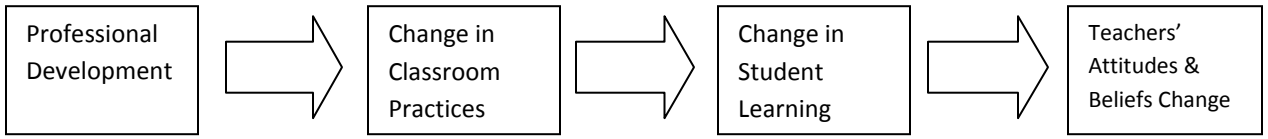
Evaluating Professional Development by Thomas Guskey

A Model of Teacher Change-Page 139 Figure 5.4



The Process of Affective Change:

A goal of many professional development programs and activities is change in participants' attitudes, beliefs, or dispositions. Many try, for example, to gain acceptance, commitment, and enthusiasm from teachers and school administrators prior to implementation of new practices and strategies. To do so, they involve teachers in planning sessions and conduct needs surveys to ensure that the new practices or strategies are well aligned with what teachers want. But as important as these procedures are, they seldom change attitudes significantly, nor do they elicit strong commitment from teachers (Jones & Hayes, 1980). Current evidence on teacher change, however, indicates that this sequence of change events is inaccurate, especially with regard to professional development endeavors involving experienced educators. The "Model of Teacher Change" illustrated above presents an alternative approach. Significant change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs occurs primarily after they gain evidence of improvements in student learning. These improvements typically result from changes that teachers have made in their classroom practices. For example, they may be the result of a new instructional approach, the new use of materials or curricula, or simply a modification in teaching procedures or classroom format. The crucial point is that it is not professional development per se, but the experience of successful implementation that changes their attitudes and beliefs. They believe that it works because they have seen it work, and that experience shapes their attitudes and beliefs. Research demonstrates that experienced teachers seldom become committed to a new instructional approach or innovation until they have seen it work in their classrooms with their students. Results from affective measures shows that teachers who saw improvements became more positive in their attitudes toward teaching and expressed increased personal responsibility for their students' learning.

Robert Marzano in *Classroom Instruction That Works,* identifies that mastering a skill requires a considerable amount of focused practice. It takes a fair amount of practice for a student or teacher to reach a fair level of competence in a skill. It is not until students have practiced upwards of about 24 times that they reach 80 % competency. This is important information for teachers, who during professional development need time to experience and apply the instructional strategy successfully, but also, information that teachers need to recognize that students

need repeated practice to see gains in learning. Another important research finding is while practicing a new skill, students should adapt and shape what they have learned. It is during this shaping phase that learners attend to their conceptual understanding of a skill. When students lack conceptual understanding of skills, they are liable to use procedures in shallow and ineffective ways. Apparently it is important to deal with only a few examples during the shaping phase of learning a new skill or process. This shaping phase is not the time to press students to perform a skill with significant speed. Healy (1990) reports that educators in the United States tend to prematurely engage students in a heavy practice schedule and rush them through multiple examples (page 69).