

CHAPTER 7. FINDING COHERENCE IN AN INCOHERENT SYSTEM

STATE POLICY

How does state policy support high-quality professional development?

- From the passage of SB 1882 in 1988, the state has launched a series of broad initiatives to support teacher learning.
- Most recently, state initiatives in reading and mathematics have infused even more dollars into the professional development system, although the reduction in time available during the school year has restricted local professional development activities.
- In combination with federal, private, and district initiatives, state professional development policies typically result in an incoherent and disconnected set of opportunities for teachers and schools.

DISTRICT SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How do districts support high-quality professional development?

- We identify three district approaches to supporting professional development that, in general, districts use in some combination: offering a wide menu of activities for individual teachers to choose from; developing a comprehensive school or district strategy in which all teachers are required to participate; and supporting collaborative, teacher-directed approaches.
- Whatever approach is taken, districts are challenged to interpret and navigate the flow of policies and directives from the state legislature in a coherent and efficient manner.
- Districts face similar challenges in developing sufficient expertise and capacity to provide all teachers with high-quality professional development opportunities.

SUPPORTS AND INCENTIVES

What supports and incentives are offered to teachers to encourage participation in high-quality professional development?

- Although most teachers receive some release time for professional development, finding time during the school day to reflect on and improve teaching strategies is a major challenge across the state.
- State policy that increased instructional days has made it harder for districts to build professional development days into the school calendar.
- Most teachers do not receive monetary supports, such as stipends, for participating in professional development, unless they are providing direct support to other teachers.
- Teacher evaluation is typically divorced from professional development and California's teaching standards.

The professional development opportunities of California’s teachers fall far short of what they themselves perceive as sufficient and short of what research has shown to be effective in helping students learn to high standards. Why is this so? Our review of state and local policy demonstrates that policy-makers at every level of the system recognize the importance of professional development. Beginning with the state’s comprehensive effort in the late 1980s to build a coherent system of professional development and continuing through the 1999 legislature’s special session on education, California has actively supported a variety of professional development initiatives. These state initiatives exist alongside various federal, private, and local professional development opportunities available to districts and schools. In fact, the number and range of learning opportunities appear almost limitless.

Yet it is precisely the dizzying array of voluntary and mandated professional development opportunities that make it difficult for districts, schools, or teachers to formulate a coherent professional development strategy. Each program must be implemented in a limited amount of time, often by the same group of district and school personnel. Moreover, in many cases, the incentives for teachers to pursue meaningful learning opportunities and the resources available for them to do so turn out to be insufficient to motivate and to support high-quality professional development.

In this chapter, we illustrate the tension that districts, schools, and teachers face between reacting to existing and new state directives and sustaining sharply focused professional development strategies. We review the state policy context, beginning with the sweeping legislation on professional development in the late 1980s. We then describe various approaches that districts and schools take to mediate the space between state and federal mandates and local professional development needs. Finally, we examine the supports and incentives that the state, districts, and schools use to promote professional development.

State Policy in Support of Professional Development for California Teachers

The 1987 study *Staff Development in California: Public and Personal Investments, Program Patterns, and Policy Choices*, commissioned by the legislature, was sharply critical of most teacher professional development in California. It found that despite several promising activities, “On the whole...the current array of staff development activities and incentives is unlikely to yield substantial change in the thinking or performance of California’s classroom teachers.”¹

In partial response to the publication of the 1987 report, the 1988 legislature passed a comprehensive professional development package under Senate Bill 1882. The legislation

established a three-tiered professional development strategy, including site-level projects, Regional Consortia, and the California Subject Matter Projects (CSMPs).

The first program of SB 1882 provided resources to schools and districts for planning and implementing professional development linked to improvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment at about 300 selected high schools. The purpose of the program was to allow for better alignment of professional development activities with local teachers' needs and schoolwide goals. District entitlements are calculated on a formula of approximately \$11.75 per student, based on average daily attendance (ADA) for all eligible schools.

The second program, the professional development Regional Consortia, was created to provide regional coordination, brokerage, and direct services to support the implementation of high-quality professional development at the local level. The goals of the Regional Consortia were to help schools and districts create, implement, and evaluate school and district development plans; facilitate collaborative learning agreements among school faculty; assist teachers in implementing the state curriculum frameworks; and build cooperative agreements between districts and institutions of higher education. Ten consortia were reauthorized for funding from 1995 to 2000.

The third and best-known provision of SB 1882 gave resources to institutions of higher education to deliver intensive subject-matter-based professional development. There are nine different Subject Matter Projects and approximately 100 different project sites throughout the state, which tend to be located on university campuses.²

A key feature of the CSMPs is regional summer institutes that last between 3 and 4 weeks. Other CSMP activities include weekend workshops during the school year, leadership academies, teacher action-research groups, and newsletters. All these activities focus on the pedagogy and content of each discipline area. They also support teachers' needs for collegiality and professional enrichment. The projects draw heavily on expert teachers as leaders to teach and support their colleagues.

Whereas evaluation data on the first two provisions of SB 1882 are thin, we know much about the progress of the Subject Matter Projects, which, according to our survey as well as previous work, reach more than one in five California teachers. CSMP activities are highly valued by its participants, again according to our work and the work of others.³ Still, in combination, the three provisions of the law did not result in anything like a comprehensive system of professional development. In fact, the 1998 reauthorization of the Subject Matter

Projects explicitly directs the projects to move away from a focus on individual teachers aside from their school and district contexts.

Professional Development Initiatives in the Wake of SB 1882

In spite of its goal of serving as the basis of a comprehensive system of professional development, SB 1882 was followed by numerous state initiatives designed with various purposes in mind. One telling example was the combined effort of the Mathematics Renaissance and the California Science Implementation Network, which were launched in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Together, these measures were designed as part of a systemic strategy to implement the California frameworks in mathematics and science.⁴ These were quite successful efforts in terms of their reach—tens of thousands of teachers—and their impact, with clear impacts on student learning. In this context, they are notable because they functioned as a parallel effort to the work of the Subject Matter Projects in science and mathematics—except they were under the control of the State Superintendent of Instruction and not the University of California. These programs exemplify how policy-makers can duplicate efforts and build numerous, differently funded, and competing efforts to support teachers.

