

Individual Development, Career Development, and Improving a School Professional
Development Plan Based on Principles of Human Resource Development

Neil Hokanson

University of Wyoming

ADED 5000, Summer 2005

Professor Lee Knabb

Introduction

Gilley, Egglund, and Gilley identify four components of human resource development (HRD): individual development, career development, performance management, and organizational development (Gilley, Egglund, & Gilley, 2002, p. 13). This paper focuses on and describes individual and career development information presented by Gilley, et al., identifies the need for ethical practice in organizations particularly in relation to professional development, examines research on the relationship between professional development and student achievement, and proposes changes and reforms to a current school professional development plan.

Individual Development

Individual development encompasses many aspects of a person's life. In human resource development, individual development is a key component to the success of any organization. "Individual development refers to the development of new knowledge, skills, and improved behaviors that result in performance enhancement or improvement related to one's current job (training)" (Gilley, et al., p. 14). Gilley, et al. further state, "individual development focuses on the importance of personal growth and development through formal and informal learning activities" (p. 27). These learning activities are generally designed by human resource development professionals to influence and make a difference in an organization (Gilley, et al., p. 29).

Managing Development

Some organizations, like public schools, may not have the luxury of access to human resource development professionals; however, the principles of human resource development can be applied via managers such as building level administrators to assist

individuals in reaching their potential. An example of a human resource development professional in a school district can fall under the responsibilities of the director of instruction and/or curriculum coordinator. In any case, human resource development professionals are held responsible for learning, but managers are those that are held accountable for improving employee performance (Gilley et al., p. 31). Gilley, et al. believe “that organizations should hold responsible for implementing the learning process individuals who conduct employee performance reviews, confront poor performance, ensure employee performance and productivity, answer for employee productivity declines, or account for organizational failures to meet goals and objectives” (p. 32). Hence, managers/administrators should carry the charge of implementing and maintaining individual development. This charge does not necessarily mean administrators should focus on individuals overcoming their weaknesses.

Building Strengths

Gilley, et al. warn, “...firms mistakenly believe that “fixing” weaknesses will make employees more productive in the short or long term” (p. 37). Furthermore, Gilley, et al. point out, “One problem with developmental strategies within organizations is that they are in the business of fixing employees rather than discovering their uniqueness and the things they do well” (p. 37). Building on strengths serves as a focus that shifts the attention of trying to fix weaknesses to building strengths and managing weaknesses (Gilley, et al, p. 37). It is paramount that human resource development professionals, managers, and employees identify and analyze individual strengths and build on them.

Clifton and Nelson identify four particular characteristics that identify individual strengths: internal burnings, high satisfaction levels, rapid learning, and performance

zones (Gilley, et al., pp. 37-38). Internal burnings are a passion or desire for something; high satisfaction levels are attained via completing tasks or activities; rapid learning is a strength tied to something that comes easily or is learned quickly; and performance zones equal “excellent performance without any conscious awareness of the steps involved” (Gilley, et al, pp. 37-38). It is suggested that these characteristics be used to create a master list of strengths and then managers and employees identify one strength to be developed (Gilley, et al. p. 38). Managers then encourage the employee to improve their strength via repeated practice and reflection, whereby reflection serves as an opportunity to “uncover new meaning that leads to renewal” (Gilley, et al., p. 38). Through a systematic approach weaknesses can also be managed.

To manage weaknesses they also need to be identified. Four strategies help minimize employee weaknesses: delegating, partnering, preventing, and accepting alternatives (Gilley, et al., p. 39). Delegating allows employees to take on additional responsibilities; partnering combines two employee’s strengths to achieve a goal (teamwork); preventing helps employees identify situations in which they consistently fail; and accepting alternatives “involves learning to live with differences” (Gilley, et al., p. 39).

Action Learning

Marquardt identifies, “Learning is the heart and soul of the learning organization” (Gilley, et al., p. 40). A learning organization values individual development because it is in the best interest of the success of an organization. Marquardt identifies action learning as a process and program that “involves a small group of people solving real problems while at the same time focusing on what they are learning and how their

learning can benefit each group member and the organization as a whole” (Gilley, et al., pp. 41-42). “Action learning enables people to effectively learn and simultaneously handle difficult, real-life situations” (Gilley, et al., p. 42). The components of action learning “derive their power and benefits from six interactive and interdependent components: a problem, the group, the questioning and reflection process, the resolution to take action, the commitment to learning, and the facilitator” (Gilley, et al., p. 42). Once learning takes place it is important that the learning is applied or transferred to the job (Gilley, et al., p. 46).

