



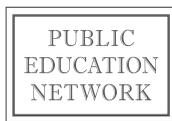
# Teacher Professional Development:

A Primer for Parents



Community Members





Public involvement. Public education. Public benefit.

Public Education Network (PEN) is a national organization of local education funds and individuals working to improve public schools and build citizen support for quality public education in low-income communities across the nation. PEN and its members are building public demand and mobilizing resources for quality public education on behalf of 11.5 million children in more than 1800 school districts in 33 states and the District of Columbia. In 2004, PEN welcomed its first international member, which serves almost 300,000 children in the Philippines.



The Finance Project is a nonprofit policy research, technical assistance, and information organization created to help improve outcomes for children, families, and communities nationwide. Its work is concentrated in several areas: education, family and children's services, vulnerable children and youth, and family economic security. Established in 1994, The Finance Project is a valuable intellectual and technical resource on key policy, program, financing, and sustainability issues for state and local officials, community leaders, service providers, K-12 educators, advocates, and others.

# Teacher Professional Development:

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- 3 Introduction
- 4 Higher Expectations/Greater Needs
- 5 Hiring New Teachers
- 7 In-Service Professional Development
- 8 Quality Professional Development Guidelines
- 13 Quality Professional Development Challenges
- 16 Supporting Quality Professional Development
- 19 Resources

## A message to advocates of teacher quality

Teachers today are under growing pressure to perform. But most new teachers are not adequately prepared to meet the needs of their students, and many experienced teachers have yet to adapt to new standards.

Just like practitioners in other professions, teachers need to deepen their knowledge and improve their skills over the course of their careers. Unfortunately, the need for quality professional development for those in the teaching profession all too often goes unmet. This publication suggests why this is so, proposes ways to rectify the situation, and offers resources for those who want to learn more.

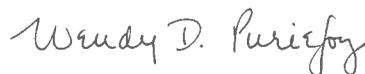
*Teacher Professional Development: A Primer for Parents and Community Members* is a collaborative effort of The Finance Project and Public Education Network (PEN). The Finance Project—a nonprofit policy research organization with a focus on financing, education, family and children services, and community development—spearheads the Ford Foundation-funded Collaborative Initiative on Financing Professional Development in Education. PEN is a national network of local education funds (LEFs) working to build citizen support for quality public education. Since their inception in 1983, LEFs have contributed over \$1 billion to improve teacher quality in the nation's public schools.

This primer on the importance of professional development for teachers is designed to give parents and community members an overview of professional development, and identifies steps they can take to support quality professional development for teachers. The text draws heavily on *The Delivery, Financing, and Assessment of Professional Development in Education: Pre-Service Preparation and In-Service Training*, published by The Finance Project in 2003. For more information on policy issues and current debates in the field, go to the Collaborative Initiative on The Finance Project's website, [www.financingpd.org](http://www.financingpd.org), for a clearinghouse of information on these issues. For guidance on implementing suggested action steps, go to the PEN website, [www.PublicEducation.org](http://www.PublicEducation.org), for helpful publications and additional contact information.

Teacher professional development is a vital tool for improving student learning. We hope this publication will bring this important issue to the attention of everyone who cares about quality in public education.



Cheryl Hayes  
Executive Director  
The Finance Project



Wendy D. Puriefoy  
President  
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**Q**uality teachers are the single greatest determinant of student achievement. Teacher education, ability, and experience account for more variation in student achievement than all other factors. Studies have found that 40 to 90 percent of the difference in student test scores can be attributed to teacher quality.<sup>1</sup> Knowing the subject matter, understanding how students learn, and practicing effective teaching methods translate into greater student achievement. Therefore, it is vitally important that teachers be well prepared when they begin teaching and that they continue to improve their knowledge and skills throughout their careers.

### What Do You Know About Teacher Professional Development?

To find out, take this true/false quiz on how teachers are trained and developed throughout their careers:

**Q.** All teachers need a degree in education before they can be licensed to teach.

**A.** *False. Licensing requirements vary from state to state. All states require at least a college degree in some subject—but not necessarily in education—and some states have developed alternative routes to licensure for candidates without traditional training in education.*

**Q.** There are national standards that all entry-level teachers must be able to meet before they are allowed to teach.

**A.** *False. In contrast to many other countries, the United States has no national standards for entry-level teachers. Each state determines its own standards and policies for training and licensing teachers.*

**Q.** The “highly qualified” provision in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act means the federal government now sets standards for all teachers.

