



Transforming Professional Learning in Washington State

Project Evaluation Report

PROJECT PARTNERS



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FOREWORD

On behalf of the team of educational researchers charged with conducting the project evaluation of the Transforming Professional Learning in Washington State project, I would like to recognize the truly amazing team of educators who brought this initiative from idea to reality. It has been our privilege to observe, engage and work directly with many, many educators from across the state and watch the transformation of thought and practice take place over the course of these three years. As you, the reader, work through the details of this report you will recognize the innovative nature of this project, the enormous scope of the project and the willing support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The conceptual thinking and design that Jessica Vavrus (formerly of OSPI) built into the original grant proposal, the thoughtful, engaged, questions of Edie Harding from the Gates Foundation, the effective and operational leadership of Dan Bissonnette from OSPI, and the structured resource support of Stephanie Hirsh and Joellen Killion from Learning Forward, have each contributed to the success of this project.

At its core, the work of Project Evaluators is technical, academic and carefully focused on assessing processes and outcomes described in the project being evaluated. Recognizing the geographic reach of this statewide initiative and outcomes directly focused on improving student learning by shifting and improving the professional practices of educators, the evaluation of this project was complex and at times unorthodox, requiring some innovative strategies for assessing unforeseen, but important aspects of the project. Given the inclusion of this note as part of the Introduction of the Evaluation Report, the reader may already recognize that this report, though technical, is structured as more of a narrative. It is our intent that readers interested in the technical work of project evaluation will indeed see the deep and complex work associated with the evaluation of this project. However, it is also our intent to provide insight into the story or stories that are at the heart of transformation. In this way, we hope to capture the individual and personal nature of transformation and how the shifts in the professional practices associated with continuous and collaborative professional learning are central to improving learning for every student.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Bishop, Ed.D.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to a clearly identified need for professional learning that would transform the instructional practices critical to the deep learning associated with the newly adopted Common Core State Standards, the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction pursued grant funded support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Using a layered theory of action in a system wide initiative, the proposal requested funding that would engage educators in schools and school districts across all nine regions of the state. The Gates Foundation provided 2.4 million dollars to fund a three-year project to support professional learning that would engage leaders in the work of developing effective processes and support structure to create a culture of collaboration that would positively impact teacher knowledge and skills to improve student learning.

This is the story of 31 school districts, 91 schools, 1,692 educators and the 131,249 students they serve across 9 regions in the State of Washington. What follows are but a few representative examples that capture many of the important emerging themes associated with the implementation of this large scale professional learning project. As the title suggests, at the heart of this project are the collaborative processes that transform professional learning for individuals and groups of educators throughout an entire system. In short, this executive summary provides a glimpse into this project and the lives impacted by the work.

Professional Learning Requires Engaged Leadership

The importance of leadership in school reform is well documented in research literature and is part of the story of the Transforming Professional Learning. However, within the context of this project, it is the definition of leadership that shifted. The traditional connotation of engaged leadership, the engagement of centralized decision makers in processes that support change, was certainly an important part of the story of success for specific schools and school districts. However, the distribution of leadership among educators suggests there are other important aspects of transformational change that impacted the culture and practices of educators.

The story of one small school district highlights this shift in thinking and practice. A key district administrator shared that the district moved to a distributive model of leadership that incorporated teacher voice in the process referencing their team's use of data as a driver of forward thinking

“The themes of ‘agency,’ ‘distributed leadership’ and ‘differentiation of professional learning’ suggest changes in the conception of what traditional district leadership means and how it is carried out in districts.”

and planning for needs-centered professional learning. Participants from this district stated collectively that the WA-TPL project highlighted the importance of district leaders being responsive to the needs of teachers and that everyone in the district was engaged in learning while using new models of professional development together.

Key findings:

- Varied forms of engaged leadership were observed throughout the project.
- The themes of “agency,” “distributed leadership” and “differentiation of professional learning” suggest changes in the conception of what traditional district leadership means and how it is carried out in districts.
- There is an emerging culture of shared or distributed leadership for professional learning.
- Shifts in practice require a system-wide approach to developing leadership.
- The cloud-based project management platform, Basecamp, provided opportunities for collaboration across school, district and regional systems.

Shifts in Practice Require Effective Processes and Support Structures

Another characteristic in the development of high quality professional learning is the attention given to implementing processes needed to support the planning, development and implementation of coherent professional learning within and across schools and districts. Though the context of each school, district and region is different, developing organizational processes and structures and articulating the way by which each organization makes sense of the work, is an important emerging theme in the WA-TPL project. Varying evidence of this concept was found throughout the project in different levels of complexity. One medium sized district provided insight into the multi-layered processes and structures within the organization that needed to be simultaneously addressed in order to positively impact professional learning. Focusing on a very practical example of how this was managed, a district teacher leader articulated that the use of a common set of standards to describe professional learning and the use of Innovation Configuration (IC) maps helped provide a language and framework from which participants worked. The teacher leader further explained that WA-TPL project empowered intentional and need based decision-making about professional learning throughout the district.

