the development of collaborative learning cultures
- Staff development reflects current research in adult and student learning, and change and improvement
- Effective staff development programs benefit from a collaborative and cooperative approach which includes a variety of providers and methods

Every effort will be made to encourage and permit staff to participate annually in in-service and/or professional development activities focused on improved performance in their jobs. For the purpose of this policy, staff development refers to in-service opportunities such as workshops and courses required of the employee by the employer, and other approved professional development opportunities chosen by the employee.

REGULATIONS

The superintendent will develop funding guidelines and application processes for the following, subject to budget availability:

- all staff should have opportunity for support to attend an approved professional development activity annually
- school and regional leaders, and/or workshop presenters will have opportunity to access supplemental support (building leadership capacity)
- staff and members are encouraged to take opportunity to present South Slave school and Council initiatives and successes at conferences and workshops, in light of the research proven benefit to the presenter (learning retention pyramid) and the additional benefit to South Slave schools and Council in terms of public recognition
- requests for SSDEC support for staff professional development that involves travel outside of Canada requires the additional approval of the SSDEC Chairperson, ECE Deputy Minister and the ECE Minister.

Trustees and staff will take opportunities to remind students, parents, and community members of current school improvement efforts and the need for related staff development opportunities.

References: ECE Teacher and Principal Evaluation Ministerial Directives
NWTTA Collective Agreement - Article 16
South Slave & Fort Smith Regional Professional Development Committees - Terms of Reference and Handbooks
National Staff Development Council (NSDC)

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