

FCSS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING HANDBOOK

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This handbook is designed to equip all employees with the necessary information for professional learning needs and requests. Specific questions can be emailed to Karen Walton at kw Walton@fannin.k12.ga.us. This handbook is also available in electronic format at www.fannin.k12.ga.us.

I. Definition of Professional Learning

Professional Learning is a planned developmental opportunity offered to staff members to increase their ability to work effectively with students, staff, parents, and other stakeholders. Professional Learning involves acquiring new learning and/or skills. It does not include other professional activities such as serving on School Improvement Teams or other professional committees. Employees earn Professional Learning Units (PLUs) through contact hours. Professional Learning Units are awarded upon the completion of 10 contact hours. At the end of each academic year, all contact hours over increments of 10 are lost. For example, if Mrs. X ends the school year with 18 contact hours she earns 1 PLU. If Mr. Y ends the school year with 11 contact hours he earns 1 PLU.

II. Types of Professional Learning

Each school should plan to offer a balance of different kinds of professional learning to their teachers every year. Some opportunities will be offered system-wide based on identified system-wide needs, and others will be specific to the school. At the school level, some topics will be identified as important for all staff and others will be targeted to specific groups. A Professional Learning Unit (PLU) can be earned for any of the professional learning activities listed below as long as they are written up prior to being offered and conform to the guidelines set out in section II of this manual.

Whole Faculty: In this model, the entire staff goes through a professional learning activity at the same time.

Small Group: All teachers are expected to participate in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) during the year. The characteristics of the groups and their operating norms can vary, but the key concept is that all teachers continue to deepen their understanding of one or more aspects of the teaching-learning process every year.

- The groups may be formed for the whole year or may be flexible during the year.
- They can be organized by department, team, grade, or be cross-curricular.
- Members can all study one topic, or the topic may vary from team to team.

Conferences: Attending conferences can be very helpful, but principals are cautioned to select conferences that relate to and support study already going on in the school. In order to receive PLU credit for conferences, teachers will work individually with the professional learning coordinator.

III. Mission

The mission of the Fannin County School System Professional Learning Department is to foster continuous improvement of all member of our school community. We believe all people have the ability and desire to grow, learn, and define their own goals and mission. Our role is to advance continuous improvement by aligning resources, activities, values, and visions with the mission of the school system to meet the needs of our schools and individuals.

A wide variety of professional learning opportunities is available to all employees. Employees are notified of opportunities through email, faculty/staff meeting, and school postings. Each school offers professional learning aligned to their annual needs assessment. Course offerings from North Georgia RESA are available to all employees.

IV. Student Goals and Educational Improvement Practices

FCSS will provide high-quality professional learning that impacts student achievement and will develop continuous improvement by providing research-based, data-driven, job-embedded and standards-based professional learning. At the core of this effort lie the Georgia Standards for Professional Learning which is based on the National Staff Development Standards.

CONTEXT STANDARDS – Professional learning that improves the learning of all students.

- **Learning Communities:** Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district
- **Leadership:** Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement
- **Resources:** Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration

PROCESS STANDARDS - Professional learning that improves the learning of all students.

- **Data-Driven:** Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement
- **Evaluation:** Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact
- **Research-Based:** Prepares educators to apply research in decision making
- **Design:** Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal
- **Learning:** Applies knowledge about human learning and change
- **Collaboration:** Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate

CONTENT STANDARDS – Professional learning that improves the learning of all students.

- **Equity:** Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for students' academic achievement
- **Quality Teaching:** Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to appropriately use various types of classroom assessments
- **Family Involvement:** Provides educators with knowledge and skills to appropriately involve families and other stakeholders

FCSS believes that successful, effective professional learning must:

- Improve all students' learning
- Improve teacher effectiveness
- Set high standards for students and teachers
- Promote continuous staff learning
- Enhance intellectual and leadership capacity for staff

FCSS will offer courses/workshops that address local initiatives and federal or state mandates and are aligned to the school/system improvement plans.

V. Educational Personnel Needs Assessment

Professional learning needs are determined annually by analyzing information from a variety of formal and informal sources including:

1. School and System Continuous Improvement Plans
2. SACS Plans
3. Legislative or Georgia Department of Education mandates
4. Analysis of student assessments
5. Current research and information on best practices
6. Analysis of student, staff, parent, teacher and community surveys
7. Teacher and administrative suggestions
8. Annual SAI Needs Assessment
9. Focus Groups and Title I parent meetings

VI. Procedures for Advisory Council/Planning

Professional Learning Committees

A multi-level structure of overlapping committees enables long and short-term professional learning needs and issues to be managed quickly and efficiently. Principals meet with central office instructional staff on a regular basis throughout the year. At the school level, leadership teams and administrative teams meet monthly and teachers meet frequently in grade level, subject area, and/or department meetings. These regular and overlapping meetings facilitate open planning and up and down communication.

