



## Professional Learning: An Analysis

An analysis of existing research on effective professional learning.

Conducted by the National Staff Development Council and Stanford University—published February 2009.

To access copies of the short and/or full versions of the report: <http://www.nsd.org/stateproflearning.cfm>



## Findings

### The Status of Professional Learning (partial list):

- Most U.S. teachers (92%) participate in some form of professional development (PD) every year.
- Much PD focuses on academic subject matter, but not with much depth. Research suggests that PD of 14 hours or less has no effect on student learning, while longer-duration programs (30-100 hours) show positive and significant effects on student achievement. Across 9 studies, student achievement was boosted approximately 21 percentile points with an average of 49 hours of PD contact annually.
- Nearly half of all U.S. teachers are dissatisfied with their opportunities for PD. Most were not enthusiastic about the usefulness of the PD they had received, perhaps due to brevity, lack of fit, or low quality,
- U.S. teachers tend to receive little funding or other support that might allow them to participate in additional PD. Very few teachers report having the opportunity to engage in more than two days of PD in one year.

*Rigorous research illustrates the shortcomings of the occasional, one-shot workshops that many systems tend to provide.*

### An Effective Professional Learning System Includes:

- A culture of continuous learning, sustained over time. This may include “informal” PD such as shared planning and tools for self-reflection.
- A focus on **specific, important** content, connected to practice (relevant), hands-on.
- Professional collaboration (such as learning teams). This leads to an increase in consistency, willingness to share, and problem solving.
- A balance of pressure (accountability) and support (encouragement, resources).
- Data-driven decisions—for planning and improving.
- High expectations.
- Substantial contact hours (30-100 hours).

*Intensive PD, especially when it includes application of knowledge to planning and instruction, has a greater chance of influencing practices, and, in turn, gains in student learning.*

Well-designed PD **CAN** influence practice!

### Key Questions For DASH Funded Partners:

- Given these findings, how might DASH funded programs build their capacity to provide high-quality PD that is effective in improving the health, education and well-being of youth?
- What will PD success look like?