



How to Improve Student Outcomes: Professional Learning about Student Learning

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Key Question

What kinds of teacher professional learning and development have a positive impact on student outcomes?

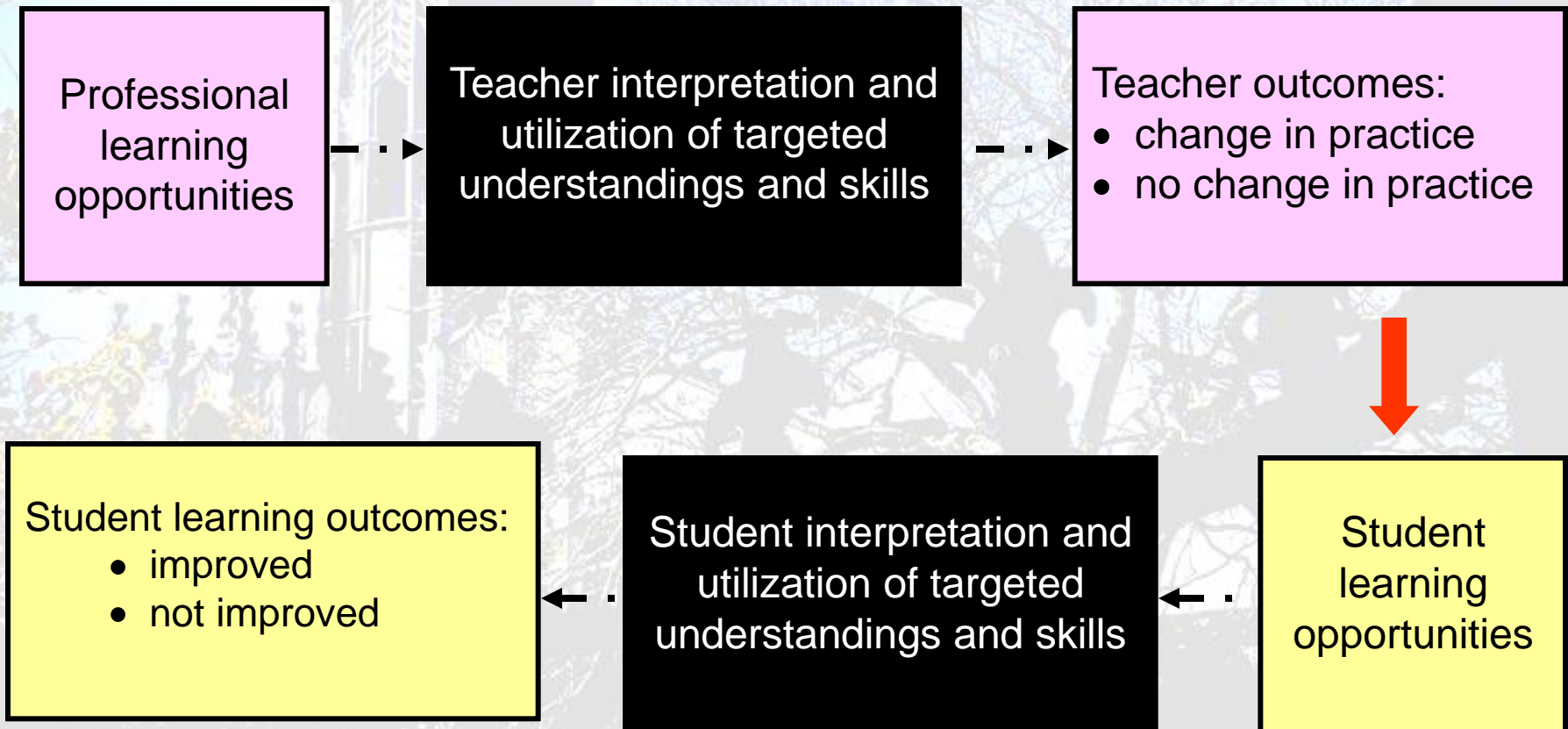


Why Do We Need Professional Development?

- Knowledge is changing
- Student composition changing
- Job requirements are changing
- “Learning from experience” is important but no longer enough



The Black Boxes of Teacher and Student Learning





Four Foundational Understandings

1. Student learning is strongly influenced by what and how teachers teach
2. Teaching is complex and effective professional development can't just be an add on.
3. Effective professional development is responsive to the ways teachers learn.
4. Professional learning is shaped by the context in which teachers practice.

