

# Evaluating Professional Learning

## Second Edition

*To Benjamin S. Bloom*

*. . . my teacher, my mentor, and my friend.*

# Evaluating Professional Learning

Second Edition

Thomas R. Guskey

Foreword by Frederick Brown

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# Foreword

By Frederick Brown

I still remember the first time I was introduced to Tom Guskey's evaluation framework. As a former teacher and principal, I had recently assumed leadership of an aspiring principals' program in Chicago. I had also enrolled in a two-and-one-half-year professional learning experience, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Academy, in which I learned to identify, analyze, and address a problem of practice. Planning and evaluation were central aspects of that process, and Guskey's framework was a key resource that opened my eyes to a strategic way of thinking about outcomes. Along with Joellen Killion's framework for assessing the impact of professional learning, it helped me encourage future principals to connect the professional learning they facilitated to real changes in practice and student results.

That introduction not only shaped my leadership approach but sparked a professional respect and partnership with Tom that has lasted decades. At Learning Forward (formerly NSDC), my colleagues and I have had the privilege of working with Tom for more than thirty years. Long before the first edition of this landmark book in 2000, Tom was writing, speaking, and sharing his ideas with our members and stakeholders. His 1991 article in the *Journal of Staff Development*, "What Makes Professional Development Effective?," was the first formal introduction of his five levels framework. Our organization has been proud to walk alongside Tom as he has refined and extended this work, always deepening the field's collective understanding of what it means to measure impact and continually improve.

The framework resonates with me for multiple reasons. It is practical and easy to explain to others. When I first learned about it, at a time when evaluation often felt abstract, Tom provided a clear way to connect professional learning to real results. Also, the framework underscores the critical fact that organizational conditions matter. If a school or district context is misaligned with the goals or dysfunctional in other ways, good practice will never gain traction and evaluation will never find positive impact.

While evaluation of professional learning is not a new conversation, recent years have brought renewed urgency. As schools and districts face tighter budgets and

increasing demands on educators' time, leaders need assurance that professional learning investments are paying off. In this sense, Tom's framework has only grown in relevance, which is why this second edition is so timely.

In the new edition, Tom engages contemporary questions and tools, including thoughtful attention to artificial intelligence (AI). He highlights promising AI applications while reminding readers of the importance of checking outputs for accuracy and relevance. He sprinkles "author notes" throughout the chapters. These reflections are gifts that deepen our understanding of the content based on his deep well of experience. He also revisits and updates key concepts from the first edition with additional insights. Longtime professional learning practitioners will especially enjoy the revisiting of the content–process–context model Tom developed with Dennis Sparks, former executive director of our organization, which has been a touchstone for so many in our community.

Importantly, Tom situates his framework and insights within the ever-growing field of professional learning research and standards, a topic near and dear to me. Learning Forward developed and maintains the research-informed Standards for Professional Learning to guide quality in educator learning. We see Tom's work as most directly aligned with the Evidence Standard, which states, "Professional learning results in excellent outcomes for all students when educators create expectations and build capacity for use of evidence, leverage evidence, data, and research from multiple sources to plan educator learning, and measure and report the impact of professional learning."

As Tom notes, there are challenges as well as opportunities in connecting professional learning to student learning. We shouldn't let those challenges overwhelm us or obscure the value of the work. As the five-level evaluation framework makes clear, context is key. For example, the difference in effect sizes for professional learning's impact on teacher practice and student achievement may appear stark at first blush but are in fact meaningful and consistent with other types of educational interventions (Kraft, 2018). Given the inherent difficulty of moving student achievement through any single intervention, the 0.09 effect size found in a recent meta-analysis (Garret et al., 2023) is both meaningful and promising, offering evidence that investments in professional learning do indeed pay off for students.

As I reflect on this second edition of *Evaluating Professional Learning*, I am struck by the power of Tom's contributions to the field of professional learning. His framework has endured not only because it offers clarity, practicality, and insight but because it challenges us to hold ourselves accountable for ensuring professional learning truly makes a difference. At the heart of this book is the essential question, "How do we determine the effects of activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge and skills of educators so that they, in turn, can improve student learning?" (p. 1). Like Tom, I believe when we get the answer right, we have the opportunity to change students' lives.

