

re:VISION

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A WISE INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

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Professional development is big business. Not just because of the amount of money spent on in-service days and training, but because in any organization, the most valuable asset is its people. Business and professional leaders recognize the importance of continued learning to the success of an organization and invest in opportunities that promote ongoing knowledge and skills building.

Nowhere is this investment in human capital more important than in education, where a large percentage of its people – teachers – are responsible for educating the future workforce. Teacher effectiveness is front and center on the state and national policy agenda. New rigorous standards and new economic demands have led to an emerging consensus that **teacher quality matters**. Research indicates that classroom teachers are the most important school-based factor affecting student achievement. ⁱ

There were more than three million full-time teachers in 2013. Approximately one quarter of a million newcomers enter the teaching profession each year. As a result, teacher professional development has reentered the public debate as state education agencies and local school districts wrestle with federal and state requirements designed to hold teachers accountable for student achievement.

How to design, support, and sustain effective teacher professional development is an increasingly complex policy area for states. The data on how much is spent, where, and on what is complicated. A 2014 study commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation found that \$18 billion is spent annually on professional development and a typical teacher spends 68 hours each year on professional learning activities. When self-guided professional learning and courses are included, the annual total comes to 89 hours. ⁱⁱ

To attain the promise of college and career readiness for all students, the investment in teacher professional development must be supported by policy that provides districts, schools, and teachers access to resources within an accountability structure that improves practice and replicates programs that have a track record of success.

State policy supporting high-quality teacher professional development must be a balance of regulation and innovation.

Learning from our growing understanding of how effective school and district-based professional learning communities establish themselves and develop, some states are reorienting professional development expenditures and accountability structures for a more supportive policy environment that focuses on:

- Local design and implementation flexibility;
- School-based and peer-based professional development;
- Continuous improvement strategies aligned to school reform; and
- Resource allocation to support implementation and innovation.



This issue of *re:VISION* summarizes the status of state professional development policies and strategies, and is designed to assist policymakers in identifying levers of change to consider when determining policies that support high-quality teacher professional development.

CURRENT CONTEXT

The approach to improving and sustaining teacher quality is based on a long-term investment in those who teach, chiefly through professional development.

While frequently professional development is referred to as “on-the-job” training, in education, teacher professional development denotes a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help teachers improve their knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness.ⁱⁱⁱ

Effective teacher professional development brings theory into practice. It translates a deepened knowledge base into improved instruction that leads to enhanced student achievement.

Professional development encompasses everything from day-long seminars, coaching provided by in-school specialists, and courses in content-specific subjects, to teachers working with one another to improve their skills.

Studies of high-quality teacher professional development indicate that the best professional development is ongoing, differentiated, experiential, collaborative, and connected to the type of student and classroom environment in which a teacher teaches.

Investing is Essential

Three distinct things that make teacher professional development a critical conversation at this time:

1. More challenging standards
2. Increasing accountability
3. Shifting demographics

Source: *Time for Teacher: Leveraging Expanded Time to Strengthen Instruction and Empower Teachers*. National Center on Time and Learning.

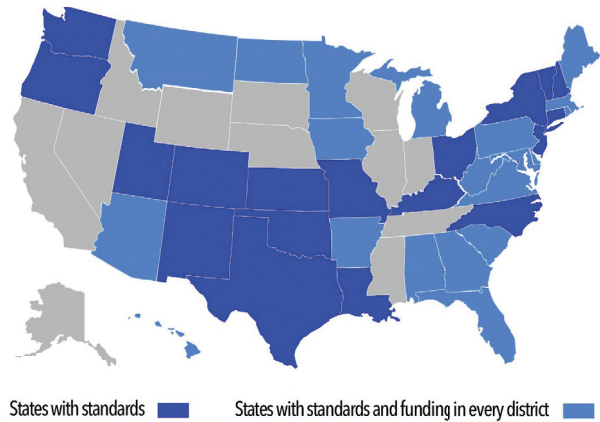
State policies have traditionally focused almost exclusively on the amount of time required and the types of opportunities that can be used for licensure, not the **quality or relevance** of professional development completed. Decisions about content and delivery are typically left to schools and districts.

