Effective Professional Development for Teachers to Foster Students’ Academic Language Proficiency across the Curriculum: A Systematic Review

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Research published in AERA Open examines the features needed for effective teacher professional development (PD) aimed at preparing teachers to support their students in mastering language expectations across the curriculum.

Eva Kalinowski and colleagues conducted a systematic review of studies of PD programs, published between 2002 and 2015, which aimed to support teachers to improve their students’ academic language ability in different subject areas. Of the 38 studies they reviewed, all but one was carried out in the US. Eighteen studies used quantitative data only, three used a mainly qualitative approach, and 17 used mixed methods.

Although the researchers were unable to conclude which elements actually influenced the effectiveness of the programs analyzed, they found that all of the studies were effective to some extent, and shared many characteristics considered to be important in successful teacher PD across different subject areas. The forms of PD likely to show some effect for teachers and students in this area were:

- long-term intensive programs that included multiple learning opportunities aimed at elaborating and practicing newly learned knowledge and strategies
- provided practical assistance
- enabled and encouraged teachers to work together
- considered teachers’ needs as well as students’ learning processes and languages spoken at home

The authors suggested PD is a way that policymakers could influence and worth investing in.

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