



**Catalyst Academy**  
CHARTER SCHOOL

**Professional Development  
Plan  
2021-2022**



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## Introduction

Professional learning and development are the cornerstones of educator growth and improvement. Catalyst Academy Charter Schools believes wholeheartedly in the power of educators to make change in the lives of the scholars, families, and communities that they serve; however, without continued growth and development, educators will be hamstrung in the impact they can have. Through continual professional development and learning opportunities, Catalyst Academy Charter Schools moves its educators closer to realizing our Core Values: Belong. Grow. Achieve. By encouraging the continued pursuit of additional education to providing high-quality in-school development and training, the team at Catalyst Academy works to meet the needs of individual educators so that they may meet the needs of their individual students. Working alongside our teaching and learning staff, we are able to push teacher practice to new levels and ensure that they feel a continuous sense of challenge and growth in their work.



## Definitions

The following outlines key terms and definitions as they relate to the Professional Development Plan:

*Professionally related graduate level coursework* - is defined as coursework at the graduate level provided by an accredited institution within the United States of America. Graduate level coursework may be obtained through either a fully residential, fully online, or hybrid style program. Coursework must support or align to the growth and development of an educator in any of the following ways:

- Support the development of content knowledge aligned to their certification area
- Build capacity in their instructional, operational, or administrative leadership
- Further their understanding of systemic issues of race, class, and privilege and their impact on our work within education
- Provide insight into research-based best practices in the areas of instructional practice, student support, or organizational capacity building

*Professionally related Master's Degree* - is defined as a degree at the Master's level provided by an accredited institution within the United States of America. Professionally related Master's Degrees may be obtained through either a fully residential, fully online, or hybrid style program. Coursework in the attainment of the professionally related Master's Degree should support or align to the growth and development of an educator in any of the following ways:

- Support the development of content knowledge aligned to their certification area
- Build capacity in their instructional, operational, or administrative leadership
- Further their understanding of systemic issues of race, class, and privilege and their impact on our work within education
- Provide insight into research-based best practices in the areas of instructional practice, student support, or organizational capacity building

*Curriculum Development work* - is defined as working in conjunction with Deans of Instruction (instructional coaches), instructional leadership team members, or curriculum developers to internalize and determine any modifications for instructional delivery.



*Professional Conferences* - are defined as conferences that are designed and executed with the expressed purpose of building professional capacity in educators. Professional conferences include, but are not limited to conferences:

- Hosted by national educator associations or groups
- Hosted by local educational organizations or initiatives
- Aligned to curricula utilized by Catalyst Academy Charter School
- Designed to build educator understanding in:
  - race, equity, or inclusion
  - inclusive learning practices and strategies
  - classroom management strategies and techniques
  - professional requirements of an educator
  - assessment and data analysis



## **Options for Professional Development**

With the expressed purpose of building a school community and culture rooted in our Core Values: Belong. Grow. Achieve. the team at Catalyst Academy Charter Schools seeks to establish an environment oriented toward growth and development. In light of that expressed purpose, the Catalyst team encourages development in all of the many forms outlined in the Professional Development Plan.

At the time of the writing and creation of this plan, Catalyst Academy Charter School is in its second year of operations, the 2020-2021 school year. It is our plan/hope over the next three years to begin cultivating relationships with local institutions of higher learning in order to better service the needs of educators seeking development aligned to professionally related graduate level coursework or obtaining a professionally related Master's Degree. Outlined below is an explanation of different options for professional development.

### *Graduate Level Coursework*

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is home to a litany of outstanding institutions of higher education and within the ecosystem of Pittsburgh, our educators are offered the opportunity to choose from a vibrant array of institutions for higher learning. The Catalyst Academy Charter School team strongly encourages educators to assess their professional goals and aspirations in order to identify the institution and program that best fits their needs in service of meeting the needs of students. The Catalyst team will support educators in reaching their goals of obtaining professionally related graduate coursework in whatever way feasible as we continue to build partnerships with local institutions.

### *Professionally Related Master's Degree*

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is home to a litany of outstanding institutions of higher education and within the ecosystem of Pittsburgh, our educators are offered the opportunity to choose from a vibrant array of institutions for higher learning. The Catalyst Academy Charter School team strongly encourages educators to assess their professional goals and aspirations in order to identify the institution and program that best fits their needs in service of meeting the needs of students. The Catalyst team will



support educators in reaching their goals of obtaining a professionally related Master's Degree in whatever way feasible as we continue to build partnerships with local institutions.