**A.** *False. NCLB legislation sets minimum-level expectations about quality; it is up to each state to determine the definition of “highly qualified.”*

**Q.** State or federal standards can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of teacher professional development.

**A.** *False. The impact of professional development on instructional practice or student achievement is rarely evaluated. State education authorities typically do not require any evaluation of professional development.*



**When hiring new teachers, districts have little guidance to help them determine which candidates will be effective in the classroom.**

## Higher Expectations/Greater Needs

Now, more than ever, teachers are expected to demonstrate effectiveness in the classroom. As pressure for higher test scores mounts and states strive to comply with new federal requirements, the responsibility for raising student achievement falls, ultimately, on teachers. In the past decade, states and districts have implemented reforms that hold students to high standards of academic performance and their schools accountable for ensuring that all students meet those standards. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 made “accountability” an explicit requirement of federal education policy. Holding districts, schools, and, by extension, teachers publicly accountable for improving student performance reflects a big change from the days when students advanced routinely from grade to grade with little measurement of learning and few repercussions for students or teachers.

At the same time, the classroom environment has become more challenging, especially in under-performing schools. Increasing numbers of students are English language learners, have special education needs, or come from poverty, unstable families, or unsafe neighborhoods. Even though teaching these students presents greater challenges, accountability demands that schools and teachers ensure that they make academic progress.

If *all* students are to have a chance for success, they must have teachers who know how to teach every student to a high standard. Unfortunately, many teachers do not have the skills to do this nor are they equipped to confront the challenges and adverse conditions they are likely to face.

To make this difficult situation even worse, the most inexperienced and least prepared teachers are being disproportionately assigned to the most demanding schools and classrooms. Education is the only profession that assigns its newest hires to handle its most difficult cases.

Accountability measures are requiring more of teachers. Teachers, therefore, need more support to meet the demands of the new system and they need tools to meet higher expectations. Standards and accountability systems show schools what is broken, then sanction them if they don't fix it. These systems will fail to improve education outcomes for students if teachers, along with their principals and school administrators, do not have the knowledge and skills they need to implement strategies to effect change.<sup>2</sup>

## Hiring New Teachers

NCLB mandates that all states must have “highly qualified” teachers in every public school classroom by 2005, but there is no national standard for what this qualification means. Federal law says a newly hired teacher is highly qualified if that teacher has a bachelor’s degree in any subject, full state licensure or certification, and a passing grade on a state exam of subject knowledge and teaching skills or a major in the subject area. These requirements, however, do not constitute concrete standards since each state gets to define what highly qualified means via its licensure requirements, which vary widely from state to state, and the state teacher exams, which vary widely in terms of content and what constitutes a passing grade.

When hiring new teachers, districts have little guidance to help them determine which candidates will be effective in the classroom. Most teacher candidates either complete a traditional teacher preparation program or come to teaching through an alternative certification route. Both paths vary dramatically in substance and rigor. Teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities range from five- and six-year programs that require degrees in an academic subject and in education plus extensive clinical classroom experience, to standard four-year programs where teacher candidates take a handful of education classes and spend a few weeks in a classroom.

Alternative certification programs—created in response to concerns about the inadequate supply of qualified teachers and the effectiveness of traditional preparation—bring candidates to the teaching profession through non-traditional routes. Most target mid-career professionals with a bachelor’s degree, employ them as teachers while they are in the program, and confer a teaching license upon completion of the program. Some have challenging entrance requirements and provide supervision from experienced teacher mentors during lengthy clinical classroom experience combined with concurrent coursework; others are simply shortcuts into the classroom.<sup>3</sup> PEN’s *The Voice of the New Teacher* gives a more detailed look at the needs of new teachers and the support programs offered to them.

Given the variability in preparation, the repertoire of skills, knowledge, and experience a teacher brings into the classroom the first day on the job varies widely as well. Overall, state certification or licensure requirements provide little guidance and few standards by which principals can judge the applicant pool of prospective teachers. Since hiring decisions are made with relatively little information about the skills of the applicants, districts and schools must rely on professional development to improve the skills of all teachers.

### LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS

#### All 50 states

- Bachelor’s degree
- Subject matter coursework
- Pedagogical coursework
- Clinical experience

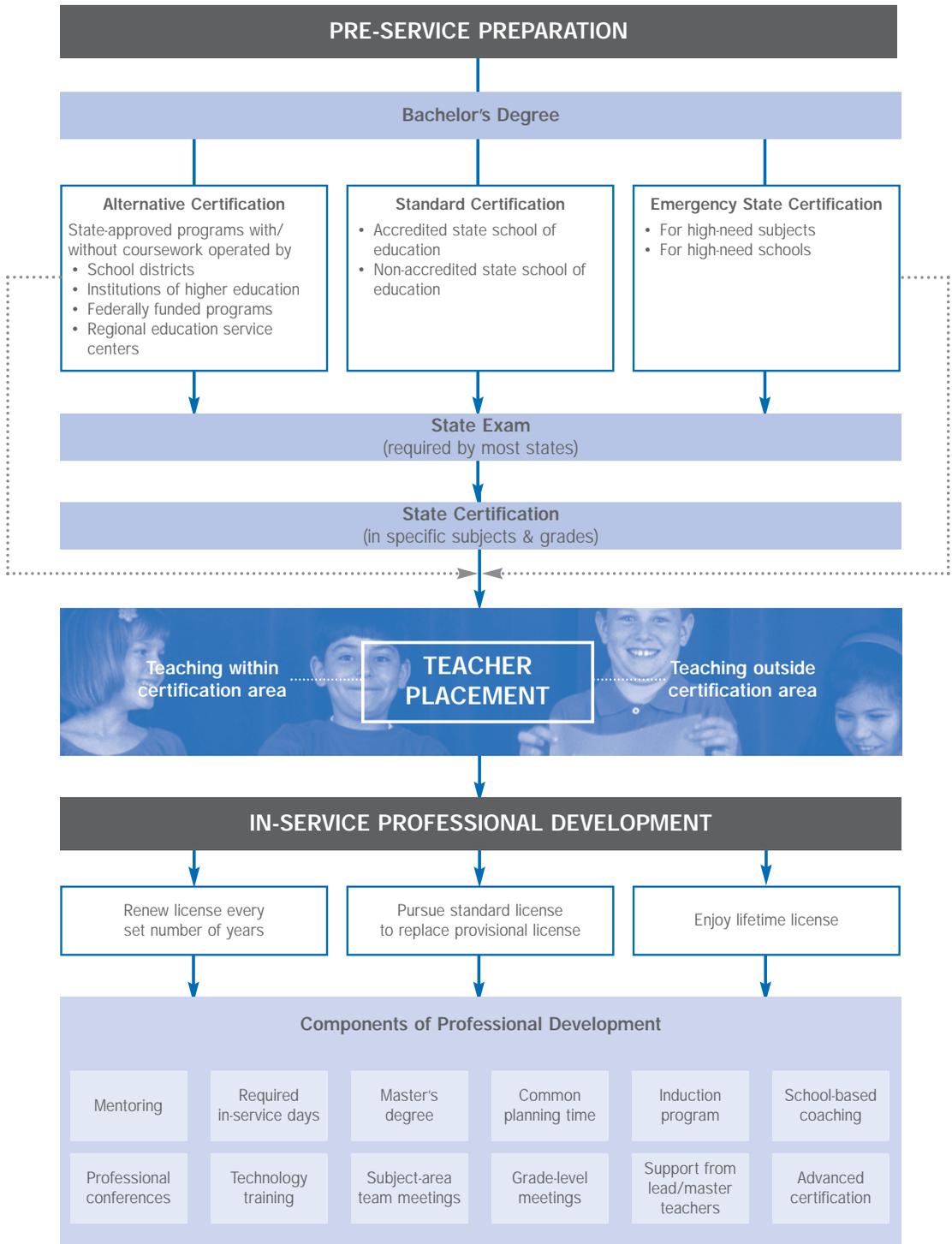
#### Majority of states

- Tests on basic skills, pedagogy, and subject knowledge
- A major in content area for high school teachers

#### Coursework required by some states

- Student learning process/developmental characteristics
- Social foundations of education
- Teaching methods for elementary or secondary subjects
- Teaching methods for reading
- Cultural diversity

