

Guidelines for Writing Learning Objectives for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Activities

National Association of School Psychologists

Learning objectives describe a) what the participant will or could expect to gain from attending or participating in the CPD activity; and b) how participants can apply the knowledge. Learning objectives should be clearly stated and available to participants of all CPD activities.

Learning objectives offer the following:

1. An identifiable and measurable outcome of the activity
2. A guide for the planning and delivery of the activity for the presenter(s)
3. A metric for evaluation

Key Components of Effective Learning Objectives

A learning objective should:

1. Include a measurable verb (e.g., describe, design, assess, apply, explain, analyze)
2. Focus on the learner

For example: “This session will help participants present and advocate the use of the NASP Practice Model to their local board of education.”

A good rule to follow is starting all of your learning objectives with a stem statement such as: “This session will help participants _____.” Learning objectives should be no longer than 20 words, not including the stem statement.

One- to two-hour sessions should have three learning objectives. Activities that last 3 or more hours should identify three to five objectives.

We encourage presenters to consider including a specific objective that links the content to the NASP Practice Model, such as: “This session will help participants describe how _____ fits into a comprehensive role as outlined by the NASP Practice Model.”

Common Errors

The following are common errors made in writing learning objectives:

1. Simply listing topics that will be covered
2. Using nonmeasurable verbs (e.g., understand, gain awareness)
3. Not focusing on the learner (e.g., the instructor/presenter will provide . . .)