Strategies that Enhance Learning

Individual development through learning transfer is key to success. After training some individuals fail because of delayed application of new knowledge and skills; plus, management, organizations, and human resource development professionals fail to provide support or reinforcement, assistance in integration, failure to be positive role models, or establish policies that are “inappropriate or nonconducive” to a developmental organization (Gilley, et al., pp. 46-47). “The learning and change process is the responsibility of everyone within the organization” (Gilley, et al., p. 47). To prevent failure there are several strategies that enhance learning before, during, and after learning acquisition.

Before learning it is important to identify learning readiness and levels of self-direction (Gilley, et al., p. 47). Two important principles of self-directed learning are: “self-directed learning requires employees to adopt controls and techniques of teaching themselves about a particular subject” (self-teaching), and the concept of personal autonomy which is “taking control of the goals and purposes of learning, and assuring

ownership of learning—leading to an internal change of consciousness in which the learner views knowledge as contextual, and fully questions what is learned” (Gilley, et al., p. 48).

During learning acquisition it is important that the learner is able to communicate and understand the language or technical information to prevent confusion or misunderstanding (Gilley, et al., p. 49). Employees understanding of technical words must frequently be tested to “guarantee their correct usage” (Gilley, et al., p. 49). Instruction serves as the vehicle to gaining new knowledge and skills, and “the responsibility for learning and change should shift...to employees” (Gilley, et al., p. 49). It is important that special needs of individuals be addressed during instruction to assist in their ability to retain information (Gilley, et al., p. 50). Another strategy during learning is enlightenment. “Learning is simply the process of internalizing in one’s own mind the truth to be learned and applying it in some form or fashion” (Gilley, et al., p. 50). “Enlightenment requires learners to internalize information and content and apply it” (Gilley, et al., p. 50). Practice and review allows the learner to apply new knowledge and skills in an unthreatening environment, and to reflect on mistakes and successes that enables the individual to solidify the understanding of new knowledge and skills.

Sustaining New Knowledge and Skills

After learning acquisition, important strategies needed to sustain new knowledge and skills include: application, reinforcement and feedback, reflection, expectation—application—inspection, plus recognition and reward (Gilley, et al., pp. 52-54). “People learn by doing” and application of new learning must be immediate to be effective (Gilley, et al., p. 52). Reinforcement and feedback shows the value and

importance of learning, and feedback should be specific, individualized, and frequent to strengthen performance behavior (Gilley, et al., pp. 52-53). Peterson and Hicks state:

The goals of reflection are to solidify one's insight and to guarantee that mistakes or successes just learned are remembered, identify themes and patterns of performance, challenge one's assumptions to ensure one learns appropriately, and remain open to new learning and change opportunities. (Gilley, et al., p. 53)

Managers/administrators should discuss their expectations with employees before they engage in learning activities, they should allow employees to apply their new knowledge, and assess or inspect the changes caused by acquisition of new knowledge and skills (Gilley, et al., pp. 53-54). Finally, recognition and reward are key elements in maintaining continued learning. LeBouf states, "the things that get rewarded get done," and the power of that statement "reinforces the importance of learning and change" (Gilley, et al., pp. 54-55).

Summary of Individual Development

Individual development can be a powerful component of any organization and should be a focus of every school. As staff members focus on ways to improve themselves, with the support of administrators, they become more effective members of the organization. The benefits of healthy, well adjusted, life long learners as staff members influences the success of the student clientele, and staff members serve as powerful models of positive and successful growth and development. Particularly, an individual's career development is where an organization can have an impact.

Career Development

Individual development is closely tied to career development. Career development is defined as: “an organized, planned effort comprised of structural activities or processes that result in a mutual career plotting effort between employees and the organization” (Gilley, et al., p. 59). Individuals or employees who work toward improving their lives and their careers are beneficial to any organization.

Career Planning and Career Management

Concerning career development Gilley, et al. identify elements that hinder the development process:

Many performance problems are career related; employees often feel trapped, stagnated, or overlooked in their present jobs or occupations. Many find little pleasure in them, which contributes to increased stress and lowered output. These workers do not work up to their full potential and often fail to meet organizational expectations. Either they have lost their occupational mission in life, or they have been unable to identify their vocational purpose.

