

HELPING YOUR PD THRIVE IN THE ERA OF ESSA


HELPING YOUR PD THRIVE IN THE ERA OF ESSA

Want to design effective professional-development programs that fulfill the goals of ESSA while also building teachers' skills? An all-in-one resource center might be your answer.

NOBODY IS MORE ENTHUSIASTIC to hit the classroom running than a new graduate of a teacher-preparation program. These individuals have done their course work, studied master educators in action and worked alongside experienced teachers for months to get into the rhythm of the profession. Too soon, however, [as national headlines declare](#), the enthusiasm wanes — especially in high-poverty schools and districts — and newbies start looking for the exit.

One of the essential ingredients for turning around the feelings of helplessness that oftentimes seem to have permeated the teaching profession, as the [Learning Policy Institute](#) reported, is developing productive school environments by continually serving a diet of supportive working conditions that include time for professional development (PD) and collaborative activities.

The [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) recognizes the effect of well-prepared teachers. The term “professional development” is referenced no fewer than 68 times in the nation’s national education law. While that’s just a third as many references as what appeared in No Child Left Behind, the topic is treated in a much

A photograph of a male teacher with short brown hair, wearing a red and blue plaid shirt, smiling and reaching out with his hand towards a student. The student's hand is visible in the foreground, palm facing the teacher. The background is a blurred classroom setting with a green chalkboard.

ESSA defines PD as
“intensive, collaborative,
job-embedded, data-driven and
classroom-focused” activities intended
to drive instructional improvements
throughout the school year.

richer manner. For example, ESSA defines PD as “intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven and classroom-focused” activities intended to drive instructional improvements throughout the school year.

Just as important, ESSA explicitly calls on schools and districts to provide sustained PD, openly rejecting the traditional “stand-alone, 1-day, or short-term workshops.” As the [National Education Association reported](#), these experiences, in which participants, for example, sit and listen to an outside expert and look at generalized slide bullet points, are often mocked by educators as “‘Spray and Pray,’ ‘Drive By,’ or ‘Sit and Get.’”

“The traditional episodic and fragmented approach of traditional [PD] does not afford the time necessary for learning that is ‘rigorous’ and ‘cumulative,’” observed [a technical report issued by the School Redesign Network at Stanford University](#). From analysis of federal education data, the Stanford researchers found that while more than nine in 10 educators participate in formal PD activities, fewer than half rate it as useful.

In an era in which many districts face challenges with a revolving door of excellent teachers, it’s time to find ways to offer sustainable, relevant and engaging PD consistently in and across schools. The goal: to instill that newbie teacher’s energy and level of enthusiasm into all teachers heading into the classroom, no matter how long they’ve been in the profession.

BUILDING EFFECTIVE PD

EFFECTIVE PD displays three primary characteristics:

- The PD is sustained over time.
- It’s collaborative.
- It allows teachers to practice concepts.

PD That’s Sustained Over Time

Effective PD takes time, but that investment is profound, [as a meta-study of the effect of teacher PD on student achievement from the Institute of](#)

[Education Sciences](#) found. Teachers who received an average of 49 hours of PD “can boost their students’ achievement by about 21 percentile points.” Contrast that, the report noted, with the results of studies examining the least amount of PD — between five and 14 hours — which showed no significant effects on student outcomes. An important aspect of sustainability for school leaders is developing internal capacity. That calls for the school system to be able to turn to internal resources for PD rather than having to pay for an external expert every time PD is delivered, which no public district can really afford.





PD That's Collaborative

As the Stanford report explained, an emphasis on collaboration gives teachers the time and space to meet regularly in learning teams organized by grade level or content-area assignments. These learning teams share responsibility for their students' success. Each team pursues a cycle of continuous improvement that begins with the examination of student data to determine the

areas of greatest student need and pinpointing those areas where additional educator learning is necessary. That's followed by identifying and creating learning experiences to address teacher needs. From that effort, team members develop powerful lessons and assessments and learn how to apply new strategies in the classroom. A continual refinement of lessons and assessments takes place, followed by educator reflection on the effect the changes have made on student learning. Then the whole cycle is repeated, but with updated goals.