# Components of Teacher Preparation and Training



## In-Service Professional Development

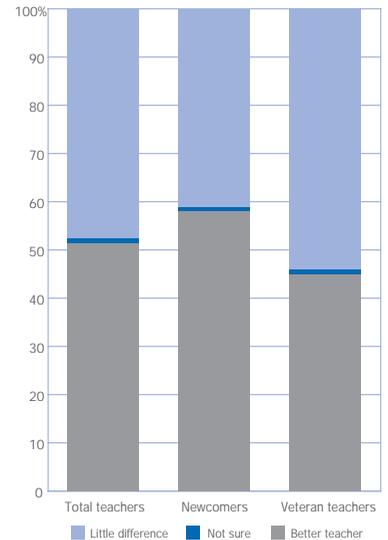
Even if all candidates met the highly qualified requirement, there still would not be enough to fill every position, and districts would still have no way of knowing how effective these candidates would be in the classroom. The demand for teachers often exceeds supply, particularly in low-performing schools. Given the sheer number of people needed to staff the nation's schools, it is not feasible for districts to hire a brand new batch of highly qualified teachers to replace the ineffective ones they might have in their systems. Furthermore, even the most prepared, genuinely qualified new teachers still have a great deal to learn when they begin to teach full time. The most relevant coursework and extensive clinical teaching experience is no substitute for the daily responsibility and unexpected challenges that come with being in charge of a classroom.

Schools, therefore, need to retain and develop the teaching force they have in place. Since these teachers vary greatly in terms of preparation, experience, and expertise, they also vary greatly in terms of their professional development needs. Districts bear the responsibility of responding to all these needs and fostering the development of teachers so that all students receive quality instruction.

States are given significant leeway in defining what constitutes a highly qualified teacher as designated by NCLB. Every state can create an alternative to the testing or subject-area major requirement. Alternatives proposed to date include measures such as completing relevant coursework and improving student achievement. Some states, however, include less demanding measures such as years of experience or sponsoring an academic club. Other states have skirted federal requirements by making their highly qualified standards identical to their certification standards, which means that all certified teachers are automatically considered to be highly qualified.<sup>4</sup>

Given the transformative potential of professional development—and the federal, state, and contractual requirements for districts to provide it—districts invest significant resources in professional development. In many districts, this investment comprises as much as 6 percent of total operating expenditures, which can translate into millions of dollars.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the money is often spent on professional development that teachers neither want nor need, and rarely is it tied to overall district goals for student achievement. In a survey conducted by Public Agenda, 50 percent of teachers polled report that the professional development they receive makes little difference to them as teachers.<sup>6</sup>

## Does Professional Development Make You a Better Teacher?



Source: Stand By Me: What Teachers Really Think About Unions, Merit Pay, and Other Professional Matters. Public Agenda. 2003

**In a survey conducted by Public Agenda, 50 percent of teachers polled report that the professional development they receive makes little difference to them as teachers.**

## Quality Professional Development Guidelines

NCLB requires states to increase the percentage of teachers receiving high-quality professional development each year. The law encourages partnerships between districts and schools of education and defines high quality professional development programs as those that are “sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused...and are not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences.”<sup>7</sup> While NCLB says these characteristics are required “in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher’s performance in the classroom,” information on how to make that happen is hard to find.

Districts expend significant resources to provide professional development, not only because they are obligated to do so by law, but because they hope it will help them meet their student achievement goals. As a result, districts need reliable information on what kind of professional development works so they can get a good return on their investment. They need to be able to recognize quality professional development and know what kind of professional development has proven to be effective in raising student achievement.

## Correlative Links to Higher Student Test Scores

While the education field can provide guidance on characteristics associated with quality professional development, it is much more difficult to demonstrate that professional development has a causal effect on student achievement since there are so many variables involved—teacher characteristics, student characteristics, changes at school, circumstances in the home. Only a handful of research studies have been able to demonstrate that professional development has resulted in an improvement in student outcomes, and those were studies of isolated and controlled initiatives.<sup>9</sup>

The strongest links between professional development and student achievement can be found in induction programs and in support for new teachers. Professional development in the form of mentoring programs provides critical support to teachers during the pivotal early stages of their careers. Without initial and ongoing support, new teachers are twice as likely to leave the teaching profession.<sup>10</sup> A number of studies have shown that, during the first five years of a teacher’s career, student achievement correlates with years of teaching experience.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, stemming the tide of teachers leaving the profession has significant implications for student learning. Professional development, along with a supportive working environment that includes strong principal leadership, helps to keep teachers in the classroom and ensure a return on the substantial investment expended to prepare them.