“The use of a common set of standards to describe professional learning and the use of ‘Innovation Configuration’ maps helped to provide a language and framework for participants to work within.”

Key findings:

- Learning Forward’s [Standards for Professional Learning](#) became an effective organizing tool for school and district teams to use in planning, implementing and assessing effective professional learning experiences.
- Effective professional learning relates to learning designs that include the integration of theory, research, and models of human learning into professional learning.
- Professional learning requires an important combination of structural support, advanced planning, changes in policies and allocation of resources.
- Districts receiving greater levels of external support in funds and coaching perceived a significantly higher level of *Collaboration* and *Content* than those districts receiving less support.
- New concepts about teacher leadership provided space for both systemic change around professional development, and a shift in thinking about teacher involvement in the delivery of professional development.

Professional Learning Requires Attention to School and District Culture

Shifts in decision making, processes, and structures provide some evidence of a changing “culture” within the system. Understanding and attending to the culture of an organization requires attention to a variety of indicators. These include a focus on student learning, improving professional practice and the desire to work collaboratively to build individual knowledge and skills. Multiple school district teams spoke to developing a culture focused on inclusive, “job-embedded” professional development. A large district in eastern Washington spoke to how participating in the WA-TPL project made professional learning more inclusive and needs based. A paraeducator explained that initially during the WA-TPL project she waited to be told what to do, but as the project unfolded she shifted her thinking and began to advocate for professional development that would help her better serve students. She indicated that an inclusive and collaborative culture empowered her to advocate for her own learning.

“It is important to understand and recognize the pressure associated with standardized achievement tests and to leverage results as a useful tool for examining data on student learning to better understand professional learning needs.”

Attention to the individual professional learning needs of educators is frequently viewed as too complex or in opposition to the larger, common interests of the organization. However, building collaborative systems and breaking down factors that isolate individual educators can become the nexus for enhancing the knowledge and skills of individual educators with a focus on improving learning for all students.

Key findings:

- All educators, from the superintendent to the paraeducator, can and should work together in building professional learning systems.
- The structural shifts that draw teachers into the process of designing and implementing quality professional learning provide opportunities for direct input into decisions that impact professional practices in the classroom.
- With some variance between participating districts, the WA-TPL project helped to shift the focus of professional learning from disconnected, individually-based approaches to district wide teaming where the educators engaged in problems of practice related to teaching and learning.
- Effective professional learning experiences require positive social interactions that take time, and must be built upon strong relationships, trust, encouragement, a sense of collective responsibility, and the creation of social norms.

Professional Learning Impacts Teacher Knowledge and Skills

Understanding the tension between the need to improve the knowledge and skills of individual educators within the broader context of a school or district system is challenging. Recognizing this challenge, one medium-sized district explained that WA-TPL project helped develop conversations across grade-levels and schools about how to close gaps in student learning. These kinds of conversations can lead to educators identifying areas of individual need while providing a structure to support professional learning within a learning community. This was highlighted when a building principal explained that the WA-TPL project provided a structure that helped shift the school toward a growth-oriented mindset. Sharing an example, the principal told the story of a teacher who presented pre and post professional learning data utilizing a strategy introduced during a professional learning sequence. Through this process teachers became more empowered to discuss and dissect how professional learning helps in the development of specific skills and knowledge.

“The WA-TPL project had a positive impact on professional learning and instructional practice with evidence to suggest a deeper shift in school and district culture that emphasizes learning as the central tenet for everyone -- student and educator.”

Key findings:

- There was an increase in participant perceptions that professional learning experiences positively impacted content knowledge.
- There was an increase in active professional learning occurring in teachers’ classrooms over the duration of the project providing a strong indication that teacher

participants were applying effective pedagogical practices.

- There were significant differences in professional learning experiences in the following categories: level of project participation, years of teaching experience, and type of teacher certification.

Professional Learning Directly Relates to Student Learning

The overarching goal of this project is to improve learning outcomes of P-12 students. The stories of individual teachers, schools and district systems suggest that the professional practice of educators throughout the system changed as a result of participating in the WA-TPL project. Whether the self-reported success of an individual teacher or a marked increase in assessment data, there are observable improvements in student learning. Educators at the school and district level offered similar qualitative evidence of impact. In telling part of their story, one district team from central Washington explained that during the second year of participation in WA-TPL, teachers advocated for professional learning that would help increase student reading assessment scores. District leaders provided support and resources for teachers to improve their knowledge and skills, and suggested there was a direct link between the professional learning and an increase in student scores.