Many states attempt to unite this collection of professional development opportunities through the use of **professional development standards**. The most recent *National Center for Education Statistics* data shows that 39 states use professional development standards to guide the design and execution of professional development experiences – but for many states this regulation is complicated by the absence of a state funding lever. Of the 39, 21 states both fund professional development and have standards, and 23 finance professional development at the state level in every district.^{iv} (See map)

Examples of the areas of decision-making for schools, districts, and states as providers of professional development appear to be stand-alone policy areas but are in fact interdependent.

From simple to complex, the investment in teacher professional development must yield results for students.

There is a clear variation in quality, delivery, content, and outcomes for teacher professional development. The most common approach is the occasional short-term lecture or workshop, whether in-person or online. More than 90



percent of teachers attend these kinds of professional development every year.^v Of the 89 hours teachers spend in professional development activities, most (57 percent) receive no more than two days of professional development in the **subject area they teach**, just 23 percent receive more than four days.^{vi}

A 2014 study on teacher views of professional development found that the most often-cited barriers to participation in high-quality professional development are:

- **Insufficient time;**
- **Lack of financial resources to pay for the professional development they want;**
- **Learning that is not customized enough to the content they teach and the skills they need to develop; and**
- **A lack of continuity between professional development sessions.**^{vii}

Examples of Professional Development Policy Levels of Control

School

- Coaching/mentoring provided by in-school specialists
- Interventions arising from accountability and performance evaluation
- Collaborative time teachers spend with each other on planning and instruction

District

- Teacher induction programs
- Content-specific professional development courses
- Training in new procedures and technologies associated to school reform success
- Resource allocation to schools
- Alignment with instruction and assessment

State

- Statutory and regulatory compliance programs (licensing, testing, evaluation)
- Higher education courses for certification/re-certification or advancement
- Data collection
- Approval of standards
- Regulation of providers

In 2011-12,

the percentage of teachers that participated in any professional development in the previous 12 months was 99 percent for public school teachers and 95 percent for private school teachers. About 85 percent of public school teachers and 67 percent of private school teachers actually participated in professional development and focused on the subject(s) they taught.^{viii}

Teachers often use professional development opportunities to work towards advanced degrees. This practice is encouraged by salary schedules and certification requirements. Currently, more than 50 percent of the nation's teachers hold advanced degrees.^{ix} Twenty states currently tie lane salary increases to holding a master's or other advanced degree.^x In many states, including Indiana, Utah, Virginia and Maryland, the top tier of licensure is reserved for those with a master's degree.

Often participation in professional development courses allows teachers to accrue credit for recertification. Full licensure renewal, usually every five or six years, has largely required the completion of professional development hours. In 35 states, licensure renewal requires the completion of a defined quantity of professional development hours. This varies from 90 to 200 hours^{xi} or workshop attendance in standardized courses. For example, both Alabama and Illinois have established criterion that links student achievement to the evaluation of teacher effectiveness.^{xii}

