

Instructional Mentoring Provides Effective Professional Learning that Improves Instruction




THE WHAT... Professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results is critical to improving schools and increasing student learning and growth. A recent report from the Learning Policy Institute, *Effective Teacher Professional Development*, explained, “Effective professional development is defined as structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes”(2017)ⁱ.

THE WHY... As students are required to learn more complex skills, teachers are required to implement more sophisticated instructional strategies, as well as refine and improve their professional practices. Research studies on professional learning recommend different characteristics and elements; however, the essential focus is to ensure effective delivery and successful implementation^{ii, iii, iv}.

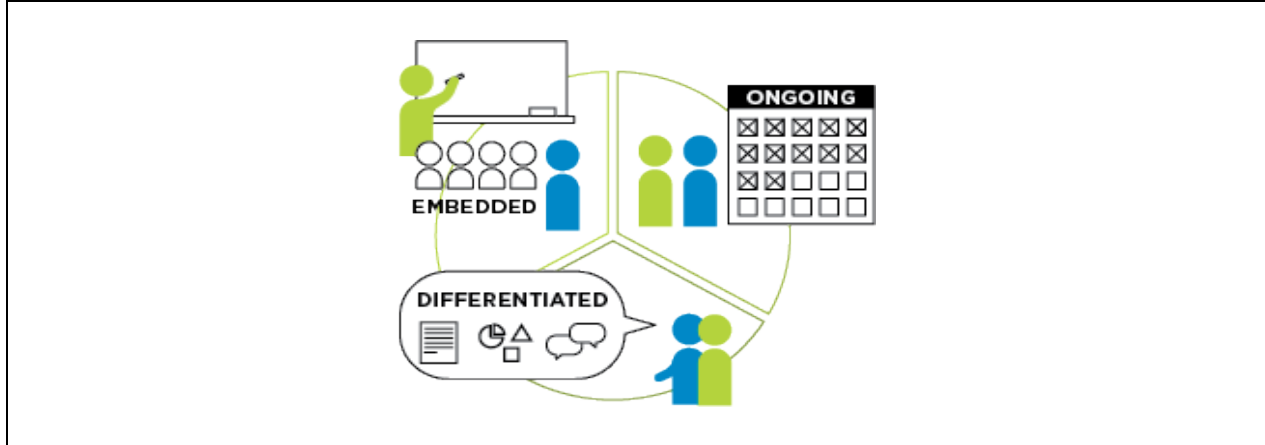
In order for districts and schools to meet the needs of all students they must create opportunities for teachers to grow and develop during their daily practice so they can help students grow and develop their knowledge and ability to think critically. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) reported, “Teachers develop expertise not as isolated individuals but through job-embedded professional development, and as members of collaborative, interdisciplinary teams with common goals for student learning”.^v

A major conclusion of, *The State of Teacher Professional Learning*^{vi} was “Teachers report that they are not provided adequate time during the school day to follow-up on their professional learning by practicing and applying new skills in the classroom,” (2017). Mentoring supports effective implementation and needed follow-up to professional learning by supporting the mentee and strengthening the mentor.

THE HOW... The Center for Great Teachers and Leaders^{vii} adapted the five characteristics of high-quality professional learning established by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2011) ^{viii} into three categories and three overlapping characteristics of effective professional learning. The focus of this brief is to explain these categories and characteristics as they relate to Mentoring which is the **most effective form of professional learning**.