“As the teachers engaged in the professional learning over time, there began to be an increased emphasis...on active learning, problem solving, and critical thinking which impacted student motivation.”

Given the hidden effect of any number of extraneous variables, quantitative data linking characteristics of professional learning to student achievement is difficult to make without a complex experimental research design. However, one preliminary finding associated with this project suggests a strong relationship exists between student learning and two different factors of professional learning: collaboration and content knowledge.

Key findings:

- There is a very strong and positive relationship between collaborative professional learning and student math achievement scores.
- There is a very strong and positive relationship between collaborative professional Learning and English Language Arts student achievement scores.
- There is a very strong and positive relationship between content focused professional learning and student math achievement scores.

Concluding Comments

The larger narrative of the Washington State Transforming Professional Learning project is replete with stories of positive impact on the professional learning of individual educators, schools and districts in regions from across the state. Students of organizational change often refer to the importance of a 3-5 year window of direct engagement before consistent, observable evidence of change can be identified. However, this three-year project is already showing evidence of impact and a growing interest in extending the work beyond the support of the external funding.

Along with the previously identified observations, strengths and findings, one of the commendable characteristics of this initiative is the privately funded, state-wide scope of a project that recognized the critical importance of coherent professional learning as a catalyst for improving student learning. A second unique and critically important characteristic of this project is that it was practitioner focused. Private funding in education is frequently focused on influencing policy but this project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was designed and implemented by educators to improve the practice of educators in their work with students.

Though not designed as a research initiative, the structure of the WA-TPL project and related complexity of the project evaluation provided important evidence that will continue to inform the work of improving learning within P-12 school systems. The sample of participating individual educators, schools and districts will be helpful in understanding the nuanced contextual differences between schools that make a recipe for reform illusive. However, the important work of the contextual application of key concepts will support the kind of deep learning that is a hallmark of the Common Core State Standards and highly effective professional learning.

Recommendations

Based on the key strengths and challenges, the evaluation team gleaned a variety of insights that may be helpful in the implementation of the project toward accomplishing the ambitious goals set out in the original proposal and reflected in the evaluation of the project itself. These recommendations could also be applied to future efforts.

1. Districts should use evidence-based approaches to making decisions about the design of professional learning opportunities.
2. Ensure the system-wide use of the [Standards for Professional Learning](#) as a means to communicate priorities and site-based, distributive leadership model.
3. Clarify leadership roles regarding professional learning systems.

4. Continue to increase data literacy at all levels.
5. Develop ways to sustain professional learning initiatives in the face of staff and administrator turnover.
6. System leaders should ensure that decisions regarding the design of professional learning opportunities are aligned to the district strategic plan.
7. Design professional learning to support teachers' use of student learning data to inform their own instructional practices aligned to school and district goals.
8. Districts should consider system-wide professional learning designed to address the unique needs of educators within each school.
9. Districts should not only build up their own educators to become professional learning leaders and facilitators, but they should consider ways in which external resources can improve the effectiveness of the design.
10. A continuum of services should be considered and utilized, from site-based teacher leaders to regional and state-level experts that can offer further support as needed.
11. Improve educator knowledge of professional learning standards in order to make informed decisions regarding what types of experiences they need to improve personally.
12. Identify creative ways to effectively use time for professional learning
13. All educators, from the superintendent to the paraeducator, can and should work together in building professional learning systems.
14. Districts should seek to understand and recognize the pressures associated with standardized assessment and leverage test results as a useful tool for examining data on student learning and progress.
15. Focus on building relationships, trust and collective responsibility for professional learning.
16. Professional learning activities should directly be linked to teachers' content knowledge and be supported as they teach that content to students.
17. Support systems should be scaled up statewide in order to build high quality professional learning.
18. Professional learning focused on content knowledge and classroom application should be emphasized in order to maximize impact on student learning, classroom climate, and cognitive levels.

INTRODUCTION

In response to a clearly identified need for professional learning that would transform the instructional practices critical to the deep learning associated with the newly adopted Common Core State Standards, the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction submitted a grant proposal to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Using a layered theory of action in a system wide initiative, the proposal requested funding that would engage educators in schools and school districts across all nine regions of the state. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation provided 2.4 million dollars to fund a three-year project to support professional learning that would: engage leaders in the work of developing effective processes and support structure to create a culture of collaboration that would positively impact educator knowledge and skills to improve student learning.

