Improving Teach Professional Development
With Appreciative Inquiry and Emotional
intelligence

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ABSTRACT

Creating meaningful and effective professional development (PD) programs for K-12 teachers is an ongoing challenge. The problem is exacerbated when PD models are implemented without fully aligning PD resources and plans with the training needs of teachers and the organization. This study sought to understand the experiences of teachers about the implementation of PD as a means for improving student outcomes. The purpose of the study was to find ways to enhance PD in order to improve student outcomes at the school. The conceptual framework for this study is interwoven through the constructs of student-centered learning, adult learning theory, transformational learning, self-directed learning, and emotional intelligence (EI). A qualitative case study was used in an appreciative inquiry approach that included a document review, written response survey, a positive assessment of EI skills, and focus group interview with 5 teacher participants. The EI data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to create an average EI profile for the group, and qualitative data were analyzed using inductive and comparative techniques. The results indicated that the teachers desired more focused PD that aligns to organizational goals, is collaborative, and includes support from leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Education in the United States has increasingly emphasized accountability and student achievement as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, popularly referred to as NCLB. Under NCLB (2002), all students must be proficient in math and English Language Arts by 2014, and schools must make annual yearly progress towards this goal. In California, students’ proficiency was measured annually through the California Standards Test (CST), now the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) System. The challenge many schools face in the era of accountability is how effectively to develop teachers as the primary resource for improving student learning (DeWitt, 2013).

Professional development (PD) is an essential factor for student achievement and improved student outcomes (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). The National Staff Development Council (NSDC), in collaboration with several national and state organizations, created standards for professional development for educators (NSDC, 2001). The purpose of these standards, in part, was to facilitate the design of quality professional development experiences that would improve student outcomes (NSDC, 2001). In 2001, the NSDC revised the standards to express more explicitly that high quality professional development should be driven by outcomes and occur as embedded activities of the day-to-day job of the participating teachers (NSDC, 2001). In the recently published Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011), there is an even stronger call for educators to take an active role in their professional learning and development.

Although criteria for effective PD for teachers have been established, there is not a single model for how those criteria may be implemented. Learning Forward (formerly NSDC) created a formal definition of professional development for use in the reauthorized version of NCLB: “The term ‘professional development’ means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (Learning Forward, 2012, para. 2). Professional development can occur in many forms, including individually guided activities, an observation and assessment cycle, teacher-
for teachers results in improvements that affect all those in the school community.

One direction for future research could be to investigate the needs of school leaders who are responsible for planning PD for teachers at their school site to include examining the gaps in knowledge and practice of those who plan PD. Another direction for possible future research could be to examine how various professional learning events impact student outcomes or student learning experiences. According to Yoon, (2007), only 9 of more than 1300 studies examined met What Works Clearinghouse’s evidence-based standards for studies that directly study the affect of teacher PD on student achievement. There is a clear need for further studies in this area in order to further strengthen the argument in favor of expending resources for teacher professional learning.

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