**Effective Teacher Professional Development**

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This report can be found online at <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-prof-dev>.

Using the methodology detailed in Appendix A, we identify seven characteristics of effective PD. **Specifically, we find that it:**

**1. Is content focused**

**2. Incorporates active learning utilizing adult learning theory**

**3. Supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts**

**4. Uses models and modeling of effective practice**

**5. Provides coaching and expert support**

**6. Offers opportunities for feedback and reflection**

**7. Is of sustained duration**

Successful PD models generally feature a number of these components simultaneously. The Reading Recovery program, described in detail in the box that follows, is an example of one program that possesses all seven elements and has been found to generate positive student gains. Other effective programs may possess most but not all of the seven features.

**Effective Professional Development in Practice: Reading Recovery**

Reading Recovery is an example of a professional development model that has demonstrated effectiveness in supporting student learning gains in dozens of studies over several decades on multiple continents. Reading Recovery was originally designed to provide individualized interventions for struggling readers in New Zealand, and has since been widely implemented in the U.K., Canada, and Australia. It was first implemented in the U.S. in 1984, and grew to serve a peak number of 152,000 students nationwide in the 2000–01 school year. In 2010, the Ohio State University—the U.S. seat of Reading Recovery—received a $45 million federal i3 grant to fund the expansion of Reading Recovery. The university partnered with 19 universities across the U.S. to recruit and train teachers and schools to participate in the Reading Recovery program. The i3 grant supported teacher PD for 3,747 teachers, who served 387,450 students in one-to-one lessons, classroom teaching, or small-group instruction.

The Reading Recovery theory of change asserts the critical role of the teacher in identifying students’ strengths and needs and facilitating their learning by providing appropriate opportunities to acquire and use new reading skills. The teacher’s practice is highly diagnostic and grounded in a substantial knowledge base about the learning-to-read process for diverse learners, as well as a sophisticated set of teaching skills applied in an individualized fashion for each learner. The basis of the Reading Recovery PD model is similarly informed by a very deliberate approach to acquiring and applying knowledge that is individualized to the needs of the teacher.

To prepare teachers to play this critical role, Reading Recovery provides intensive PD that incorporates all seven of the elements of effective PD. In groups of 8 to 12, teachers complete a yearlong graduate-level training course taught by a literacy coach. This sustained training involves model lesson observation, teacher demonstration of effective teaching techniques, and frequent collaborative discussion between participants. After the training course, faculty from the partnering university support teachers in their classrooms and facilitate program implementation within their area. Additional, ongoing PD for these teachers includes a minimum of six sessions with a Reading Recovery teacher leader and colleagues; opportunities for interaction and collaboration with school leaders and colleagues; and ongoing access to conferences and training institutes.

A 2016 evaluation of the i3 funded initiative found that students who participated in the U.S. expansion of Reading Recovery significantly outperformed students in the control groups on measures of overall reading, reading comprehension, and decoding. Moreover, these gains were nearly three times as large as average gains for similar broad instructional interventions. Of particular interest during the i3 scale-up study was the performance of English language learners (ELLs) and rural students. Results indicated that there was a similarly large positive impact on their performance. These findings suggest that the Reading Recovery PD program is capable of positively impacting student achievement on a large scale and can help drive equitable learning outcomes for ELL and rural students.