



Professional Learning in the Learning Profession



A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad

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What We Did: Year One of a Multi-Year Study

- **What Does Research Tell Us** about Effective Professional Development?
- **What Do High-Achieving Nations Do** to Support Professional Learning?
- **What is the Status of Professional Learning** in the United States?
 - SASS survey of more than 40,000 teachers
 - NSDC survey of more than 50,000 teachers
 - MetLife and NEA surveys of teachers



What Research Tells Us

- Professional development that is short, episodic, and disconnected from practice has little impact.
- Well-designed professional development can improve practice and increase student achievement.

A review of high-quality experimental studies found that among programs offering extended PD (49 hours on average over 6 to 12 months), student achievement increased by 21 percentile points. (Yoon et al., 2007)



What Matters for Effective Professional Development

- Content of Learning
- Design of Learning
- Context for Learning



Professional Learning Opportunities that Impact Practice are Generally:



- ✓ Focused on specific curriculum content
- ✓ Organized around real problems of practice
- ✓ Connected to teachers' work with children
- ✓ Linked to analysis of teaching and student learning
- ✓ Intensive, sustained and continuous over time
 - ✓ Supported by coaching, modeling, observation, and feedback
 - ✓ Connected to teachers' collaborative work in professional learning communities
 - ✓ Integrated into school and classroom planning around curriculum, instruction, and assessment





The State of the Research

While findings are consistent, they are based on a limited pool of rigorous studies that treat only some areas.

- Need more research using comparison groups and appropriate measures of learning.
- Need to study which approaches are most effective for different purposes in a range of contexts and for teachers at different points in their career.



Professional Learning Opportunities in High-Achieving Nations Abroad

High-achieving nations in Europe and Asia:

- Offer extensive, sustained learning opportunities embedded in practice.
- Provide beginners with intensive mentoring.
- Go well beyond workshops:
 - Teachers engage regularly in Lesson Study, Action Research, and Peer Observation and Coaching to evaluate and improve practice.



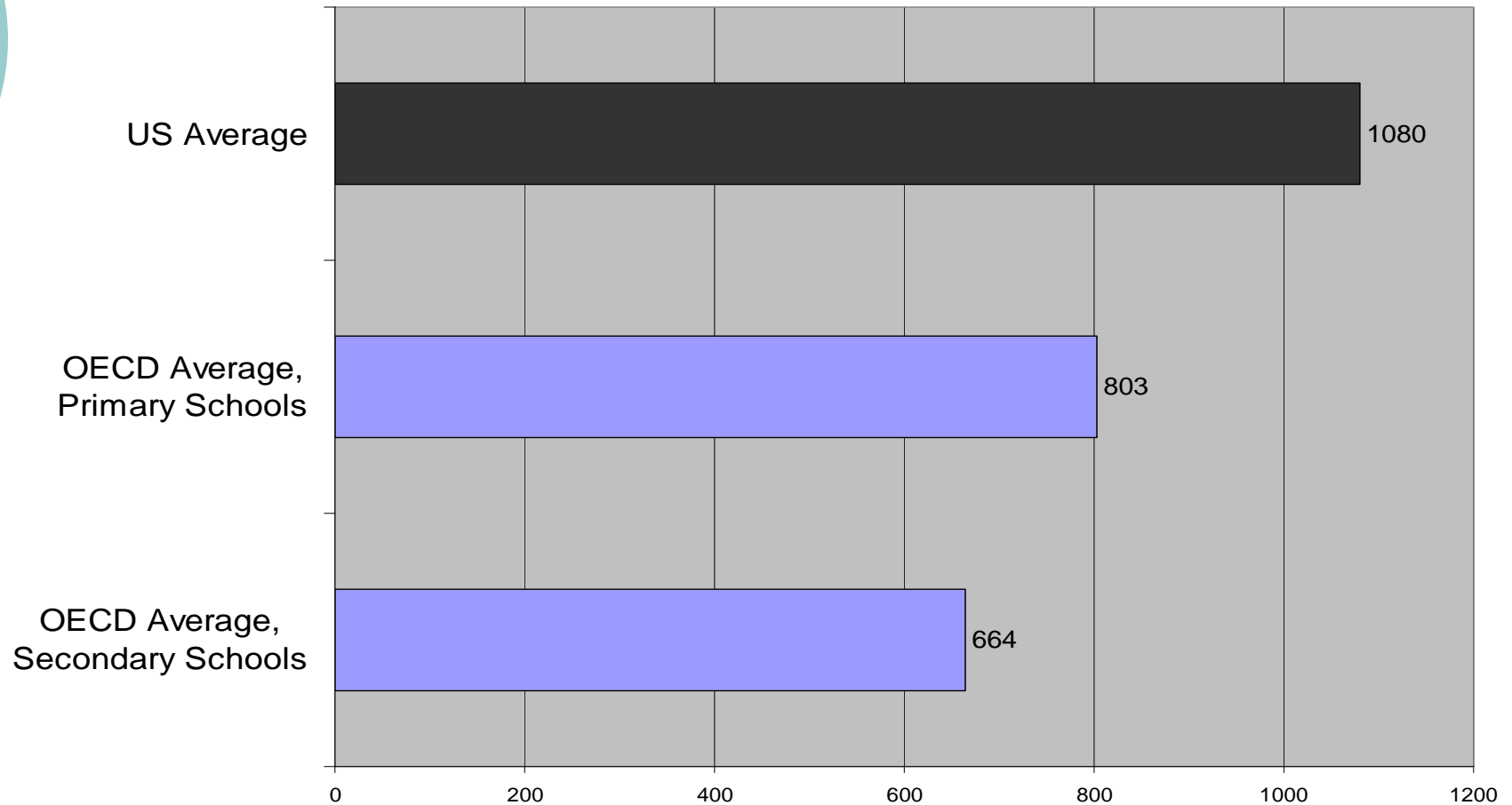
Professional Development Supports Abroad