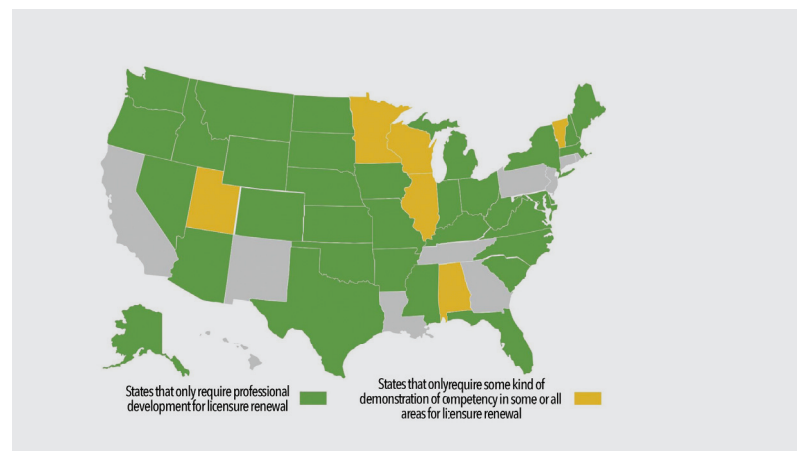
Finding time to engage in learning

The largest expense in professional development, regardless of the type, is paying for the **time** teachers need to be able to participate. The conventional way

states have structured the working time of teachers is a substantial barrier to a more integrated and job-embedded professional development model.

Teachers in the United States have less planning time and fewer opportunities to collaborate, share, and discuss student work during the school year than in other countries.^{xiii} Elementary school teachers in the United States teach 20 percent more than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average. Secondary teachers teach 33 percent more than the OECD average. They do so in a shorter standard school year of 36 weeks compared to other countries. Canada, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain have 37 week school years. Austria, Belgium, Finland, Israel, Norway, England, Scotland, New Zealand, Italy, Australia, Japan, Korea, Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark all have school years of 38 weeks or more.^{xiv}

States and districts have begun to adopt policies and build strategies to extend learning time, while also including time for job-embedded professional development. These programs rely heavily on local design and implementation.



“The crux of the problem appears to be an incentive structure that rewards seat time rather than improved performance. Policymakers need to consider better ways to structure incentives so that teachers engage in professional development directly related to their work with the potential to improve their practice and ultimately their effectiveness.”^{xv}

- Dan Goldhaber
Director of the Center for Education Data and Research

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Teachers want and need support to develop their practice so that their students can succeed. Currently, the way in which schools and districts deliver professional learning is highly fragmented and characterized by key disconnects between what decision-makers intend and the professional learning teachers actually experience.^{xvi} The *National Council on Research* asserts that teachers learn better in environments that are:

- **Learner-centered** - built on the individual strengths, interests, and needs of the teacher;
- **Knowledge-centered** - discipline-specific content knowledge for teaching, rather than learning generic teaching approaches;
- **Assessment-centered** - encourages teachers to test new approaches to learning and receive feedback; and

- **Community-centered** - involves collaboration and learning creating communities of practice.

Trying to determine the direct effect on student achievement is difficult because much of what is characterized as professional development does not have a direct link to instruction. **Content-focused** professional development, which is aligned to subject areas such as math, science, and language arts, however, provides a more robust research base because the measure of professional development effectiveness can be directly linked to student outcomes.^{xvii}

The growing understanding of Adult Learning Theory and how professional development opportunities can be enriched is encouraging. Teaching improves, and student achievement flourishes, when teachers routinely

Definitions:

Professional learning communities (PLCs) create an environment in which groups of educators with a collective responsibility for student learning collaborate in regular peer-to-peer interactions to deepen their skills and knowledge base. PLC members who share a learning vision because of their workplace (school), content knowledge (e.g. middle school math teachers, early reading specialists), or grade level engage collaboratively in dialogue to ensure school improvement and student achievement.

Job-embedded professional development directly addresses the content area and teaching practice, style, and habits of individual teachers; is integrated into the work day of teachers; is most often connected to coaching; and is a year-round process.

Adult Learning Theory emphasizes that adults are self-directed and expected to take responsibility for decisions. This means that effective design must inform adults as to why they need to learn a particular thing, must be experiential and approach learning as problem-solving, and be on a topic of immediate value that is problem-oriented. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning experiences.

communicate with each other about students and practice, have access to an array of instructional resources, and have mentors to guide their development. These findings are consistent with what is generally known about successful adult learning and training strategies.

