

# Best Practices in Teacher Professional Development

## Teacher PD Best Practice #1 DURATION OF 30+ HOURS

- The duration of professional development must be significant and ongoing to allow time for teachers to learn a new strategy and grapple with the implementation problem.
- Professional development that is longer in duration has a greater impact on advancing teacher practice, and in turn, student learning.

## Teacher PD Research Findings #1 DURATION OF 30+ HOURS

- *Research Finding:* When professional development ranges from 30 to 100 hours, with an average of 49 hours, there was a positive and significant effect on student achievement (TNIS, nd; Yoon et al., 2007)
- *Research Finding:* In nine different experimental research studies of teacher professional development, all found that programs of greater duration were positively associated with teacher change and improvements in student learning (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009)

## Teacher PD Best Practice #2 ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

- Teachers' initial exposure to a concept should not be passive, but rather should engage teachers through varied approaches so they can participate actively in making sense of a new practice.
  - During training, teacher participants should be placed in real situations that models desired classroom approaches to project a clearer vision of the proposed change.
    - EX: Inquiry-focused activities, interactive lectures, and hands-on lab/field experiences
  - Teachers should have opportunities for actively engaging in meaningful discussion of the content they teach.
    - EX: modeling, demonstrating, and practicing lessons, observing expert teachers and being observed by their peers, planning classroom implementation, and reviewing student work.

## Teacher PD Research Findings #2 ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

- *Research Finding:* Teachers are more effective in engaging students in active, "hands-on-minds-on" learning when they possess subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge that goes beyond what is typically gained in one-shot professional development programs (TSIN, nd; Rhoton & Wojnowski, 2006; CAP, 2013)

## Teacher PD Best Practice #3 MODELING/DEMONSTRATIONS

- Modeling has been found to be highly effective in helping teachers understand a new practice.
  - Have an expert demonstrate instructional strategy.
  - Have teachers view a video of an instructional strategy.
  - Have teachers visit another school for a Learning Walk or demonstration lesson.
  - **Teacher Learning Channel**
    - EX: [PBL for ELLS](#)

## Teacher PD Research Findings #3 MODELING/DEMONSTRATIONS

- *Research Finding:* While many forms of active learning help teachers decipher concepts, theories, and research-based practices in teaching, modeling — when an expert demonstrates the new practice — has been shown to be particularly successful in helping teachers understand and apply a concept and remain open to adopting it (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005; Carpenter et al., 1989; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Garett et al., 2001; Desimone et al., 2002; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007; Saxe, Gearhart, & Nasir, 2001; Supovitz, Mauger, & Kahle, 2000).

# Best Practices in Teacher Professional Development

## Teacher PD Best Practice #4 DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC CONTENT

- The content presented to teachers should be specific to the discipline (for middle school and high school teachers) or grade-level (for elementary school teachers).
  - Professional development should involve less teachers per topic, not more.

## Teacher PD Research Findings #4 DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC CONTENT

- **Research Finding:** Several studies, for instance, have shown that professional development that addresses discipline-specific concepts and skills has been shown to both improve teacher practice, as well as student learning (Blank, de las Alas & Smith, 2007; Carpenter et al., 1989; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Lieberman & Wood, 2001; Merek & Methven, 1991; Saxe, Gearhart, & Nasir, 2001; Wenglinsky, 200; McGill-Franzen et al., 1999).
- **Research Finding:** Teachers report that their top priority for professional development is learning more about the content they teach, giving high marks to training that is content-specific (Darling Hammond et al., 2009).
- **Research Finding:** Student achievement in science was higher in schools where teachers had extensive professional development related to specific science content (TSIN, nd; Rhoton & McLean, 2008).

## Teacher PD Best Practice #5 SUPPORT DURING IMPLEMENTATION

- There must be support for a teacher during the implementation stage that addresses the specific challenges of changing classroom practice.
  - Teachers need to be held accountable through deadlines and submission of lesson/implementation plans, implementation reports, and videos.
  - Teachers need just-in-time support during implementation.
  - Teachers need opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback.

## Teacher PD Research Findings #5 SUPPORT DURING IMPLEMENTATION

- **Research Finding:** Knight and Cornett (2009) found in a study of 50 teachers that those who had coaching along with an introductory workshop were significantly more likely to use the new teaching practice in their classes than those who only were only exposed to the workshop.
- **Research Finding:** There is a greater chance for improved student achievement when teachers have opportunities for continuous feedback after they have had a chance to practice what they are learning in the classroom (NCCTQ, 2011; Garet et al., 2001).
- **Research Finding:** Studies have found that when teachers are supported during this phase, they change their teaching practices. Truesdale (2003) studied differences between teachers attending just a workshop and teachers attending the workshop and then being coached through implementation. The study found that coached teachers transferred the newly learned teaching practices, but teachers who only had the workshop quickly lost interest in the skill and did not continue to use it in their classrooms.

## Teacher PD Best Practice #6 COLLABORATIVE PARTICIPATION

- Enables collective and collaborative participation of teachers (Professional Learning Community or Project Management Team)
  - Teachers from the same school, department or grade level are more likely to share resources and common curricular materials; integrate what they have learned into their own curriculum; and build a shared professional culture and learning community.
  - PLCs can provide accountability, just-in-time support, and ongoing feedback and discussion.

## Teacher PD Research Findings #6 COLLABORATIVE PARTICIPATION

- **Research Finding:** Professional learning communities are vital to teachers' identity formation, acting as the primary motivation for professional growth (NCCQT, 2011; Butler et al., 2004; Lieberman, 2009).
- **Research Finding:** Teachers develop expertise not as isolated individuals but through job-embedded professional development, and as members of collaborative, interdisciplinary teams with common goals for student learning (NCCQT, 2011; Hill et al., 2010).