**Article Review of *Does It Make a Difference? Evaluating Professional Development***

Summary:

In his article *Professional Does It Make a Difference? Evaluating Professional Development,* Thomas Guskey (2002) presents strong evidence in favor of effectively evaluating professional development efforts. Guskey’s question “does the investment [of education budgets] yield tangible payoffs or could that money be spent in better ways?” (p. 45) is meant to demonstrate the need of ensuring that professional development really is making a difference.

Guskey next defines what evaluation is and why it is important. He also argues the idea that those creating development opportunities more often than not rely on only one or two types of evaluation, when in reality developers should be using five different levels of evaluation. These include: Level 1- Participants Reactions, Level 2- Participant’s Learning, Level 3- Organization Support and Change, Level 4- Participant’s Use of New Knowledge and Skills, and Level 5- Student Learning Outcomes. A great deal of explanation is given for each level, not only making the meaning crylstal clear, but also indicating explicit ways in which to implement each..

Next, the author makes the point that too often evaluators look for proof rather than evidence of learning. Guskey argues that because “nearly all professional development takes place in real-world settings” (p. 49), it is nearly impossible to demonstrate that there is a direct correlation between the professional development learning and academic growth. However, the point is made that in the absence of proof, evidence can be gathered and used to determine if a specific professional development training contributed to identified gains.

Guskey next explains that “unfortunately professional developers fall into the same trap in planning that teachers sometimes do, making plans in terms of what they are going to do, instead of what they want their students to know and be able to do” (p. 50). He then goes on to describe the need and process of working backwards through the five levels of critical evaluation when creating a professional development session.

The article ends with the notion that evaluation needs to be a systematic and central component of all professional development followed by analysis. Guskey also points out that without this purposeful collection of data, little change will happen in the arena of professional development, and runs the risk of causing its extinction.

Analysis:

This article provides good information and an easy to read rubric that is vital to having effective and lasting professional development take place with teachers. For these reasons, I feel that this article provides strong support for our presentation. I look forward to using these strategies and suggestions when I am an administrator.