This is the story of 31 school districts, 91 schools, 1,692 educators and the 131,249 students they serve across 9 regions in the State of Washington. This Evaluation Report captures many of the important emerging themes associated with the implementation of this large-scale professional learning project by highlighting a few representative examples. As the title suggests, at the heart of this project are the collaborative processes that transform professional learning for individuals and groups of educators throughout an entire system. In short, this comprehensive project evaluation report provides a detailed analysis of this project and the lives impacted by the work.

Project Implementation and Evaluation

External project evaluators are commonly used to ensure an unbiased evaluation of a particular project. The Washington State Transforming Professional Learning (WA-TPL) initiative used a team of external evaluators to determine the effectiveness of the project in accomplishing the project goals outlined below. However, the innovative nature of the project highlighted the need to create a closer link between the implementation and evaluation of the project.

Five identified project outcomes framed the original grant proposal submitted to the Gates Foundation by the Office of the Superintendent of Public instruction. These include:

1. WA-TPL districts will demonstrate growth on state and district-identified English language arts (ELA) and math assessments.
2. Administrators, teacher leaders, and classroom teachers from WA-TPL districts actively engage in and benefit from professional learning grounded in the shifts within standards.

3. A framework is created for the state and districts to utilize to develop comprehensive systems of professional learning that includes a vision and definition of professional learning that aligns with research-based practice, standards for quality and expectations for results of professional learning, policies that support equity of access to professional learning, and resources to develop individual, school, team, school system capacities needed to ensure success for all educators and their students.
4. State WA-TPL partners and members of WA-TPL leadership/design team demonstrate established infrastructures that show increased capacity to lead and support high quality, standards-based professional learning.
5. WA-TPL state partners and districts demonstrate alignment of behaviors and actions grounded in trusting relationships at all levels that are focused on student and educator learning and collaboration.

The breadth and complexity of these goals required a detailed implementation plan with capacity to develop a variety of complex processes uniquely applicable to the participating school districts and available regional support. Without clearly measurable outcomes, participating schools and districts would struggle to make sense of their progress toward these goals. This presented a significant challenge to the effective implementation and evaluation of the project. In response to the original Request for Proposal (RFP) for external project evaluation, our proposal used a logic model to articulate details associated with a robust mixed method approach that included: carefully crafted research questions, a set of related indicators, sampling procedures, assessment instruments, data needed and analyses to be used. This helped to bring definition to various aspects of the project and provide practical guidance to the implementation of the processes.

One of the unique and unorthodox features of the evaluation proposal was the inclusion of the Principal Investigator as a consulting member of the project leadership team. This served two functions: first, the opportunity to gather insight into the effective leadership of the project and second, to provide feedback and consulting support to the project leadership in their work to structure processes and support for the school/district and regional teams that aligned to the proposed outcomes. The structure of the project evaluation team helped to provide appropriate separation between the work of external evaluators and consulting support. Though this added an additional layer of complexity to the project evaluation, open communication and clarity of roles led to an overall positive, collaborative approach toward the work of Transforming Professional Learning in Washington State.

From the identification of participating school districts to the contextual differences associated with school/district size, geographic location and available revenue, the challenges associated with implementing this project across the nine regions of the state were huge. Though the overall funding was significant, given the scope of the project, no individual school, district or regional agencies had enough funding to provide all the resources needed. This required schools, districts and regions to think carefully about how to use grant funds in combination with other local and state funds to leverage greater impact. When it became clear to interested districts that the opportunity to participate in this project did not include a large influx of funding, many districts chose not to participate. However, for those that chose to participate the ability of leaders to see and articulate the connections between various professional learning initiatives already underway was one characteristic of districts and region where schools flourished in the work of transforming professional learning. This was one of the embedded goals of the projects that had to develop organically within and across the system. This suggests that effective professional learning is influenced by the level to which various initiatives within the system can be aligned toward a common purpose, an important insight that is highlighted in different ways within the narrative that follows.

Each of the nine Educational Service Districts across the State was provided funding to provide regional support for the project. School district participation was based on a competitive application process that prioritized district engagement and demonstrated readiness to implement district-wide, aligned professional learning, and a willingness to engage with colleagues in a statewide transformational professional learning network. OSPI identified Laboratory Districts in each ESD region. Lab Districts serve as regional models for Critical Friend Districts within each region. Though the level of participation expected of Lab Districts was well defined from the outset, the defining features of a Critical Friend District were more elusive, an issue that persisted throughout the project to one degree or another. The selection process was well developed, and when the opportunity for participation was reopened after the first year of implementation, the selection process was refined to develop a better profile of district readiness to benefit. This suggests that careful consideration and a well-crafted application process is an important feature of any large-scale initiative.

