Aligning Professional Development and Professional Practice:
A Continuous Discussion

My name is Michele Ziegler and I have been a Mathematics Resource Teacher for Carroll County Public Schools in MD for 9 years. As a math resource teacher in my building, one of my responsibilities is to ensure students are receiving instruction that optimizes their academic achievement. Another responsibility is to plan and implement professional development in the area of mathematics. I have found that by providing professional development on topics that can be incorporated into collaborative lesson planning I am able to continue important discussions about mathematics education, and students are able to reap the benefits of purposefully planned lessons.

Over the past two years, I have provided professional development that has focused on the Eight Teaching Practices (Principles to Action: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All, NCTM), Classroom Based Formative Assessment (Classroom Based Formative Assessment: Guiding Teaching and Learning) and the Concrete-Representational-Abstract Instructional Sequence of Learning. In order to ensure teachers were applying what was learned, school based funds were secured that enabled me to have several half days for collaborative planning with mathematics teachers from the same grade level.

The purpose of the collaborative planning days is to work with teachers to take what was learned during the professional development sessions and see how it is applied to daily lesson planning.

I created a lesson planning template (Table 1) that includes the aforementioned topics (8 Teaching Practices, CBFA and CRA), as well as the Standards for Mathematical Practice, and Differentiation. This planning template has helped ensure that lesson planning was purposeful and incorporated the professional learning that had occurred during the school year. It provides a reminder to dive deeply into the content as well as instructional delivery. It is a template that we continue to revise and use to purposefully plan lessons and has become a tool for reflection and discussion after a lesson.

As a result of incorporating the professional learning into lesson planning, I am able to continue to provide professional development through the application of what has been learned, and teachers are able to walk away with good lessons they are excited about using in their classrooms.
So how do I know that the alignment of professional development with professional practice works? Often, teachers share with me that the lessons we planned together helped students understand the content in a way their students have not understood it in the past, and that they are looking forward to our next planning time together. Furthermore, this type of planning takes time. If teachers are willing to continue to take the time to purposefully plan using this format, they only do it because it is something that WORKS.