

# **PDU HANDBOOK**

## **Earning Professional Development Units Through Ongoing, Collaborative, and Job-Embedded Learning**



**Professional Development can take many forms,  
However the type which will reap the greatest benefit  
For adults and the students we serve is ongoing,  
Job-embedded, and situated in safe  
Professional Learning Communities.**

*DuFour & Eaker 1998; Little, 1993; Silver, 1996*

Office of Teacher Learning and Teacher Leadership

DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

900 Grant Street • Room 601 • Denver, CO 80203

## Table of Contents

Effective Professional Learning.....	3
PDU Principles.....	4
Earning Professional Development Units (PDUs).....	7
Study.....	8
Demonstrate.....	8
Reflect.....	9
Team .....	9
What an Eligible Professional Development Study Is and Is Not .....	9
Getting Started.....	12
Professional Development Protocol.....	11

## Effective Professional Learning

The mission of Denver Public Schools is to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens in our diverse Society. We believe that for our students to learn at high levels, the adults in our system must not only be teachers, but lifelong learners as well. Therefore, Denver Public Schools' plan for earning Professional Development Units (PDUs) has been carefully crafted to align with the principles for effective professional learning as defined by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC).

Effective professional learning is...

- Continuous
- Embedded within the school and classroom
- Consistent with research—based on best practice
- Immediately relevant—satisfies a need to know
- Rooted in deep self-reflection
- Built through communities of practice; and
- Standards-based, that is, based on what students need to know and need to be able to do and the skills adults need to get them there.

Research indicates that the most successful teacher professional development activities are those that extend over time and encourage the development of learning communities (National Research Council, 2000).

This document represents the collective work of the Pay for Performance Design Team, The Joint Task Force on Teacher Compensation, the ProComp Team, the Professional Development Unit Workgroup, and many staff members, including classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, academic facilitators and staff developers, special service providers, counselors, media specialists, technology teachers, student advisors, and administrative assistants. It serves as a guide for teachers, principals, and professional staff who are seeking to earn Professional Development Units within the Denver Public School system.

