

Professional Learning

Westside Community Schools has a well-developed and well-supported professional development program designed to enhance, maintain, and refine staff skills. For more than 25 years, the focus of this program has been to improve learning for all students.

Our professional development program provides staff access to ongoing, research-based training opportunities. Teachers fulfill their professional development requirements at the district, building, and individual levels through locally designed training programs as well as through local, state, regional and national conferences and workshops. Since 1995, all certified staff members have been required to obtain a master's degree by their tenth year of employment; a tuition reimbursement program based on the University of Nebraska at Lincoln's graduate studies rate supports this requirement. In addition, the District requires and supports job-embedded staff development through weekly PLC (professional learning community) meetings where teachers collaborate on curriculum, instruction and assessment. Each certified staff member annually reports professional development activities as part of the district evaluation process.

The Westside Community Schools professional development program builds a strong base for teacher excellence through its three-year induction program for all new teachers. During the first year, each newly hired teacher works closely with a mentor who develops a relationship of trust, respect, support and collegiality; helps the teacher acclimate to the building and the district; and provides professional guidance that supports instructional strategies that improve student achievement. Throughout the three years, small groups of new teachers learn about effective instruction and are observed and coached by staff development facilitators who help them implement what they have learned.