CPEC

Teacher Professional Development in California: Status of Review

Item 11

www.cpec.ca.gov • Draft report • June 2009

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Over the last year, the Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) program staff have been looking at the scope of professional development for K-12 teachers in California. Staff are assessing current models of professional development offered, how they are funded, and how widespread are the kinds of professional development that research finds best at improving student achievement. This review will help staff better understand the context in which the ITQ program operates and help define the role of the program. The findings will inform the content and administration of the ITQ program and will foster discussions on the role that colleges and universities can play in supporting professional development for current teachers.

Professional Development Programs in California

Currently, professional development programs are offered by county offices of education, local education agencies, colleges and universities, and non-profit and for-profit organizations. They are funded through a myriad of categorical funds, both state and federal. School districts receive some funds by formula allocation and some through competitive grants or non-competitive applications. The table shows some of the larger programs in place.

The Beginning Teacher Support Assessment, which gives California teachers intensive support for their first two years, is mandated by law for new teachers. However, professional development is less systematic beyond the two years. The other major programs are the School Improvement Program, and the Professional Development Block Grant. CPEC research indicates that individual districts determine which programs are used, how they are delivered, and who receives them. While each program has specific rules and objectives, and some programs require districts to provide a spending plan, it is difficult to draw a clear statewide picture because of variation between districts.

The categorical programs that form the basis of professional development funding are subject to change. All state programs were reduced by 15.4% for 2008–09, with an additional cut of 4.7% expected in 2009–10. With the current state budget cri-

Professional Development Programs

2008–09 budget allocation — $ million

State Programs	
School Improvement Program	$463
Professional Development Block Grant	275
Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment	129
Math and Reading Professional Development (SB 472)	57
Gifted and Talented Education	51
California Peer Assistance Review Program	30
Certificated Staff Mentoring Program	12
California Subject Matter Projects	8
National Board Certified Teachers Incentive Grant	6
Administrator and Principal Training (AB 430)	3
Federal Programs	
Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting*	$326
California Math and Science Partnerships	23
Total	$1,382

*CPEC's ITQ program is part of this program.

sis, school districts are allowed flexibility in using categorical funds and can now move funds between programs. The effect of this provision on funding of professional development is still unclear. And, with the rejection of propositions 1A through 1E in the May 19 election, additional cuts are being considered that could affect funding of professional development programs.

CPEC's Survey of School Districts

The professional development study began in summer 2008 when student intern Courtney Logan conducted an online survey of school districts regarding their professional development practices. Although the survey included only a small number of school districts and is not definitive, it provided some interesting insights. It showed that the majority of teachers in the districts that responded spend 40 to 120 hours a year in various forms of professional development. The survey was completed by district administrators, rather than teachers, so did not provide any data on whether teachers found the professional development valuable or whether the models used are what teachers need.

Early this year, another intern, Hanouvi Agbassekou, took over the study. She reviewed the survey findings and interviewed staff at the California Department of Education and Elk Grove Unified School District to try to clarify the picture of professional development today — whether sufficient professional development is being offered, if existing programs are based on effective models, and how the ITQ program can best contribute to meeting state needs.

Other Research

A considerable body of research argues that professional development should be a continuous effort that gives teachers support to translate what they learn in institutes and workshops back into their classes in ways that help increase student achievement. A 2006 InPraxis Group report and a 1998 report by Kati Haycock suggest that students do best when teachers are engaged in sustained, collaborative professional development that targets content knowledge and instructional practice. The National Staff Development Council's 2009 report *A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad,* done by Stanford University researchers, shows there is a movement toward transformational professional development emphasizing collaboration in planning activities, curriculum development, lesson planning, and assessments.

This research will form the basis of further study by CPEC staff. The ITQ program is structuring its projects in ways that reflect these findings, and grantees are now focusing more on models that research shows to be more effective in helping teachers increase their knowledge and skills. A question that staff are exploring is whether the professional development landscape in California supports these models generally or whether the ITQ focus on models that research shows to be effective is atypical of California professional development.

Next Steps

Staff will review findings from the National Staff Development Council's 2009 status report. CPEC's data will be compared with this study to consider what conclusions can be drawn for California. Staff will also use the California Department of Education's listing of categorical programs to pinpoint the amount of state and federal funds allocated solely to teacher improvement programs. If possible, the results will be presented at the September commission meeting.