To further complicate matters, many managers are reluctant to approach employees about performance problems. They hold their breath, look the other way, cross their fingers, and hope that somehow the situation will work itself out, even though these managers are still held accountable for their subordinates. (p. 57)

On the solution side, Gilley, et al. offer a concise summary of what can enhance career development in an organization:

Employees and organizations working together as a team are necessary to guarantee career development's success. Organizational leaders, HRD professionals, and managers organize and direct the program, including identification and establishment of career developmental activities. Each of these key players meeting their respective responsibilities regarding career development builds a stronger link between individual and organizational development.

Organization leaders generate career development program policies, allocate financial resources, provide opportunities for collaboration and integration, and advocate the importance of career development to the overall success of both individuals and the firm. At the same time, HRD professionals provide guidance and information regarding the impact and importance of career development. They exhibit leadership and expertise in creating career development activities and interventions that initiate or improve employee growth and development, and serve as a liaison between employees and the organization. (pp. 57-58)

Ultimately, Gutteridge and Otte “suggest that within this system, the employee is responsible for career planning and the organization is responsible for career management” (Gilley, et al., p. 59). Career development allows employees to examine future career paths, and assists in analyzing their skills and interests to match individual needs for growth and development with needs of the organization (Gilley, et al., p. 60). Furthermore,

Managers can increase productivity and efficiency, improve employee attitudes toward work, and develop greater worker satisfaction through effective

career development programs. In addition to reducing performance problems, the career development process also promotes more efficient allocation of human resources and greater loyalty among employees. (Gilley, et al., pp. 60-61)

In summary, organizational career development can be divided into career planning that is instituted by individuals, and career management that is the responsibility of a manager/administrator.

Elements of Career Development

Elements of an effective career development system include employees accepting “ownership of and responsibility for their own growth,” and “organizations need to provide the resources necessary for the success of career development” (Gilley, et al., p. 61). Career anchors are “dominant elements that govern career choices” and include: managerial competence (progress toward greater responsibility), technical/functional competence (proper fit between person and job), security and stability (maintaining satisfiers like income, benefits, and recognition), pure challenge (newness, assignments, problem solving), autonomy and independence (freedom making decisions and carrying out responsibilities), lifestyle integration (balance between work and other aspects of one’s life), service/dedication (making a difference), and entrepreneurship (ownership and responsibility for one’s work) (Gilley, et al., pp. 61-62).

Another element of career development is purpose. “Career development helps employees analyze their abilities and interests to better match human resource needs for growth and development within and organizations needs” (Gilley, et al., p. 62). “Career development should center on needs related to personal activities and interests, be

flexible, develop appropriate evaluation procedures, and have the support of top management” (Gilley, et al., p. 63).

Organizations that effectively implement career development have the organization engaged in developmental planning and employees engaged in career/life planning (Gilley, et al., p. 65). Both organizations and employees need to conduct needs analyses, skills analyses, and potential analyses to determine goals and create plans that match career information with developmental plans (Gilley et al. p. 66). Successful career development organizations rely on teamwork.

Organization and Employee Responsibilities in Career Development

The responsibilities of an organization in career development are to: establish a job posting system, develop mentoring systems, use managers/administrators as career counselors, plan and implement career developmental workshops and seminars, develop a human resource planning process, transform performance appraisals in to developmental evaluations, institute employee growth and development plans, and create a developmental culture (Gilley, et al., p. 68). Employee’s responsibilities in career development include career awareness, career planning, organization awareness, and self-awareness (Gilley, et al., p. 87). To be effective, organizational and employee responsibilities must be integrated.

Gilley, et al. suggest a five-stage approach of integrating organizational and employee responsibilities: employee orientation (stressing individual career responsibility), individual self-analysis (Who am I?), reality check (How am I viewed by the organization?), options (develop organizational awareness of alternatives within or

outside the organization through growth and development activities), and career goals (career planning, career counseling) (pp. 93-94).

Summary of Career Development

Career development is a key component in the success of an organization. School districts are required to have professional development plans as mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB); however, these plans can often be simply paperwork with little or no follow up at all. Career development is not a simple activity of filling out a form with a goal and then having it signed off at the end of a school year. It is a process that requires thought, follow-up, reflection, and management. Authentic and valuable career development is a systematic process that matches individual development with the goals of an organization. As an organization assists individuals with career development, it benefits by developing and promoting employees from within and reduces turnover (Gilley, et al., p. 63). Ultimately the students benefit as consumers of information shared by employees that are anchored positively in an organization that values and supports individual and career development.