Through the 1990s, older programs, such as the Bilingual Teacher Training Program, continued, and new ones, like SB 1274 grants to restructure schools, supported professional development for teachers throughout the state. Taken individually, each of these efforts had clear merits. Yet, together, they did no more than SB 1882 to build a more coherent statewide system for supporting teacher learning.

Recent Professional Development Initiatives

During the past few years, the legislature has also added funds to the state budget for professional development in reading and mathematics in an attempt to raise the test scores of the state's students. In addition, other recent legislative initiatives have implications for teachers' opportunities to learn. We review these key initiatives below.

Reading Instruction Development Program. AB 1086 (1997) provided \$56 million to expand the Teacher Reading Instruction Development Program for grades K-3 and created similar programs for teachers in grades 4-8.⁵ This legislation also required the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, to develop a list of approved contract providers of training in reading instruction. ABX1 2 (1999) provides for another \$75 million to establish the Elementary School Intensive Reading Program. The funds support “multiple, intensive reading opportunities for pupils in [K-4]” and “give first priority to

increasing instructional opportunities for pupils who are experiencing difficulty learning to read.”⁶

Reading Professional Development Institutes. Under ABX1 2, passed in 1999, the legislature requested that the University of California, along with partner CSU sites and independent colleges and universities, develop and execute reading professional development institutes for up to 6,000 teachers. The legislation directs that the training be consistent with the Reading/Language Arts Framework and include the instruction of explicit reading skills; a strong literature, language, and comprehension component; ongoing diagnostic assessment; and early intervention techniques.

Mathematics Professional Development Grants. In addition to the increased funding available for reading, the 1998 Budget Act provided \$28.5 million for staff development in mathematics for teachers in grades 4 to 12. AB 2442 provides approximately \$14 million in grants to local districts to reimburse teachers for fees and materials arising from taking college and university mathematics classes. AB 1331 provides another \$14 million in grants for in-service training in mathematics. The professional development providers are specified through an approved list, similar to the provisions of AB 1086 in reading.

Elimination of “Noninstructional” Days. Beginning in 1977, the state had authorized and funded districts to include up to 8 noninstructional days in the school-year calendar. Most districts used 4 or 5 of those days for professional development. The 1998-99 budget stipulated a minimum of 180 instructional days for students, effectively eliminating all staff development days within the teacher contract year. The 1998 budget act appropriated \$195 million to fund up to 3 days of staff development at \$270 per day for certificated staff and up to 1 day at \$140 per day for classified staff. Because these pupil-free days cannot replace any days within the 180-day instructional year, districts must extend the school year beyond the 180 days for which teachers are contracted to implement any of the staff development days. Teachers and administrators argue that this legislation further exacerbated schools’ difficulties in supporting teachers’ professional development. At the very least, the legislation forces schools and districts to change the ways in which professional development is scheduled.

California Peer Assistance and Review Program (PAR). ABX1 1 emerged from the 1999 special legislative session and established the California Peer Assistance and Review Program (PAR). PAR seeks to create “a critical feedback mechanism that allows exemplary teachers to assist veteran teachers in need of development in subject matter knowledge or teaching strategies, or both.”⁷ PAR will become fully operational on July 1, 2001, when it will completely displace the California Mentor Teacher Program. Funds received under PAR may be

used for BTSA, pre-intern programs, district intern programs, and other professional development.

Public School Performance Accountability Program. The special legislative session of 1999 further established the Public School Performance Accountability Program, under which, among other provisions, 430 schools scoring below the 50th percentile on the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program would be “invited” to participate in the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program. In 1999, the first year of implementation, more than 430 schools volunteered to participate. Participating schools will receive \$50,000 as a planning grant to assess their weaknesses and design a plan of action to improve student achievement.

Issues in Understanding State Support for Professional Development

These many state professional development initiatives provide needed resources to districts and schools to address important goals—like increasing reading achievement. At the same time, they can also restrict local efforts, increase the burden on local educators as they seek to follow state guidelines, and, in combination with myriad federal and privately sponsored initiatives, make it difficult for districts, schools, or teachers to formulate a coherent professional development strategy.

The task of interpreting the policies flowing down from the state legislature and implementing the directives in some coherent and efficient manner is made more difficult by the noninstructional nature of some mandates. An examination of Elk Grove’s catalogue illustrates that, even for this progressive district, the menu of staff development courses is studded with a host of noncurricular, noninstructional topics, including:

- Illness and Injury Prevention Program, Hazardous Materials, and Blood Borne Pathogens training for new employees.
- CPR/Community First Aid & Safety and CPR Recertification.
- Mandatory Child Abuse Workshop for new teachers.
- How to Develop and Implement 504 Plans for Students.

Although each of the mandated professional development topics addresses important social and educational problems, the requirement to offer these and other workshops to remain in compliance with state policies fractures teachers’, schools’, and districts’ concentration on student learning and consumes valuable time and financial resources. One principal expressed her struggle in focusing on instructions: “If policy-makers were all focused on student achievement, that would be fine. Just focus on that. But there are 10 new things that have come

up in the last year. We are supposed to be instructional leaders, but the pie of my time keeps getting sliced up. The piece for instruction is only a small piece.” At the same time, the state picture changes so rapidly that districts must sprint to catch up with all the mandates. “The messages coming from [the state] have been so chaotic and inconsistent....” This assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction continued, “The message from [the state] changes on a monthly basis. We don’t really know how to respond...we are left on our own.”

