

Investment in Professional Learning & Development: What Motivates You?

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What motivates teachers to invest in professional learning and development and pursue accomplished teaching?

Rationale

Teacher professional development (PD) is an essential feature of instructional interventions in general, and for the improvement of students' learning and achievement. The more motivated teachers are to participate and engage in PD, the more likely they will be to profit from the experience. Teacher motivation in PD is directly linked with classroom enactment of PD approaches, content and skills and it is indirectly related to increasing the likelihood of desirable student outcomes. My presentation, "Investment in Professional Learning & Development: What Motivates You?" is an action research on how perceived experiences and benefits were associated with features of teacher professional development programs and contextual factors. This action research was done in order to identify, quantify, and substantiate possible learning outcomes from the participants. Here we focus specifically on teachers' motivation to (a) participate in PD and (b) to apply the knowledge and skills acquired to their instructional practices.

Literature Review

Numerous state and federal organizations have made studies and developed key principles of high quality professional development. These include:

- Teacher Motivation and Professional Development: A Guide to Resources by Laura J. Schieb & Stuart A. Karabenick
- Teacher Motivation for Professional Development by Anne Marie Conley
- The National Board for Professional Teaching Certification: Teacher Motivation, Benefits, Burdens by Lisa Renee Krause

Data/Tools/Process

This research examines what motivates teachers to invest in professional learning and development and pursue accomplished teaching. Current general PD trends are noted, including the importance of teacher self-efficacy, the need for collaboration, intrinsic rewards, teacher autonomy, administrative support, and education policy. Invitations for survey participation were given in hard copies, sent via email and posted on Facebook page. The first page of the survey included an invitation to take the survey. There were nine multiple questions and an open ended question. Given limitations in the existing literature, it was concluded that more research is needed to understand how reforms in curriculum and instruction affect teacher motivation for PD.

Forty-seven WTU members completed the survey. An online survey, SurveyMonkey, was used to gather data and information, with 10 survey questions, which also helped with data analysis, sample selection, bias elimination, and data representation. The learning outcomes discussed in

this report should inform district administrators, policy makers, and union leaders what motivates teachers to complete the National Board process and to encourage more teachers to apply for certification. In order to best serve diverse student populations, schools need high quality teachers who are successful in raising student achievement. The National Board process is a process to identify effective teachers (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2004).

Data Analysis

Teachers' general motivation to participate in PD (PDM) was assessed by their response to the direct statement: "In general, I am motivated to participate in Professional Development activities" The 4-point response scale ranged from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Subsequent analyses describe the characteristics of PD that may influence PD participation and of teachers who are more or less motivated to participate. In general, information from this sample of teachers indicates both a high rate of PD participation and that participation: (a) was a positive rather than a negative experience, and (b) was judged to be useful for increasing their teaching effectiveness. As expected, PDM was higher for teachers who said that PD enhanced their teaching strategies and that it was a source of continuing education credits. To determine whether teacher PDM depended on the way that PD was offered, teachers were presented with a list of formats and asked to rank them, the highest would be that they preferred the most. A series of workshops with teacher participation was clearly the most preferred, followed by professional learning communities, again with teacher participation. These were followed by single workshop, summer institutes and blended learning (face-to-face and online. Online professional development were preferred the least.

Recommendations

My action research confirmed that PD was a common experience for teachers. Teachers in general indicated they were positively motivated to participate in PD. A majority of the teachers surveyed felt that PD was useful for improving teaching practice, student learning, and student motivation. Overall, teachers who participated in PD reported moderate to high levels of motivation, even when participation involved a considerable investment of personal time or resources. Teachers were open to a variety of PD formats, most notably those that included teacher participation. This suggests a picture of teachers eager to improve their teaching practices and to participate in continuing education.

The learning outcomes discussed in this report should inform the debate between the instructional leadership and the union leadership regarding the professional development policies in DCPS schools, and contribute insight into the current divisive state of school-based professional development models during contract negotiations between DCPS and WTU.

Bibliography

- *Teacher Motivation and Professional Development: A Guide to Resources* by Laura J. Schieb & Stuart A. Karabenick
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