PD That's Active

The same study found that active learning in PD was crucial. When educators had the chance to practice their new content knowledge and teaching skills with hands-on work, they reported a greater sense of efficacy. A similar finding surfaced in a [Center for Public Education report](#), which included active practice as one of five PD principles. "Just like students, teachers learn better when they are able to actively participate and make sense of the information being presented," the report explained. Teachers achieve a better grasp of a new concept when they can learn about it in varied, active ways. Those might include "readings, role playing techniques, open-ended discussion of what is presented, live modeling, and visits to classrooms to observe and discuss the teaching methodology."

CORWIN'S PD RESOURCE CENTER

CORWIN — an independent, family-owned publisher of research-based, peer-reviewed resources for Pre-K-12 educators — has also long been in the business of teaming up with schools and districts to deliver face-to-face PD. Recognizing that schools wanted a more sustainable model for providing teachers with PD, the company introduced its [PD Resource Center](#).

Corwin's PD Resource Center includes sets of resources — called “centers” — and each center is focused on a different subject area. All centers provide on-site facilitators with the tools needed to deliver PD on specific important topics. They are meant to be used by instructional coaches, principals, teacher-leaders and others who are facilitating PD in their districts, schools or learning teams.

Each center includes a facilitator's guide, which explains step by step how to use the resources for leading PD sessions, as well as the videos, handouts, readings and other materials needed for the gatherings. Teachers gain access as well, allowing the facilitator to assign in advance readings or video viewings for upcoming PD sessions or to allow the educators to work independently.



The aim of the PD Resource Center is to help schools provide PD that can be sustained over a long time, encourage collaborative activities and provide hands-on activities for learning “stickiness.” Let's look at each area in more detail.

Sustainable PD

Corwin's PD Resource Center is intended to serve as a robust library of materials and content that educators use among themselves, eliminating the longtime practice of sitting through required PD that has no bearing on immediate needs. This approach allows schools and districts to build internal capacity so that PD can be sustained over time. The in-school

facilitator acts as the “teacher guide” on the journey to acquiring new skills.

For example, the “Close and Critical Reading” center includes one band geared at grades K-5 and the other geared at grades 6-12. Each provides all the materials needed for a yearlong PD initiative focused on this subject.

However, there is no one way to use the tools. Instead of yearlong training, the facilitator and teachers may decide to run a semester-long program, or stand-alone sessions for teams of participants.

Collaborative PD

The center offers prompts and activities that promote collaboration and engagement. Teachers are intended to work together on a range of tasks that lets them reflect on what they're learning, how to apply it and how to make it meaningful for them.

In the case of "Close and Critical Reading," for example, education professors and literacy experts Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey act as virtual coaches through the scaffolded resources they've developed. As Frey explains in an introductory

video, one of the purposes of the resource center "is to aid schools and districts in creating that common vocabulary — in this case around close and critical reading — so they can ensure consistency, so students can engage in critical reading, no matter what the discipline, no matter what the teacher purpose is in those classrooms."

Active PD

The PD Resource Center includes "Bring-It-Back Tasks," activities that encourage

teachers to put the learning for a given workshop session into practice. Modules in the "Close and Critical Reading" center, for instance, introduce teachers to four types of questioning in the classroom; then PD participants are encouraged to engage in "between-session" practice for each type, supplying them with embedded opportunities for implementing new ideas and practices in their day-to-day classes.

The aim of the PD Resource Center is to help schools provide PD that can be sustained over a long time, encourage collaborative activities and provide hands-on activities for learning "stickiness."



THE CORWIN PD RESOURCE CENTER IN ACTION IN INDIANA

KNAPP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL in Michigan City, Ind., educates 360 students in its K-6 classrooms and provides ample opportunities for its 17 teachers to gain professional development. The school has a full-time instructional coach, enabling teachers to receive job-embedded PD during the school day as part of their planning time and in weekly professional learning community (PLC) gatherings on Wednesdays after school.

A change in academic standards and assessments at the state level introduced Knapp staff members to a concept they weren't familiar with. "We kept hearing all these words about 'close reading,' and we were wondering what that meant," recalled principal Cathy Bildhauser. She responded to a Corwin email promoting the PD Resource Center and decided to try it. The school ordered access to the [Fisher & Frey PD Resource Center](#) on "Close and Critical Reading, K-5."