The lesson for state policy-makers is that the influence of any individual state policy must always be considered in the context of what is already asked of districts, schools, and teachers. Constructive state efforts to promote teacher learning—providing sufficient resources, creating model programs, setting overall priorities, tapping the expertise of the state university systems—can be undermined when combined with restrictive mandates or new programs that are simply layered on existing efforts. In essence, the state cannot mandate what really matters: coherent and effective learning opportunities for all teachers. The success of state initiatives will always turn on the actions and will of local educators. The state can provide the resources, the focus, and the motivation; however, it can also inadvertently create confusion and lessen the likelihood that California teachers will develop the skills and knowledge needed to bring all students up to the state standards.

District Support for Professional Development

In the face of the vast universe of professional development options, districts seek to develop a coherent and strategic approach to teacher learning. In fashioning a strategy, districts and schools make a series of choices regarding professional development, including (1) the content, (2) the source of expertise, and (3) the participants. Separate from these issues is the question of who makes the decisions for each of these questions. Strong leadership and explicit goals and incentives can result in more centralized decision-making at the school or district level. A very decentralized system allows teachers to be the main arbiter of their own professional growth activities. It is through making these decisions that districts and schools choose to respond to state initiatives.

In our case study districts, we found a wide range of district activities designed to provide teachers with multiple learning opportunities. In each site, districts faced the daunting task of identifying professional development priorities, interweaving appropriate state goals and resources, and covering other, unrelated state mandates. The following examples illustrate how schools and districts attempt to create coherence out of state directives, teacher needs, disparate flows of monetary resources, and unconnected incentives and supports.

Menu Approach

One common district approach is for the central office to provide a broad array of workshops, presentations, and seminars for teachers to choose from. An important goal of the menu of offerings is to provide something of interest to everyone. In a menu approach, the central office distributes a catalogue of staff development activities for teachers to choose from, thus acting as a clearinghouse of activities, resources, and expertise. The menu is also the way districts can efficiently cope with all of the noninstructional state mandates, such as CPR and hazardous-materials training.

The professional development activities vary widely. Entries in a typical catalogue from one case study site included such workshop titles as “Speed Reading,” “Fall Art Docent Training,” “Ways to Improve Your Existing Units with Innovative Strategies and Resources,” “Beginning Spanish,” and “Memory Mastery.” At another district, the curriculum and technology professional development calendar included “Using Online Resources in Elementary Science,” “NuCalc,” “Using Internet Search Skills,” “Creating and Using Excel Spreadsheets,” “Using Primary Resources in California and U.S. History: the California Heritage Project,” and “Geometer Sketchpad.” In addition, professional development activities covered both topics that cut across content areas, such as classroom management or working with special populations, and those specific to grade levels and content areas, such as teaching time and calendar concepts in K-2.

Under the menu approach, the district identifies the needs to be addressed and selects the sources of expertise, whether district curriculum specialists, external experts, or full-time classroom teachers. But it is the teacher who makes key decisions about which topics to seek out and how much time to spend on such activities, since participation is largely voluntary.

A menu approach is usually an insufficient vehicle for improving teaching practice in specific areas of instructional need, because the emphasis is on something for everyone. In at least three case study districts, administrators stated that they wanted to reduce the number of workshops and topics on the menu and increase the focus on specific instructional or student learning goals. To the extent that the menu approach is maintained to cover the extraneous state requirements, teachers face an incoherent set of offerings and choices.

However, a menu approach can supplement a more targeted professional development strategy, as in the case of Elk Grove. The example of Elk Grove Unified School District, in a fast-growing suburb of Sacramento, illustrates how a tailored menu approach can signal district priorities. In this case, the professional development office ties the menu of choices into district instructional priorities through an elaborate incentive structure. District administration augments

the salary schedule such that credits for the top steps can be earned only through designated workshops focusing on specific content areas. Credits toward the second-highest step are available for workshops focusing on English, math, science, or social studies. Teachers attain credits for the highest step, introduced just 2 years ago with the simultaneous launch of a reading initiative, for workshops related to early literacy, reading for information, and reading across the content areas.

Thus, the selection of workshops and seminars is coupled with financial resources and teacher incentives to reflect the district's goals. For these targeted areas, the professional development activities are somewhat more sustained than a typical menu approach. They are less often one-shot workshops and more often a series of three or four seminars spaced apart to allow for some follow-up over the course of the series. In the case of the literacy initiative, the reading courses reinforce and complement more intensive staff development that includes literacy coaches and reading specialists who work with teachers in the schools, through coaching, grade-level meetings, and, to a limited extent, demonstrating and observing lessons. However, even with a more streamlined menu approach, central office staff admit that "some folks miss the mark and just focus on moving up the salary steps."

Comprehensive School and District Strategies

In addition to offering broad-based professional development menus to teachers, several districts had developed and sustained a comprehensive professional development strategy around very specific instructional focuses. We present several contrasting examples—ones where state policies happened to support district goals and plans already in place, and others where professional development based on local needs flourished with little relationship to state policies.

The first two examples are Selma Unified School District in the Central Valley, near Fresno, and San Diego Unified. Selma has placed a long-term, strategic focus on early literacy. Beginning more than 5 years ago, Selma redirected half of its Title I resources to a new reading initiative. Accessing high-quality external expertise to build internal capacity, Selma contracted with outside reading experts for three consecutive summers. In addition, the district supported a 1-year training of a full-time district reading specialist through a partnership with the local university, CSU Fresno. The district specialist then trained several school-based teacher leaders. The full-time specialist, a local external consultant, and the teacher leaders have thus far trained 22 Selma teachers, who spend half of each school day working with students. This capacity is sufficient for all first-grade classes to have access to the program and for each elementary school to have at least one trained teacher. Selma intends to continue expanding the program so that enough teachers are trained to support students in all the primary grades. Training for

kindergarten to grade 2 teachers consists of 2 days with an outside expert, with a focus on assessment. Monthly grade-level meetings, led by the cadre of local teacher leaders, reinforce and deepen the initial training. In addition, upper elementary teachers work with the local consultant on using assessment to make instructional decisions and using a small-group approach to better customize instruction to students' needs.

