

# NISKAYUNA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2015-2016



Niskayuna Central School District

**Professional Development Plan  
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Niskayuna Central School District  
Niskayuna, New York 12309

## **Professional Development Plan**

### **Preface**

The Niskayuna Central School district recognizes that quality professional development is valuable and important to improve instruction and learning. The district views it as essential to the full achievement of its mission...

*...Empower each individual to make responsible choices, meet challenges, achieve personal success, and contribute to a global society....*

and to promote and assure ongoing development and growth of its professional staff.

Section 100.2 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education requires that each school district create and implement a plan for professional development by September 1, 2000 (in Niskayuna's case 2001), and annually thereafter. This plan should "...describe how districts will provide all teachers with substantial professional development opportunities\*."

The Niskayuna Central School District Professional Development Plan is the result of facilitated work of a committee of teachers, administrators and community members which began in the 2002-2003 school year. The committee considered current research and literature, as well as district teacher input in its development. The plan is intended to inform and direct professional development planning and implementation in the district.

### **Professional Development Plan Mission Statement**

The mission of professional development in Niskayuna is to promote and enhance professional excellence for the members of the educational community through a variety of opportunities designed to ensure successful learning for all students.

## Professional Development Plan

Niskayuna believes that an educational community can only be as good as the personnel that it employs and that it is a shared responsibility to provide high quality ongoing professional development. The school district is responsible for helping staff members achieve the district mission and members of the school community have a responsibility to engage in comprehensive professional development.

The vision of the Niskayuna professional development plan is to support educators who:

- are committed to students and their learning
- know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students to maximize student learning
- are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning
- systematically think about their practice and learn from experience
- are contributing members of the learning community

These attributes are aligned with the core principles of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

### Effective professional development:

- Begins with the commitment by the members of the school community to life-long learning
- Maintains a differentiated approach to meet individual, department and level needs related to the teaching and learning process
- Is data-driven based on student performance results (National Staff Development Standard)
- Provides time and school district financial and philosophical support
- Follows a coherent, cohesive and comprehensive plan
- Allows individuals to initiate their own professional development
- Supports awareness activities, a blend of research and practice, time for follow-up, support groups and further investigation (National Staff Development Standard)
- Includes research-based practices while also encouraging innovation, experimentation, and risk-taking (National Staff Development Standard)
- Addresses a person's self-image, self-concept, and stage of development
- Balances the need for systemic initiatives as well as professional choice
- Is inseparable from district improvement, the APPR process, is job-embedded and directly applicable to teaching and learning

All professional development is in service to our students who are expected to graduate from our district as empowered learners who are:

Educated individuals  
Responsible citizens  
Independent thinkers  
Lifetime learners  
Effective Communicators

Aesthetically sensitive  
Self-directed individuals  
Enterprising individuals  
Collaborative team members  
Technologically literate

## **Relationship of Professional Development to Continuous Improvement**

The Niskayuna Central School District includes in its vision for systemic development the concept of continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is the overarching goal for professional development that must be the driving force for improved teaching and learning. This Professional Development Plan is designed to assure all teaching staff has the opportunity to strengthen and develop their pedagogical skills and content knowledge within a collaborative professional culture.

The following district priorities have been the focus of our professional development and align with the four domains of the Danielson Framework for Teaching:

Domain 1: Instruction:	Technology Integration Response to Intervention Common Core Literacy
Domain 2: Planning	Curriculum Mapping, UbD Unit Design, formative/summative assessments
Domain 3: Environment	Differentiation
Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities	Professional Learning Communities, reflective practice

## **Relationship between Niskayuna’s Professional Development Goals and New York State Learning Standards**

Each year the Professional Development Committee defines the professional development goals for the following year. Committee members base decisions upon general district goals set by the Niskayuna Board of Education and Curriculum and Assessment Council. Needs are identified through analysis of instructional program reviews and teacher surveys. The priority is that all professional development facilitates our faculty’s growth in their ability to:

- align and implement curriculum to New York State Learning Standards
- provide instruction, based on the Standards, that promotes meaningful learning in a safe environment
- accurately assess student achievement of standards-based learning outcomes
- systematically think about and learn from their experiences, including opportunities for reflection
- be contributing members of our Professional Learning Community

### **Resources to be used**

Local Budget	1. Curriculum Development 2. Mentor Program
Federal Grants	1. Title IIA

### **Faculty**

Professional development by both department and school occurs during faculty meeting and department meeting times. Each school has a Professional Development Committee that identifies needs and goals of the building, which align to district goals. The Professional Development Committees works with the building administration to plan professional development opportunities that take place during faculty meetings.

