

## Professional Learning to Improve Achievement for All Students



ISSUE ORIENTED

The National Staff Development Council and the School Redesign Network at Stanford University recently published a technical report about teacher development called *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad* ([www.nsd.org/stateproflearning.cfm](http://www.nsd.org/stateproflearning.cfm)). The report reviews the research on the relationship between professional development and student learning, concluding that improving professional learning for educators is a crucial step in transforming schools and improving academic achievement. Professional learning must be sustained, focused on important content, and embedded in the work of collaborative professional learning teams that support ongoing improvements in teacher practice and student achievement.

The report also reviewed the availability of effective professional learning opportunities in the United States and other high-achieving nations. The report is the first of a multi-year effort to track progress in the United States and identify model policies and practices.

According to scores from the Program in International Student Assessment (PISA), high-achieving nations provide teachers with:

- More time for professional learning and collaboration
- Extensive opportunities for professional learning that is ongoing and job embedded
- Involvement in curriculum and instructional practice decisions
- Induction programs for new teachers that include mentors

It feels as though we have a road map for effective professional learning that will lead to increased learning for students. The report is a must-read for all educators.

What are some resources for models discussed in the report? The Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle (PTLC), developed by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), is one form of ongoing, job-embedded professional development in which teachers collaboratively plan and implement lessons aligned to their state standards. The cycle involves teachers working in collaborative planning teams (grade-level, vertical, or departmental) to:

- Discuss learning expectations from selected state standards
- Research and select instructional strategies, resources, and assessments
- Develop a lesson incorporating the selected strategies and identify the type of student work to use as evidence of student learning
- Carry out the planned lesson, note implementation successes and challenges, and gather agreed upon evidence of student learning
- Examine student work and discuss student understanding of the standards
- Reflect on the implications of the analysis of student work and discuss alternative instructional strategies or modifications

The PTLC is part of *Working Systemically in Action: A Guide for Facilitators*, available from the SEDL Store ([www.sedl.org](http://www.sedl.org)).

By Anita McAnear

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