There is also evidence pointing to a correlative effect between continuing professional development programs and improved student learning. Districts that have made improvements in their professional development activities have seen a rise in student achievement. The Learning First Alliance (LFA) examined five high poverty districts with a record of increasing student achievement through a focus on effective instruction.

## Characteristics of Quality Professional Development

- Continuous learning, not a one-time seminar
- Focused on improving classroom practice and increasing student learning
- Embedded in the daily work of teaching, not relegated to special occasions or separated from the learning needs of students
- Centered on crucial teaching and learning activities—planning lessons, evaluating student work, and developing curriculum
- Cultivated in a culture of collegiality that involves sharing knowledge and experience on the same student improvement objectives
- Supported by modeling and coaching that teaches problem-solving techniques
- Based on investigation of practice through case study, analysis, and professional discourse<sup>8</sup>

LFA selected districts based, in part, on a reputation for effective professional development practices and considered student achievement through improved test scores across grades, subjects, and racial and ethnic groups.<sup>12</sup> Research conducted by The Finance Project found innovative approaches to professional development such as research-based principles to guide planning, training, and the nurturing of instructional leadership teams; support systems for new teachers; prudent, strategic use of financial resources; and a focus on understanding and using student data to guide decisions.<sup>13</sup> As the report noted:

*Teachers and principals more readily shared ideas. The content of professional development was heavily rooted in the weaknesses revealed by student achievement data. Moreover, teachers worked more deliberately to assess student needs and adjust instructional practice. The thoughts of a Maryland teacher reflected those of many interviewed: “We are beginning to work smarter. We are doing individual assessments and are identifying needs and tailoring instruction.”<sup>14</sup>*

The National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) looked at professional development by studying practices that distinguish consistently high-performing schools. The NCEA framework for best practices—used by the Broad Foundation to evaluate candidates for the Broad Prize for Urban Education, an annual award given to districts for outstanding student achievement—evaluates a number of factors to include professional development. In their study of district finalists and winners, NCEA found a number of innovative approaches to professional development, including opportunities for collaborative learning and planning time, mentoring, and data-driven analysis of achievement. A Broad finalist explains:

*I see our gains through our staff development program. There are numerous training opportunities, and staff members are paid to attend. All training is research-based. Teachers have had release time to attend training....There is more classroom level support. We've aligned our materials to standards. The introduction of a standards-based report card changed focus in the classroom. The big systems approach has made the difference. We started with focused alignment*

*and provided resources. We then gave strategies, particularly for high school. There are multiple opportunities for demos and follow-up. A critical element is that those helping teachers are well trained.*

## Examples of Quality Professional Development

While professional development in many districts paints a rather bleak picture, there are a number of professional development programs that teachers say have helped them in the classroom, and others that research has demonstrated make a difference in retention and student learning.

Quality professional development can lead to important qualitative outcomes such as the creation of a positive school culture, improvement in individual teacher skills, and development of opportunities for peer learning. Good quality professional development gives teachers at all experience levels the tools they need to approach classroom challenges with confidence, and access to a professional community that can support their endeavors.



Communities have been successful in providing professional development that breaks the mold and that teachers find valuable. In Raleigh, NC, the Wake County Education Partnership (WCEP), a community-based public school advocacy organization and local education fund, provides technology training for teachers every spring and summer. WCEP's Technology Institute focuses on the use of technology to align lessons with state standards. Teacher instructors, who are called "Beacons," use a train-the-trainer model, enabling participating teachers to transfer what they've learned to other teachers at their schools. Teachers learn collaboratively and work in teams throughout the Institute; in some instances, administrators from participating schools also attend.