What doesn't work

Two extremes:

- Teachers are treated as professionals and left to construct their own learning experiences
- Experts develop recipes for teaching, teachers given a rationale, shown how, then closely monitored

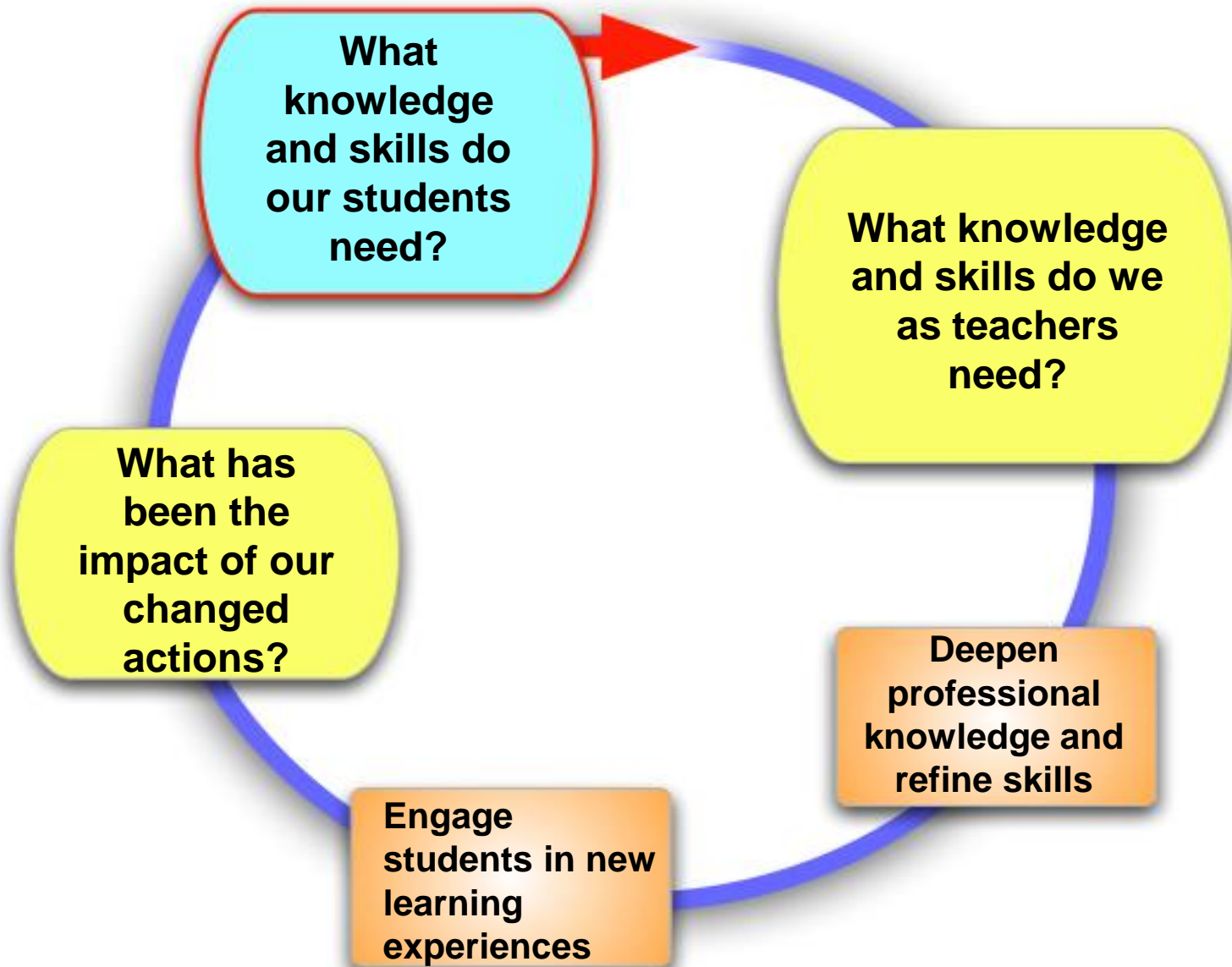
Learning is more complex than either of these alternatives

What does work?

Formative assessment for teachers - teachers know why they are learning what they are learning, have ways of monitoring their success, and have some control of the process

Eight key principles

Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued student outcomes



Section 1

What is it that teachers need to learn to make a difference for their students?

Outcomes linked to teaching practices

Professional learning experiences that focus on the links between

- particular teaching activities and
- the student outcomes desired

are associated with positive impacts on those outcomes.