The Professional Learning Coordinator and Council will approve professional learning plans. Two-thirds of the committee must give approval. The committee will meet three times annually and/or as necessary.

The Fannin County Professional Learning Program is an integral and supportive part of system and school continuous improvement planning process. The plan is developed based on a thorough assessment of needs, resources and current best practices using the annual fall SAI Needs Assessment, annual school and system surveys of teachers, leaders, students, parents, and the community and focus groups. System priorities are included in the annual plans.

The committee will be responsible for reviewing the results of the needs assessment and prioritizing the courses to be offered. They will also approve the FCSS annual plan for professional learning. The committee will ensure the quality and suitability of offered courses. High quality professional learning is defined in H.R.1-539 section 34 of the “No Child Left Behind Act”:

- A. Improve and increase teachers’ knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach, and enable teachers to become highly qualified;
- B. Give teachers, principals, and administrators the knowledge and skills to provide students with the opportunity to meet challenging state academic content standards and student academic achievement standards;
- C. Improve classroom management skills;
- D. Are sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher’s performance in the classroom;
- E. Advance teacher understanding of effective instructional strategies based on scientifically based research.

VII. Professional Learning Activity Approval Process

Each individual desiring Professional Learning must complete a Prior Approval Form (PL Form 1) or the Online Course Approval Form (PL Form 1a). These forms are available on the FCSS website as well as by contacting the Professional Learning Department. The completed form must be signed and approved by the individual’s supervisor, professional learning coordinator, or system superintendent to assure that improvement goals of the school or system are being met by the course(s) being offered.

Professional learning may either be requested by the employee or by the supervisor of the employee. Prior approval for such requests must be obtained before leave is taken. Availability of funds and alignment to the system/school’s improvement goals will determine the approval or denial of requests.

Explanation and Procedures:

If you would like to participate in a professional learning activity in which Fannin County Schools will issue the professional learning credit or pay for the activity, you must follow these procedures:

1. Ensure that the planned professional learning activity aligns to the needs of the school/system.
2. For each activity planned, a Professional Learning Leave Prior Approval Form (PL Form 1) or Online Approval Form (PL Form 1a) should be completed by each participant and submitted to the principal or immediate supervisor at least two weeks prior to the activity.

A prior approval form must be on file for all professional leave absences. If a prior approval form is not on file and an absence is noted as professional leave, the leave may come from available sick days, personal days, or be docked from your pay whichever is appropriate. Travel may not be reimbursed for professional leave with no prior approval.

5. You will be notified of approval or denial for the request. It is the responsibility of the employee taking professional leave to ensure that a substitute has been secured and appropriate plans are left for the substitute.

6. When training and assessment are completed, participants should submit the form to their administrator who will in turn submit to the Professional Learning Director:

- A sign-in sheet for each meeting date of the planned activity. (PL Form 2).
- A Mastery Verification Form (PL Form 3) for each participant requesting credit.
- A Professional Learning Evaluation Form (PL Form 4) for each participant.
- All reimbursement must be completed by the 15th of the month following the activity.

Each Professional Learning Unit (PLU) requires 10 contact hours. At the end of each academic year all contact hours over increments of 10 are lost. For example, if Mrs. X ends the school year with 18 contact hours she earns 1 PLU. If Mr. Y ends the school year with 11 contact hours he earns 1 PLU.

VIII. Recommendation for Professional Learning Credit

Recommendation for Professional Learning Credit will be made upon the satisfactory completion of the following criteria:

1. Verification by the Program Coordinator that the participant has completed the required number of contact hours.
2. Verification by the instructor that the participant has demonstrated at a predetermined level of competencies listed in the preparation phase of the training activity.
3. Verification by the instructor that the participant has successfully completed the on-the-job assessment (or mastery verification) process.

The signatures of the instructional staff indicate both attendance for the required minimum contact hours and successful completion of the mastery verification requirements.

IX. Evaluation and Accountability

The ultimate test of the overall effectiveness of the Professional Learning program is a continuous increase in student achievement. Evaluations of the components of the total Professional Learning program indicate which areas are working well, where adjustments need to be made, and where programs need to be added or dropped.

Participants have the opportunity to complete a summative evaluation of the effectiveness of each Professional Learning activity in which they take part. The total Professional Learning program is evaluated annually by summarizing the data from individual activities and through the use of teacher surveys.