San Diego Unified School District likewise has an aggressive implementation strategy targeting literacy. Importing key elements of the literacy program used in Community District 2 in New York City, where the current San Diego Chancellor for Instruction was the superintendent, San Diego has restructured the central office, redirected resources to support professional development for teachers, and made principals accountable for instruction in their schools. The district established the Institute for Learning, which houses a cadre of instructional leaders whose job it is to train and support teachers in literacy instruction. Instructional leaders work directly in classrooms with teachers and lead after-school and weekend workshops. All principals are expected to spend 2 hours each day in classrooms to help their teachers improve instruction. The district further mandated a daily 3-hour block for literacy in every elementary school.

In both the Selma and San Diego examples, the strategic direction and key decisions about resources, structure, capacity, and content of the training are set at the top of the district system. In both cases, California's Reading Initiative supported these districts' professional development strategies through financial resources and statewide training opportunities. Both took advantage of AB 1086 dollars to provide additional professional development opportunities—but they did so in a way that fit state resources and support into their ongoing initiatives. San Diego, for example, used AB 1086 dollars to support professional development from a state-approved external provider in one strand (Word Study) of a multiple-strand balanced literacy program. District and other external funds were used to support professional development in the other strands. In neither San Diego nor Selma did the district leadership simply “implement” a state policy. In fact, the strength of their approach was in adapting state policy to local needs—which were consistent with basic state intentions. Selma and San Diego already had in place structures that allowed them to take advantage of the extra resources provided by the state. Thus, these two districts did not have to alter their focus and attention to incorporate the direction from the state.

Teachers Directing Their Own Professional Development

In two other examples, we illustrate district approaches that are teacher driven, collaborative, and sustained. It is interesting that these alternative approaches matured in the absence of directly related state policies and indeed are sustained in spite of the fragmentation and disparate pressures applied by various state initiatives.

Inquiry groups in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District exemplify teacher collaborative groups directing professional development. The inquiry groups, funded externally by the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP), involve teachers, administrators, and, in some instances, students working together to solve specific problems. The inquiry groups complement the district's move toward site-based management and constitute Santa Monica's primary professional development approach. Although voluntary, the inquiry groups have drawn in almost 100% of all elementary teachers in Santa Monica, approximately 70% of middle school teachers, and 65% of high school teachers. Through a long-term alliance with Center X at UCLA, the district has identified the inequitable learning opportunities between Caucasian and minority students as the single most pressing issue facing the district, and expects the inquiry groups to address this issue in their own ways. Inquiry groups consist of 8 to 12 people who meet for 2 to 3 hours every 2 weeks, generally during school hours. A trained "critical friend," usually an external consultant, facilitates these structured discussions, which are designed to promote self-reflection on instructional practice.

Unlike the finding from the 1987 report that teachers have little influence over decisions regarding their professional development, the participants in the inquiry groups direct the activities. The degree to which the inquiry group is action oriented rather than limited to discussion depends on the group participants themselves. In one strong example, the inquiry process precipitated an overhaul of the math program at one middle school so that all students could take algebra. The planned overhaul included:

- A review of the math courses and math instruction at the middle school and feeder elementary schools.
- A summer working group with guidance from a UCLA professor and access to the California Math Project at Center X to research different approaches to organizing and teaching math.
- Rewriting of the math curriculum.
- Adoption of new textbooks.
- Development of criteria for elementary math programs.

In this example, teachers working together developed a plan of action, identified the reforms needed, located appropriate external expertise, built internal capacity to institute change, and had control over resources to execute the steps of the plan. Teachers saw the work of reforming the curriculum so that all students would have the opportunity to learn algebra as part of their instructional responsibilities.

One elementary school in Elk Grove Unified embarked 3 years ago on Results, a program that is now associated with the California Reading and Literature Project, emphasizing the analysis of student data to drive instructional decision-making. Adoption of the initiative grew organically, beginning with a reading specialist at the school who independently sought out external training. With support from her principal, she instituted training for teachers at the school on a voluntary basis. Teachers select and administer a variety of reading diagnostic tests, meet in grade-level groups weekly to examine the assessment results, and plan, as a team, instructional strategies based on their analyses. Teachers at the school describe Results as a “philosophy, not a curriculum” and point to after-school programs designed for the lowest-performing students as tangible reforms flowing from a paradigm of basing instructional decisions on the analysis of assessment results. Novice teachers at the school report that participating in the Results discussions has given them concrete assessment skills that have improved their sense of efficacy in the classroom. “Results is a great thing for a new teacher because it gives you ready assessments, and new teachers are looking for something to guide them.”

In this example, professional development takes the form of collaborative, problem-solving discussions and analysis that lead to specific, action-oriented goals. Teachers testify to its profound influence on their teaching: “Results...allows us to do small-group instruction and is focused on what individual kids know and can do. It is powerful because of its focus and the information it gives. Once you do the assessment for the second time, you understand and can’t imagine ever doing without it. I can’t image teaching another way.” Much of the power of the Results work seems to be associated with the shared responsibility of teachers at the same grade level. “It has to be a team effort. We teach each other’s kids, rearrange groups, and give suggestions for teaching strategies with kids that are not making it. It leads to powerful discussions. ... Our mantra is ‘Every child a reader and every child a name’.” Teachers in the lower grades in this school made it clear that their most powerful professional development occurred through everyday interactions with their colleagues as they discussed the students’ progress—it was not an adjunct activity.

Like the examples of Selma and San Diego, Elk Grove's and Santa Monica's approaches to professional development demonstrate the core role of the district in affording teachers coherent learning opportunities. It was in part because of the success of Results in local districts like Elk Grove, in fact, that the Subject Matter Projects adopted it statewide. Here we have an example of local efforts influencing statewide policy.