Participants have found this approach to professional development valuable and refreshing:

*This has been a wonderful experience. I have never been given the opportunity to really plan an integrated unit. The gift of time was unparalleled. I appreciated the chance to learn and apply skills I can really use in my classroom and share with my peers. It was so very valuable to be able to work as a team with adequate time and limited interruptions. We were treated as professionals and enjoyed the sharing of ideas with other leaders. Having administrators involved was a stroke of genius.<sup>15</sup>*



There are several individual professional development programs highly regarded by the teaching profession. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) offers National Board Certification, an extensive certification process that includes performance-based assessments of teaching portfolios and student work as well as thorough analyses of classroom teaching and student learning. Teachers must demonstrate subject-matter knowledge and an understanding of how to teach those subjects to their students. Teachers find this lengthy, intense process to be a powerful professional development experience that deepens their content knowledge and develops new instructional methods. A national survey of NBPTS candidates found that over 90 percent believed the process made them better teachers:

*The National Board Certification process was by far the best professional development I have been involved in. I did not realize how much I still needed to learn about impacting student learning. I learned so much through hours of analyzing and reflecting.*

*It caused me to dig deeper into lessons and bring out the best in my students.*

*It was an invaluable and life-changing experience.<sup>16</sup>*



Those teaching Advanced Placement (AP) courses, in which high school students prepare for a rigorous examination in the hope of earning college credits, report that they find the preparation needed to teach AP courses to be highly valuable professional development. AP workshop instructors, who are selected on the basis of their track record of achievement as measured by student success on the exam, often serve as mentors for novice AP instructors. Teachers receive subject-specific training on content and teaching methods. One AP teacher in American history explained why he found this professional development so effective:

*Because the instructors were the most successful teachers, they really knew what they were doing and were extremely effective. My peers were exceptionally smart and hardworking, and I continued to learn from them throughout the year. We were all focused on the same goal of helping our kids succeed in the course. The professional development was focused and targeted. It was in stark contrast to what I was receiving from the district—a hodgepodge blend of district policy and pedagogy, with no clear goal or ideas for what to do differently, usually delivered by videotape.*

## Quality Professional Development Challenges

Given their limited resources, districts need to use professional development dollars to help teachers who need it the most, in the most efficient manner. Yet, for a variety of reasons, it is often hard to tell if districts and schools are getting a good return on the professional development dollars they spend. Although a number of professional organizations have agreed on the characteristics of quality professional development (see page 9)—and NCLB reflects many of these—there is a disconnect between the identified parameters of quality professional development and the one-shot seminars most teachers receive.

There are also no accountability measures for how effective professional development is in helping teachers improve classroom practice—teachers tend to be asked if they enjoyed the training, not how they will use it in their classrooms. Furthermore, the degree to which professional development content and/or strategies are integrated into classroom practice is not part of teacher evaluations, nor is it part of the performance assessment of those who select which professional development activities are provided. Data management issues further add to the difficulty of tracking the difference professional development makes in specific classrooms.

### Who Calls the Shots?

The disconnect between the design principles of quality professional development and what is delivered in most districts can be attributed to the many players involved and to the fragmentation of their roles. The design and delivery of professional development is controlled by a number of entities at a number of levels, ranging from the federal government to the individual teacher. Each has an opportunity to shape professional development and each faces the challenge of aligning practice in the field with research and policy.

The federal government may set the tone of the national education agenda, but a great deal of the decision-making power for policies related to professional development is at the state and district level. NCLB consolidated federal funds previously limited to professional development with funds for reducing class size into one program, the Title II Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program.<sup>17</sup> States, however, have a great deal of flexibility in determining how the funds should be used and discretion in distributing the funds to districts and schools. States also set standards, allocate resources, require program evaluations, and sometimes administer statewide training programs and academies. Some states go even further and require districts to offer professional development in certain content areas, such as technology or mathematics.

## IN-SERVICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ROLES

### Federal Government

- Provides guidelines for boosting teacher quality
- Holds states accountable

### States

- Adopt standards
- Require district, school, and teacher plans
- Allocate resources
- Approve professional development providers
- Require evaluations
- Provide statewide training programs and academies
- Develop state plan

### Districts/Schools

- Adopt standards
- Develop a district plan
- Train principals and teacher leaders
- Evaluate professional development
- Provide support for teachers
- Deliver professional development
- Manage federal and state requirements

### Teachers

- Access online information and activities
- Attend conferences
- Participate in curriculum planning
- Work collaboratively
- Pursue National Board Certification

Districts make the ultimate decisions on what professional development their schools and teachers receive. They decide how to build leadership skills in principals and teachers; how much time will be allotted for teachers to collaborate; how—or, in some cases, whether—professional development will be evaluated; how new teachers will be mentored; and how to comply with state and federal requirements. Districts also negotiate contracts with teacher unions, or with teacher professional associations in right-to-work states without collective bargaining, that specify how many days of the school year will be devoted to professional development and how much planning and collaboration time teachers will have.

In addition to deciding how much control individual schools and teachers have over professional development programs, districts set policies that provide incentives for individual teachers to obtain master's degrees or additional certification and to participate in other professional development activities. Districts often offer a menu of development opportunities from which to choose; in exchange, participating teachers receive continuing education or license renewal credits. If a teacher decides to pursue a master's degree, districts will typically provide tuition reimbursement and an increase in salary once the degree is completed—irrespective of whether the degree is in education or the teacher's subject area, how well the institution conferring the degree is regarded, or the grade point average maintained by the teacher.

Funding for professional development is also fragmented, with funds coming from federal, state, local, and private sources. This often results in disjointed content supported by uncoordinated spending. With so many players having some degree of control, it should come as no surprise that professional development seldom reflects the model inputs and characteristics listed on page 9.

**Funding for professional development is also fragmented, with funds coming from federal, state, local, and private sources. This often results in disjointed content supported by uncoordinated spending.**



## Data Management Issues

Few states or districts have the data management capacity to link student achievement to teacher performance. Currently, there is no way to tell if the students taught by teachers who received a particular type of professional development are reaping any benefits. Data analysis is one way to evaluate what type of professional development works best for specific teachers so that teachers and districts can design programs that translate into student achievement.

Another daunting data management issue is how to use district budgets to allocate resources for student achievement goals. Professional development is expensive and disentangling its many parts—teacher salaries, professional development curricula, facilitation costs, incentives for advanced certification—from a complicated education budget is more work and expense than many districts are prepared to undertake.

## Accountability Issues

Many of the challenges in designing and delivering effective professional development arise from aspects unique to the teaching profession. Unlike other professionals, teachers have little financial or professional incentive to improve their skills through professional development. Teachers do not have a career ladder whereby promotions are earned upon mastery of new techniques or successful demonstration of new skills. In addition, teacher performance evaluations seldom measure whether teachers are translating professional development into effective classroom practice and student achievement. Instead, teachers tend to be rewarded solely for length of service. Obtaining a master's degree is an exception to this rule but, because most districts do not specify that the degree must be in relevant subject areas, the incentive for obtaining the degree exists whether or not the degree improves classroom instruction or student learning.

Professional development must be of high quality to be enticing and perceived as valuable. But professional development initiatives are rarely evaluated in a constructive manner. This overall lack of evaluation and accountability not only contributes to a lack of information about the usefulness or effectiveness of professional development, it gives teachers no incentive to take professional development seriously. Without incentives, teachers are not likely to participate in the professional development available to them.

**Teachers do not have a career ladder whereby promotions are earned upon mastery of new techniques or successful demonstration of new skills.**

## Supporting Quality Professional Development

Great teachers produce high-achieving students. At a time when raising student achievement has become the focus of national, state, and local education policies, reform solutions must serve all students, particularly those most in need of quality teaching. We have a responsibility to allocate our scarce resources effectively, investing in the development of great teachers so that all students can have high-quality instruction. That means all stakeholders—from the statehouse to the schoolhouse—have a responsibility to create a system of public education that provides quality teaching in every classroom as well as strong leaders in schools and district offices who strive to sustain professional learning for all staff.

### Parents Have a Role to Play

Professional development is a necessary ingredient for improved student achievement. Parents are partners in the education of their children and can support professional development in the following ways:

- Inquire about the commitment to professional learning opportunities when choosing or assessing a child's school. Check with teachers to see if they find their professional development options useful. Ask the school board about its professional development goals for the school year. This sends an accountability message that quality professional development matters, and that parents expect teachers to receive quality professional development.
- Volunteer to serve on the school improvement committee, which makes countless decisions that impact the quantity and quality of professional learning opportunities for teachers.
- Form a parents' group and focus on professional development as a topic.
- Attend teacher recognition and award ceremonies. Active participation and presence in the school lets teachers know that parents are supportive of and attentive to teacher quality. This, in turn, can motivate teachers to work on their instructional practice and deepen their skills.
- Volunteer your expertise and skills in the classroom. Being active and involved in the classroom will deepen your connection to the school and help advance student understanding of your area of expertise.
- Vote for greater financial investment in public schools. In times of fiscal stress, education is too often found on the cutting room floor in statehouse budgets. Take time to understand school funding or bond referenda issues so that you can vote with confidence in support of schools and quality professional development.
- Advocate for professional development that includes the characteristics listed on page 9.

- Pressure districts and states to move beyond talking about professional development and make the structural changes and resource allocations needed to turn rhetoric into reality:
  - Teacher evaluations that look at the degree to which teachers take what they learn and incorporate it into their pedagogy
  - Staffing policies that keep new hires from being assigned to the most difficult classrooms
  - Reimbursements for master's degrees—and salary increases related to master's degrees—that meet standards of quality and relevance
  - Evaluations of professional development that examine whether it is tied to state content standards, whether teachers find it helpful in their classrooms, and, ultimately, whether it leads to improved student learning

## Endnotes

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- 9 David Cohen and Heather Hill, *Learning Policy: When State Education Reform Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
- 10 Robin R. Henke, Xianglei Chen, Sonya Geis, and Paula Knepper, *Progress Through the Teacher Pipeline: 1992-93 College Graduate and Elementary/Secondary School Teaching as of 1997* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2000).
- 11 William L. Sanders and June C. Rivers, *Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, 1996).
- 12 Wendy Togneri and Stephen E. Anderson, *Beyond Islands of Excellence: What Districts Can Do to Improve Instruction and Achievement in all Schools* (Washington, DC: Learning First Alliance, 2003); Karen Hawley Miles and Linda Darling-Hammond, *Rethinking the Allocation of Teaching Resources: Some Lessons From High-Performing Schools* (Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1997).
- 13 Togneri and Anderson, op cit.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Megan Andrews, Wake Education Partnership, personal communication, 2004.
- 16 National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, *I Am a Better Teacher: What Candidates for National Board Certification Say About the Assessment Process* (Arlington, VA: NBPTS, 2001).
- 17 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (Washington DC, 2001).

## Resources

The National Staff Development Council is a non-profit professional association committed to ensuring success for all students through staff development and school improvement. [www.nsd.org](http://www.nsd.org)

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards offers National Board Certification, recognizing accomplished teachers through a rigorous performance assessment. [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)

Regional Educational Laboratories provide local and regional resources on a number of education topics, including professional development, teacher quality, and No Child Left Behind. [www.relnetwork.org](http://www.relnetwork.org)

The US Department of Education provides information on No Child Left Behind. [www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml](http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml)

The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality develops teacher leadership, builds coalitions, and conducts practical research to improve teacher quality. "Unfulfilled Promise: Ensuring High Quality Teachers for Our Nation's Students" explores how high-needs schools are implementing the high quality teaching mandates of NCLB. [www.teachingquality.org](http://www.teachingquality.org)

The National Center for Educational Accountability is a collaborative effort to improve learning through the effective use of school and student data and the identification of best practices. [www.nc4ea.org](http://www.nc4ea.org)

The Learning First Alliance is a partnership of leading education associations with more than 10 million members dedicated to improving student learning in America's public schools. [www.learningfirst.org](http://www.learningfirst.org)

### Resources from The Finance Project

[www.financingpd.org](http://www.financingpd.org)

*The Delivery, Financing, and Assessment of Professional Development in Education: Pre-Service Preparation and In-Service Training* provides an overview of the landscape of professional development and the issues associated with its financing.

*Profiles of Selected Promising Professional Development Initiatives* identifies promising new approaches to professional development in education.

*Framing the Field: Professional Development in Context* examines key factors and conditions that contribute to or hinder success among professional development initiatives.

### Resources from Public Education Network

[www.PublicEducation.org](http://www.PublicEducation.org)

*A Community Action Guide to Teacher Quality* is designed to help communities arrive at a better understanding of teachers and teaching, and the community role in attaining high-quality teaching.

*The Voice of the New Teacher* looks at the needs of new teachers in the context of quality teaching.

*Using NCLB to Improve Student Achievement: An Action Guide for Community and Parent Leaders* highlights ways NCLB can be used to strengthen the public's voice in education, and increase community and parental involvement in school- and district-level operations and decisions.

*Communities at Work* highlights strategic interventions used by local education funds to involve parents, business leaders, and a wide range of community members in education issues.



## **Acknowledgements**

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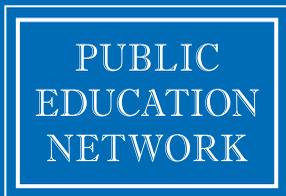
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