Evaluation questions were developed for each of the project outcomes as an alignment tool for the critical components of the Evaluation plan (see Appendix A). The project outcomes, aligned with evaluation questions, indicators, evaluation outcomes, data sources, timeline, sampling and data analyses formed a coherent logic model and are the basis for this report, which is divided

into chapters. Each of chapter includes specific data analyses with additional narrative to provide insight as to the progress made toward achieving the outcomes identified in the WA-TPL project.

Data and Sampling: Informing Implementation and Progress Toward Outcomes

The original purpose of the WA-TPL project was not simply to transform the professional learning in participating districts, but to impact the larger system across the state by providing insight into the processes that support the development and sustaining impact of effective professional learning. The WA-TPL project design called for a total of 33 participating school districts from across the state. One of the first conversations linking WA-TPL project implementation with evaluation was focused on the need for variability in participating school districts. If ease of implementation were the primary interest, then a more standardized district profile would support a more standardized implementation of professional learning. However, given the long-term interest in understanding the implications associated with implementing transformative professional learning across an entire system of districts, it was clear that the selection of participating districts needed to emphasize variability. A hallmark of high quality research design and variability in the sample creates significant complications for project implementation. Though the WA-TPL project benefited heavily from the use of the well designed and robust set of resources made available to participating district by Learning Forward, each district had to make use of these resources in ways that brought meaning to the professional learning initiatives by contextualizing the work within their school and district.

To maximize the impact, effective project implementation required adjustments in strategies, processes and support structures to accommodate the differences in participating schools and districts. To inform these adjustments at every level within the system, educators needed a deeper understanding of how data could be used to inform decisions as well as the individual practices of educators. As one of the seven standards of professional learning identified by Learning Forward, the ongoing and effective use of data became an important factor in project implementation. Given the important use of data as integral to the project evaluation, during the first year of implementation there was some confusion among project participants as to the use of data collected as part of the project evaluation and role of project evaluators in supporting the selection and ongoing use of data at the local school and district level. This confusion was mitigated to some degree by school coaches using Learning Forward resources to develop a deeper understanding among school and district teams as to the kind of data useful for local decision-making, and strategies for using data to inform practice. These local supports along with instructional sessions on data collection and use designed and presented by project evaluators to all participants during the statewide conven-

ing, school and district teams developed a deeper understanding of their own role in the ongoing evaluation of the impact of professional learning. The effective use of data in decision making at every level in the system from the individual classroom to the district, regional and state offices, is a critical component of sustaining the impact of professional learning and an important indicator of the shifts in practices associated with individual and system transformation.

While schools and districts deepened their understanding of the use of data, project evaluators collected both quantitative and qualitative data to triangulate findings and inform the progress of the project toward accomplishing the stated outcomes. Data sources used for the evaluation included interviews, focus groups, documentation of project activities found in Basecamp, surveys and aggregated student achievement data. To maintain the relative brevity of this document the instruments and protocols used are not included in this document. What follows below is a partial list of the major data sources and a short narrative of the related protocols. A complete list of the data sources is available in the Evaluation Plan.

Interviews

In early March of 2015 the evaluation team initiated an email contact with a stratified, random sample of 90 participants from the fall of 2014 administration of the SAI-2 survey to participate in a structured interview to gather qualitative (experiential) data regarding the Transforming Professional Learning project. The sample was stratified by six different educational roles and nine Educational Service Districts (ESD) across Washington State. Given the layered theory of action associated with this project, including the regional involvement of ESD's and the system wide impact of professional learning, these data provide some insight into the depth to which the TPL project has penetrated the educational systems across participating schools, districts and ESD's.

Focus Groups

During the WA-TPL Spring 2016 Convening of participating districts, time was set aside in the agenda to conduct focus group interviews with five district teams. Prior to the Convening each of the selected teams was invited to participate in a focus group session. Each team was selected based on district characteristics that aligned stratification factors associated with the "layers" of the project, timing of participation and general demographics. Each focus group included self-selected members of the district teams present at the semi-annual Convening in June. To support participant anonymity and provide the greatest potential for candid responses no record was made of the names of any participants. However, each participant's role within the district

(teacher, building administrator, central office administrator/support staff) was recorded to facilitate insight into participant responses by role, similar to the structured interviews conducted in March of 2015. Three project evaluation team members were present in the room with district participants - one facilitator and two to recorder participant comments. No personnel associated with the project leadership or implementation was allowed in the room during the focus group interviews.