Ethics

What is the right thing to do? Maintain the status quo and fill out development plans at the beginning of the school year with no real thought or foundation work and then hand them in at the end of the year to fulfill an agreement, or to improve and reflect on how the plans can become meaningful tools to improve individual development which can be transferred to career development and have a positive impact on the organization as a whole. The key to development is learning, and “in learning organizations, everyone (leaders, managers, and employees) is driven by a desire for quality and continuous

improvement and activities are characterized by aspiration, reflection, and conceptualization” (Gilley, et al., p. 41). Without such learning the opposite can follow.

Everett M. Rogers states in his book Diffusion of Innovations: "the intent of bureaucratic organizations is often to depersonalize human relationships as much as possible by standardizing and formalizing them" (Rogers, 2003, p. 404). This situation is understandable in the fact that if an organization is to survive it requires a set of standards that leaders and employees must follow. However, Rogers refers to the German sociologist Max Weber's "iron cage" description of bureaucratic organizations, and Weber characterizes these organizations “by a form of authoritarian control” (Rogers, p. 405). Furthermore,

Rules are made and orders issued by individuals of authority and carried out by organizational members who accept the system of authority. At first, this control system operates in a rational and efficient manner, but the organizational effectiveness of the bureaucracy is often lost over time. Rules are enforced overzealously and applied to all cases in an impersonal and inappropriate way.

Bureaucratic leaders become impersonal, and the rationality of the system disappears. Nevertheless, organization members, trapped in an iron cage of control, continue to support the bureaucratic authority system. (Rogers, p. 405)

The idea of being trapped in an iron cage is not a positive approach to the function of an organization and those that work within it, and the idea does not look outward to the effects the organization has on the rest of the world.

The set of standards that organizations create to formalize human relationships require a code of ethics. In order to do away with the "iron cage" mentality it is

important for organizations to be innovative as to how employees are treated in the workplace and become aware of the effects the organization has on the environment as a whole. Systems thinking is a key process in social and environmental responsibility.

"Systems thinking involves examination of and reflection upon all aspects of organizational life, such as mission and strategy, structure, culture, and managerial practices" (Gilley, et al., 2002, p. 40). Furthermore,

Socially responsible companies offer a way to relate work to something outside us, something bigger than we are or the company is; a way to feel good about the way we make a living and to actually witness that organizations are part of society, the environment, and us. (Hatcher, 2002, pp. 102-103)

Systems thinking and social and environmental responsibility are innovative approaches.

As Rogers points out, innovations (in the case of this paper the innovation is an improved professional development plan) are more successful with the presence of champions, and these champions are not generally powerful individuals "with a high office in the organization," but are generally middle managers that work closely with staff (Rogers, pp. 414-415). These are the people who see the effects of the "iron cage," and if they are champions will offer innovations that respect the individual rights and sensibilities of employees they come in contact with. Also, these champions will recognize that the decisions made within the "iron cage" have far reaching consequences outside the cage: on the environment, the community, and the world as a whole.

Administrators are the champions in the case of assisting employees in achieving positive individual and career development. As managers, they assist in the management of professional individual development plans, based on the principles of HRD, that lead

to successful organizations. A successful organization in today's world should realize that they do not and cannot exist in an iron cage but must recognize the consequences of their decisions. The consequences of decisions begin at an individual level but are maintained by managers/administrators. These consequences can be positive if careful planning, implementation, evaluation, and maintenance take place.

Professional Development Research in Schools

Recent research in the relationship between professional development and student achievement, particularly in middle schools, is difficult because of all the variables that influence student learning and remains inconclusive and requires additional study in the relationship of the two variables (Schmitt, 2004, para. 2). “However, some reports from the National Staff Development Council have claimed that evidence does exist to suggest a relationship between teacher professional development and student achievement,” and sustained professional development can result in improved teacher practices (Schmitt, para. 3).

Furthermore, “successful professional development strategies are: experiential, grounded in participants’ questions, collaborative among educators, connected to and derived from work with students, sustained and intensive, and linked to other school aspects,” suggesting the importance of a learning organization (Schmitt, para. 7). Some researchers “believe that a school must understand and practice the five disciplines of a learning organization to be a true professional learning community and that leadership plays a significant role in the ability of a school to become a professional learning community that enhances student learning” (Thompson, et al., 2004, para. 1).