# Acknowledgments

*"A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life are based on the labors of others."*

Albert Einstein

I began the first edition of *Evaluating Professional Development* by acknowledging the many scholars, teachers, and friends who have profoundly influenced my thinking and my work in evaluation. Since then, my understanding of their influence has become keener and my appreciation of them even greater. These extraordinary individuals elevated my thinking and helped me see things in new ways. To the degree my insights are wise and my vision is far, it is because I stand on the shoulders of these giants.

I am especially indebted to Professor Benjamin S. Bloom. As my teacher and adviser at the University of Chicago, Ben introduced me to the field of evaluation and involved me in evaluation studies. He taught me the importance of asking good questions and how to be methodical in finding answers. Some reviewers suggest that Bloom's remarkable contribution to education shows that he heard a different drummer. But I disagree. Benjamin Bloom was his own drummer, unique unto himself, and I was fortunate to walk with him, to listen to him, and to learn from him.

I also owe a great deal to my dear friends Dennis Sparks, former executive director of the National Staff Development Council (now Learning Forward), and Susan Loucks-Horsley, former director of Professional Development Research for the National Institute for Science Education. Dennis and Susan encouraged me to get involved in professional learning based on my early work on teacher change and supported me at every step along the way. They helped me to consider new perspectives and deepened my understanding of critical issues. Although Susan tragically passed away much too early, Dennis remains a true friend, confidant, and source of great jokes.

I am also indebted to Frederick Brown, president and CEO of Learning Forward. Fred uniquely combines bold and dynamic leadership with personal warmth and

friendliness in his unceasing efforts to ensure that every educator has opportunities to participate in exemplary, high-quality, professional learning experiences. He is a role model to me and, as my friend, graciously agreed to write the Foreword for this book.

Evident throughout all my work on professional learning is the influence of the dedicated teachers, school leaders, and other education professionals alongside whom I have had the privilege to work. Whenever I became infatuated with educational theories, they reminded me of the importance of utility and practicality. Many of the insights offered in this book they helped me develop.

Most importantly, I am indebted to my family and special friends. These wonderful people stood by me through troubled times, endured my impatience, showed me kindness when I was truly undeserving, and helped me keep my work and my life in perspective. Above all else, they keep me ever mindful that it is not the journey or destination in life that matters most, but rather with whom you travel. Nothing that I have accomplished in my life would have been possible without their steadfast love, understanding, and support.

Finally, I have long been an admirer of Albert Einstein. As a physics major in college, I was awed by the beauty and simplicity of his theories and mathematical formulas—qualities that he saw in the universe and, ultimately, in his idea of God. He also had a profound appreciation of the human condition and an abiding compassion for all humankind. Throughout this book are some of my favorite Einstein quotes that reflect his brilliance, his perceptiveness, and his wit. I offer them to both inspire and delight, and I hope you enjoy them.

—TRG  
Lexington, Kentucky

# About the Author



**Thomas R. Guskey**, PhD, is professor emeritus in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky where he served as department chair, head of the Educational Psychology Area Committee, and president of the Faculty Council. He has been a visiting professor at ten other universities in the United States and a visiting scholar at universities in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. He began his career in education as a middle school teacher and earned his doctorate in educational measurement and evaluation at the University of Chicago. He served as an administrator in Chicago Public Schools

before becoming the first director of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning, a national research center.

Dr. Guskey is the only person to win Learning Forward's (previously the National Staff Development Council) Book of the Year Award twice and the Article of the Year Award three times, in addition to winning the Best Staff Development Evaluation Award and Best Staff Development Research Award. He helped to develop the first edition of the *Standards for Professional Learning*, and in 2009 was awarded Learning Forward's prestigious Outstanding Contribution to the Field Award.

Dr. Guskey is the author/editor of 30 award-winning books and more than 300 book chapters, articles, and professional papers. He was named a fellow in the American Educational Research Association, the Association's highest honor, and received the Association's prestigious Relating Research to Practice Award. He also received the Distinguished Educator Award from Phi Delta Kappa, the Jason Millman Award from the Consortium for Research on Educational Assessment and Teaching Effectiveness, and the Distinguished Achievement Award from the

Association of Educational Publishers. Perhaps most unique, in the 160-year history of his undergraduate institution, Thiel College, he is the *only* graduate to receive the Outstanding Alumnus Award, be inducted into the Thiel College Athletic Hall of Fame, and be awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities Degree.