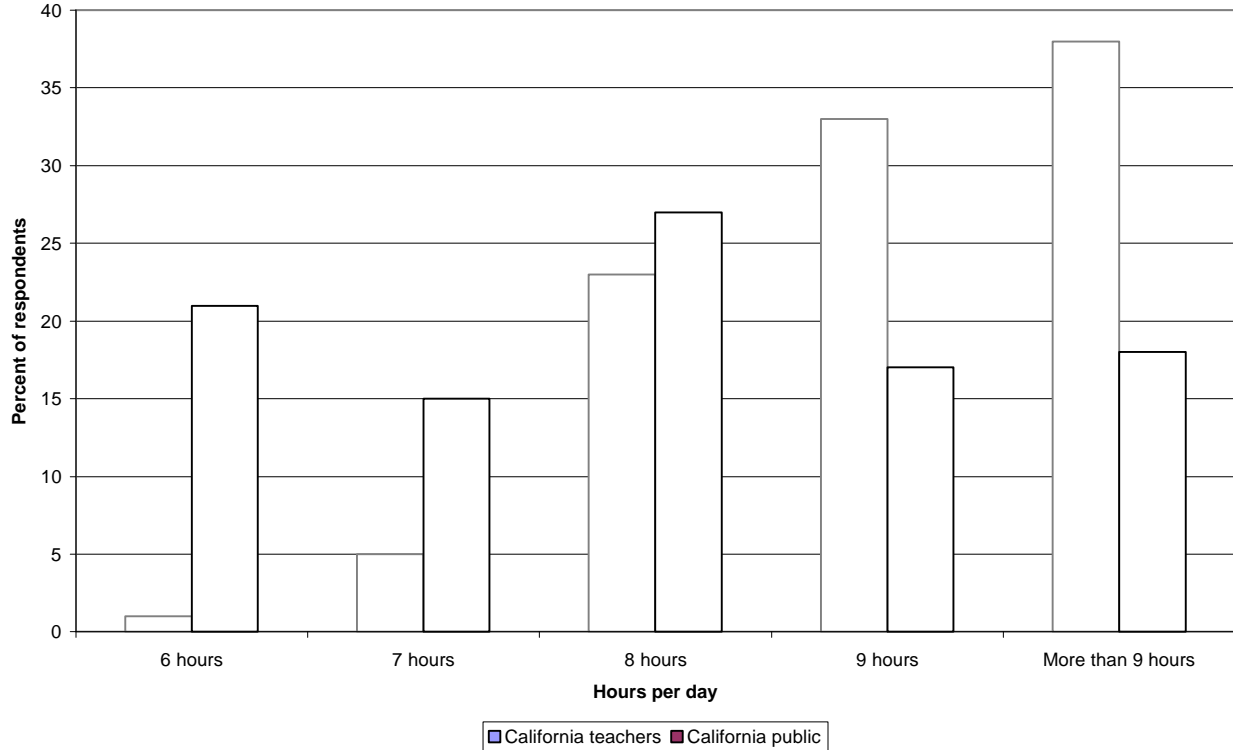
Supports and Incentives for Professional Development

Regardless of the programs and strategies that the state, districts, and schools create to support professional development, core decisions about what teachers participate in and how seriously teachers pursue opportunities lie in the hands of the teachers themselves. Thus, much of what policy-makers can do to promote quality professional development turns on the supports and incentives they offer individual teachers. Supports and incentives signal the priority that schools and districts place on different activities. Here, we discuss the system of supports and incentives for teachers' participation in professional development. We address the issues of time, rewards, and evaluation.

Time for Professional Development

Teachers work long hours. Overall, California teachers report working on a variety of tasks outside of their regular contract day, many of which help build their professional skills and knowledge. The vast majority of teachers report working more than 8 hours per day (Figure 7-1). Thirty-three percent work 9 hours and 38% work more than that each day. Public perceptions of the teaching profession generally err on the side of underestimating the workload of teachers.⁸ Thirty-five percent of the California public estimate that teachers work more than 8 hours a day, but equal percentage (36%) estimate that teachers work less than 8 hours. Even though the public holds misconceptions of teachers' workloads, 82% believe in compensating teachers more for professional development and planning.

**Figure 7-1
Average Hours Worked Daily, Teacher Reports vs. Public Estimates**



Source: Estimates by California public from RNT (1999); California teacher data from SRI statewide teacher survey.

Time for professional development, then, either has to be inserted into an already crowded schedule or, worse, added on top of teachers' other responsibilities. Almost two-thirds (63%) of teachers received release time for participating in professional development (Table 7-1). However, fewer than half of all teachers (46%) had scheduled time for collaboration with other teachers, and only 38% had scheduled time for such activities during regular school hours.

**Table 7-1
Time for Professional Development**

Time Provided Teachers in 1997-98	Percent of Teachers
Release time from teaching (i.e., when your regular teaching responsibilities are covered by someone else)	63
Scheduled time for collaboration with other teachers, including your regular planning period if it is used for this purpose	46
Scheduled time in the weekly master schedule for pupil-free time (i.e., time for professional development built into your regular schedule)	38

Source: SRI statewide teacher survey.

Teachers and district personnel whom we interviewed for the case studies generally anticipate even less time for professional development as a result of the elimination of “noninstructional” days. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the 1998-99 budget stipulated a minimum of 180 instructional days for students, effectively eliminating all staff development days within the teacher contract year. Teachers and administrators across the state complained about the reduction of the state-funded instructional development days. “We used to have up to 7 days of in-service, but not with the new bill. It’s got to be either before or after school,” explained a high school administrator in a rural district. “The value of having 1 or 2 days before school is very questionable in my mind, but that is our only alternative right now.” In addition, the difficulties of scheduling time for teachers’ professional development were exacerbated when the statewide implementation of class size reduction significantly reduced the pool of substitutes.

In an attempt to provide models of creating time for professional learning, the California Professional Development Reform Initiative (CPDRI) summarized some possible strategies:

- Purchasing time, such as release days, summer stipends, or adding days to the contract.
- Reallocating time, such as expanding staffing with substitutes and part-time teachers; flexible classroom coverage by teaching assistants, interns, or team teaching; alternative scheduling, such as common prep time, block scheduling, banking time; reducing teacher workload/student contact time.
- Improving the use of time during staff development days and faculty meetings.⁹

CPDRI notes that these solutions have their drawbacks. Purchasing time tends to be “one-shot” rather than ongoing. Reallocating time is nearly impossible, as we have noted, in districts with

teacher shortages because few substitutes are available. Flexible coverage is a temporary strategy and cannot free teachers for long periods of time.

