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As Administration Proposes Cutting Federal Funding for Teacher Professional Development, New Study Shows It Can Improve Student Achievement

Student Learning Increases When Teachers Have Strong Learning Opportunities, Too

WASHINGTON, DC—A study released today demonstrates how well-designed teacher professional development programs significantly improve student achievement, challenging the logic behind the Administration’s proposal to eliminate funding for those programs.

The new [report](#), *Effective Teacher Professional Development*, reviewed 35 scientifically rigorous studies conducted over the past 30 years which showed significant gains in student achievement resulting from teacher development programs. The programs shared seven common features: they were focused on the subject areas that teachers teach; incorporated active learning; supported collaboration; used models and modeling to demonstrate effective practice; provided expert coaching and support, offered opportunities for feedback and reflection, and were sustained in duration, often unfolding over months or years, rather than occurring in a single, “drive-by” after school workshop, as is often the norm.

The report was released today at a [national event](#), cosponsored by LPI, the Center for American Progress and Learning Forward.

Although teachers have often complained – and researchers have sometimes found – that not all professional development is effective, this study shows that well-designed programs can have large and substantial effects.

The comprehensive review of research on effective professional development, conducted by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), comes at a time when federal support for educators’ professional development (funded under Title II of the Every Student Succeeds Act) is under threat of elimination by the Trump Administration.

“The proposed funding cut raises a very serious question: is investing in teacher development programs worth it and do we know how to make those investments effective?” observed Linda

Darling-Hammond, president and CEO of LPI and Professor Emeritus at Stanford University and a co-author of the report. “What we found in the research is that the answer both of those questions is ‘yes.’ Indeed, when the law was reauthorized last year, Congress focused the uses of Title II funds on many of the features this review finds are associated with effectiveness.”

The report recommends that policymakers and school administrators support and encourage evidence-based professional development by:

- Adopting professional development standards to guide the design, evaluation and funding of educator professional learning.
- Evaluating and redesigning the use of time and school schedules to increase opportunities for professional learning and collaboration.
- Conducting regular needs assessments using data from staff surveys.
- Identifying and developing expert teachers as mentors and coaches to support learning in their area(s) of expertise.
- Integrating professional learning into Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) school improvement initiatives.

ESSA also allows states to set aside funds for leadership development. An earlier LPI [report](#) reviewed leadership development programs also found to boost student achievement, noting that students benefit when both their teachers and principals experience intensive, well-designed learning opportunities.

“Without investments in educators’ learning, most of the aspirations of the Every Student Succeeds Act for improvements in education cannot be realized,” Darling-Hammond noted. “Well-designed and implemented professional development is an essential component of an education system that supports student learning.”

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About the Learning Policy Institute

The Learning Policy Institute conducts and communicates independent, high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. Working with policymakers, researchers, educators, community groups, and others, the Institute seeks to advance evidence-based policies that support empowering and equitable learning for each and every child. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the Institute connects policymakers and stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels with the evidence, ideas, and actions needed to strengthen the education system from preschool through college and career readiness.

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