His current work involves developing the evaluation model for the Compassionate Coaches Program, a special program designed by the Army of Survivors, an organization advocating for and supporting athlete survivors of sexual abuse, and helping school leaders engage parents and families in meaningful grading reforms. His most recent books include *Grading With Integrity* (2024), *Engaging Parents and Families in Grading Reforms* (2024), and *Implementing Mastery Learning* (2023). He may be contacted by email at [guskey@uky.edu](mailto:guskey@uky.edu), X/Twitter at @tguskey, or at [www.tguskey.com](http://www.tguskey.com).

# Introduction

*“I have no special gift. I am only passionately curious.”*

Albert Einstein

No topic in education today is more important but also more neglected than evaluating educators’ professional learning. According to a study by the National Council on Teacher Quality (A. Jacob & McGovern, 2015), school districts in the United States spend an average of \$18,000 per teacher per year on in-person, synchronous professional learning. This translates to an annual investment of \$18 billion (Will, 2022). A significant portion of that money goes to the nearly 8,000 education consultants currently doing business in the United States (ZIPPIA, 2024), with little to no accountability or quality control. Estimates indicate that we spend only 1 to 2 percent of professional learning funding on evaluating these efforts to determine if they make any difference (Twersky & Arbreton, 2014), and the results of those evaluations are often of questionable validity.

This book is designed to change all that. Its primary purpose is to help educators develop meaningful and efficient evaluations of all forms of professional learning. The central question addressed is “How do we determine the effects of activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge and skills of educators so that they, in turn, can improve student learning?”

At first glance, this may appear to be a simple and easy-to-answer question. After all, professional learning for educators has been a part of education since the time of the early Greeks. With such a long history, we might expect most of the issues involved in evaluating professional learning to be well defined and thoroughly understood. Unfortunately, that’s not the case.

Effective evaluations of professional learning address a series of important questions that range from simple to highly complex. They offer vital information to key decision makers at the state, province, district, school, and classroom levels. They verify the effectiveness of current practices and guide the content, form, and structure of future activities. Poorly designed evaluations, on the other hand, waste time, money, energy, and the goodwill of participants. They can even be impediments to the implementation of more effective professional learning practices.

Too often educators shy away from evaluating professional learning because they believe it's a time-consuming process that requires knowledge and skills they don't possess. As a result, they either neglect evaluation procedures completely or leave them to "experts" who come in at the end and gather data to determine if anything made a difference. But these ad hoc procedures rarely yield information that helps educators improve the quality or effectiveness of their professional learning experiences.

The truth is that good evaluations of professional learning don't have to be costly. Nor do they require high-level technical skills. All they require is the ability to ask good questions and a basic understanding about how to find valid answers. In fact, the most critical element in effective evaluation is thoughtful planning. A major theme emphasized in this book is that when professional learning is well planned, 90 percent of the questions essential to a meaningful and effective evaluation are already addressed. Knowing what you want to accomplish is the foundation on which all effective evaluations are built.

Planning effective professional learning begins with describing the goals to be achieved and what evidence best reflects the attainment of those goals. This leads to discussions about the value of the goals, the accuracy and validity of the evidence, and how that evidence can be gathered and analyzed to make thoughtful and responsible decisions about professional learning processes and effects. Addressing these fundamental planning questions provides the basis for meaningful and effective evaluations.

In this book we will consider the importance of evaluating professional learning at a variety of levels, beginning with the earliest stages of planning, and continuing through implementation, follow-up, and institutionalization. At each level we will discuss the central questions to be addressed, the pertinent evidence that needs to be gathered, and how best to present that evidence to various audiences. We will explore how the use of artificial intelligence (AI) can simplify many of these development and evidence-gathering tasks. We also will consider a variety of practical suggestions, procedures, and instruments that teachers and school leaders can use to fine-tune their professional learning efforts and assess the impact of various professional learning activities, programs, and experiences. Our goal is to provide educators with a working philosophy for evaluation and practical guidelines in developing more useful professional learning evaluations.

