

## **The Importance of Continuing Professional Development and How I Plan to Incorporate It Throughout My Career**

Continuing professional development is seen in many professions, from medical staff to lawyers, finance professionals to engineers, computer information specialists to cosmetologists. With a society full of new technologies, new laws and greater public awareness, professions rely heavily on continuing professional development to make sure that employees are competent experts in their fields. Making sure skills are up to date and relevant, employers and the public can therefore be assured that they are getting the most meaningful contributions they can from their specialist.

Professional development attempts to help legally safeguard the employer, the public, and employee. Many professions today require a very select skill set that is governed by laws. When instituting professional development criteria for a profession, you are making sure credentials and contributions are up to date, adding to the employees desirability, employer and public safety, and ultimately a greater public confidence. Staying relevant to professional changes can in some cases be the difference between a lawsuit or not. Even if legalities are not in question, public confidence and opinion can play a great part in an individual's, a company's, or even a profession's image. We in the educational field can attest that the "image" of our profession is of vital importance.

While staying relevant and learning new skills has a direct connection to providing meaningful contributions to the profession, there is also an indirect connection through personal growth. One of my favorite quotes is "If you do what you have always done, you get what you have always gotten." While I use this attitude quite often in my personal life, it works well in the professional realm as well. When we stretch ourselves into new areas of our vocation, areas we may not be as comfortable in, we most often come away with some new insight or new idea. This can open up new possibilities into our profession that we didn't otherwise think of or capitalize on. Many times this also means we gain a deeper understanding of our own unique talents, abilities and ultimately our professional repertoire deepens. This adds to our competency as a professional.

I am a great believer in personal growth. Professional development is a significant part of that process. As an individual that believes you should never stop educating yourself, I have taken varying strides to ensure my own continued personal and professional development. Rarely has a year gone by that I haven't taken some type of "class" either through an educational institution or through private sectors, to help

broaden and deepen my own professional repertoire, keep up to date on new trends, legal issues, and many other professional innovations. I have also engaged in Webinars, which makes continuing education incredibly easy from an access standpoint. Belonging, and taking part in civic activities, joining professional communities, reading journals and sitting in on expert speakers, are all methods I've used to help strengthen my professional base. Learning is a lifelong process and should be treated as such in our professional and personal lives.