Peter Senge's five disciplines include: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994, p. 6). All of the components of the five disciplines are associated with professional development, but Senge "believes that systems thinking is the cornerstone of a learning organization because it integrates the disciplines" (Thompson, Gregg, & Niska, para. 7).

Systems thinking requires a team approach and the five disciplines support the characteristics and provisions of successful schools as outlined by the National Middle School Association:

Successful schools for young adolescents are characterized by a culture that includes: educators who value working with this age group, and are prepared to do so; courageous, collaborative leadership; a shared vision that guides decisions; an inviting, supportive, and safe environment; high expectations for every member of the learning community; students and teachers engaged in active learning; an adult advocate for every student; and school-initiated family and community partnerships.

Therefore, successful schools for young adolescents provide: curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory; multiple learning and teaching approaches that respond to their diversity; assessments and evaluation programs that promote quality learning; organizational structures that support meaningful relationships and learning; school-wide efforts and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety; and multifaceted guidance and support services.

(NMSA, 2003, p. 7)

The middle school approach is a systems thinking approach and necessitates quality, meaningful, and sustained professional development.

Another study identified the discrepancy between administrative and teacher opinion on expectations about what their professional development should be focusing on (Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 2002, para. 10). In this study by the Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois they found:

The highest ranked topics that teachers want...include using computers as part of instruction, strategies for teaching a broad range of ability levels, and working with at-risk students. Administrators, on the other hand, recognize the classroom needs but also identify broader issues as a high need...such as peer coaching, teacher-led advisory, and data-based decision making. (Flowers, et al., para. 14)

In this case the “teacher’s focus is primarily on the teaching and learning process, the administrator’s focus is often from a larger school improvement perspective,” and it is necessary for both parties to elicit dialogue and have input in designing professional development (Flowers, et al., para. 15).

As this research suggests it is important to continue studying the relationship between professional development and student achievement. Based on some studies professional development can have an impact on student learning, especially sustained development, and Senge’s five disciplines, particularly systems thinking, can assist in creating a professional learning organization. With the practice of systems thinking, administrators and staff can communicate their needs and engage in dialogue that works to find and develop appropriate professional development plans.

Improved Professional Development Plan Proposal

Based on the recommendations from principles in human resource development, the importance of ethics in the workplace, and research on the effects of professional development particularly in middle schools, it is important to reflect on a current school's "Individual Professional Development Plan" (Appendix A). The current plan is established to meet the requirements of North Central Association (NCA) accreditation and NCLB. The specific form to write a plan is the plan itself and follows a structured format; furthermore, the form alludes to the necessity of follow-up. Using the guidelines from Gilley, et al. suggestions will be made to improve the plan and make it more meaningful and valuable. Furthermore, improving the plan is ethically driven, and is the right thing to do.

Current Plan

Currently, the plan (form) used by staff members is filled out at the beginning of the school year and submitted to the plan building designee and is then passed on to school administrators. The plan is filed and is used at the end of the school year in an exit interview between a school administrator and employee. The plan is formulated based on school improvement goals, and the goals are to be used to develop individual plans based on individual needs to carry out the school improvement goals. The plan is divided into a section where employees identify gaps in skills or learning and competencies needed to close the gaps; a section where employees list activities, plans for assessment, and dates of follow up and who monitors the plans; a section for the employee to provide reflection on reaching development goals; a section for

administrators to provide comments on employee progress; and a checklist to monitor guidance and fulfillment of the individual professional development plan.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The strengths of this plan/form are it allows administrators to organize career development and establishes a policy, identifies employee's individual activities, and allows for documenting follow up and monitoring activities (Gilley, et al., pp. 57-58).

The weakness of the plan/form is it does not analyze and identify individual strengths and allow for employees to build on them, and it focuses mainly on organizational needs rather than matching these with individual employee's strengths (Gilley, et al., p. 37).

Furthermore, the plan/form is not regularly monitored as the school year progresses. The responsibility is left to the employee, and some employees take responsibility for follow through and some do not. Planning career development is the responsibility of the employee, but managing career development is up to the administrator (Gilley, et al., p. 59). This is one example where the use of the plan could be greatly improved as employees and administrators work together on a regular basis to provide consistent follow up of each plan.

