



Rethinking Professional Development

Comprehensive Approaches to Ensuring Effective Teaching

12:00 – 1:30 p.m., Friday, June 26, 2009

Measuring Teacher Effectiveness

While there is no consensus on the definition of “teacher effectiveness,” research often measures the term by student gains on standardized test scores from one year to the next.

Supporting teacher effectiveness is an increasingly pressing issue in education policy discussions at the federal, state, and local levels. Decades of research have shown that teacher quality is a large determinant of students’ abilities to make gains in academic achievement. Districts often attempt to support teacher effectiveness with professional development (PD) opportunities. However, new research by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has found that existing PD is often of low quality and ineffective. Research from the NSDC indicates that although over 90% of teachers have participated in some sort of PD, most teachers say that much of the professional development learning available is not useful¹.

Recent federal legislation addressing inequities in teacher quality:

Recent federal legislation frames teacher effectiveness as an issue of equality. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 requires states to “...take actions to improve teacher effectiveness...in order to address inequities in the distribution of highly qualified teachers between high- and low-poverty schools...”

The Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL) in Chicago and Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) in California are leaders in the implementation of high quality PD opportunities for teachers that support the continuous improvement of teaching and student achievement .

Academy for Urban School Leadership, Chicago, IL:

The Academy for Urban School Leadership (AUSL), a nonprofit educational organization partnered with Chicago Public Schools, creates a pipeline of new, effective teachers through innovative teacher induction and continuous PD support.

- AUSL trains new teachers through its Urban Teacher Residency (UTR) program in which pre-service teachers spend one year in the classroom of an experienced, mentor teacher.
- AUSL provides continuous PD at its “turnaround schools” by:
 - Tailoring PD to individual teacher needs, based on bi-weekly analysis of student data and teacher performance, and
 - Allowing teachers to work one-on-one with mentors to develop and execute individual teacher improvement plans.

AUSL has been successful at improving teacher retention: 87% of UTR participants have remained in the teaching field after five years of service, a rate much higher than the national average of 50%. All turnaround schools have seen steady increases in Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) scores. In addition, 93% of the turnaround schools’ first graduating class (2008) enrolled in college.

Long Beach Unified School District, CA:

The Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) has developed a school- and classroom-embedded, multifaceted approach to PD that:

- Is determined by student and teacher needs,
- Is closely linked to classroom practice,
- Involves opportunities for collaboration with colleagues,
- Is embedded in the daily routine of teachers, and
- Empowers school leaders to support new teaching methods and practices.

As a result, LBUSD, a five-time Broad Prize nominee, outperforms other districts in California serving students with similar income levels and demographics.

¹ National Staff Development Council (2009). “Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad.” Stanford: National Staff Development Council and The School Redesign Network.