## **PDU Principles**

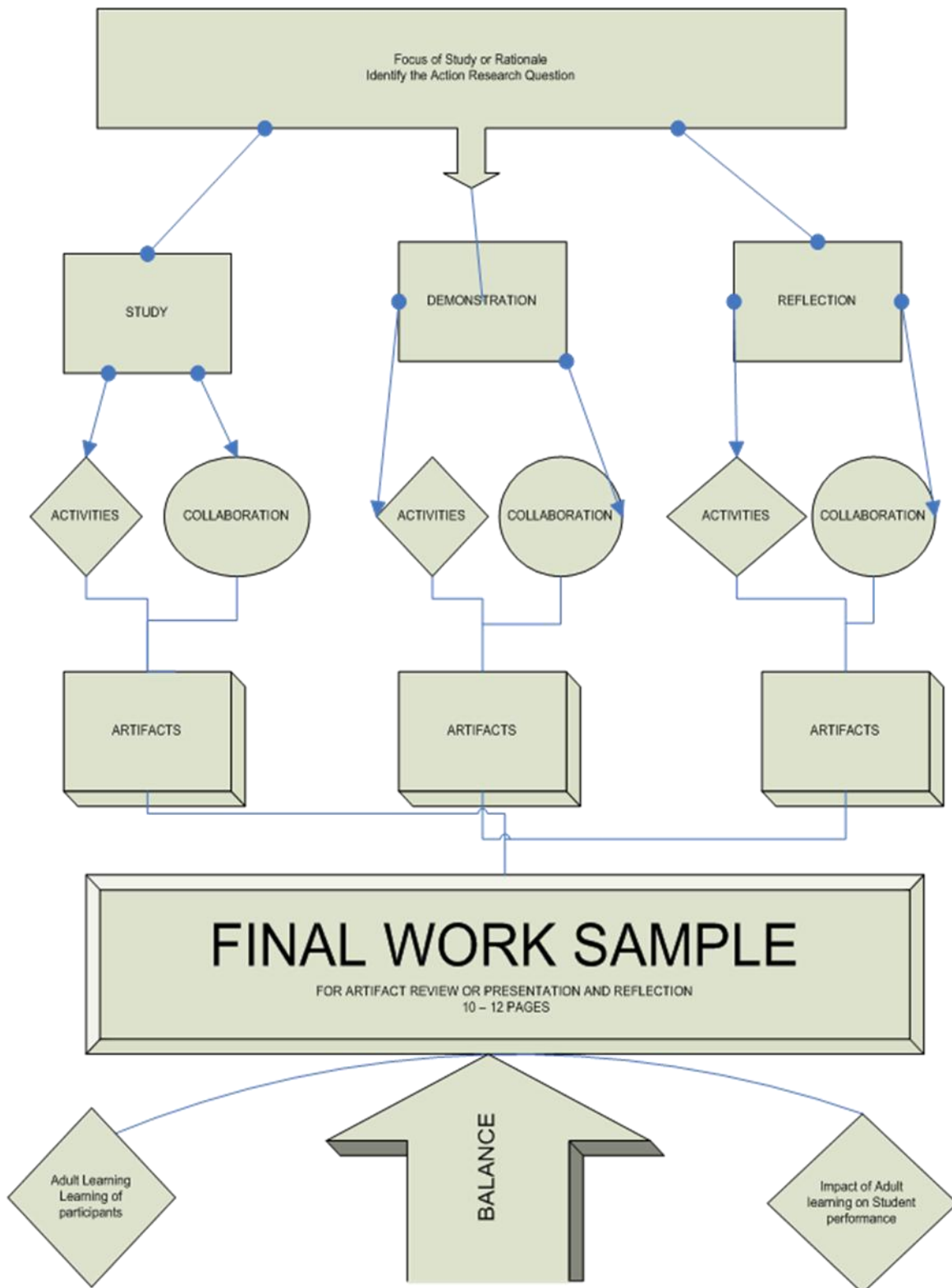
### **Operational Principles:**

1. There are minimal limitations around starting times and/or the duration of PDU activities. During the school year teachers may begin a PDU from September 1st to February 15th. All reviews/reflections for completion will take place in January, or February or April or May. Learning must take place over a minimum of three months.
2. PDU payment is made on the next scheduled PDU payroll after submission of the required documentation.
3. PDU payment is limited to one per contract year.
4. The district will support educators by providing information and access to available professional development opportunities.
5. Educators are responsible for selecting their opportunities for PDUs and completing PDUs within the established timeframe as identified in the educators' PDU proposals. (Exception: "Teachers with unsatisfactory performance evaluation will complete Professional Development Units as agreed upon in their Professional Improvement Plan").

### **Foundational Principles:**

1. Knowledge and skills development helps educators learn the instructional strategies and content area expertise that increases student learning.
2. Those closest to the teaching and learning process are the most effective change agents
3. PDUs:
  - a. Develop educators' professional status and motivation to increase instructional expertise
  - b. Encourage professional practices that contribute to student learning
  - c. Encourage educators to develop content area expertise appropriate to current or proposed assignment

- d. Distinguish the district as a leader in quality professional development
4. Self-directed professional development, which is grounded in district and individual goals, maximizes the possibility of educators meeting instructional and career needs:
    - a. Educators have professional discretion around the content of their PDUs including creating innovative or creative PDU plans. (Unless they have received an unsatisfactory evaluation)
    - b. The methodology for conducting PDU activities is determined by the educator and may include working individually, as a group or with a team.
    - c. Educators have the option of completing any part of the three-step process (Study, Demonstrate, and Reflect) during or outside of the regular workday as appropriate.
  5. Demonstrating and reflecting knowledge and skills optimizes the time spent on professional development.
  6. The PDU is for enhanced knowledge and skills, even when the individual is compensated for their time during acquisition.



