

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

EFFECTIVE CPD BENEFITS LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS ALIKE, BUT IT'S ESSENTIAL TO GET THE RIGHT MIX OF INGREDIENTS, AS **DAVID WESTON** EXPLAINS...

Think about the way staff members at your school engage with continuing professional development (CPD). Where, on the scales shown in the following table, is your school?

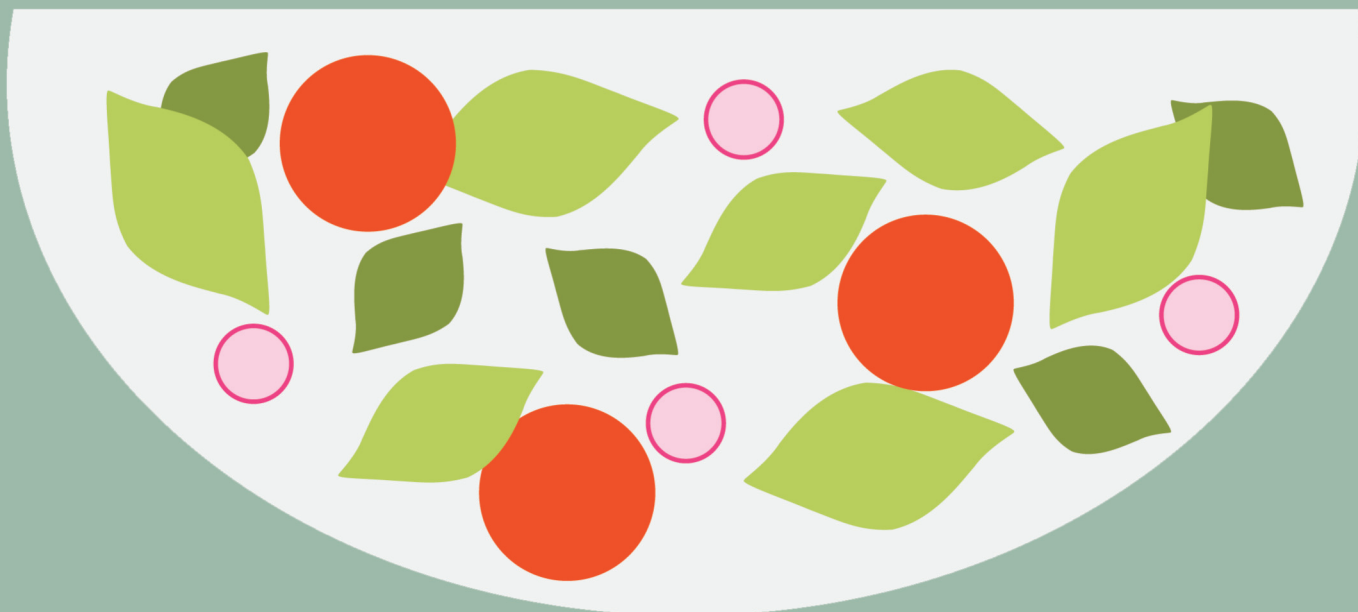


ABOUT THE EXPERT



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1	2	3	4	5
Teachers have complete control over what they do				Teachers have no control, managers dictate activities
All CPD is related to individual staff members' needs				All CPD is related to school needs and the development plan
Experts views are paramount – people are told to follow				Teachers are expected to discover ideas for themselves
CPD is focused on developing strengths				CPD is focused on fixing weaknesses



I suspect the majority of readers will have a mix of 'scores' as every establishment finds its own way of balancing whole school needs against individuals' needs and responds to the requirement for constant improvement against a background of inspection and accountability. It's a tough challenge and I've witnessed a variety of approaches as schools in the Trust's National Teacher Enquiry Network have been undertaking the CPD Peer Audit.

The reality is that the best possible solutions are at neither extreme but manage to effectively and engagingly offer individual opportunities for growth while maintaining a coherent plan for whole-school improvement.

Great CPD

There is a lot of international research into the types of professional learning that engage and inspire as well as deliver



WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT THE CPD OCCURRING IN SCHOOLS

From the 2008 'State of the nation' research by Opfer, Pedder and Storey:

CPD tends to centre around personal development rather than the wider impact on school improvement or improvements in pupils' learning.

Therefore there is little indication that it is seen as having an impact on raising standards or narrowing the achievement gap, though the literature suggests that CPD is most effective where senior managers understand its potential for this.

Most teachers' approaches to CPD tend not to be collaborative or informed by research.

CPD activities tend not to be sustained or embedded, often lack coherent focus, tend to have multiple emphases, and are rarely evaluated in relation to planned outcomes. The main focus of evaluation used by schools tends to be the views of participants expressed through questionnaires.

The two most common activities for professional development are in-school workshops/seminars, followed by out of school workshops/seminars.

The most common evaluation of impact of CPD is to ask participants their opinions.

NFER research from 2009 suggests that only 7% of all schools evaluate the impact of teacher CPD on the learning/attainment of pupils – only 3% in secondary schools.

genuine, positive impact on pupil learning. The consistent message is that the following characteristics need to be built in:

Aspirational

CPD experiences are far more successful when they are designed to help teachers achieve their aspirations for their pupils. CPD should aim to solve learning/behaviour problems that participants care about or build on strengths/dispositions that they feel are important. Not all CPD will do this directly, so it's important to try and help teachers see the links between their personal goals and the work they're doing.

Learning-focused

The most effective professional development focuses on specific areas of learning of behaviour rather than simply aiming to change the way the teacher practises. For example, "improving history essay structure for EAL pupils through targeted use of formative feedback" rather than simply "improving assessment for learning" leads to more focused professional learning which makes it easier for the participant to evaluate and refine their approach.