"We didn't need all the modules, because we were further along," Bildhauser emphasized. "We just pulled out the pieces that we did need to use."

Over a Christmas break, Bildhauser, a former instructional coach, dug into the content to

figure out which resources would be most helpful for her teachers. The principal, the instructional coach and the school's leadership team conferred on a plan to plot out how they'd use the PLC time to work through the guides and videos available in the resource center. From there, she said, "we were able to move pretty quickly into more individual support because of the years of experience and content knowledge our teachers have."

The biggest challenge they faced was choosing which materials to use. The center includes a full library of rich materials, all vetted and ready for use. Whittling down their choices took a bit of time. "The materials were pretty meaty — so we had to weed through and pick and choose what resources were going to be the best fit for us."

By the time that phase of PD was over, she added, the teachers had gained what they needed. "The Corwin content provided that background knowledge for them and started them on their deeper dive into understanding close reading."

A photograph of a man and a young girl laughing together in a classroom. The man, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is looking at the girl. The girl, wearing a white shirt and blue overalls, is laughing heartily. In the background, a whiteboard has the words "Sight word", "live out people", and "who work" written on it. A red speech bubble overlay is positioned in the foreground, containing a quote.

"The Corwin content provided that background knowledge for them and started them on their deeper dive into understanding close reading."

THE CORWIN PD RESOURCE CENTER AT WORK IN WASHINGTON STATE

WHEN MARGARET NERISON joined her previous district as a literacy specialist, she knew she was going into a “school in trauma.” “It was high poverty,” she said, “and extremely low performing.” Teacher turnover was about 60%, and a vast majority of educators at the K-5 elementary were new to teaching. One of Nerison’s jobs was to help fourth- and fifth-grade teachers develop proficiency in helping students learn to read.

Nerison was well-versed in the reading-education work done by Fisher and Frey. But she needed a structure to help her organize the PD path the teachers needed. District access to Corwin’s “Close and Critical Reading, K-5” supplied just what she was looking for.

“Part of what I like about the Corwin [content] is that it is a framework to look at reading strategies and how you become a good reading teacher,” Nerison explained. “Then I can tailor it to what I know about the staff.”

Once a month, Nerison would facilitate a group PD gathering with all the teachers. The group would do team building and go through resource center PowerPoint



Teacher turnover was about 60%, and a vast majority of educators at the K-5 elementary were new to teaching.

presentations that she had modified for that day’s session. “That was so awesome and helpful,” she recalled. “I could take those presentations and then tailor it without having to make my own PowerPoints. The work was already done.”

Her teachers especially “loved the Corwin videos and watching other teachers teach.” Not only would they view many of the demonstration

videos as a group and then discuss what they’d observed, but teachers would also view them on their own time as well.

Then Nerison would take what she’d learned from that session to plan the next one: “We’re not quite ready for questioning, because we don’t quite understand scaffolding. We couldn’t get to quality questioning until we really understood the gradual release of responsibility.

Once we got to questioning, the teachers needed to learn how to do functional small-group instruction.” And so on.

She found the Corwin materials particularly useful for modeling. “We did a lot of, ‘I’m teaching a lesson and this is what it looks like as I gradually release you.’ And, ‘This is what it looks like to do close reading.’”

Nerison also met individually with teachers for “side” sessions or classroom coaching or in PLC groups by grade level to review specific lessons in the resource center for building certain skills. For their part, the teachers were by far most interested in watching a skill being modeled and then trying it out for themselves.

She could almost see the light bulbs go off for the teachers, she recalled. “They were really hungry for information, and when those ah-hahs came on, there was that sense of, ‘Oh, I get it,’ and ‘I’m smart enough to do this,’ and ‘I know where to start ...’”

Compared with previous PD, which tended to be one-size-fits-all, top-down and focused on book studies, the beauty of Corwin’s PD Resource Center, said Nerison, is that right after the training session, teachers can go back to their classes and try it out. “With the book studies, it’s great

learning, but there’s no application. They’re stuck trying to figure out, ‘How does that fit my narrative for today?’”

Now, Nerison is at a new district with its own set of challenges. “I hope to introduce them to some of what Corwin has to offer in their PD,” she ventured. “I really like the framework.”