X. Professional Learning Needs Assessment and Planning

Procedures:

1. Each staff member completes a Professional Learning Needs Assessment in the spring of each fiscal year. The forms are collected by the school-level administrators and returned to the Professional Learning Director.
2. The Professional Learning Director compiles the assessments and meets with the school-level administration and committee to develop a plan based on the assessed needs and available funds.
3. The Professional Learning Director along with the system-level committee reviews and approves each school-level plan and budget for implementation.

**You will be notified by email when the needs assessment should be completed.*

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NEEDS ASSESSMENT DATE:

Fannin County Schools
 Professional Learning Needs Assessment Date:

Name:

Location:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Blue Ridge Elementary	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fannin County Middle
<input type="checkbox"/>	East Fannin Elementary	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fannin County High
<input type="checkbox"/>	West Fannin Elementary	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

Position:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/>	Classified Employee (Office Staff, Custodial, Bus Driver, Nutrition, Etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Board of Education Member
<input type="checkbox"/>	Paraprofessional	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

The Fannin County school improvement plan establishes the following as priorities for the schools:

- Increase student achievement in all content areas for all students
- Increase the use of differentiated instructional strategies
- Increase the use of data analysis to improve instruction and increase student achievement
- Increase the use of formative assessments
- Implement the pyramids of intervention and tiered instruction
- Increase the graduation rate
- Increase the use of technology by students and teachers
- Maintain a safe learning environment
- Increase communication between home and school
- Use professional learning communities

THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE ON THIS FORM WILL BE USED TO PLAN LOCAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES. PLEASE BE AS SPECIFIC AS YOU CAN IN STATING YOUR NEEDS FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH.

THE TOPICS LISTED BELOW ARE POSSIBILITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES. THESE ARE INTENDED TO SERVE AS A GUIDE AS YOU DETERMINE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

Would you be interested in any of the following areas?	Yes	No	Neutral
Reading Endorsement	Yes	No	Neutral
Vocabulary Development	Yes	No	Neutral
Phonemic Awareness	Yes	No	Neutral
Reading Fluency	Yes	No	Neutral
Reading Comprehension	Yes	No	Neutral
English/Language Arts Content and Strategies	Yes	No	Neutral
Mathematics Content and Strategies	Yes	No	Neutral
Science Content and Strategies	Yes	No	Neutral
Social Studies Content and Strategies	Yes	No	Neutral
Health Content and Strategies	Yes	No	Neutral
Fine Arts (Art, Music, Band, Drama, Chorus)	Yes	No	Neutral
Technical/Vocational Education	Yes	No	Neutral
Vertical Teaming	Yes	No	Neutral
Co-Teaching/Least Restrictive Environment	Yes	No	Neutral
Assessment Strategies	Yes	No	Neutral
Curriculum Mapping	Yes	No	Neutral
Differentiated Instruction	Yes	No	Neutral
Pyramids of Intervention/Tiered Instruction	Yes	No	Neutral
Technology Education and Integration	Yes	No	Neutral
Gifted Endorsement	Yes	No	Neutral
ESOL Endorsement	Yes	No	Neutral
Unit Design	Yes	No	Neutral
Standards-based Instruction	Yes	No	Neutral

Would you be interested in any of the following areas?			
Professional Learning Communities	Yes	No	Neutral
Classroom Management/Time Management Strategies	Yes	No	Neutral
School Safety	Yes	No	Neutral
Learning Styles	Yes	No	Neutral
Conflict Resolution	Yes	No	Neutral
Data Analysis	Yes	No	Neutral
Parental Involvement Strategies	Yes	No	Neutral
Microsoft Technology Applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access)	Yes	No	Neutral

Your Comments

Please list your top three educational priorities (be specific):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List additional needs for professional learning based on your teacher evaluation goals if not listed above:

List additional needs or specific training for the school system not listed above which you consider a need:

List the areas you would recommend North Georgia RESA to assist the schools and system with for the 2008-2009 school year:

**Fannin County School System
School Summary
Professional Learning Needs Assessment**

School:

Date:

Summary/Top Three Educational Priorities. (Please be specific)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List the top three additional needs for professional learning based on your teacher evaluation goals if not listed above.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List the top three additional needs for the school system.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List the top five areas you would recommend for North Georgia RESA to assist the schools and system with for the upcoming school year.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Principal Signature: _____

**Fannin County Schools
Prior Approval Request Form
Professional Learning Leave
PL Form 1**

Participant Directions: 1) Complete all information below. This form should be completed by the participant for approval at least 2 weeks prior to the activity. 2) Submit this form and the completed activity registration form to your supervisor. 3) The principal will submit the form to the professional learning director. Note: Travel expenses may not be reimbursed without prior authorization. This form is ONLY for professional learning leave.