Which means that -

- Improving student outcomes must be the reason teachers' engage in PD
- Success is determined by impact on students
 - not changed teacher skills
- Teachers must believe that their students can learn faster and better
 - And usually do so when this happens

Principle 2: Worthwhile Content

The knowledge and skills developed are those that have been established as effective in achieving valued student outcomes



Principle 3: Integration of Knowledge and Skills

The integration of essential teacher knowledge and skills promotes deep teacher learning and effective changes in practice



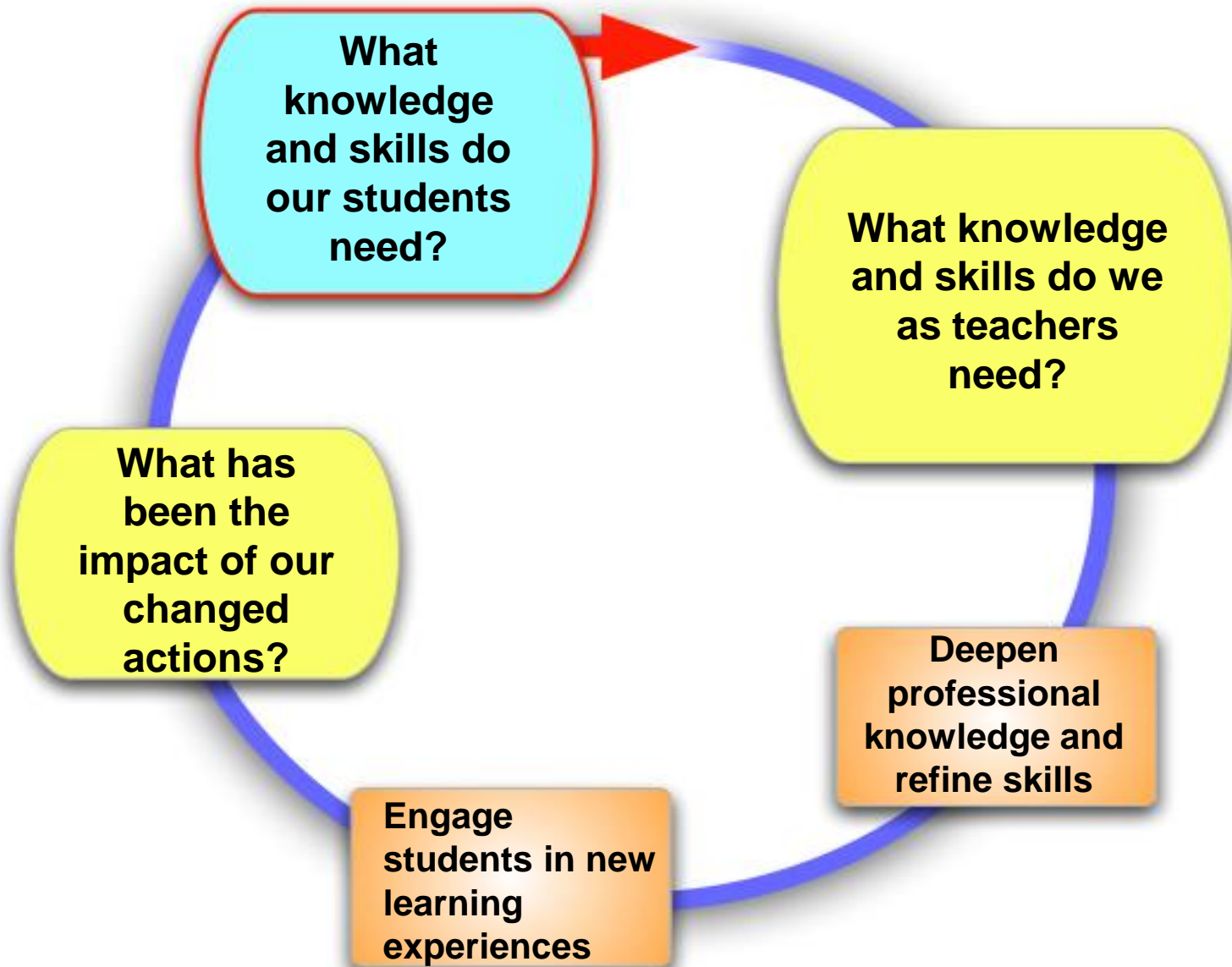
Which means that -

- The PD needs to deepen knowledge about
 - The curriculum (and relevant content)
 - How to teach it effectively
 - How to assess student learning
- And to integrate theory and practice
 - A ‘what to do tomorrow’ approach doesn’t work

Principle 4: Assessment for Professional Inquiry

Information about what students need to know and do is used to identify what teachers need to know and do

Teacher inquiry and knowledge-building cycle to promote valued student outcomes



Section 2

What are the conditions that promote teacher learning in ways that impact on students?

