

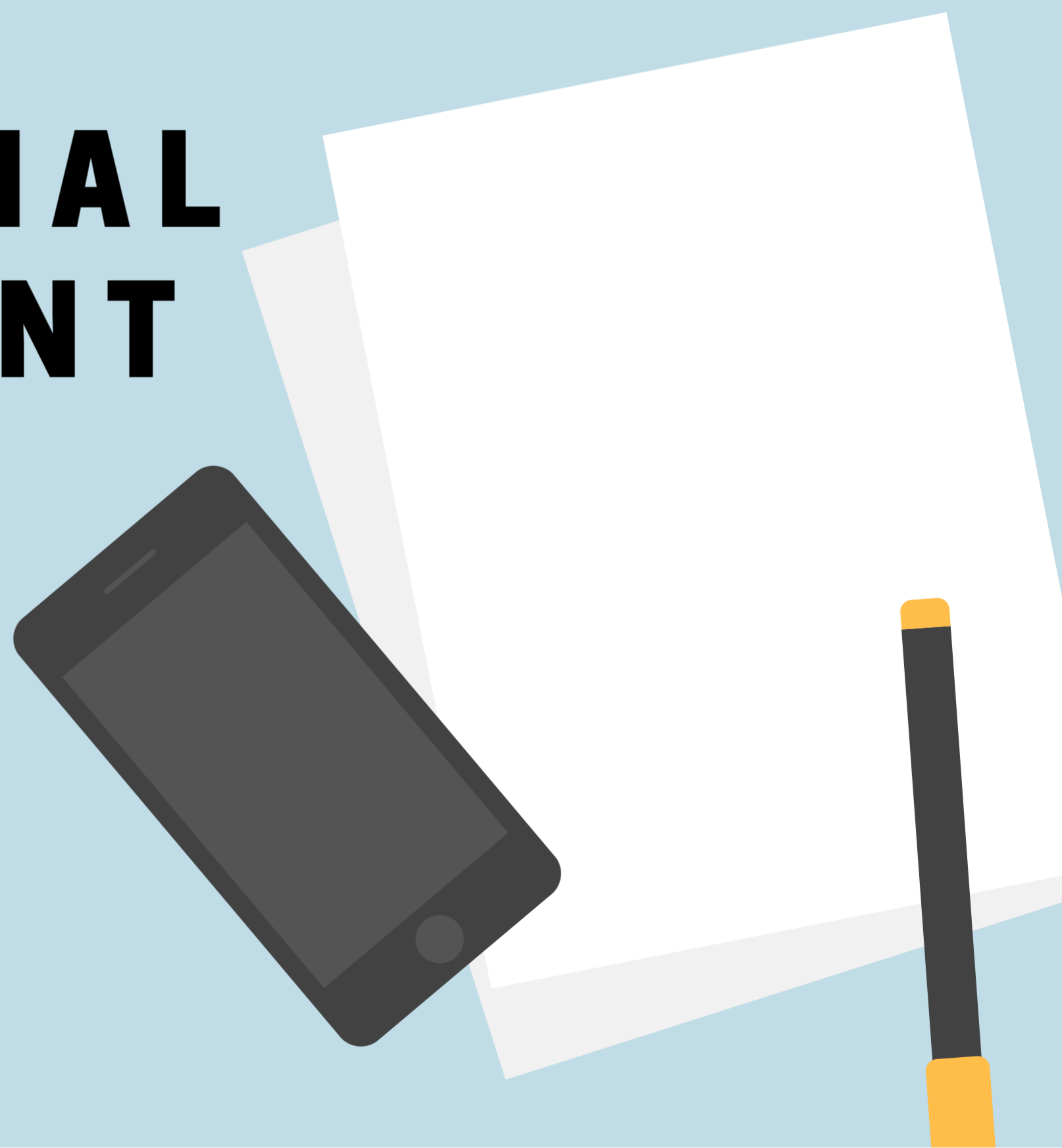
CONNECTED EDUCATION
EVERY LEADER, EVERY
TEACHER, EVERY LEARNER

BRIDGE



PLANNING AN ON-SITE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

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—INANDA SEMINARY



A BRIDGE Knowledge Product



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LINKING INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION

At a meeting of BRIDGE's South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition (SAESC), held in February 2017, CoP member Devan Govender introduced the idea of a school-based education summit as an innovative tool for professional teacher development.