#### *Department-Approved In-Service Courses*

Rooted in the core belief that educators have the biggest overall impact on student learning and success, Catalyst Academy Charter School seeks to prepare its teachers and leaders to be the best educators they can be, day in and day out. Nowhere does this focus become more evident than in our belief in professional development and learning. Starting during the summer, Catalyst holds a four-week intensive professional learning and development experience known as Teacher Training Camp. The full day trainings allow teachers to learn and develop in the following areas:

- Examining and uncovering the insidious nature of implicit and explicit biases in our work as educators.
- Practicing high-leverage “teacher moves” in order to increase pedagogical effectiveness.
- Establishing a culture of radical candor that allows for feedback to improve individual and organizational performance.
- Unpacking core curriculum and content, with a particular emphasis on the scientific and research-based foundations and classroom execution.
- Building a cohesive adult culture rooted in our Core Values: Belong. Grow. Achieve.

In addition to the development provided during the summer to prepare educators to be “Day One ready,” Catalyst provides continued development over the course of the school year to ensure that educators never feel stagnant in their path forward. Through Workshop Wednesdays (professional development and learning each Wednesday) and Teacher Build Days (educator in-service days), we continue to build on the knowledge and skills of our educators.

#### *Curriculum Development Work*

In direct alignment with our belief that teachers must model our Core Value of Grow, the professional development offerings tied to curriculum development work allow for educators to work directly with Deans of Instruction (instructional coaches), other instructional leaders, or curriculum developers to internalize curriculum and determine



any modifications for instructional delivery. One prime example of this would be the curriculum development work during Teacher Training Camp during which educators work with Deans of Instructions to break down the written curriculum into discrete components and internalize and practice instructional delivery within those discrete sections and analyze the scope of the components as an instructional unit.

### *Professional Conferences*

The scope of professional development through the avenue of professional conferences is vast. In consultation with Deans of Instruction (instructional coaches) and other members of the Catalyst Academy Charter School Leadership Team, educators will have the opportunity to choose professional conferences that align with and support their areas of growth and development. The Catalyst team will support educator attendance and participate in professional conferences by any of the following measures:

- financial support
- classroom coverage
- identification of conferences that align to desired goals and areas of growth





## **Serving the Needs of our Community of Learners**

At Catalyst Academy Charter School, we believe that good teaching centers around the idea of getting learners what they need in order to be successful. This educational ethos permeates the work that we do operationally and administratively as well. This ethos also crosses over into our interactions with and supports we provide to our educators. Good development is about getting educators what they need. The idea of getting our community what it needs in order to be successful begs the question, how do we assess or know the need? Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data points, the Catalyst Academy Charter School team works to outline the overall needs of our community of learners (including our scholars and educators) in order to get what they need. Incorporating educator survey data, student achievement data (using formative and summative assessments), the Catalyst team makes informed decisions on what developmental supports are needed in order to meet the needs of learners.

In particular, there are specific points to consider when thinking about a few populations of learners that exist within our community. In particular when thinking about what scholars with exceptionalities and our early readers need, some special considerations must be made.

### *Scholars with Exceptionalities*

In service to our scholars with exceptionalities, the Catalyst Academy Charter School Director of Inclusive Learning works to outline a scope and sequence of professional learning and development, starting in Teacher Training Camp and continuing over the course of the school year, to best equip our educators with the knowledge and skills to support all learners. With a full inclusion model as the framework of understanding, our educators work closely with the Inclusive Learning team to ensure the use of best practices in service of scholars with exceptionalities. Development and learning is provided in order to address the following:

- Co-teaching and co-planning
- Differentiated instruction to support all learners
- Modifications and Accommodations
- How to read an IEP



Additionally, educators are given the opportunity to attend Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) offerings in order to bolster their understanding of best practices in supporting scholars with exceptionalities.

### *Early Readers*

The needs of our early readers is vitally important to our work to support and lead all scholars. We know that strong early literacy skills unlock the door to future academic success. Employing the research-based curriculum *Lifelong Readers*, the Catalyst Academy Charter School team ensures that each and every staff member receives training on the research foundations and instructional strategies and best practices on implementation. Throughout the school year, with additional instructional coaching and support from curriculum specialists and developers from *Lifelong Readers*, the Catalyst instructional team turnkeys development sessions aligned to educator needs. Through the use of formative and summative assessment data, the Catalyst team will outline plans to address achievement gaps amongst student groups in language and literacy acquisition.



## **Process for Review and Evaluation of Professional Development Plan**

Every three years the Catalyst Academy Charter School team will reconvene members of the original Professional Development Plan Steering Committee (if applicable), members of the teaching and learning team, and Board of Trustee members to review the Professional Development Plan in light of the following measures/occurrences:

- Student growth and achievement data
- Educator mobility
- Educator Professional Development Survey Data
- Curricular shifts/changes
- New/Updated programmatic offerings at local higher education institutions

Looking at the specific measures/occurrences above, the Catalyst Academy Charter School team will outline any necessary changes to the Professional Development Plan in service of addressing any gaps in meeting the needs of educators or students.