Principle 5: Multiple Opportunities to Learn and Apply

Like students, teachers need multiple opportunities to learn and apply new information in a trusting and challenging environment

Principle 6: Approaches are Responsive to Learning Processes

Different approaches to PD are needed depending on whether new ideas are, or are not, consistent with teachers' existing assumptions

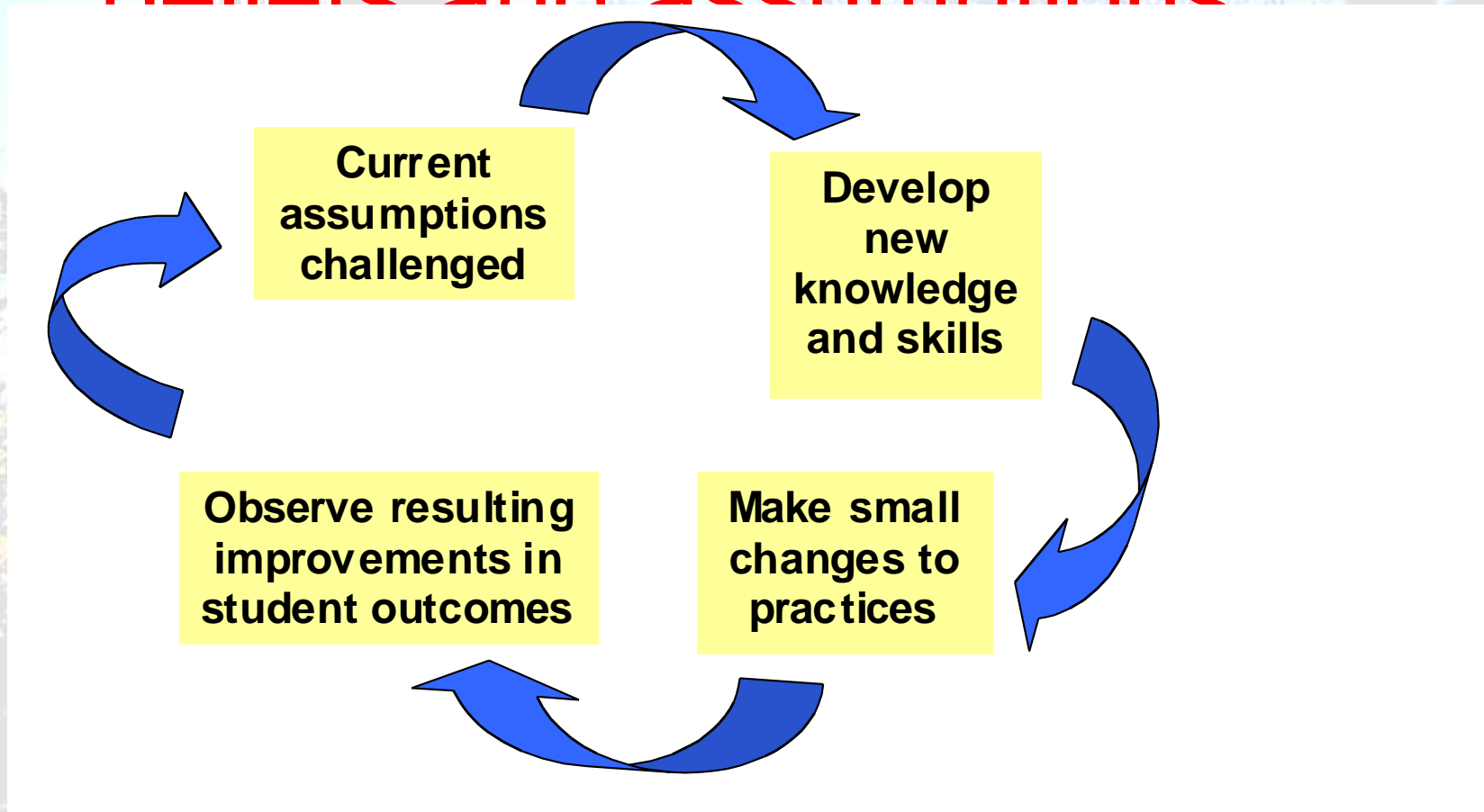
Which means that -

Teachers are as diverse as their students in their beliefs about:

- What counts as valued knowledge
- Students and how they learn
- Effective teaching practices

Need to be made explicit and engaged (and sometimes challenged).

Promoting change in teachers' beliefs and assumptions





Principle 7: Opportunities to process new learning with others

Collegial interaction that is focused on student outcomes can help teachers integrate new learning into existing practice



Principle 8: Knowledgeable Expertise

External expertise is necessary to:

- Challenge existing assumptions
- Develop new knowledge and skills

Which means that -

- Experts need to be very knowledgeable in the area;
- Need to know how to make the knowledge relevant to the teachers
 - In ways that integrate other principles
 - Not to treat teachers as technicians



Principle 10: Maintaining momentum

- Sustainability depends on:
 - teachers developing strong theoretical frameworks that allows them to make principled changes to practice
 - Self-regulatory skills to inquire into effectiveness and answer the questions:
“Where am I going?” “How am I doing?” and
“Where to next?”