

Online Professional Development for Teachers

Description of Request:

The requestor would like to know if they can get any data on Online Professional Development (OPD) for teachers. I know that there are companies and organizations that provide OPD. I have not been able to find data that quantify the use of OPD.

Question:

1. What data is available regarding Online Professional Development (OPD) for teachers?
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Report:

Following an established REL-NEI Reference Desk research protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive and policy-oriented briefs and articles in this area. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research institutions, several educational research databases, and a general Internet search using Google and other search engines. We also searched for appropriate organizations that may act as resources on this issue. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves, but offer this list to you for your information only.

Our Researchers have found a number of resources regarding Online Professional Development for Teachers. One resource suggests that, "School districts must provide ongoing and effective professional development to help their staff learn to use educational technology in their classrooms. OPD, when carefully tailored to meet local needs, and when well integrated with other ongoing technology and professional development plans and initiatives, provides a powerful way for busy educators to meet this challenge successfully." (See, Treacy, B., 2003, below)

The body of research and resources is growing in the field of Online Professional Development for Teachers. "The e-Learning for Educators Initiative is a federally funded program seeking to establish an effective and sustainable model of online professional development that will help address state-wide teacher quality needs and have an impact on student achievement in eight partner states. Part of this initiative involves conducting four large-scale randomized experiments in 4th grade English Language Arts (ELA), 5th grade Mathematics, 7th grade ELA, and 8th grade Mathematics." (See, The e-learning for Educators in general resources, below)

Question:

1. What data is available regarding Online Professional Development (OPD) for teachers?

1.1. Successful Online Professional Development. Treacy, B., Klieman, G, Peterson, K.; 2002; *Information Society for technology in Education. Vol. 30 Num.1.; pp.42-47.*

Source: Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC)

(<http://www.edtechleaders.org/about/research/articles/SuccessfulOPD.pdf>)

"In January 2000, our team from the Center for Online Professional Education (COPE) at Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) launched EdTech Leaders Online, an online professional development (OPD) program to help school districts, state departments of education,

regional service providers, and other educational organizations incorporate technology into their educational programs. During the past two years, we have built EdTech Leaders Online into a national program, currently running in 17 states and the District of Columbia, with more than 50 school-based teams participating. Through this work, we have learned valuable lessons about how online learning can build capacity for technology integration and help school districts meet the challenge of providing effective professional development for teachers and administrators.”(p.42)

“The success of your OPD program depends on fulfilling the following elements:

- Assess local professional development needs and develop an OPD plan based on these needs.
- Connect OPD with other ongoing, face-to-face professional development activities.
- Carefully select and train OPD specialist team members.
- Build a strong local team.
- Develop incentives.
- Publicize the OPD program and involve local stakeholders.
- Provide readily available and reliable access to technology and support.
- Foster a rich, interactive online learning community.
- Integrate online workshops with face-to-face meetings.” (p.44)

“School districts must provide ongoing and effective professional development to help their staff learn to use educational technology in their classrooms. OPD, when carefully tailored to meet local needs, and when well integrated with other ongoing technology and professional development plans and initiatives, provides a powerful way for busy educators to meet this challenge successfully.” (p.47)

1.2. Teacher Professional Development, Technology, and Communities of Practice: Are We Putting the Cart Before the Horse? *Schlager, M., Fusco, J.; 2003; The Information Society; Issue 19; pp.203-220.*

Source: General internet search using Google.

(http://www.lerenvandocenten.nl/files/schlager_fusco.pdf)

From the abstract, “Over the past decade, education reform and teacher training projects have spent a great deal of effort to create and support sustainable, scalable *online* communities of education professionals. For the most part, those communities have been created in isolation from the existing local professional communities within which the teachers practice. We argue that focusing on online technology solely as a mechanism to deliver training and/or create online networks places the cart before the horse by ignoring the Internet’s even greater potential to help support and strengthen local communities of practice within which teachers work. In this article we seek guideposts to help education technologists understand the nature of local K–12 education communities of practice—specifically their reciprocal relationship with teacher professional development and instructional improvement interventions—as a prerequisite to designing online sociotechnical infrastructure that supports the professional growth of education professionals.”

1.3. The Use of Distance Education for Teachers. *Creed, C.; 2001; International Research Foundation for Open Learning.*

Source: General internet search using GoogleScholar

(<http://www.irfol.ac.uk/publications/pdfs/Mappingreport.pdf>)

From the Executive Summary, “This report, commissioned by the Department for International Development, was designed to map the current use of distance education for teachers, looking for evidence internationally but drawing in particular from experience in the south. Its purpose is to see how far distance education can help with the problems of teacher shortage, gender imbalance, and teaching quality that have a bearing on meeting the international education for all targets.”

1.4. Online Professional Development - concern about the standards of distance education.

Richardson, J.; October 2001; School Administrator.

Source: RELNEI Assistance

(http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0JSD/is_9_58/ai_79006755/?tag=content;col1)

From page 1, “Online staff development offers enormous opportunities to customize learning around individual teacher needs and to make learning convenient for teachers. Learning can be

"just in time," when teachers need it most. Online training can allow teachers to learn basic skills with confidentiality or it can open doors to allow teachers to network with colleagues across their school districts or the country."

"But online learning also has the potential to accelerate the worst parts of staff development--the fragmentation and the isolation--without any monitoring of the rigor of the work that teachers are doing, says Joellen Killion, director of special projects for the National Staff Development Council and co-author of a newly released set of technology standards, "E-Learning for Educators: Implementing the Standards for Staff Development".