Collaborative

When a team of teachers jointly tackle a professional learning activity then the ensuing debate, discussion and developing relationships strengthen the effectiveness of the experience. Triads are often particularly powerful to ensure that there are enough different viewpoints and support.

Relevant & differentiated

Nothing is more off-putting than being forced to attend training which is irrelevant to your current work and/or too hard or too easy. Teachers need enough support and challenge to be able to go away and try ideas out as soon as possible and then come back for further discussion. However, if this is taken too far and every teacher does something different then you lose the opportunity to develop a shared language and understanding of pedagogy.

Sustained & cycled

One of the surprise results from the research is that, on average, only those professional development processes that lasted at least 30 hours had any sustained positive impact on pupil learning. This time includes training, discussion, teaching, reflection, observation and informal thinking. It's easy to see that school staff members are undertaking six different strands of CPD every year then

it is unlikely that any will make a long-term impact.

Evaluated

We know that pupils need regular formative feedback in order to improve their understanding and skill. The same is absolutely true of teachers who need to be able to objectively assess the impact they are having and refine/adapt their approach.

Challenging as well as informative

Some of the most powerful learning occurs when professional development causes a teacher to re-evaluate their fundamental beliefs around mechanisms of learning and effective teaching. CPD which is merely enjoyable 'fluff' with lots of tips and tricks is unlikely to lead to a significant and fundamental change in practice.

Lead by example

The most effective schools create a culture where learning is openly modelled by all senior staff, where experimentation and research are actively encouraged and supported, and where even the most experienced teachers are open to constructive feedback. When senior leaders become 'lead learners' who are willing to take risks and make themselves vulnerable then this permeates through the school and creates an effective CPD culture.

Practical Examples

In practice, schools approach CPD in a number of ways. Cramlington Learning Village timetables two hours of staff collaboration time every week on a Wednesday afternoon, having ended the school day slightly earlier than the rest of the week. This is used to collaborative planning, research, coaching and other team-based CPD activities. They have a very structured induction programme which is tightly specified for NQTs and then becomes more self-directed as you move through their NQT+1, NQT+2 and NQT+3 programmes, which contain increasing elements of leadership and research work.

At Wroxham School most staff undertake research or enquiry work and then lead the dissemination, implementation and embedding of their findings throughout the school. All staff, including teaching assistants, meet regularly to discuss research papers and the school has published a book (Creating Learning Without Limits) about its approach in association with a University.

Bethnal Green Academy has two members of the governing body who

★ FINDING THE BEST EXTERNAL CPD

Going out on a course is still one of the most common CPD activities that teachers engage in. The effectiveness of this type of CPD varies hugely depending on both the quality of content/delivery and the quality of professional learning that takes place back in school both before and after the event.

In order to maximise the likelihood of success you should demand:

- ✗ independent reviews, not just cherry-picked testimonials;
- ✗ a description of the evidence base behind the approaches being described;

monitor and get involved in professional development. There is a whole school research focus as part of their involvement in a randomised control trial research project through the University of Bristol. Departmental meeting times are organised to minimise administrative discussion and ensure there is regular collaborative discussion of teaching, learning and pedagogy.

Meanwhile, at Oakmere school, Lesson Study is being used across the school to develop a common language and joint understanding of approaches to improve spelling, punctuation and grammar. This has led to a distinct shift in the types of conversations that take place in the staffroom with many more informal discussions around pedagogy.

Where to start?

The first thing that schools need to do is audit their own approaches to CPD. There are many possible ways of doing this including engaging with CUREE's SKEIN programme and/or joining the National Teacher Enquiry Network (NTEN). The CPD quality framework for NTEN is available freely to download from TDTrust.org/NTEN.

Individual teachers whose schools are not so

- ✗ opportunities to follow-up and get further support in future (where relevant);
- ✗ tools to help you evaluate the impact back in your classrooms.

Where possible, the approach being used should have been subject to large scale research on effectiveness in multiple contexts. The best providers will be able to supply the above information for courses, consultancy services and resources.

Providers on the national GoodCPDGuide.com database of CPD are able to fill in this information – look out for listings that contain all of this information and be sure to write a review of any CPD you have been on so that others can help judge its effectiveness.

supportive may benefit from engaging with the community of teachers on social media, especially Twitter but also, for example, LinkedIn and the TES Forums. Small groups of teachers can consider creating informal 'journal clubs' to read and discuss key blogs and research papers and may also wish to attend Teach Meets where practitioners share ideas.

Schools should look to embed some collaborative approaches to professional development such as peer coaching or Lesson Study. Free resources are available at lessonstudy.co.uk and a supported national programme of Lesson Study with resources for research and evaluation can be found through the National Teacher Enquiry Network.

Find more advice and resources on the Teacher Development Trust blog at TDTrust.org/blog and follow [@TeacherDevTrust](https://twitter.com/TeacherDevTrust) for updates.

★ ASK THE EXPERTS

Hibernia College UK (HCUK) is a leading provider of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes including Subject Knowledge Enhancement and preparation and development for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). HCUK is one of the largest providers of Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE+) for qualified teachers with over 300 teachers currently enrolled on its maths, physics, chemistry or MFL programmes. It offers fully funded SKE+ courses in key shortage subjects and these programmes are delivered 100% online making them extremely flexible.

HCUK has also launched a new professional development programme aimed at unqualified school staff who want to become qualified teachers. The programme, called Straight to Teaching, supports and prepares participants to meet all the QTS Standards for the award of qualified teacher status (QTS).