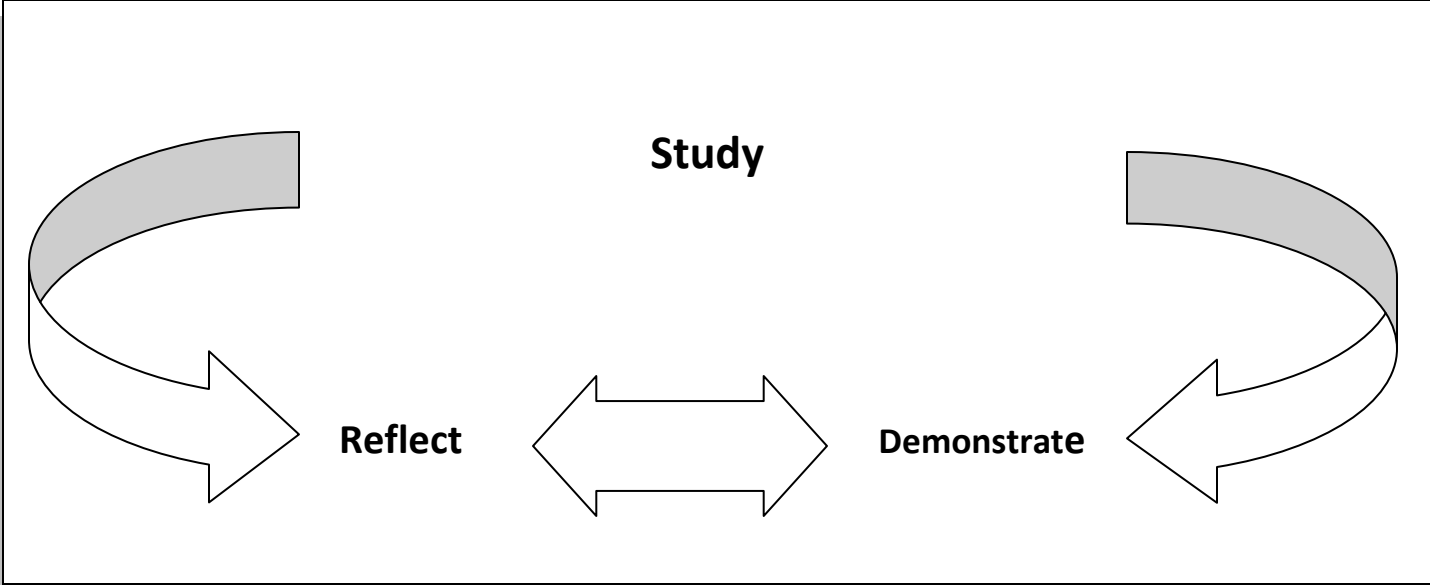
# Earning Professional Development Units (PDUs)

In Denver Public Schools (DPS), all Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DTCA) bargaining unit members are eligible to be paid for one Professional Development Unit (PDU) each school year. The DPS plan for earning PDUs is based on a three-phase process of professional inquiry. This inquiry-based process supports and promotes the type of deep adult learning described in the National Staff Development Council standards. That is, successful study will not be judged by a single event or test, but rather will be determined at the culmination of an extended period of work (not less than three months).

The model involves the participant in an ongoing process of study, demonstration, and reflection in teams within professional learning communities, as shown in the following figure.

**Teams within Professional**

**Learning Communities**



## **Study**

A participant will choose and design a type of study for their professional learning experience. For a type of study to be considered eligible for earning a PDU, it must:

- be ongoing and take place over time
- be collaborative and involve extending learning beyond the individual and his or her classroom to colleagues, parents, and/or community members
- be job-embedded (i.e., directly relevant to the individual's current job responsibilities or proposed assignments); and
- be reflective of best instructional practice.

