

Summary: Sustained Teacher Collaboration and Its Impact on Student Achievement

There is substantial educational research supporting the idea that regular, sustained teacher collaboration is more valuable for improving student outcomes than infrequent, stand-alone professional learning. Key studies point to the benefits of ongoing, embedded collaboration versus one-off workshops or isolated training sessions.

1. Sustained Professional Learning

- **Linda Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2009)** conducted a comprehensive review of professional development and concluded that **sustained, collaborative, and job-embedded professional learning** has a greater impact on teacher practice and student learning than traditional, infrequent workshops. The review emphasized that collaboration embedded within the school context allows teachers to learn from one another and directly apply strategies to their classrooms.

Citation: Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R. C., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad*. National Staff Development Council.

2. Job-Embedded Collaborative Learning vs. One-Time Workshops

- Research from the **Learning Forward and Stanford University (2017)** found that when teachers engage in **ongoing, collaborative learning that is job-embedded**, such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) or other collaborative formats, they are more likely to change their instructional practices and improve student outcomes. In contrast, one-off workshops tend to have minimal impact because they lack follow-up and ongoing support for implementation.

Citation: Learning Forward & Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. (2017). *The elements of effective professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.

3. Impact on Teacher Practice

- A study by **Desimone and Garet (2015)** supports the idea that sustained, collaborative professional development is more effective than infrequent, short-term. Their research highlights that when professional learning includes ongoing collaboration and is aligned with teachers' daily practice, it leads to better retention of knowledge and implementation in the classroom.

Citation: Desimone, L. M., & Garet, M. S. (2015). Best practices in teacher's professional development in the United States. *Psychology, Society, & Education*, 7(3), 252-263.

4. Collective Teacher Efficacy

- **John Hattie's meta-analyses (2023)** show that **collective teacher efficacy**, which is fostered through regular, collaborative work among teachers, has an effect size of 1.34—one of the highest influences on student achievement. Infrequent professional learning does not build this kind of collective efficacy, as it lacks the regularity and community-building aspects of ongoing collaboration.

Citation: Hattie, J. (2023). *Visible learning: The Sequel A synthesis of over 2,100 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.

5. Teacher Agency and Continuous Improvement

- **Kraft, Blazar, and Hogan (2018)** conducted a meta-analysis of coaching programs and found that when professional development is ongoing, with collaborative components such as instructional coaching and peer support, it produces more significant improvements in teacher instruction and student achievement than infrequent, one-time professional learning.

Citation: Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018). The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(4), 547-588.

Key Takeaways:

- **Ongoing, collaborative professional learning** allows teachers to apply what they learn in real time, receive feedback from colleagues, and refine their practices, leading to deeper changes in instruction.
- **Infrequent professional learning** often lacks the follow-up, accountability, and direct application that come from sustained collaboration.
- **Regular collaboration** strengthens relationships and builds collective efficacy, making it more impactful on both teacher practice and student achievement.