Each chapter in this book is organized around a series of essential questions about evaluating professional learning. This first chapter focuses on these five basic questions that provide the foundation for all that follows:

1. Why is professional learning important?
2. Why is evaluation important?
3. Why are most professional learning evaluations inadequate?

4. What issues will we *not* address?
5. What issues will we address?

Each chapter concludes with a list of Questions for Reflection designed to offer readers the opportunity to reflect on the topics presented and to discuss the issues most pertinent to their work and experience. Let's get started.

## WHY IS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IMPORTANT?

Education is a vibrant and dynamic field. Research in education is constantly expanding our knowledge base and providing new insights into the teaching and learning process. To be effective, educators must keep abreast of this new knowledge and use it to continually refine and renew their professional expertise and craft skills.

At the same time, it's important to recognize that not all research is trustworthy and results are frequently misinterpreted. Therefore, educators must become discriminating consumers of research. They must learn how to discern quality research from shoddy investigations that may be commercially inspired or politically motivated (Pogrow, 2023).

Furthermore, advances in technology and the application of AI compel educators to constantly update their professional knowledge and skills. Although many teachers and school leaders make special efforts to keep up with these changes, all educators need structured opportunities to learn about these new developments, discuss applications with colleagues, examine implications, and consider needed adaptations for their context.

In Chapter 2 we will explore inconsistencies in the current research on professional learning and the limited success of many professional learning initiatives to bring about significant improvements in student learning. Despite these inconsistencies, however, the one constant that permeates all research in education is that noteworthy improvements in student learning *never* take place in the absence of high-quality professional learning for educators. At the core of *every* successful educational improvement effort is a thoughtfully conceived, carefully designed, and well-supported professional learning component. Hence, though much of what is labeled "professional learning" for educators may be ineffective in bringing about improvements in student learning, *every* educational improvement initiative that has proven effective in improving student outcomes includes a strong professional learning component.

This combination of the recognized importance of professional learning and the paucity of credible evidence verifying the impact of educators' professional learning on student learning reveals two crucial needs. First, we need enhanced methods for

collecting sound evidence on the impact of professional learning. Although many professional learning activities may have a positive influence on teachers' instructional practices *and* student learning outcomes, we've not done a good job of systematically documenting those effects. Second, we need to be more purposeful in our use of trustworthy evidence to elevate the quality of professional learning activities for all educators. In other words, we need to be more focused and methodical in planning and carrying out systematic evaluations of all forms of professional learning.

## ■ ■ ■ Reasons We Need Better Professional Learning Evaluations

1. To document the effects of professional learning accurately and systematically.
2. To gain meaningful, reliable, and trustworthy evidence from well-designed evaluations to guide improvement. ■

### WHY IS EVALUATION IMPORTANT?

The vital importance of evaluating professional learning is reflected today in policy documents (e.g., Kentucky Department of Education, 2024) and in numerous recent articles and publications (e.g., Parsons, 2022; Svendsen, 2020; Ventista & Brown, 2023). Everyday conversations among educators reflect the importance of systematic evaluations as well. Sharon Rallis and Nancy Zajano (1997) offer an example of such a conversation that took place among a team of educators struggling with how best to document the effectiveness of their professional learning experiences:

*Now in its third year, the team was pleased that the faculty had accepted its proposed mission, goals, and improvement plan. A variety of professional development activities had already taken place, and a substantial portion of the faculty was using the instructional strategies recommended in the plan. The team was now grappling with the matter of how to measure the impact of the school improvement effort on student learning.*

*"The real question," stated Paul, the project evaluator, "is 'How do we know that students are learning more with the new instructional strategies that teachers are using?'"*

*"Well, I know my students are learning more. Their thinking is more complex," responded Sandra.*

*"But what exactly does that mean?" asked Paul. "How do you know their thinking is more complex?"*

*"For one thing, they can apply a concept they learn in one situation to another," Sandra offered.*

*"That's a start. But we need to collect evidence of how they are applying those concepts," Paul responded.*

