Flexible **L**earning **EX**periences (FLEX):

Putting the "Professional" in Professional Learning

Session Objectives:

- Explore characteristics of professional learning (PL) that's applied in the classroom
- Participate in a FLEX activity
- Create your own FLEX activity

FLEX is designed to be:

Personalized:

Meaningful:

Collaborative:

Actionable:

FLEX SWOT Analysis:

Strengths of FLEX:
(What I liked best and want to use in my own district.)

Weaknesses of FLEX:
(What I think needs work before I could use it.)

Opportunities for FLEX:
(How could I put this into practice in my own district?)

Threats to FLEX:
(What would stand in the way of trying it out?)

Creating a FLEX using the Learning Loop:

- Begin with the end in mind—write clearly-defined learning objectives
- Collect resources for gaining knowledge
- Consider a hook—what would draw the learner into the activity?
- Write reflection questions
- Build-in opportunities for collaboration
- Determine what evidence the participant will be required to submit

Templates and FLEX Documents

FLEX Publisher Template: bit.do/FLEXPubTemp
FLEX Wakelet Template: bit.do/FLEXWakeletTemp
FLEX Activity Planning Document: bit.do/FlexPlan
FLEX Learning Loop: bit.do/FlexLoop
FLEX Website: bit.do/FLEX_Main
FLEX Participant Manual: bit.do/FLEXPartManual
FLEX Creator Manual: bit.do/FLEXCreatorManual

Session Resources:

⇒ Effective Teacher Professional Development *(L. Darling-Hammond, et.al)*: bit.do/LPI-TeacherPD
⇒ 4 Cornerstones of PL *(S. Hirsch)*: bit.do/4CornerstonesPL
⇒ Professional Learning Standards *(Learning Forward)*: bit.do/StandardsPL
⇒ Standards for Professional Learning *(Learning Forward book w/MetLife)*: bit.do/LFStandardsBook
⇒ The Adult Learning Theory-Andragogy-of Malcolm Knowles *(C. Pappas)*: bit.do/AdultLearningTheory
⇒ Characteristics of Adult Learners *(K.Cercone)*: bit.do/CharAdultLearn

FLEX Learning Loop

There are a lot of resources for effective lesson planning when working with students, but it is less common to see these same concepts shared regarding adult learning. Professional learning guidance tends to focus on making the activities fun or at least less aversive. Less guidance focuses on the ultimate purpose: behavior change. If adults attend professional learning and continue doing the same thing in the same way, there was no reason to go in the first place. Billions of dollars are spent each year on professional learning opportunities for educators. The assumption is that educators become more effective and appropriately rise to new challenges in and out of the classroom. Because of this, we must ensure the professional learning opportunities support this purpose.

It's not about the opportunity, it's about the change

Effective adult learning involves multiple components that ensure engagement, participation, and ultimately behavior change. FLEX has organized these concepts into the Learning Loop and this model serves as the framework for all FLEX activities.

Hook: The Hook provides an emotional connection to the content. Learning happens when we are emotionally invested in solving a relevant problem. The hook quickly attaches the learner to the crux of the content or the problem at hand.

Anticipatory Set: The Anticipatory Set engages prior knowledge and introduces new questions that will be addressed throughout the activity.

The Hook and Anticipatory Set may be separate tasks, or the same task may serve the purpose of both components. Collectively, we call these components the **Opener**.

Explore Research: The facilitator and participants must reach a common understanding about the realities of the content being covered. By providing tasks that share common findings, key understandings, and important perspectives, everyone lands on the same page. Encouraging participants to do their own research related to their needs also ensures the learning is relevant to each participant. Collaboration is encouraged throughout this process as research confirms that learning is social and short-term memory is converted to long-term memory when ideas are shared or discussed.

Components of a FLEX

Consider Viewpoints: Adults, more than children, come to learning tasks with rigid viewpoints. Our experiences shape our perspectives and we develop deeper understanding when we consider the perspectives of others. These experiences provide opportunities for participants to stretch their previously held beliefs and philosophies to include evidence-based practices and solutions.

Application: It is difficult to change behavior if we have not practiced the new behavior before we need it. Effective training gives opportunities for participants to try the new skills and get timely, relevant feedback.

Reflection: Taking the time to consider how your recent experiences affect your future actions is critical to making the lasting changes. When learning, our past beliefs are challenged, and we need time to resolve this disruption. The new thoughts and beliefs find a way into our paradigm and this integration is ultimately what allows for long term change. Doing this after learning new facts considering new viewpoints, and again, following the opportunity for dedicated practice and application, is a must.