District Artifact Documents

In August and September of 2016, the evaluation team conducted a content analysis of district documents uploaded to the project online system on Basecamp. The analysis was focused primarily on the use of specific documents that would provide insight into shifts in planning and policies associated with the WA-TPL project. Basecamp is a web-based project management and collaboration tool used by the Office of the Superintendent Public Instruction (OSPI) to facilitate both local and large scale communication and collaboration throughout the course of the project. Basecamp provides forums for collaboration and communication at the district, ESD and statewide level, making it an ideal source of data to address questions associated with system impact of the project. Planning and policy documents analyzed from Basecamp include: Innovation Configuration (IC) maps, 30-60-90 day plans and Action Plans. These documents are part of a suite of tools provided to WA-TPL participants from Learning Forward as part of the project implementation process. Use of these tools across the system provides some insight into the shifts that are occurring within the system.

Surveys

The Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI) is a self-report instrument developed in 2003 by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory to assess the alignment of building professional development with Learning Forward's seven standards of professional development. The instrument underwent a redesign in 2009, and a factor analysis was run on the second iteration of the instrument (SAI-2) in 2012. Findings from this factor analysis show the SAI-2 measures one construct—the overall quality of a professional development survey. Results from the SAI-2 presented to the state, districts and schools are also reported by mean scores and frequency counts grouped by the seven standards. The SAI-2 was administered bi-annually throughout the project duration.

The Characteristics of Professional Development Survey (CPDS) (Soine & Lumpe, 2014) was developed as an instrument to measure teachers' perceptions of characteristics of effective

professional learning. A factor analysis of the instrument showed five valid constructs of professional learning: Active learning in the classroom, Active learning beyond the classroom, *Content Knowledge* and Student Learning, *Coherence* with Needs and Circumstances, and Collective Participation. The survey also measures duration of professional development (time spent engaged in professional development activities). The CPDS was administered annually during the project.

The two survey instruments were chosen for the project evaluation for different reasons. Taken in tandem they provide important insight into specific aspects of the WA-TPL project implementation. For example, because the SAI-2 is aligned to the seven Learning Forward [Standards for Professional Learning](#), the basis for defining professional learning and the organizational structure of resource materials, it provides insight into progress toward the project outcomes. However, even though survey results are organized by standard it is intended to measure a construct of the seven standards. Though some tables in this report represent mean scores associated with individual standards, it is best to consider SAI-2 data with mean scores for all seven standards (Appendix B). This provides an opportunity to glean insight into the strengths and weakness of particular portions of the overall construct.

The validation of the CPDS provides the researcher with information specific to each of five factors offering greater statistical precision when considering the implications of particular aspects of professional learning. As would be expected with two different instruments that measure educator perception of aspects of professional learning, there is some overlap between the two instruments. However, by design, each survey is intended for different purposes.

Student Achievement Data

Washington State utilized the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) as the statewide assessment in grades 3-8 and high school for the 2014-2015 school year. The SBA assesses Math and English/Language Arts (ELA), and is aligned with the Common Core State Standards adopted by Washington State. Summary data about the SBA was retrieved from the OSPI database. The first administration of the assessment was in the Spring of 2015 to create a baseline of student achievement scores for the next year of the project.

Data Analyses

Data were analyzed using a variety of strategies including descriptive statistics for summarizing data, inferential statistics for making group comparisons, qualitative analytic induction strategies in order to identify emergent themes, and semantic text analysis (Appendix C) which involved the

application of linguistic algorithms to all text data (interviews, focus groups, and artifacts) in order to extract themes and sentiments. All resultant data, quantitative and qualitative, were triangulated in order to confirm validity of the results, cross check data, and search for patterns in the data (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003). Once patterns were identified, assertions were developed in order to communicate key findings.

Assumptions

This project evaluation includes several assumptions embedded within the Transforming Professional Learning (TPL) project (limitations regarding the evaluation plan and data are also listed below).

1. The unit of change/analysis is the school building, as this is the level where the intervention is applied.
2. The effectiveness of professional learning collaboration impacts teachers and professional practice.
3. Teacher professional learning impacts classroom practice, which ultimately impacts student learning.

Limitations

1. Student achievement data at the K-3 levels is limited.
2. Fidelity of the professional learning initiatives is outside the control of the evaluators.
3. The ability to generalize findings outside of the selected districts is limited.
4. The disaggregation of SAI2 data by evaluators is limited to the school building level.
5. The SAI2 and other relevant teacher data can be connected to individual teachers for statistical analyses (with anonymity maintained).