Improvement

A key process that will improve the individual professional development plan is for "organizations and employees to conduct needs analyses, skills analyses, and potential analyses to determine goals and create plans that match career information with developmental plans" (Gilley, et al., p. 66). The organizational goals are listed in each plan but fail to identify the individual strengths of the employees. It is recommended that administrators and employees create a master list of strengths based on the characteristics

of internal burnings, high satisfaction levels, rapid learning, and performance zones to identify a particular strength that can be developed (Gilley, et al. pp. 37-38).

Upon identifying a particular strength it is important for administrators to assist the employee in identifying learning readiness. Some important questions to answer are: is the employee ready for self-directed learning, and can they be personally autonomous and take ownership of their learning; plus, is the organization prepared to provide support and resources for individuals to meet career development goals? It is proposed that administrators and employees meet at the beginning of the school year to identify and discuss readiness for career development and to share what resources are available to carry out development plans. Furthermore, it is recommended that administrators and employees work together to recognize individual career responsibilities, discuss individual self analysis and the employee's value to the organization, identify options within and outside the organization, and discuss career goals and give and receive counsel on those goals (Gilley, et al., pp. 93-94).

Systems thinking is an approach that can facilitate improved career planning and management in regards to the individual professional development plan. Systems thinking involves "peripheral vision: the ability to pay attention to the world as if through a wide-angle, not telephoto lens, so you can see how your actions interrelate with other areas of activity" (Senge, et al., pp. 87-88). Senge further states: "A good systems thinker, particularly in an organizational setting, is someone who can see four levels operating simultaneously: events, patterns of behavior, systems, and mental models" (Senge, et al., p. 97). It is important that in improving the development plan administrators and staff members do not jump to solutions (Senge, et al., p. 98). It is vital

that as a team they work together to understand why the plan has been effective and ineffective, and to develop ways to improve the plan. A suggested approach would be to examine how the steps in the process of developing a professional development plan are connected and identify what is missing, what could be added or deleted, and how the process is influenced by unanticipated factors and consequences (Senge, et al., pp. 113-190) (Appendix B).

Nevertheless, it is important to understand that change must be real, and that systems thinking should not be attempted for the sake of appearance or to appease the masses. The following statement is telling:

The foremost advocates of learning-organization theory (the latest concept in organizational management) miss the proverbial boat in introducing five disciplines of critical and systemic thought (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994). These qualities are indeed necessary, but equally necessary is that they be used in a context that is not arbitrarily limited by the interests of a select power group. If context is limited in such a manner, then critical thought does not exist and systemic thinking is so restricted as to be more accurately called single-minded or self-serving thinking. (Nabb & Armstrong, 2005, p. 98)

Successful HRD, for example, was implemented in Nazi Germany, but the effects were profoundly negative (Nabb & Armstrong, 2005). Nabb and Armstrong caution:

Critical evaluation and reflection must be espoused and all sources of such thought must be given valid recognition. Token consideration, in which ideas and their sources are tolerated only long enough to acquire labels that relegate them a marginal status and rob them of power, will not suffice, nor can the

context, subject matter, or pool of sources for critical input be predetermined.

Predetermination is limitation, and limitation has proven detrimental. (p. 98)

Any model for improvement must be honestly and thoughtfully implemented with the best interests of all those involved, and it should involve all who have a stake in the process.

Without the aforementioned groundwork, the individual professional development plans will continue to be paperwork with no real goal or outcome, but once the organization establishes a foundation via the recommendations, real learning can take place. This is not a simple task and requires time and effort on the part of all involved. However, once discovered, the learning needs will determine the approach and scope of staff development over the course of the year and beyond, and it is important to remember that as this is established employees must be actively engaged in the learning process via application, reinforcement, reflection, inspection, recognition, and reward (Gilley, et al., pp. 52-54). There must be improved follow up on the employee part (self direction and autonomy) and monitoring on the administrator's part to maintain progress.

Conclusion

Two statements are key in improving the individual professional development plans of any school: "people learn by doing", and "the things that get rewarded get done" (Gilley, et al., 52-55). The consequences of decisions begin at an individual level, and these consequences can be positive if careful planning, implementation, evaluation, and maintenance take place. Based on the principles of human resource development school professional development plans can be valuable tools in an organization's success, if they are carried out in a systematically designed process, in an ethical manner, with the intent

of helping individuals meeting their full potential via a meaningful systems thinking approach. Success is dependent on teamwork with employees and administrators working together to reach a common goal: improved individual professional development that impacts and benefits organizational success. It is the right thing to do.