*"I find it's kind of hard to talk about collecting evidence to measure impact. Mostly I just feel a whole lot better when I'm teaching because students in my class are so busy interacting and solving problems together. You know what I mean," said Carmen.*

*"Fine. But are parents and taxpayers going to be satisfied with a measure like 'I feel better because students in my class are working together'?" asked Paul. "The superintendent told me yesterday that he needs results or the board may recommend that we drop some of the strategies."*

*"I don't think the board understands that this change stuff takes a long time and is pretty messy. We don't exactly know what students will do differently if we believe that each learner constructs his or her own meaning," said Tony. "Besides, as teachers, we are still learning the new strategies. It might take me years before I am totally comfortable using some of them. So how can we expect to see change in the students right away?"*

*"That's what I was trying to say," interjected Carmen. "And I am not even sure how to assess what I am expecting. I don't mean that I do things without a purpose, but some of what I want my class to be doing will not show up on any kind of test that I know of."*

*"You're right. But I can see how it would help if we had some sort of image of what we expect to see students doing. Something more than goals and objectives—some sort of picture that we can all share, so we know we are all talking about the same thing. Restructuring and learner-centered schools are such broad and general terms that they can mean different things to different people. What do we mean?" said Ann. "Think about it. Columbus might never have received any support at all if he had actually been heading for parts unknown. But his stated destination was the Indies, and people at that time did carry a similar picture in their heads of what they thought China looked like, even though they had never been there. We need some picture like that."*

*"I like that analogy. To keep us and others going until we can see the actual results, we need to agree on a picture of what a classroom in a restructured school will look like, a picture of what students and teachers in these places will be doing," Paul agreed.*

*"What you're talking about is what makes restructuring so difficult for me. We don't yet have a picture of what we expect classes and students and teachers to look like. When a parent asks me, I can describe cooperative learning, but I have trouble going deeper. Still, I guess you're right that we need clear shared images of what restructured classrooms will look like." (Rallis & Zajano, 1997, pp. 706–707)*

This conversation shows that these educators are truly struggling with the issues of evaluation. Similar conversations can be heard today in boardrooms, committee meetings, and teachers lounges in schools throughout the United States and around the world.

Interest in evaluating professional learning has grown dramatically in recent years for three important reasons. First, educators like those in the preceding conversation have gained an increased appreciation of the dynamics of professional learning. They recognize professional learning as an *ongoing and continuous process, not an event* (Guskey, 2020; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Muhammad, 2016). The old view of professional learning as “something done to educators” on three or four days during the school year has been replaced by the perspective that sees professional learning as a series of extended, job-embedded learning experiences. This broader conception of professional learning includes opportunities for educators to discuss, think about, try out, and hone new practices in an environment that values inquiry and experimentation. An important part of that experimentation is gathering sound evidence on effects. Hence, the focus on evaluation.

A second, related reason for the growing interest in evaluation is that professional learning today is recognized as a purposeful and intentional process (Guskey, 2017). Regardless of its form, professional learning is a systemic effort to bring about change—but more specifically, *positive change*. We want to make things better. We want improvement.

The educators in the preceding conversation have clear ideas about the kind of changes they want to see and the goals they hope to accomplish. They also recognize that to verify the success of their efforts, they need to gather relevant evidence related to those goals. The kind of evidence they gather and when to collect it will depend on the specific improvements sought. Nevertheless, gathering that evidence, analyzing it, and reporting results to relevant audiences are all activities associated with evaluation.

The third reason for the growing interest in evaluation is increased pressure at all levels of education for greater accountability (Leader & Pazez, 2023; Ordofa & Asgedom, 2022). No longer can teachers and school leaders continue to do things just because “we’ve always done things that way.” Instead, they must be prepared to demonstrate that what they do is purposeful, meaningful, and effective. The educators in the preceding conversation recognize that they need to gather valid and trustworthy evidence to demonstrate that their professional learning experiences make a positive difference. They need to be able to show that these activities provide tangible benefits to the school, to school leaders and teachers, and ultimately to students. Again, this is the basis for evaluation.