A professional learning communities model that is **job-embedded is a shift away from the traditional workshop** model where teachers receive lecture-style information in a short time frame with little or no subsequent support. There is, however, still an appropriate role for the traditional workshop and lecture when further clarification

around changes in statutes, regulations, or policies is required.

As the conversation on teacher accountability elevates and the evidence-base expands, research that produces solid evidence of what works can guide both traditional and professional learning community models.

STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:

(As defined by Learning Forward, an organization that builds the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning.)

Learning Communities. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

Resources. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

Learning Designs. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

Outcomes. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Leadership. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

Data. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

Implementation. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

Given the investment in professional development throughout a teacher's career, it is important to understand the types of policies that states are implementing and the results of those policies in four key areas: local design and implementation flexibility; school and peer-based professional development; continuous improvement strategies aligned to reform; and resource allocation to support implementation and innovation.

There is no one right answer – participation requirements vary significantly across states and across districts – but there is one goal: to ensure students receive an education that is the best in the world. Raised expectations for students means raised expectations for teachers.

Teacher preparation programs get teachers into the profession; high-quality professional development keeps them there.



LOCAL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION FLEXIBILITY

Promoting local planning

Professional development is considered more of a compliance exercise than a learning activity for many teachers today. States can play a role by allowing each district to choose its own professional development policies, which are reasonable and practical, and then provide support or information to aid districts in professional development decisions as a clearinghouse for effective professional development strategies. States

can act as catalysts for local design and planning of professional development by creating or encouraging districts and schools to use intermediary organizations to plan, coordinate, and execute professional development programs. One emerging trend is the regional coordination institution. These institutes monitor, screen, and distribute resources, including professional development resources, and provide a forum for local districts and schools to coordinate programs, activities, and strategies.



SCHOOL AND PEER-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODELS

Building teacher-led professional development and shared leadership

The role of principal has evolved to include responsibility for improving the quality of instruction in his or her school. From a simple time-management perspective, this is a role that is best shared with effective teachers. Using highly effective teachers in shared leadership roles improves instruction in the school and promotes a culture of shared responsibility for improving student learning. This approach represents a rethinking and repositioning of teacher duties.

Some states are beginning to respond through the reform or creation of multi-tier licensure systems. These systems are characterized by upper tiers beyond that of initial and full licensure. To this point, state licensure systems with upper tiers have generally used them to recognize teachers with advanced degrees or National Board Certification. Expanding the concept of tiered licensure provides a pathway for excellent teachers to take on new instructional leadership and mentoring roles, including leading job-embedded professional development initiatives.

Innovative Professional Development (iPD) Project

Beginning in 2013-14, Fresno and Long Beach, CA; Jefferson County, CO; Lake County, FL; and Tulsa, OK; have partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to reform professional development in their school districts. The goal of the project is to move professional development to a more collaborative basis, characterized by better identification of individual development needs. This is accomplished through better use of multiple sources of data, the utilization of appropriate development methods matched to teacher needs, and the use of feedback and evaluation to promote continuous improvement. The three-year project benefits from the evaluation efforts of MDRC, a social policy research organization. This evaluation will examine the change process, analyze district and school trends, and conduct studies of 'critical' cases of schools and teachers.^{xviii}



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

“*In the new American era of outcomes-based education, the balance between federal and state education policy will be of paramount importance in guaranteeing that high school graduates are college and career ready.*”

Christopher T. Cross

Political Education: Setting the Course for State and Federal Policy Columbia University Press, New York, 2014

If teacher professional development strategies are to be successfully implemented, there must be **consensus** among stakeholder groups about the focus. State policy can serve as a catalyst in establishing and encouraging relationships between higher education and other institutions and organizations connected with teacher preparation and teacher quality to initiate, promote, and monitor necessary professional development reform.

Changing certification and recertification requirements

Part of the multi-faceted reform work being done in the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) *Network for Transforming Educator Preparation* (NTEP) is to reform licensure in order to better ensure teaching quality, and promote classroom readiness at the start of and throughout a teacher's career. This work is in the early stages in seven states – Washington, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Georgia.