Types of study may include, but are not limited to, book study, taking university classes, teaching in a lab classroom, working with a coaching lab, serving as a cooperating teacher or mentor, establishing or being part of a virtual online community, action research, and/or facilitating professional development experiences for others.

## **Demonstrate**

Participants will demonstrate their learning not through a single test or performance, but rather through an ongoing body of work accumulated during the course of the year. Participants are required to select a minimum of three methods of demonstration that will comprise their demonstration work sample. Methods of demonstration include, but are not limited to, ongoing classroom visits; self-reporting; one-on-one conferencing; teacher's journals, portfolio, and videotapes; student reports and surveys; focus groups; and artifacts posted on walls. In addition to selecting ways of demonstrating learning, the participant, in collaboration with professional colleagues, will use the PDU rubric to determine the ultimate success of the professional development study. Each person will participate in two reviews and/or discussions of work samples presented by other participants. This process will build capacity throughout the DPS District so that teachers in all schools are prepared for the peer review process.



## Reflect

The act of reflecting may be simply defined as purposefully planning a desired future based on the past. Research describes reflection as a higher-order skill that encompasses extending and refining thought, clarifying experiences, and defining connections between ideas and concepts. Reflection requires multiple levels of inferring, including supposition, theorizing, conjecture, and speculation. Like the cyclical nature of inquiry, one never truly finishes reflecting. True to the concept of a cycle of inquiry, ending one study naturally leads to new questions and new areas of study, encouraging ongoing learning. Reflection is the critical process that enables us to weigh challenging feedback and use it to develop new mental models that change our current practice. As reflective practitioners, we can consider future possibilities based on the current reality. Thus reflection is an inextricable part of the deep learning that will improve the quality of teaching and learning that our students will ultimately experience. Methods of reflection include, but are not limited to, content focused online chat room with professional colleagues, maintaining a personal journal of the process, logging group discussions and team meetings and providing an analysis of how the group support helped move the individual learning, providing a summary of personal learning and its effects on practice.

## Team

Working in teams is central to the PDU process. Research focusing on interactions between students and teachers has confirmed that learning occurs best when strong, respectful relationships exist (Jackson, 1999; Meier, 2000). Mirroring these research findings, the DPS plan for earning PDUs encourages individuals to learn together in teams over time. Teams encourage participants to develop the kind of respectful, supportive relationships that help them take risks and critically explore their skills and beliefs so new learning can take hold and change current practice.

The team is responsible for helping the participant refine his or her study, providing ongoing feedback throughout the course of the study, and helping the participant judge the overall success of their experience. Therefore, careful selection of one's team is a critical step in designing the professional development study.

# What an Eligible Professional Development Study Is

Studies that are eligible for earning Professional Development Units are consistent with the principles for effective professional learning. These studies are ongoing, collaborative, and job-embedded. The following provides examples of studies that demonstrate what an eligible study is.

## What an eligible study is...

### *Ongoing*

- Engaging in yearlong study of differentiated learning that includes participating in a two-day development class, a book study with grade-level colleagues, and quarterly peer observations focusing on efforts to differentiate learning.
- Mentoring a pre-service teacher targeting specific skills for growth during an 8-10 week practicum, creating appropriate and differentiated experiences for skill development and providing effective constructive feedback. Ongoing examination of own practices through explanations in response to “mentee’s” questions (recorded in some way)
- Participating in a university class and applying the new knowledge in improving instruction for your students. Evidence of the application of new knowledge is demonstrated in classroom practice.

## What an eligible study is not...

- Taking a two-day professional development class on differentiated learning.
- Permitting a pre-service teacher to observe lessons and teach sample lessons without giving specific, individualized guidance and/or feedback on skill development and progress or answering questions
- Taking a university class and submitting the transcript.