## ■ ■ ■ Reasons for Growing Interest in Professional Learning Evaluation

1. Understanding the dynamic nature of professional learning.
2. Recognition of professional learning as “a purposeful and intentional process.”
3. Increased pressure for educational “accountability.” ■

### WHY ARE MOST PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EVALUATIONS INADEQUATE?

Evaluating professional learning is certainly not a new topic in education. For years educators have been “evaluating” professional learning activities and providing results to district and school leaders, board members, state departments of education, and funding agencies. But rarely have those evaluations been informative or prescriptive. Most are little more than satisfaction surveys or “happiness quotients” that ask participants “Did you like it?” and “Was your time well spent?”

To be truly meaningful, evaluations must probe deeper. Effective evaluations provide useful evidence about the effects of professional learning at various levels, along with the conditions and processes that lead to success. If our goal is improvement, we cannot be satisfied with simply gathering evidence about participants’ initial reactions to a professional learning experience (Guskey, 2024b).

Furthermore, meaningful improvements in education generally require time for adaptation, adjustment, and refinement. When teachers make major changes in their instructional practices, for example, most gain better results the second year of implementation than they did the first (Stollman et al., 2020). The first year tends to be a time of trial and experimentation. In the second year, their efforts are more refined and efficient. Therefore, support for implementation and the collection of evaluation evidence must be extended into the second year, considering the complexity of the innovation as well as the extent of the changes that teachers are required to make.

### WHAT ISSUES WILL WE NOT ADDRESS?

This book offers guidelines to all levels of educators for developing meaningful, efficient, and effective evaluations of professional learning. However, these guidelines should not be seen as technical or professional standards. Readers interested

in technical standards for evaluations can find these in *The Program Evaluation Standards: A Guide for Evaluators and Evaluation Users* by Donald Yarbrough and colleagues (2010). Although we present a brief description of these standards in Chapter 4, those wanting more detailed information should consult this excellent resource.

We also will not be presenting specialized information about qualitative and quantitative research methods, measurement and data collection, data analysis, or report writing. When we describe procedures for presenting professional learning evaluation evidence, for example, we will discuss ways to ensure the validity and reliability of that evidence. However, we won't discuss specific validation procedures or techniques for calculating reliability indices. Many other excellent resources offer readers detailed descriptions of these important procedures.

Furthermore, this book is not intended to replace texts on the general topic of evaluation. Program evaluation is a complicated endeavor that can be approached from a variety of philosophical perspectives and include a wide range of activities. Our focus is much narrower, concentrating on the procedures for developing effective professional learning evaluations. For readers who want a more thorough and in-depth treatment of program evaluation issues and procedures in general, several excellent texts are available, including *Evaluation Theory, Models, and Applications* by Daniel Stufflebeam and Chris Coryn (2014), *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation* by Kathryn Newcomer and colleagues (2015), and *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* by Peter Rossi and colleagues (2019).

Our focus in this book is limited to evaluations of professional learning programs, activities, and experiences. We will not be considering evaluations of educational institutions, professional development centers, or educational service agencies that provide professional learning services and activities for educators. Nor will we consider evaluation of teachers or school personnel. Although these are extremely important topics that deserve serious attention, they lie beyond the scope of this modest effort.

## WHAT ISSUES WILL WE ADDRESS?

This book is designed to provide a framework for planning and conducting meaningful and informative evaluations of professional learning for educators. Early chapters (Chapters 2 through 5) describe the foundational issues most central to this work. Middle chapters (Chapters 6 through 10) focus on the practical issues involved in gathering accurate and meaningful evaluation information at five specific levels. We describe how each evaluation level provides different but equally important information that is crucial in the evaluation process. In the final chapter, we describe how to present evaluation results to various audiences in ways that are clear, meaningful, and understandable.

We begin in Chapter 2 exploring the puzzling results in current professional learning research. We review recent research summaries that document the ineffectiveness of much of the current professional learning in which educators engage. Next, we consider research syntheses of professional learning activities that prove highly effective in changing teachers' instructional practices (Evaluation Level 4) but are generally less effective in improving student learning outcomes (Evaluation Level 5). Finally, we explore the nature of this disparity, present several reasons that might explain it, and offer specific strategies on how to remedy the difference.