The Structure of the Report

Five themes were distilled from the original WA-TPL project outcomes and were used to frame the five chapters that make up the body of this report. Each chapter is organized using a common structure to provide consistency for the reader and prompt quick access to specific topics of interest. The narrative associated with each theme is then organized around a set of evidence-based assertions to highlight the findings. The findings are then summarized by chapter in the conclusion of the report with a set of recommendations.

CHAPTER 1

Professional Learning Requires Engaged Leadership

An important part of the WA-TPL story is transformation. The shifts in practices that signal significant, deeper transformation in the way educators think about the work of teaching and learning bring about support for the learning needs of every child. As indicated in the introduction, the importance of thoughtful, direct engagement of leaders who attend to the work of aligning various and at times disparate initiatives within a system, toward a commonly held goal, is critical. The assumption that leadership engagement and systemic alignment are cornerstones of effective teacher professional development is supported by Hattie’s extensive meta-analysis focusing on best teaching and learning practices in 2012. Given the assumption that effective professional learning improves the practices of educators, this section will focus on four evidence based assertions that will help to inform the importance of the direct engagement of leaders in the design, planning, resourcing and assessment of professional learning. Each of these suggests some important shifts in thinking are occurring within the system. However, there is evidence to suggest another more basic shift is emerging within the culture of some of the schools and districts associated with this project. The very definition of leadership is changing to include a broader array of people whose title may not associate them with leadership responsibilities, even though they express the language and action of leaders engaged in the work of improving learning.

EVIDENCE-BASED ASSERTIONS

1.1 Effective leadership is distributed throughout the system.

Leadership, from the district level to instructional leaders within teacher teams, is an integral component of the effective implementation of professional learning. The work of Goddard, Goddard, Kim and Miller (2015) found a strong correlation between principal instructional leadership style and degree of teacher collaboration. The work of Goddard et al. (2015) demonstrated the importance of examining the layers of influence on teacher professional development. Emphasized throughout the project, district leaders were challenged to think about leadership structures and how they might work collaboratively with principals, instructional coaches and teachers, to build a coherent, effective system for professional learning. In the words of one principal:

“Our team has one administrator from each level: superintendent/assistant superintendent, instructional coach and a teacher from each level. All of us are learning together and the leaders are in the trenches learning with us and taking the learning to each

building. We lead by example just like we do for our kids. It is a very powerful message.”

Using a variety of strategies to develop and support leadership throughout the system, school and district administrators pursued opportunities to grow teacher leaders, and empowered teachers to identify their own professional learning needs. The direct engagement of district and school leaders helped to ensure all professional learning was aligned with district strategic plans, and there was coherence between individual, school and district initiatives. This pushed school and district systems to ensure that professional learning initiatives were research-based and aligned with student learning needs.

This type of change in thinking regarding the role of the district leadership in planning for teacher professional growth required a change in the implementation of such practices. This change results in both immediate and long term positive and negative effects on teacher perception of leadership support. A two-year comparison of the SAI-2 Leadership category is shown in Figure 1. Overall, the factor Leadership remained the highest of the seven categories on the SAI-2 across the duration of the project. But there was a slight negative growth in the Leadership category across

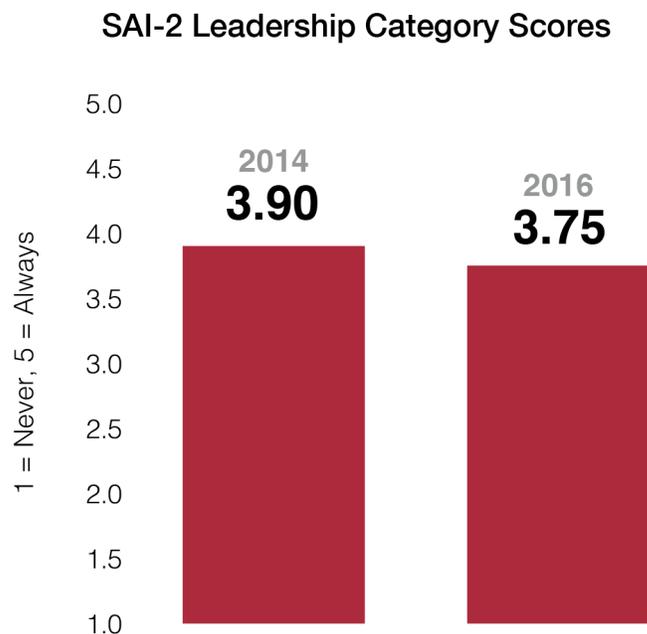


Figure 1. SAI-2 Leadership Longitudinal Trend

the two years of the project. And this decrease was statistically significant ($t = 5.2$, $df = 3364$, $sig = .000$). This slight decrease in perceptions of leadership over two years of the project is somewhat disconcerting given the fact that the items in this SAI-2 factor focus on distributed leadership, culture building, advocating, active participation by leaders, and an emphasis on student and teacher learning.