## **What an eligible study is**

### **Collaborative**

- Conducting action research in the classroom around a personal or common concern and discussing the progress and results of the research with colleagues at regularly scheduled brown bag lunches.
- Collaborating with a pre-service teacher to plan and implement lessons that reflect current practice as studied in current teacher education classes, and reflecting on those lessons and their implications for own practice.

## **What an eligible study is not...**

- Conducting action research in the classroom without discussion and reflection with colleagues or the community.
- Working with a pre-service teacher without discussing what she or he is learning in teacher education classes

## **What an eligible study is...**

### **Job-Embedded**

- Writing and implementing a grant as a mathematics teacher to purchase graphing calculators.
- Conducting action research in the classroom with discussion and reflection with colleagues or the community.

## **What an eligible study is not...**

- Writing a grant as a mathematics teacher for new playground equipment.

# Getting Started...

## PDU Protocol

1. The Professional Development Unit (PDU) proposal should be individualized to meet personal professional development needs. A PDU proposal must meet the standards of adult learning, all participants will:
  - a. Review the handbook and sample PDUs
  - b. Study the criteria rubric that indicates the quality of the PDU work that is expected.
2. Assess your individual professional development needs.
  - a. You can use your Action Plan from your Comprehensive Professional Evaluation of the previous year.
  - b. You can look at your current learning needs in relationship to District professional development programs.
  - c. You can look at your current learning needs in relationship to your school's or department's professional development plans.
  - d. You can look at your current learning needs based upon assessment of the population (students, staff, parents) you serve.
3. Access the DPS website for ProComp elements to find the tools, schedules and forms you will need.
4. Determine your individual professional development goals.
  - a. These should be based upon needs you have identified for your personal professional growth.
  - b. They can be based upon the District Goals
    - Our children will learn from a highly skilled faculty in every school that is empowered by robust professional development and timely assessment data.
    - Highly trained principals and assistant principals will serve as instructional leaders of the faculty in Denver Public Schools.

- Collaboration among the Denver community and all DPS stakeholders will support our children in a safe, orderly, and enriching environment in every school and classroom.
  - c. They can be based upon School Goals written in the School Improvement Plan.
  - d. They can align with or support the student learning objectives that you write.
4. Pre-Approved PDU's may be used by teachers new to the District and by Veteran teachers working on specific topics that are designed to meet District or school objectives. Pre-Approved PDUs will be monitored by the instructor offering the professional development work.

## **Personal PDU**

You need to decide if you wish to be part of a Pre-Approved PDU and/or submit a personal PDU

1. Select appropriate staff development activities or strategies to help you achieve your personal professional development goals. Select strategies that will best provide the skills and knowledge necessary to meet your personal professional development goals. This may include, but is not limited to:
  - a. University course work
  - b. District professional development
    - Special Education workshops
    - Teaching and Learning Professional Development
    - School Level Professional Development option
      - a. School professional development
      - b. Department or grade level collaborative work
      - c. Vertical Team collaboration
      - d. Cross-school or cross-department collaboration
      - e. Action Research
      - f. Case Studies
  - Online Courses

2. Write your individual Professional Development Unit proposal. The individual PDU proposal should include goals or clear statements of what you want to know and be able to do as a result of the PDU. The proposal should also include descriptions and artifacts for each of the three components (Study, Demonstrate, and Reflect). Artifacts included in the final work sample are used to determine if the planned professional development unit has led to the desired results.
  - a. Use the handbook, samples and the rubric provided to assist you in writing your PDU proposal.
    - Study – What is the focus and rationale for your study?
      - What do you need to learn to help your students?
    - Demonstration – What new strategies will you use that you could not or did not use before?
    - Reflection – How will you use new strategies to improve student performance?
      - How will you change your practice /program?
  - b. If you are working in a professional learning community, work together to plan your proposals.
3. Submit your personal PDU proposal for review to gain the “go ahead” for your work to begin.
  - a. Submission dates for the contract year are from September to February 15th
  - b. You must plan on spending at least three (3) months working on your personal PDU
  - c. PDU proposal is submitted to the PDU Administrator
    - You must share your completed work
      - Your Personal PDU will be assigned to PDU Peer Reviewers.
      - You will receive an email indicating that your PDU has been received and assigned for review from the PDU Administrator.
      - The reviewers will review your proposal and contact you, via email as to the status of your work. Work status can fall into these two categories:
4. You may begin your work.