Some schools and districts are already implementing some of these suggestions and have developed other ways of building in time for teacher learning. For example, Selma Unified has each Tuesday as an early release day for pupils, allowing teachers an hour and 45 minutes for professional development (but the other four days of the week have slightly longer hours). One Tuesday per month is reserved for BTSA mentors and mentees to meet. Another Tuesday per month is used for grade-level meetings, which bring all elementary teachers in the district together. At the junior high, the early release days are used for team meetings. At the high school, Digital High School training occurs twice per month and department meetings once per month.

In another example, a San Francisco middle school moved to block scheduling. Every teacher has two prep periods per day, and teachers meet every day. The principal believes, as do the staff, that communication is crucial to developing expertise within the school. In this school, teachers have common planning time within their interdisciplinary families, as well as in vertical departmental teams. A veteran teacher told us, “I love this school because teachers have common planning time, time to talk to each other. There is a lot of collaboration here because of the [interdisciplinary] families; there is a lot of interaction over student learning.”

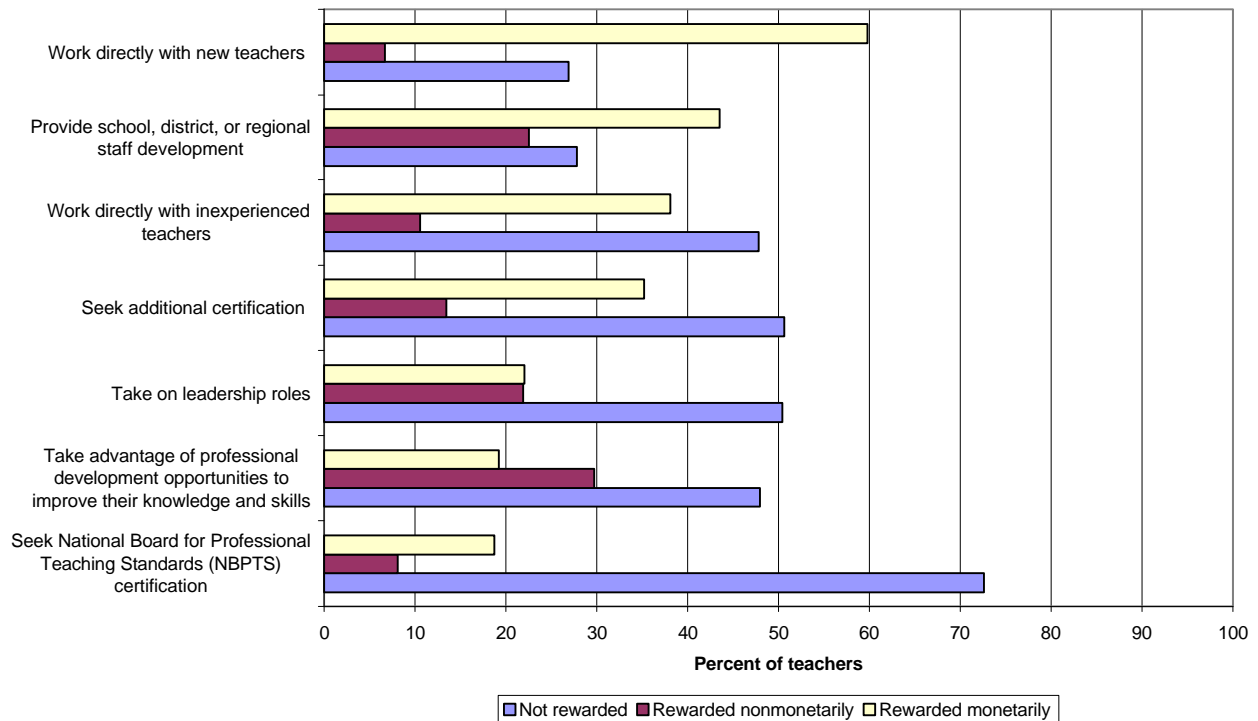
San Diego has taken a different approach to affording teachers professional development time by placing staff developers in schools 2 to 4 days per week. These peer coaches work directly in teachers’ classrooms, modeling lessons, observing, and offering critical feedback. But they also take over teachers’ classes to allow those teachers to observe in others’ classrooms. Thus, professional development time takes place during the regular daily schedule.

In the absence of such integrated approaches, professional development time becomes fragmented as activities are fit into the small periods available, resulting in unsustained and shallower focus on the content of professional development activities. As one administrator expressed: “Time! As a system we just haven’t been able to organize time in ways that support professional development. It will take a radical reconceptualization of the way we think about a school year.” In addition, there are serious time constraints on the planning and development of professional development. As one teacher reported: “There’s a PD committee that includes teachers and administrators that tries to come up with things. But the PD is not well focused, not in-depth. It’s all flavor of the month. It’s not well thought out because it’s developed in teachers’ spare time. I’ve given in-services...and I know that it has to be developed at lunch, after school, off-track. There’s no time in the schedule for it.”

Rewards for Professional Development

Another way districts can support teachers is by providing them certain benefits for professional-development-related activities. The types of rewards districts can offer are influenced by state policy. For example, because of funds available through the California Mentor Teacher Program and BTSA, a large percentage of teachers report being rewarded monetarily for working with new teachers (Figure 7-2). Much lower percentages of teachers report getting either monetary or nonmonetary benefits for other relevant activities. Strikingly, fewer than half of teachers who provide direct professional development to their peers or take on leadership roles are paid for it. At minimum, this suggests to those teachers that professional development is not an expectation of their job; at worst, it acts as a disincentive to pursue professional development, given the scarcity of time, and to pursue those things that are rewarded.

Figure 7-2
School/District Rewards for Teacher Development Activities



Source: SRI statewide teacher survey.