One aspect of the work of effectively distributed leadership within a system is the degree to which professional learning opportunities for teachers align with their specific needs and circumstance. The Characteristics of Professional Development Survey provided insight into the type of leadership structures used in districts. For example, the *Coherence* factor included items related to engaging teachers, using student data to inform professional learning, aligning with school goals, and maintaining a focus on student learning.

Growth data taken from the Characteristics of Professional Development Survey (from winter 2015 to winter 2016) showed an increase in the category of *Coherence* as shown in Figure 2 below. This increase was statistically significant ($t = -4.72$, $df = 1028$, $sig = .000$)

These two graphs represent data taken from two different surveys, the SAI-2 and the CPDS. The first provides data from the category *Leadership* taken from the SAI-2 and the second provides data for the factor *Coherence* taken from the CPDS. Viewing the two data sets in succession provides an opportunity to triangulate participant perceptions of specific characteristics of professional learning.

While there is evidence to suggest that the theme of distributed leadership is emerging throughout the system, it has not yet permeated the entire system from classroom to state office. During focus group interviews, one teacher leader indicated that:

“(This project) has planted the seed for some shifts, however has not permeated to all buildings.”

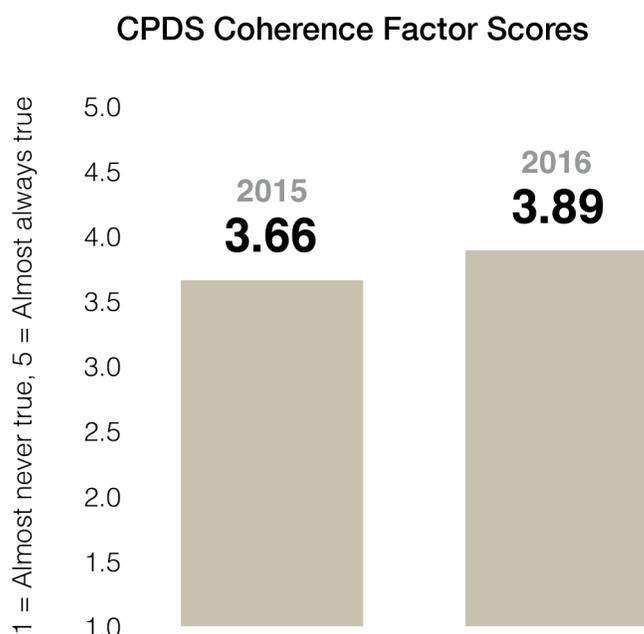


Figure 2. CPDS Coherence Longitudinal Trend

One aspect of distributed leadership is the degree to which individual educators enjoy a sense of personal investment in their work with students and their own growth as professionals. This sense of “agency” was echoed throughout the focus group interviews. One teacher described it this way:

“As teachers we are given agency; we are...learners ourselves and as a teacher we are responsible for our own learning...to identify our own gaps...Teacher voice matters and that hasn’t always been the case... We are finding better ways to communicate, for example, saying ‘I’d like to see a training on that.’ or ‘Can I see a resources on that?’”

Another teacher leader adds,

“Through our work with WA-TPL, it has really cemented in our district the culture of teacher leadership and that is a respected voice and important voice in the decision-making process...we are a system of teacher leaders that support the system -- not just a participant but a leader in the system...as a coach, understanding the seven professional learning standards has done the same with adult learners. It has given me the language

to be more intentional about the decisions I'm making in terms of designing experiences for learners with specific outcomes, just like I did with my students."

The themes of "agency," "distributed leadership" and "differentiation of professional learning" changes the conception of what traditional district leadership means and was carried out in the districts. At the same time, districts struggled through the implications of the shift in control of professional learning from the "district office" to teacher leaders within schools. Hence, the assertion that professional learning requires engaged leadership is echoed throughout this project and is demonstrated through these different shifts in thinking and implementation of professional learning plans, leadership roles and implementation of a distributed leadership model. This distribution of leadership is highlighted in the following statements from a variety of educators:

District Administrator: *"This is a really positive description in terms of my role and the instructional coach's role. We aren't doing the directing but providing the time and resources and we help to distribute it out to the masses. Our initiative isn't dictation, but rather to identify the things our teachers should work on, but the work is done by the team. A teacher adds: "they (district administrators) are not afraid to let the teachers have the freedom to try new things. They've never said, no. Usually it works for the best."*

Instructional Coach: *"Leadership has been purposefully and systematically developed through this project." