

## ELEMENTARY FOCUS

### Not So Elementary: Primary School Teacher Quality in Top-Performing Systems

*National Center on Education and the  
Economy, July 2016*

This paper gives new insights into a critical driver of the success of the world's top-performing education systems — developing elementary teachers with deep content knowledge. These high-performing



systems recognize that a strong foundation in the core subjects in the early grades increases the chances that all students will achieve at higher levels throughout their schooling. The report finds that teacher

preparation in Finland, Japan, Shanghai, and Hong Kong builds deep understanding of the content being taught in elementary schools as well as of how young students learn and understand that content — two essential components of highly effective teaching.

The report also gives guidance on what the United States can learn from these systems to strengthen teaching in elementary schools. In the report, leading Australian researcher Ben Jensen describes how high-performing countries ensure that their elementary teachers have strong content knowledge. They have done so by focusing on the selection of teachers, content specialization, initial teacher education, and professional learning systems in their schools.

[www.ncee.org/elementary-teachers](http://www.ncee.org/elementary-teachers)



## LEARNING PREFERENCES

### 2016 Results From the SIIA Vision K-20 Professional Learning Survey *Education Technology Industry Network of SIIA, June 2016*

The survey finds that educators from pre-K-12 and higher education institutions most often enroll in courses that provide training for online software and digital resources and classroom management/behavior training. “Educators have an increasing number of online professional learning choices that provide them with a flexible alternative to traditional professional development formats,” said Karen Billings, vice president and managing director of the Education Technology Industry Network. “The Vision K-20 Professional Learning Survey provides educators and administrators with critical insight to how educators are taking online PL courses, why they take them, and who provides them.”

Key findings from this year’s report about pre-K-20 online professional learning include that educators enroll in online professional learning courses when they are personally interested in the subject and want to increase their knowledge in that area; the most common online professional learning courses that educators select are courses that provide training for software and digital resources and classroom management/behavior training; and educators with less than 20 years of experience working in an educational institution are more likely to enroll in an online

professional learning course than educators with more experience.

[www.sii.net/visionk20](http://www.sii.net/visionk20)

## BETTER THAN A BAND-AID

### No Panacea: Diagnosing What Ails Teacher Professional Development Before Reaching for Remedies

*New America, June 2016*

New America identifies key obstacles that prevent professional learning from reaching its potential for growing teachers’ knowledge and skills. The authors find that these obstacles prevent four elements of a productive professional learning cycle from occurring: identifying teachers’ development needs; selecting aligned, evidence-based professional learning approaches; implementing approaches with fidelity; and assessing outcomes. The authors argue that challenges in the professional culture many teachers experience reinforce these obstacles. They also highlight how federal, state, district, and school-level stakeholders play a role in contributing to these obstacles and professional culture barriers, as do educator preparation programs.

Report co-authors Melissa Tooley and Kaylan Connally intend for *No Panacea* to provide a diagnosis of the underlying causes of ineffective professional learning that can serve as a foundation for remedying the U.S. approach to teacher development. “Ultimately,” the report says, “we strive to encourage a move away from putting Band-Aids on our current PD efforts and toward working collaboratively to create a high-functioning system of educator professional learning — from initial preparation through the highest levels of career advancement.”

[www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/no-panacea](http://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/no-panacea)

**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT****Can Professional Development of Teachers Reduce Disparity in Student Achievement?***Teaching and Teacher Education, August 2016*

This paper describes a national, school-based professional development intervention in which large student achievement gains were previously signaled using single-level regression analyses and effect sizes. However, such analyses can be misleading since educational data typically do not meet independence assumptions. The current study investigates the effectiveness of the professional development intervention using hierarchical linear modeling, with particular focus on whether disparities were reduced for groups typically underserved by the New Zealand education system.



Results indicate that students from all learner groups made large gains, especially in writing, but additional targeting

would be required to improve equity across student groupings.

[www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X16300932](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0742051X16300932)

**TEACHER DIVERSITY****The Effects of Teacher Match on Academic Perceptions and Attitudes****Working paper, June 2016**

In this paper co-authored by Anna Egalite (North Carolina State University) and Brian Kisida (University of Missouri), the authors examine research that has demonstrated



positive benefits for students assigned to demographically similar teachers. Because teachers are more likely to be white and female than their students, however, demographic mismatches may contribute to racial and gender achievement gaps.

Using data from six U.S. school districts collected by the Measures of Effective Teaching project and a teacher fixed effects approach, the authors estimate how assignment to a demographically similar teacher affects student reports of personal effort, happiness in class, feeling cared for, student-teacher communication, post-secondary motivation, and academic engagement, as well as student achievement.

Their results show that students assigned to a demographically congruent teacher experience important benefits in terms of academic perceptions and attitudes. The largest benefits are demonstrated by black male students assigned to black male teachers and by black female students assigned to black female teachers. However, they find little convincing evidence of test score impacts associated with student/teacher demographic pairings.

<https://ced.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Egalite-Kisida-Teacher-Match-Working-Paper-June-2016.pdf>

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