NAME _____ Activity Title: _____

Activity Location: _____ Registration Deadline: _____

Requested Leave Date(s): _____

Departure Date: _____ Departure Time: _____ AM/PM

Return Date: _____ Return Time: _____ AM/PM

PLU Credit: Yes No Number of contact hours _____

Check Related System Goals:

- Attain high level of student achievement
- Develop organizational effectiveness
- Develop stakeholder support and satisfaction

Workshop objectives and school improvement plan action item number: _____

Registration Fee: Yes No Amount to be Paid: \$ _____

Did you register for this workshop? _____ **Substitute Needed:** Yes No

Days needed: _____ **Overnight travel expenses?** Yes No

Name and telephone number of motel (IF STAYING OVERNIGHT): _____

Cost per night for motel room (Required) _____ **(CHECK ONE)**

PAID BY EMPLOYEE (TO BE REIMBURSED) _____

PAID BY SCHOOL (TO BE REIMBURSED) _____

PAID BY CENTRAL OFFICE _____

(PLEASE ATTACH REGISTRATION INFORMATION) _____

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR REGISTRATION

Required Signatures:

Supervisor/Principal Approval **Date**

Professional Learning Coordinator/Central Office **Date**

Professional Learning Online Course Approval Form

Employee Name _____

School _____

Name of Course _____

Name of Organization Offering Course _____

Date Course begins: _____ Expected Completion Date _____

When will this course be taken? During the school year _____ Summer _____

Online courses are considered evening courses.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN ACTION ITEM NUMBER:

NUMBER OF PARTICIPATION HOURS: _____
This request will be denied if hours are left blank.

Cost of Course _____

I would like to be reimbursed for this course: Yes _____ No _____

SCHOOL APPROVAL:

DATE SIGNED

PRINCIPAL/SUPERVISOR AUTHORIZATION

CENTRAL OFFICE APPROVAL:

DATE SIGNED/APPROVED

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COORDINATOR/CENTRAL OFFICE

TYPE OF FUNDS AND FUND NUMBER:

PLU _____ OTHER _____

Fannin County Board of Education
2290 East First Street
Blue Ridge, GA 30513
706-632-3771
706-632-7583 FAX

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING UNITS

PLEASE PRINT

NAME: _____

SCHOOL: _____

SOCIAL SECURITY #: _____

CERTIFICATE LEVEL AND EXPIRATION DATE: _____

TODAY'S DATE: _____

TRAINING OR	CONTACT	SDU	DATE	INSTRUCTOR'S	
CLASS TOPIC	HOURS	HOURS	COMPLETED	SIGNATURE	DATE

CENTRAL OFFICE SIGNATURE _____

Fannin County Schools
Professional Learning Evaluation Form (PL Form 4)

Program Title: _____ **Presenter:** _____

Date(s): _____ **School/Location:** _____

Position: Elementary Middle High Administrator Support Staff Classified Staff

Overall Evaluation: Poor Fair Good Very Good Excellent

Quality of Engagement: Check the box that best indicates your level of involvement throughout most of this experience.

Authentic	Strategic Compliance	Ritual Compliance	Retreatism	Rebellion
I was very involved in this learning experience most of the time. The activities were designed in ways that appealed to the various ways that I best learn such content. The content will be valuable to me and to my school, department or school system.	I participated in this learning experience throughout the time allotted. I believe attendance at this seminar/workshop/course is part of what others expect of me.	I was in attendance throughout the session(s). I have made some contributions, but nothing significant.	Although I was present during the learning experience, I did not always clearly focus on the content, presentations or discussions. Most of the time, my attention was on other matters.	Throughout this learning experience I found ways, other than the planned activities, to occupy my time and attention. I chose to derail some of the work during the seminar/workshop/course.

Evaluate the quality of the professional learning activity by checking your belief: strongly agree; agree; are undecided; disagree; or strongly disagree with each of the statements below:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The activity objectives were related to my educational concerns.					
2. The activity objectives were related to practical educational application in my specific job setting.					
3. The activity had some outstanding components which were unique or innovative.					
4. The program schedule was well adapted to my educational needs.					
5. Meeting facilities were suitable.					
6. The strategies utilized, including instructional resources, were appropriate for meeting the stated objectives.					
7. Overall, personnel conducting the activity exhibited the qualities essential to the success of the workshop. (Consider creativity, specialized knowledge, communication skills, etc).					
8. Overall, the activity was a successful training experience for me.					
9. Adequate provisions were made for me to identify needs which were not previously identified.					
10. Adequate provisions were made for me to provide feedback to the personnel conducting the workshop.					
11. As a result of this professional learning activity, I will alter my educational behavior in a more positive direction in my specific job setting.					

Comments: _____