| Professional Learning Categories | Standards based Instructional Mentoring provide effective professional learning by: |
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|  <p>Professional learning activities that are focused on the content to be taught and emphasize how to teach the content are more effective than focusing on general strategies.</p> <p>Aligning professional learning activities with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ data analysis ○ goal setting ○ implementation strategies ○ monitoring and evaluating <p>can be highly beneficial to educators and students.</p> | <p><u>Being Focused:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discussions and data gathering on content knowledge and the most effective pedagogy, or how students best learn that subject matter. ● Providing mentees support through strategies of listening, reflective questioning, data gathering, and data sharing to clarify the mentee’s thinking and reasoning which leads to changes in practice. |
| <p>Teachers report greater changes in their instructional practice as a result of professional learning activities that involve their active participation and engagement.</p>  <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ practicing what they learned in their classrooms ○ observing other teachers ○ conducting demonstration lessons ○ leading group discussions ○ reviewing student work with colleagues | <p><u>Active Engagement :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identifying specific mentee/student needs and seeking out highly effective experienced teachers for mentees to observe, followed by a focused debrief conversation that identifies specific strategies and skills to implement.. ● Providing mentees a hands-on plan, do, study, act, reflect inquiry-based collaborative mentoring approach to professional learning in their instructional setting by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ co-planning lessons/meetings, ○ modeling practices, ○ co-teaching/leading, ○ analyzing data and ○ debriefing using the cycle of inquiry. |
| <p>Group learning creates space for teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning, often in job-</p>  | <p><u>Collaborative interactions by:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishing a positive, trusting, collegial and collaborative relationship with mentees is at the heart of mentoring. ● Using the 3 Cs (consultant, collaborator, coach) continuum for mentoring that |

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| <p>embedded contexts. By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school and/or district.</p> | <p>encourages mentors to positively challenge and encourage growth in the mentee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-developing ideas, approaches and information to implement once a problem has been clarified. |
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| Overlapping Characteristics | Standards based Instructional Mentoring provide effective professional learning by: |
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| <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing professional learning carries the idea that learning is a continuous process, moving away from the one-time events.</p> <p>Providing regular opportunities for learning can increase the frequency with which educators try new things and take risks.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a minimum of 75 hours per year for two years of job-embedded mentoring with their mentees. The Oregon Mentoring Program data shows that on average over the last three years beginning teachers have received 110 hours and Beginning Administrators 82 hours of mentoring support. • Implementing a plan, do, study, act, reflect collaborative mentoring process focused on enhancing intentional instruction. |
| <p>Job-embedded</p> <p>Effective professional learning opportunities are integrated into the workday and directly connected to learning and application.</p> <p>Job-embedded connections allows for the continuous improvement cycle to happen with expertise of an experienced teacher assisting in “real time” to improve student learning.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing in the mentees educational setting and gathering data that will be used as a basis for promoting the mentee’s reflection on their teaching/leadership practices. • Providing support in the classroom/school with the beginning educator modeling strategies, observing and gathering evidence and having collaborative conversations based on data from their specific setting. |

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| <p>Differentiated Differentiating professional learning for adults is similar to differentiating learning for students.</p> <p>Adults vary in their professional learning needs from reading research to observing teacher practice.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Varying the support provided to beginning educators based on the educator and student needs..• Gathering and sharing objective data based on the mentee’s identified focus as a basis for promoting the mentee’s reflection on their teaching/leading practices. |
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Standards based Instructional mentoring includes all of the effective professional learning features needed to improve educational practice. “Effective professional development provides teachers with adequate time to learn, practice, implement, and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their practice”.^{ix} Mentoring provides time for educators to think about, receive input on, and make changes to their daily practice by facilitating reflection and soliciting feedback. Feedback and reflection both help educators to thoughtfully move toward improvement in practice and increased student growth.



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References for this Brief can be found here.

ⁱ Darling-Hammond, Hylter, & Gardner, 2017.
ⁱⁱ Gulamhussein, 2013
ⁱⁱⁱ Archibald, Coghelli, Croft, & Goe, 2011
^{iv} Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009
^v Hill, Stumbo, Paliokas, Hansen & McWalters, 2010, p. 10
^{vi} Learning Forward, 2017, p. 2
^{vii} American Institutes for Research, 2014, p.12.
^{viii} National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2011
^{ix} Darling-Hammond, Hylter, & Gardner, 2017, p.2