

Professional learning boosts student and school success

What the research says

Why should schools spend time and resources on professional learning? The answer is simple: Research shows that high-quality professional learning improves student learning by improving educators' teaching.

As we all know, even experienced educators confront challenges each year, including changes in subject content, new instructional materials, advances in technology, new laws and procedures, and changing student learning needs, especially since the pandemic. They must learn to address these needs so that every student learns to read, masters content, and develops the skills they will need in work and life.

Professional learning is the best tool schools have for improvement when it is high-quality. Professional learning works when it is ongoing, job-embedded, relevant to students' needs, shaped with input from teachers, and connected to school improvement goals. That includes opportunities like coaching, mentoring, examining curriculum, and time for teachers to plan collaboratively and review student data together. These types of learning are more valuable uses of teachers' time than traditional "sit-and-get" or passive learning experiences.

Professional learning improves student outcomes

High-quality professional learning can help schools meet the diverse academic needs of all students. For example, a 2018 meta-analysis (research that combines the results of many studies) found that one year of coaching accelerated teacher growth at a rate that typically occurs over three years of teaching experience.¹

¹ tinyurl.com/mpne45st

A 2019 study found that high-intensity teacher mentoring has also been shown to accelerate student growth, with the students of participating teachers demonstrating between 2½ and 4½ extra months of math learning.²

A 2022 meta-analysis found that high-quality professional learning led to improved instruction, which in turn led to higher student achievement.³

High-quality professional learning was defined according to Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, which describe the content, processes, and conditions for professional learning that lead to successful leading, teaching, and learning in schools and systems.⁴

² tinyurl.com/24mr9xrp

³ tinyurl.com/2ruc932a

⁴ standards.learningforward.org



Professional learning supports teacher retention

Research also shows that high-quality professional learning can help teachers stay in the profession – a critical issue for schools and students across the U.S. In interviews, teachers who had described feelings of burnout reported that high-quality professional learning, such as coaching and mentorship, reenergized them.⁵ In another recent study, teachers of color indicated improving professional learning and leadership development as the two best strategies for teacher retention.⁶ This may be because when schools and districts invest in teachers' growth, teachers feel valued and supported. It may also be attributable to the potential of professional learning to equip them to address challenges that might otherwise drive them out of the profession.

5 tinyurl.com/y5yvvh74m

6 tinyurl.com/26juhxtm



Professional learning is an important investment in our children and our country's future. It's how we move our schools forward and improve achievement.

Learn more about high-quality professional learning

Resources and information are available from Learning Forward, a nonprofit association that helps educators engage in high-quality professional learning so every student achieves.

- View Learning Forward's Capitol Hill briefing to learn more about the value of professional learning.⁷
- Explore the Standards for Professional Learning to get up to speed on what high-quality professional learning looks and feels like.⁸
- Check out webinars, publications, conferences and other resources at www.learningforward.org.

When educators keep learning, students learn more.

7 learningforward.org/2023/07/06/watch-our-capitol-hill-briefing/

8 standards.learningforward.org