Research shows the most effective model to provide professional development is one where teachers learn in a cohort group, have opportunity to try out what they are learning, and provide feedback to each other. The Professional Learning Community model embraces this mindset. Niskayuna has used this framework to support teachers and encourage them to evolve their overall instructional practice. This has resulted in a culture of teachers sharing best practice and learning from one another.

The district began a multi-year curriculum project during the summer of 2015. Twenty-five teachers, as well as teacher leaders from the high school, and district administration spent three days learning about curriculum development. These faculty members and district curriculum directors will turnkey the training to teachers, K-12 throughout the 2015-16 school year. Throughout the course of the school year, groups of teachers will have release time to work on building units of study. The first year will focus on ELA and math units in grades K-8. The high school teachers will focus on building curriculum for the following courses: earth science, algebra, 9-11 English, and 9-10 social studies.

Niskayuna Academy is the name we have given to our in-house learning opportunities for faculty and staff. Teachers are either tapped by district leadership or initiate these learning opportunities. These “courses” are offered through MLP (My Learning Plan) and are open to all faculty and staff. This fall, Annette Romano, will provide classes on

how to plan and teach a “course” to colleagues. The goal is to expand professional development opportunities, designed and taught by our faculty and staff, throughout the 2015-16 school year.

The 2015-16 budget includes approximately \$20,000 to allow for teachers to attend conferences and learning opportunities outside of the school district. Teachers will fill out a request form. Faculty will be asked to describe how the learning will impact their instruction and student learning, as well as how they plan to bring the learning back to the district and share with colleagues. A small committee of teachers and administrators will meet every other month to approve conference requests.

#### Teaching Assistants

In March of 2015, all teaching assistants (TA’s) were surveyed with respect to what areas they would like to have professional development around during the 2015-2016 school year. As a result of the survey results, we have planned two workshops for TA’s to attend on August 28, 2015. The workshops are: Learning Preferences: Four Styles for Success and Dealing with Difficult Students. They will be provided by NYSUT. TA’s will have choice as to which one they want to attend.

The following days are times when TA’s could participate in building level PD:

- Webinars and book talks will be offered and led by a TA leader in each building. These opportunities could take place during half days when faculty are meeting with parents for parent conferences.
- NESPA leaders will look to identify a mentor for new TA’s beginning in the 2015-16 school year.
- TA’s are encouraged, as their schedules permit, to attend offerings in Niskayuna Academy, as well as attend faculty meetings when topics would support their development as a professional.

#### Potential Providers:

Center for Educational Leadership  
Special Education consults (autism, etc)  
Model Schools – technology  
NYSUT

## **Range of Professional Development Opportunities**

### **2015-16 Required Activities (occur annually):**

July 21-23 Curriculum Writing Training

Nine additional release days will be provided to teams throughout the 2015-16 school year for teachers to draft, implement and refine three common units.

Faculty meetings – one of the two faculty meeting per month dedicated to professional development

Department meetings- two department meetings per month include professional development that is content/course specific

Elementary Grade Level meetings – five per year

### **Mentor Program (occurring annually):**

Three-day New Teacher Orientation Program – August 17-18, 2015

Mentoring Activities for Probationary Teachers- fall and spring workshop

Classroom Visitations – a minimum of one half day in the fall and spring

Regular Meetings with Mentor

### **Additional Voluntary Activities:**

Conferences/Workshops

After School Niskayuna Academy

Webinars on Nisky PD Wiki

Graduate Classes

Model Schools

Curriculum Development

Summer Niskayuna Tech U

Peer Observations

Visitations (districts, schools, classrooms, three days/year by contract)

## **Evaluation of Professional Development**

The Professional Development Team will survey teachers annually in order to inform the revision process of the Professional Development Plan and to seek input on the professional development priorities for the next year. The following process will be used:

- Measure plan and PD opportunities accomplished against the Professional Development Rubric from NYSED website
- Design survey on Survey Monkey
- Individuals asked to complete survey online (spring 2016)
- Surveys returned to Professional Development Team for review and then shared with all staff
- Professional Development Team revises the Professional Development Plan based upon the input of teachers. Recommendations are reviewed with the Curriculum and Assessment Council.
- Utilizing the survey data, the team will develop the following year's Professional Development Plan and offerings.