The key reforms being discussed and implemented include moving to requiring that teachers reach performance-based benchmarks based on student achievement, and observations of classroom teaching, among others.

Performance-based licensure has the capacity to substantially enable professional development reform. It minimizes the role of the lecture-based summer opportunities and releases resources for job-embedded professional development linked to student outcomes.

Currently, only six states – **Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, New Mexico, Tennessee** and **Rhode Island** – use the achievement of a teacher's students in certificate renewal decisions.^{xix}

Improving tracking and evaluation

With the advent of the accountability age, teacher professional development is at a crossroads. One obvious conclusion from the evaluation and budget data on

professional development is that, going forward, states will need better data if there is to be long-term improvement in teacher quality and student outcomes. The range of experiences that count as professional development make measuring its effectiveness a challenge. Scholars acknowledge that we need more empirically valid methods of studying professional development. There must be an emphasis on data-driven decision-making. Just as the data on content-specific professional development's link to student outcomes is expanding, data must be collected that show a direct link between other forms of teacher professional development and student outcomes.

Providing digital resources

Web-based resources are revolutionizing professional development just as they are revolutionizing schooling in general. Suppliers are beginning to leverage technology to address teacher needs for collaborative and customized learning opportunities. The use of web-based resources broadens school and district access to a vast array of

States should consider surveying K-12 teachers and principals on professional development they need in order for college and career readiness standards to be fully implemented.

Source: ECS Blueprint for College Readiness October, 2014 <http://blueprint.ecs.org/>

instructional improvement resources. **On-time, on-demand** learning plays an enormous role in providing professional development services to districts. The challenge for states is to ensure high-quality and ready-access **infrastructure**.



RESOURCE ALLOCATION TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION AND INNOVATION

Policymakers and education leaders must leverage effective teacher professional development as an asset to manage human talent because research has proven two things: **teacher quality drives student achievement and policy drives practice.**

Talent turnover is expensive. Kim Ruyle, author of *Measuring and Mitigating the Cost of Employee Turnover*, found that “the average cost of turnover is 150 percent of the departing employees’ annual salary and that turnover

in the first two years of employment is particularly disruptive and expensive.”^{xx}

The absence of tools for ensuring fit with the role and a lack of retention initiatives that support an employee’s career growth are leading to a less diverse workforce and to poor hiring decisions across the board. Ruyle’s research supports that “team members who feel they are growing, and that there is a clear avenue for the acquisition of new skills and responsibilities are far more likely to stay with an organization.”^{xxi}

ESEA Title II-A The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA), as amended, provides funds to states and districts to improve the quality of their teachers and administrators in order to raise student achievement. These funds are provided through ESEA Title II, Part A (*Improving Teacher Quality State Grants-Subgrants to LEAs*). Under ESEA, states can use funds for a variety of teacher quality activities in any subject area.

Source: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg20.html>

Development is key to retention. In today's fiscally constrained environment, states still have choices about how to use current professional development budgets. Reallocating professional development resources is one option states can use to promote effective development strategies, and sunset established ones with little or no track record of success.

What does all the spending on personnel, programming, and teacher released time actually buy? The tracking of professional development expenditures is complicated by the multiple sources of funding (federal, state, local, nonprofit, and community-based) and the accounting practices that tend to group money spent on training and development with other spending.