In the worst-case scenario, teachers are not only not rewarded but are expected to spend their own money on their professional development. As Table 7-2 illustrates, 66% of teachers spend more than \$50 per year on their own professional development, and almost 40% spend more than \$250 per year.

Table 7-2
Teachers' Expenditures on Professional Development

Amount Spent in 1997-98 School Year	Percent of Teachers Spending Amount on Their Own Professional Development
None	21
Up to \$50	13
\$51 to \$100	12
\$101 to \$250	15
\$251 to \$500	17
More than \$500	22

Source: SRI statewide teacher survey.

Evaluation as Professional Development Tool

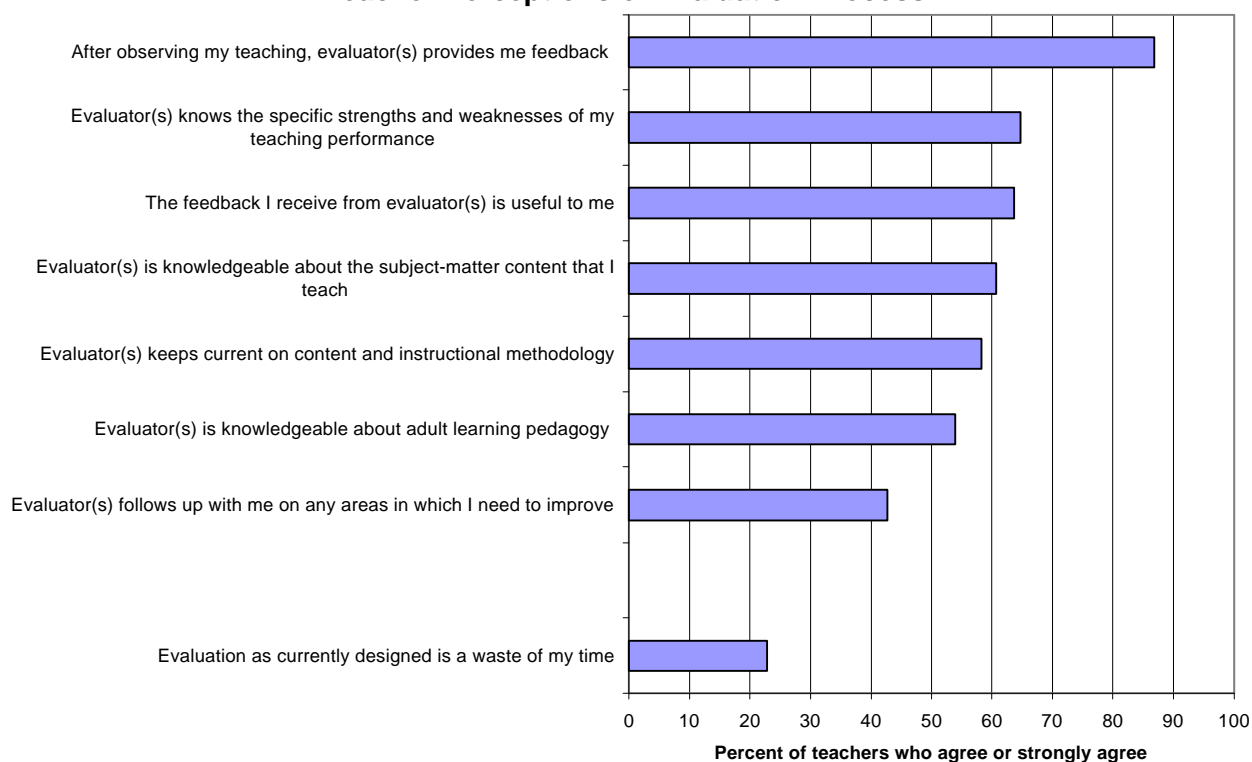
In theory, evaluation can play a critical feedback role for teachers. If teachers are evaluated relative to a set of standards or professional goals and provided appropriate feedback, the results of this process can be used to fashion an individualized professional development plan. In practice, however, teacher evaluation systems as they are currently constructed are usually pro forma. Typically, new teachers with preliminary or clear credentials have probation status for the first 2 years of employment with a district. Their administrators formally evaluate them at least once each year. In many schools we visited, administrators chose to evaluate them twice in the first year or informally evaluate them more frequently. Schools are required to evaluate teachers with tenure biennially.

The entire evaluation process includes conferencing, observation, and culminating in written documentation of teachers' performance. Generally, administrators do a preconference with the teacher to discuss the lesson to be observed—the objectives, relationship to the previous and subsequent days' lessons—followed by the observation and a postconference. In the schools we visited, teachers and administrators described the evaluation forms they use as bubble forms

with satisfactory or unsatisfactory types of ratings along various dimensions, which usually are unrelated to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.

Between 1996-97 and 1997-98, almost all teachers (96%) in our survey sample were observed at least once for evaluation, including 59% who were observed two to three times and 17% four or more times. Almost 90% of teachers received feedback after being observed for an evaluation, but only 64% found that feedback useful, and even fewer (43%) reported that their evaluator followed up with opportunities for professional development (Figure 7-3).

**Figure 7-3
Teacher Perceptions of Evaluation Process**



Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 5=strongly agree

Source: SRI statewide teacher survey.

In schools with high turnover, administrators are overwhelmed with heavy evaluation loads, and veteran teachers reported in interviews that administrators may complete their evaluation forms without observation and discussion. In these instances, the evaluation process itself does not yield information useful to the teachers. Thus, overall, evaluation as a system is not used to further teachers' professional development. While it consumes valuable time, more than 30% of teachers do not think the feedback is useful. Over half report that their evaluators

do not follow up with them regarding needed improvements, and almost one-quarter think evaluation is a waste of time.