“They were really hungry for information, and when those ah-hahs came on, there was that sense of, ‘Oh, I get it.’”



Expect to customize your PD. Any professional-development resource will use generalizations, observed Knapp Elementary principal Cathy Bildhauser. The best PD, however, will allow you “to take it and make it fit with your needs within your building and based on what your data is showing you.”

Use data to guide your PD selection. Knapp relies on information from state, district and classroom assessments as well as in-class work, noted Bildhauser. “You need to look at where your students are and what teachers will need to help them go that next step.”

Get familiar with the philosophy behind the learning. In the case of Fisher & Frey, for example, literacy specialist Margaret Nerison had read several of the experts’ books and had a strong sense about what they were advancing.

Gain a grounding in the basics. It’s helpful to understand the concept being covered, Nerison suggested. “If you’re doing guided reading, you need to have an in-depth knowledge of that. If you’re teaching about close reading, you need to have a solid understanding of it. If you’re teaching about text-dependent questions, you really need to understand that.”

Encourage the PD facilitators to meet regularly. Nerison’s district had licensed access to the Corwin PD Resource Center for all its teachers and school leaders. Because a team of people across schools was teaching the materials, it would gather once a month to go through the PowerPoint slides, talk about it “and make sure we were all on the same page and learning from each other. That was invaluable.”

Don’t tackle the PD sessions cover to cover. “This is meant to be a framework,” Nerison advised. “Teach based on where you are and what you’re doing to meet the needs of the schools.”

Do a SWOT analysis among your teaching team. By examining your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, Nerison suggested, your staff members can help you figure out what they need, “rather than telling them what they need.”

Take advantage of the “brains” without the huge expense. Nerison had the opportunity to train with Fisher and Frey in person at a three-day professional-development conference. “It was phenomenal,” she recalled. “But then you’re like, ‘Wait! I need to ask this, and I need to ask this ...’” Having access to the Corwin PD Resource Center allowed her teachers to spread out their learning over the course of a year.

Tap the experts with your questions. Corwin professionals stand ready to lend a hand. When Nerison and her team of teachers had a question they couldn’t find an answer to, they simply emailed the experts, who answered them. “That’s so cool,” she marveled. “Corwin is a great resource.”

LESSONS LEARNED



FEATURED CORWIN PD RESOURCE CENTERS

[Fisher & Frey PD Resource Center for Close and Critical Reading for K-5 and 6-12](#)

This center provides the resources you need for PD initiatives focused on close and critical reading, whether it's for a week, a month or the whole year. Each band offers 11 90-minute modules with video and print content and "Bring-It-Back" activities for teacher practice from Fisher & Frey's research-based PD framework.

[The Deep Equity PD Resource Center](#)

Are you looking for ways to help your educators begin conversations around systemic equity reform and culturally responsive teaching? Facilitators can use the resources in this center to lead participants through the five phases of the deep equity program, developed by the world-renowned author of the landmark book, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers/Multiracial Schools*, published by Columbia University.

[A Guide to Co-Teaching PD Resource Center](#)

Designed to support the best-selling book *A Guide to Co-Teaching, Third Edition*, this center provides PD resources to help teachers learn how to collaborate effectively in the classroom. Contents by Richard Villa and Jacqueline S. Thousand help facilitators discuss the planning, implementation and reflective phases of creating and maintaining a collaborative teaching and learning environment.

To see more topics or to request a free trial, please visit
www.corwin.com/pd-resource-centers.



ABOUT CORWIN

A SAGE Publishing Company

Corwin has one mission: to enhance education through intentional professional learning. We build long-term relationships with our authors, educators, clients, and associations who partner with us to develop and continuously improve the best, evidence-based practices that establish and support lifelong learning. Learn more at www.corwin.com.

ABOUT SmartBrief

Serving more than 5.8 million senior executives, thought leaders and industry professionals, SmartBrief is the leading online publisher of targeted business news and information by industry and is based in Washington, D.C. By combining technology and editorial expertise, SmartBrief filters thousands of sources daily to deliver the most relevant industry news in partnership with more than 200 trade associations, professional societies, nonprofits and corporate entities.

www.smartbrief.com