- Netherlands, Singapore, and Sweden support at least 100 hours of professional development per year, in addition to regularly scheduled time for common planning and collaboration.
- Regular time – between 15 and 25 hours per week – is allocated to support joint planning and professional learning:
 - Activities include developing curriculum, evaluating student learning, observing classrooms, and engaging in study groups & seminars.
 - This is **3 to 5 times** the amount of time U.S. teachers generally have for independent planning.



US Teachers Spend Much More Time Instructing and Much Less Time Planning

Number of Hours Teachers Spent in Instruction Annually



Source: OECD, Education at a Glance, 2007



'Smart Teaching' Results from Supporting Teachers to Develop Practice

"Asian class lessons are so well crafted [because] there is a very systematic effort to pass on the accumulated wisdom of teaching practice to each new generation of teachers and to keep perfecting that practice by providing teachers the opportunities to continually learn from each other."

Stigler, James W. and Stevenson, Harold W. (1991, Spring). How Asian Teachers Polish Each Lesson to Perfection," *American Educator*, pp.12-47.



The Status of Professional Development in the United States

- Effective professional development is better understood but still relatively rare in the U.S.
- Most teachers (>90%) participate in 1 to 2 day workshops and conferences.
- Fewer than half are involved in collaborative research (40%), mentoring or coaching (46%), or observations of other schools (22%).

Much professional development focuses on content, but not with much depth.



- Nationally, about 83 percent of teachers engaged in learning opportunities focused on the academic content that they taught.
- However, most received fewer than two days (16 hrs.) of professional development.
- Only 23 percent had received more than 32 hours of professional development.
- The frequency and duration of professional development was even less in other areas.



Teachers find much of the professional development they receive is not useful.

- 59 percent found content-related professional development they received to be useful.
- However, fewer than half found other professional development useful, including areas where they would like more opportunities to learn.
- This is linked to the one-shot nature of much PD: Teachers find more extensive professional development much more useful to their practice.



Teachers report little engagement in collaborative planning and learning.

- Most report having some scheduled time for collaboration.
- However, the amount of time and intensity of joint work on curriculum and planning is much less than in other countries.
- Only 17% of U.S. teachers report a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members, and only 14% are involved in coordinating course content.

Teachers' Opportunities for Sharing Practice Have Not Increased



- Between 2000 and 2004 there were declines in the proportions of teachers reporting they had opportunities for:
 - Regularly scheduled collaboration
 - Collaborative research on teaching
 - Observations of teaching in other schools

Key areas of professional learning are neglected



Professional Development on ELLs and Students with Disabilities .

- Fewer than 1/3 of teachers received even one day of professional development over the last 3 years on how to teach students with disabilities or new English language learners.

Teachers Want More Professional Support in:

- Teaching Students with Disabilities
- Teaching in their content areas
- Classroom management
- Use of technology



Progress in Beginning Teacher Support

Beginning teachers increasingly experience induction programs but all programs are not comprehensive.

- 68% of those with <5 years of experience participated in induction in 2004 as compared to 56% a decade earlier.
- However, fewer than half of these teachers have an in-class mentor in their same field or the opportunity for common planning.
- Teachers in affluent and suburban schools are much more likely to receive mentoring than those in urban and high-poverty schools.

Professional Learning Opportunities Vary Greatly Across States and Schools



- **South Carolina** had the greatest share of beginning teachers engaged in **induction programs (96%)**; **Montana** had the lowest (**30%**).
- **Professional Development on specific topics ranged widely. For example,**
 - PD on **reading instruction** ranged from 43% in South Dakota to 76% in Maryland
 - PD on **teaching students with disabilities** ranged from 21% in Idaho to 62% in Texas
- **Overall, Arkansas, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Vermont** had significantly higher proportions of teachers participating in **professional learning** than the national average.
- **Policies matter** in shaping what teachers have the chance to learn and be able to do.



Conclusions

High-achieving nations have created extensive systems of in- and out-of-school teacher learning opportunities to support 'smart teaching.'

The U.S. provides intensive job-embedded learning opportunities of the kind that improve teaching and learning for a minority of teachers.



Next Steps

- Examine the policies used by states and localities where high-quality professional development is widely available.
- Consider levers and investments that will support features of effective professional development in Title II of ESEA and HEA, and development state and local infrastructure for teacher learning.
- Support rigorous studies of professional learning in relation to student achievement.
- Encourage U.S. participation in OECD studies of teaching, teacher development, and student learning to better understand systemic effects.