There are, of course, exceptions to these general trends. To improve on the standard evaluation process, some schools use individual plans that are intended to guide professional development choices and link evaluation and professional development. In one middle school in Elk Grove Unified, all teachers are required to meet with an administrator (principal or assistant principal) to develop a professional development plan. Each teacher then must submit a portfolio that demonstrates progress toward annual professional development goals. The administrators review and provide feedback on the portfolios each year, even for veteran teachers. Administrators and teachers alike report gaining more valuable information from this process than through the district-required evaluation form. Unfortunately, the school must comply with the standard process, in addition to its own system, even though the standard process is less useful for both teachers and administrators.

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified has an innovative districtwide evaluation system (described below). Tenured teachers have two options: the regular 2-year evaluation cycle or a 3-year professional growth cycle that includes setting goals and submitting evidence of achieving the goals.

Teacher Evaluation in Santa Monica

In the first year, Santa Monica teachers are observed three times, the third of which is a formal evaluation, usually performed by the principal. For teachers with satisfactory evaluations the first year, there are no formal evaluations in the second year. (However, new teachers may be observed and given informal feedback by the principal.) If the teacher did not get a satisfactory evaluation the first year, then the Year 1 process is repeated the second year. In the third year, a new teacher who was successful in the first 2 years gets tenure. All teachers get their choice in the third year of the cycle to either repeat the process described above or to enter a “3-year professional growth cycle.” A teacher who chooses the professional growth cycle develops a plan for what he or she wants to do over 2 years and submits it to the principal. The teacher then follows the plan, taking courses, reading, taking professional development offerings in areas of interest (e.g., interacting with a community and families served, National Board certification, and so on). At the end of the fourth year, the teacher submits a portfolio or other evidence of professional growth for the principal to assess. If satisfactory, there is no evaluation in the fifth year of the cycle. Then the cycle starts again with Year 1 of the 3-year professional growth cycle.

These uses of evaluation to support professional learning goals are the exception. In general, teacher evaluation systems in our case sites were divorced from professional development and were not tied to teaching standards. However, the legislative mandates under Peer Assistance and Review (ABX1 1) could change local evaluation procedures.

Teachers participating in PAR are expected to have individual improvement plans, and districts and schools will have to provide appropriate staff development and support for teachers to progress toward their improvement goals, most notably the assistance of an exemplary “consulting teacher.” Further, the bill amends existing law to require school district governing boards to evaluate certificated employee performance as “it reasonably relates to” the progress pupils are making toward meeting state standards, as measured by “state adopted criterion referenced assessments.” In addition, the CDE will provide guidelines on how to develop local PAR programs that are based on the CSTP and the NBPTS. The final evaluation results of a teacher’s participation in PAR will become part of the teacher’s personnel file.¹⁰ Although these provisions may improve the usefulness of the evaluation process for participating teachers, it is unclear how many teachers will actually participate, given the capacity constraints of enough master teachers, mentor teachers, BTSA support providers, and now consulting teachers.

The Challenges of Coherence and Capacity in Professional Development

The state, districts, and schools face two fundamental challenges in ensuring that all teachers have access to high-quality professional development: (1) sustaining a consistent and coherent vision, goal, and strategy for instructional reform over a long period of time; and (2) the scale of the human and financial resources necessary to support instructional improvement over the long term in multiple subjects and multiple grades.

At each level of the system, the coherence of teachers’ professional development opportunities is a key issue. At the state level, various pieces of legislation do not attempt to coordinate the disparate approaches to professional development, nor do they effectively ensure that the quality of professional development will be high. Yet they are increasingly prescriptive. “The fragmentation of funding sources is a major problem. It leads to creating a situation where the amount of local discretion is the smallest it’s ever been, while the dollar amounts are the largest. We are told very specifically how to spend those dollars,” stated another superintendent.

Regardless of state policy, however, districts shoulder some responsibility for making sense of competing mandates and providing professional development opportunities for teachers that make sense in the district context. Our case study districts provided examples of how strong local leaders can do much to develop coherent approaches. Elk Grove, for example, uses a series

of incentives to encourage teachers to take advantage of opportunities in line with district objectives. San Diego has built a system of peer coaches and a literacy focus, taking advantage of state resources.

School leaders also have a role in helping to forge professional development that makes sense for their teachers. In Santa Monica, there has been an explicit effort to build school-level capacity, shared among the principal and teachers, to make sure that teachers have learning opportunities that meet their particular needs.

In the absence of a coherent message from policy-makers at each level of the system about the importance and direction of professional development, teachers' learning experiences will too often be fragmented and incoherent themselves. More importantly, disjointed and contradictory policies can lead teachers to begin to ignore policy-makers' reform initiatives and take a "this too shall pass" approach to urgent efforts to improve our schools.

A related challenge at each level of the system is building sufficient capacity to implement high-quality professional development for all teachers. Simply put, helping teachers learn requires many helpers—other adults who are prepared to help teachers improve their practice. The numbers involved, if all teachers are to be reached—are startling. For example, San Diego Unified created more than 100 school-site staff developer positions—at a cost of millions of dollars—to ensure that teachers receive adequate support in the classroom during the instructional day. All of these dedicated staff are focused on literacy. Similarly, Elk Grove has two full-time staff in the central office maintaining the district's catalogue of offerings and the BTSA program and a full-time coordinator for the literacy coaches. Teachers on special assignment serve as literacy coaches, one for every two elementary schools. Middle and high schools each have at least one half-time reading specialist. Again, except for central office staff, this capacity is focused exclusively on literacy and reading. To replicate this kind of capacity for other content areas requires even more people dedicated full-time to the professional development role and the political will to allocate the financial resources required.

The time required to establish instructional changes in the classroom calls for the capacity to lead, adhere to, and implement a long-term strategy. Selma has sustained a 5-year focus on literacy and reading, including a 1-year training for the lead in-house Reading Recovery expert. The San Diego reform model derives from a 10-year literacy effort in New York City's Community District 2. The stable leadership and consistent long-term vision that are necessary are also rare in large urban districts.

Overall, then, our findings illustrate that intensive support for teachers to change their instructional practices requires time, money, people, and expertise. The investments made thus far, mostly in early literacy, point to the scale of the challenge in replicating those investments in math, science, and social studies.

Endnotes

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