MOVING FORWARD

The conversation about supporting professional learning systems that lead to better support for teachers and have a greater impact on student learning **must move from “whether” to “how.”**

Investing in teachers by investing in professional development that is high quality and transferable is a complex issue. There is no universal agreement about the way forward. **The practice of investing in teachers is essential – student outcomes depend on it. We know**

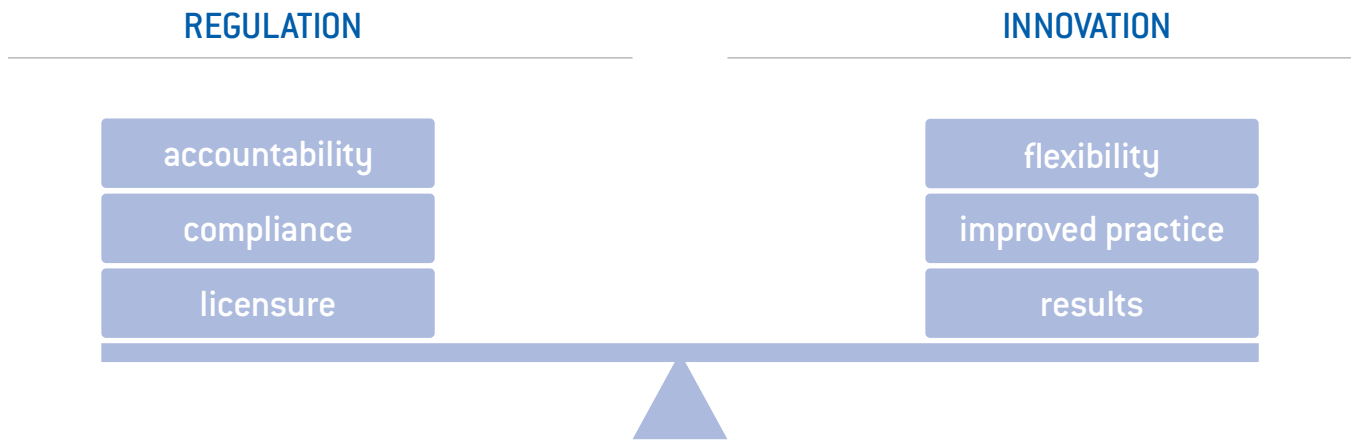
Recent cost estimates indicate between two and five percent of urban district budgets are spent on professional development. Estimates on expenditures per teacher vary significantly from \$2,000 to upwards of \$16,000. U.S. Department of Education data show that just under five percent of total expenditures by public elementary and secondary schools is spent on “instructional staff services,” which includes curriculum development, libraries, and media/computer costs, as well as staff training. Federal distributions, especially via Title II-A — which totaled \$2.3 billion in 2014 — are a substantial contributor to this spending.^{xxii} Just two and a half percent of this goes to states; the rest goes to districts.

The public dollars that support teachers' professional development are concentrated in district budgets. Directly or indirectly, districts control 80 percent of staff development resources flowing from the state.

that policy drives practice. Successful implementation is dependent upon a strong commitment from all stakeholder groups, particularly policymakers. This commitment will require a reexamination of laws, policies, funding, and structures at the local school level and state education level. **State policymakers have the opportunity to make informed choices about investments that are both practical and reasonable within the fiscal environment.**

KEY POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

To address many of the current barriers to effective teacher professional development, policymakers will need to create a policy environment that balances **regulation** and **innovation**.



Discussions must include policies that:

- Are designed for **impact** even in the absence of additional resources;
- Provide funding to **incentivize and support** high-quality, job-embedded professional learning opportunities that may include adjustments to school day structure, school calendar year, and required teacher time;
- Incentivize K-12 and higher education **partnerships and collaboration**;
- Establish a statewide system to **scale up** programs with proven results;
- **Monitor** the professional development policy framework at regular intervals;
- **Identify** the agencies responsible for ensuring high-quality professional development opportunities that are equitable, taking demographic and geographic factors into consideration;
- Incentivize **innovation**;
- Maintain and support **local flexibility**;
- Allow for the **strategic allocation** of education funding and requirements for how resources are invested;
- Provide a **transition period** for schools and districts to implement and innovate without penalty;
- **Include** key stakeholder groups in the conversations; and
- Define a clear role for state **regulatory** agencies.

Specific state examples can be found at
<http://www.hunt-institute.org/?p=1361>

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