The following document offers some notes on the planning of Inanda Seminary's summits, their intended objectives and organising principles, as well as some simple steps to help you plan a summit at your own school.

GETTING THE YEAR OFF TO A GREAT START

- Educators at Inanda Seminary kick off every academic year with a 2 day summit/conference for teachers. This is key, as **the meeting sets the tone for the whole school year**. It is a time to share, learn and establish the goals for the year.
- The summit is not an Inanda innovation. The concept of a Summit is a Coalition idea drawn from the work of the LEAP schools and the thinking of John Gilmour and Yusuf Salie.

OBJECTIVES

- To **build a community of practice** around what the Coalition believes to be the core business of education - teaching and learning (instructional practice).
- To **energise staff** and pull their thinking together around teaching and learning matters.
- The summits have helped to **establish relationships with other schools in the area** (some of whom are beneficiaries in Inanda Seminary's outreach and project work). As a result of this connection, Inanda Seminary has taken professional development initiatives to these schools.

ORGANISING PRINCIPLES

The summit centres on:

- the currency of ideas generated in Coalition forums, that is **instructional practice and international best practice**;
- Inanda Seminary's three-year **educational objectives**;
- the gaps in Inanda Seminary's professional development programme, i.e **staff needs** within the school and **the needs of the broader school community** and;
- the school's yearly theme, which finds expression in the choice of topics for discussion.

A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO PLANNING A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

1. Identify needs.

Many professional development events are planned without input from the intended audience. If teachers are allowed to use their own experiences to “zero in” on critical content and instructional issues, they are apt to find what is needed to boost learner performance. If they are involved in decisions about professional development, they are more likely to attend the sessions with enthusiasm and to implement what they learn.

2. Develop a plan.

A school that lacks a professional development plan runs the risk of conducting haphazard events that do little to advance instructional skills or to improve learner performance. By considering teachers' needs and the school's overall improvement plan, school leaders

can create a coordinated plan that will address school problems as a continuous process rather than a series of unrelated events.

3. Make room in the school calendar for site-specific professional development.

School leaders often have trouble scheduling on-site staff development. School leaders may want to set a goal to find at least five days per year that can be devoted to site-specific professional development. Full-day events are highly desirable. They give teachers sufficient time to learn new strategies and plan how to use them in the classroom.

4. Start early to plan a professional development event.

Planning for a staff development activity should begin at least six months in advance. In planning a successful event, school leaders need to develop a clear goal and a set of objectives. Objectives should address the measurable knowledge and skills that participants will gain during the summit.

5. Prepare teachers for the staff development event.

School leaders can take a number of actions to prepare teachers for a professional development activity. The first action is very simple: Post a calendar of events – containing the date, time and topic of the summit. The next step is to use a regular staff meeting to prepare for the upcoming event. This is a good opportunity to determine what staff members know and do not know about the topic. One strategy is to ask staff members to write questions that they hope will be answered during the summit. Another is to ask teachers to read articles or books on the topic.

6. Use strategies to improve the effectiveness of the event.

The following guidelines for effective staff development will be helpful:

- Set the stage during the first hour. Review the stated expectations and identify others as needed. The expectations can be checked periodically throughout the summit and reviewed at the end.
- Use instructional strategies that work with adult learners. Like their learners, teachers need to see a reason to learn.

They benefit from a variety of activities, time to think and process information, question-and-answer sessions, and opportunities to contribute their own experiences. Every staff development event should include theory, demonstrations and time for participants to practice what they are learning.

7. Evaluate the event.

Plan to evaluate every professional development event. An evaluation form should include a scale allowing participants to rate various aspects of the summit. It should also include several open-ended questions giving participants an opportunity to express their views on what they liked and did not like about the event, what they will do as a result of the training, and the types of follow-up activities they would like to receive.

8. Plan follow-up activities.

Professional development is effective only if something happens as a result. Too often, teachers are caught up in daily activities when they return to school and forget what they have learned. It is important for participants to have time to try new approaches. As part of the follow-up process, school leaders will want to observe in classrooms, ask teachers about their progress, and develop assessment standards and instruments to measure the impact of new instructional techniques on learner performance.

Another way to follow up is to establish professional learning communities for teachers interested in working together on a particular issue. The groups can share their teaching experiences, discuss books and articles on a topic, and find solutions to problems.