"Dennis Sparks, executive director of the National Staff Development Council, worries that electronic learning may "provide a centrifugal force that moves teachers away from daily collaboration with colleagues in professional learning communities within their schools." He adds: "It's essential, from my point of view, that a significant portion of teachers' professional learning occur in school each day as teachers together plan lessons, critique student work and examine various data from their school. To the extent that electronic learning aids these core team-based functions, it may well serve schools and students. To the extent that it adds to incoherence and fragmentation of effort, it contributes to the squandering of a precious resource--teachers' professional knowledge and skill. But if the trend in education follows that in business, then technology-based training, or e-learning as it's called in the corporate sector, can be expected to rise markedly. No education-specific statistics are available, but 29 percent of all training was delivered online in 2000, according to Training magazine's annual industry report. Merrill Lynch projects that e-learning will grow to become a \$25 billion business by 2003, up from \$3.5 billion in 2001."

Additional Organizations to Consult

- **Education Development Center: Center for Online Professional Education (COPE)**
(<http://www2.edc.org/cope/>)
The mission of the Center for Online Professional Education (COPE) is to promote student learning, improve teaching practices, and provide districts with capacity-building solutions through the use of innovative educational practices and technologies. COPE provides:
Support to states and districts to help them develop effective policies and programs.
Professional development programs delivered online, face-to-face, and a combination of both approaches, for educators and administrators at the school, district, state, and university levels.
- **iNACOL (International Association for K-12 Online Learning)**
(<http://www.inacol.org/>)
Research page, with links re: PD: (<http://www.inacol.org/research/research.php>)
Reports & Publications page, with links re: PD: (<http://www.inacol.org/research/reports.php>)
iNACOL, The International Association for K-12 Online Learning, is a non-profit organization that facilitates collaboration, advocacy, and research to enhance quality K-12 online teaching and learning.
- **EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO)**
(<http://www.edtechleaders.org/>)
ETLO Research: (<http://www.edtechleaders.org/about/research/>)
EdTech Leaders Online (ETLO) is a capacity-building online program for K-12 school districts, state departments of education, regional service centers, teacher training institutions and other educational organizations to enable them to provide effective online learning programs for teachers, administrators and students.
- **Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)**
Latest Reports, with links re: PD
(<http://www.sreb.org/main/Publications/LatestReports/LatestReportsindex.asp>)
Founded in 1948, the Southern Regional Education Board is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works with leaders and policy-makers in 16 member states to improve pre-K through postsecondary education. Through many nationally recognized programs and services, SREB's mission is helping states achieve the 12 goals for education which can be found in the resource,

Goals for Education: Challenge to Lead Report. This resource is available at: (http://www.sreb.org/main/Goals/2002_Goals_Report.pdf).

- **National Staff Development Council**
E-Learning page: <http://www.nsd.org/elearning/>
NSDC is using technology to engage educators from around the world in collaborative, team-based professional learning. NSDC's e-learning series provides participants with the chance to learn with and from their colleagues, as well as expert facilitators, over the course of five-week online programs that feature live, interactive sessions and much more.

Resources of Interest on Online Professional Development for Teachers

- **The e-Learning for Educators Initiative**
Source: RELNEI Assistance
(<http://www.bc.edu/research/intasc/researchprojects/eLearning/efe.shtml>)
The e-Learning for Educators Initiative is a federally funded program seeking to establish an effective and sustainable model of online professional development that will help address state-wide teacher quality needs and have an impact on student achievement in eight partner states. Part of this initiative involves conducting four large-scale randomized experiments in 4th grade English Language Arts (ELA), 5th grade Mathematics, 7th grade ELA, and 8th grade Mathematics. InTASC is conducting these studies designed to examine the impact of online professional development on teacher knowledge, teacher practices, and, most importantly, student achievement. The research study is now complete. Findings will be published as they become available.

Key words and search strings used in the search:

Online professional development for teachers OR Distance education for teachers

Search databases and websites:

Institute for Education Science Sites: Regional Educational Laboratory Program (REL); What Works Clearinghouse (WWC); Doing What Works (DWW); National Center for Education Statistics (NCES); Institute for Education Sciences (IES); IES Practice Guides.

Other Federally Funded Sites: The Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center; The National High School Center; The Center on Innovation and Improvement; The Center on Instruction; The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Datasets: K – 12; National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); National Assessments of Adult Literacy (NAAL); Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS); National Household Education Survey (NHES); Career/Technical Education Statistics (CTES); Common Core of Data (CCD)

Additional Data Resources: The Campbell Collaboration; Data Quality Campaign; Education Development Center; WestEd; American Institutes for Research; Just for Kids; Great Schools; PSK12; Kids Count; School Data Direct; The Education Trust; SRI International; ERIC; EBSCO Databases; Education Index Retrospective; FirstSearch (OCLC); ProQuest; Educator's Reference Complete; HeinOnline; Education Daily; Government Executive; <http://www.google.com>; <http://www.google.com>; general internet search.

Criteria for inclusion:

When Reference Desk Researchers review resources, they consider, among other things, four factors:

1. **Date of the publication:** The most current information is included unless in the case of nationally known seminal resources
2. **Source and funder of the report/study/brief/article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols;
3. **Methodology:** i.e. Random control trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc. Priority for inclusion is given generally to random control trial study findings; however, the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: Numbers of participants (just a few? Thousands?); Selection (did the participants volunteer in the study, or were they chosen?); Representation (were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?)

4. **Existing knowledge base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is slim or non-existent. In these cases we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, etc.

REL Northeast and Islands

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