OR

5. You may be asked to consider suggestions to improve your proposal before it is approved.
6. You may be asked: When is a good time to meet to discuss the scope of your work and the proposal?

This contact with your reviewers is the beginning of your working relationship for the year.

The reviewers will be your contact people for questions and assistance.

7. All PDU participants work is guided by the PDU proposal
  - a. Progress checks toward indicators should take place at regular intervals throughout your planned course of study.
  - b. Study, collect and record data and reflect on your personal learning. Check the verification part of your PDU proposal sheet. Are you collecting the correct data? Ask yourself, “How is my work progressing? Do I need to add or delete anything?”
  - c. Demonstrate, collect and record data and reflect on the use of your new learning. Did you collect data that will show your practice before you began the study and demonstration? Did you collect data that will show changes in your practice or changes in student or colleague learning or practice? How did your new learning impact your students or colleagues? Check the verification part of your PDU proposal sheet. Are you collecting the correct data? Ask yourself, “How is my work progressing? Do I need to add or delete anything?”
  - d. Compile a final reflection that includes your thoughts regarding the study component, the demonstration component and the impact of your work. Complete the 3-5 page Self Reflection Essay.
  - e. You will work with your professional learning community group during some portion of your PDU work; however, you will need to prepare an individual presentation of your work. Prepare your work in a clear, concise, consistent manner. Professional presentation of your PDU work sample is essential.
8. Analyze progress and revise plan if necessary. Throughout the time the learning is being applied, check to see if personal perception and observations correlate with student performance on formative assessments. Focus the analysis of assessment data on the identification of students’

needs that have not been previously addressed. It is also important to note those things that data indicates are effectively meeting previously identified needs. Based upon what is learned from the analysis of progress, you may revise the proposal.

- We realize that situations change for people in their professional placement or in the class make-up.
- We encourage all PDU participants to analyze their progress as they go through their work.

a. If alterations to the proposal are necessary, based on changes of class make-up or teacher assignment we encourage you to follow this process:

- Contact your reviewer
- Submit changes to your proposal
- Make sure you and your reviewer have a clear understanding of what you will produce as a final product.

b. Revise the PDU Proposal and share the revised plan with your reviewer. You and your reviewer will need to verify the revision date.

c. Attach the revised form to your original PDU proposal.

9. Participate in the final approval process.

a. Before you submit your work to the PDU Administrator, please, check the verification worksheet to make sure you have included all of your evidence.

b. Register online for a date for review of your work

c. All final review sessions will be held on **Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays**, from 4:30 to 8:30 pm. during the following months: **Dec., Jan, Feb., Apr., and May.**



d. Artifact Presentation/Discussion Peer Review Session

- Panel – When a group of teachers work together and want to present their work together they can choose this option. Each group member must prepare a personal Self Reflection Essay for all PDU work.
  - Table – If you would like to show three-dimensional artifacts or a power point you may choose this option. It is like a teacher “Science Fair”. You display the artifacts to explain your work and answer questions. You must include the personal Self Reflection Essay to summarize all PDU work.
  - Discussion – You bring your completed work and enter into a protocol driven discussion regarding what you did, how it impacted colleagues and/or students, and what you might do to implement again in the future. You must include the Self Reflection Essay.
- e. The PDU Administrator will electronically submit the records of completed PDUs to the Payroll office.
- f. Receive a Certificate of Completion.
- g. Retain the original Certificate of Completion in your permanent records. You will need to have evidence of your work for your license renewal with the Colorado Department of Education.