References

- Flowers, N., Mertens, S. B., & Mulhall, P. F. (2002). Four Important Lessons About Teacher Professional Development. Retrieved June 13, 2005, from http://www.nmsa.org/research/articles/res_articles_may2002c.htm
- Gilley, J., Egglund, S., & Gilley, A. (2002). Principles of Human Resource Development. New York: Basic Books.
- Hatcher, T. (2002). Ethics and HRD. USA: Perseus Publishing.
- Nabb, L. W. & Armstrong, K. B. (2005). An Adult Education Critique of HRD: A Case Study of Training for Atrocities in German-Occupied Europe. Chicago: Discovery Association Publishing House.
- National Middle School Association. (2003). This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents. Westerville, Ohio: Author.
- Rogers, E. V. (2003). Diffusion of Innovations. New York: Free Press.
- Senge, P. M., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R. B., & Smith, B. J. (1994). The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook. New York: Currency Doubleday.
- Schmitt, V. L. (2004). The Relationship Between Middle Level Grade Span Configuration, Professional Development, and Student Achievement. Retrieved June 13, 2005, from http://www.nmsa.org/research/rmle/spring04/article_1.htm
- Thompson, S. C., Gregg, L., & Niska, J. M. (2004). Professional Learning Communities, Leadership, and Student Learning. Retrieved June 13, 2005, from <http://www.nmsa.org/research/rmle/summer04/article2.htm>

Appendix A

" " MIDDLE SCHOOL
 Individual Professional Development Plan
 2005 - 2006

Name _____
Approved by _____
Date _____

The following Individual Professional Development Plan has been formulated based upon these four School Improvement Goals. First, all students of " " Middle School will improve their reading skills. Second, all students will improve their writing skills. Third, teachers and staff will understand and implement the middle school philosophy to meet the challenges associated with change in education. Finally, all staff will deliver instruction appropriate to the diverse learning needs of their students. This individual Professional Development Plan should align itself with these School Improvement Goals. In completing this plan, staff should reflect on these goals and identify gaps in their own skills and/or learning that could impede the attainment of these goals. Next, they should determine the specific skills and/or competencies they need to acquire in order to close their identified gaps. Only then should they develop an individual professional development plan based upon their identified needs.

Identify Skill and/or Learning Gap	Skills and Competencies Needed to Close the Gap

Individual Professional Development Plan

Activity	Plan for Assessment Including Data Collection	Dates of Follow up
		Monitored By:
		Monitored By:

In the space provided, please reflect on the progress you have made in reaching your professional development goal(s). How has this improved student achievement? How do you know?

School Administrator: In the space provided please comment on the teacher's progress in reaching this goal(s). Has this goal had a positive impact in the classroom? Has there been improvement in student achievement? How do you know?

Individual Professional Development Plan Guidance

Activity:

- The activities that an individual chooses should be based on a needs assessment and the identified skill and/or learning gaps.
- These activities should reflect best available research and practices in teaching and learning.
- Consideration should be given to effectively designing and/or choosing a system of organized professional development activities that will result in closing the identified skill and/or learning gaps.
- List the date(s) of the planned activity, keeping in mind that Individual Professional Development Plan activities are to be focused and sustained efforts (more than 3 days).
- In planning for this activity, staff members should consider how this professional development will be sustained and how they intend to support their efforts with substantial time and other resources.
- List the format of the activity. The format could include in-services, workshops, study groups, peer coaching, peer mentoring, peer observations, networking, and developmental workshops.
- Other formats could include coaching from outside experts, attending conferences, making presentations at conferences, job exchanges, team teaching, curriculum development, assessment development, attending college classes, and engaging in self instruction via correspondence and/or the Internet.

Assessment:

- Briefly explain the results you expect this professional development activity to have on you and what results you expect in student achievement.
- Explain how you will collect data to substantiate the impact this activity had on you and students.

Follow Up:

- Individual Professional Development plans should include focused, intensive, and sustained activities. **Follow up is an expectation.** List the dates of subsequent trainings, etc., related to the activities. Also, list the type of follow up activity, i.e., workshop, study group, further training, etc.

Monitoring:

- The building principal should date and sign this plan as it is monitored.

Appendix B