Chapter 3 focuses on the meaning of professional learning. We describe the importance of establishing clear goals for all forms of professional learning activities and the necessity of aligning those activities with the specified goals. Various models of professional learning are discussed, along with elements that researchers have identified as contributing to the effectiveness of the models.

In Chapter 4 we turn our attention to the meaning of evaluation. We describe the various purposes of evaluation and how evaluation differs from research, measurement, assessment, and accountability. We also discuss several pertinent evaluation models and the professional standards for evaluation.

This leads us to Chapter 5 where we focus on specific guidelines for evaluating professional learning. We explore the complex relationship between educators' professional learning and improvements in student learning, and an evaluation model based on this relationship. Since initially presented in a 1998 article titled "The Age of Our Accountability" (Guskey, 1998), this model has become a foundational framework for evaluating professional learning worldwide. The first edition of this book, *Evaluating Professional Development* (Guskey, 2000), which explained the model's five levels, has been cited in more than 7,000 scholarly articles and served as the foundation for more than 40 doctoral dissertations (e.g., D. Newman, 2010; Ross, 2010; Stahl, 2012). Such widespread use demonstrates the model's relevance and applicability across a wide range of diverse educational contexts.

The next five chapters describe the model's five levels of evaluation. Chapter 6 explains the first level of the evaluation model: *participants' reactions*. We discuss the importance of this level, present a variety of evaluation formats, and show how AI tools can be used to facilitate the gathering and analysis of evaluation evidence. This is the most common form of professional learning evaluation and the level at which educators have the most experience.

Chapter 7 moves to the second level of evaluation: *participants' learning*. In this chapter we address why it is essential to assess the knowledge and skills that educators gain from a professional learning experience, and how to gather that information in practical and efficient ways using established formats and AI tools to focus on a variety of learning goals.

The third level of evaluation, *organizational support and change*, is our focus in Chapter 8. Here we describe the crucial role of organizational support in every aspect of the improvement process, and how professional learning facilitates the attainment of numerous organizational goals. Special attention is given to the vital role of the school principal in leading change efforts and in supporting teachers in implementing new instructional practices.

In Chapter 9 our attention turns to *participants' use and implementation of their new knowledge and skills*. Because the changes in instructional practice differ depending on the innovation involved and the implementation context, the strategies for gathering accurate information on adaptations and implementation fidelity vary as well. Again, we explore how AI tools can be helpful in developing criteria to guide implementation efforts.

Chapter 10 focuses on the most crucial evidence on the effectiveness of professional learning: *improvements in student learning outcomes*. We begin by exploring the broad range of student learning goals that could be important, including measures of academic, behavioral, and affective student outcomes. We then examine the use of AI tools to gather this evidence in effective and highly efficient ways. Because not all audiences trust the same evidence, we also discuss the importance of including multiple indicators of success. Finally, we consider the critical importance of timing in the change process and its implications for evaluation efforts.

In Chapter 11 we focus on presenting evaluation information. We describe the critical issues involved in preparing evaluation reports, with special emphasis given to the various audiences for those reports.

Scattered throughout each chapter are specially marked “Author Notes.” These short notes emphasize important points and provide practical illustrations. Occasionally they offer a humorous perspective, unique insight, or unusual twist in understanding. I hope you enjoy them.

## Conclusion

The primary goal of this book is to help educators document the effects of their professional learning activities and to guide the development of truly effective professional learning experiences. Asking important questions, gathering valid and relevant evidence, and then analyzing that evidence in thoughtful and meaningful ways are the bases of this work. Evaluation is the essential first step toward significant improvement at any level of education and the foundation for every successful education reform effort.

## Questions for Reflection

1. Consider your own professional learning experiences. Which do you consider the most effective? What made these experiences meaningful to you? If asked, could you provide evidence of the effects of these experiences? What kind of evidence would you provide?
2. What is your general impression of evaluation in professional learning? Are there issues regarding professional learning evaluations that have special interest for you? What types of information would you consider especially important or meaningful in evaluating professional learning?
3. What reasons would you offer for evaluating any professional learning activity or experience? Who would be interested in the results of an evaluation? What do you believe is the most important audience for evaluation evidence? How might this evidence best be presented and used?

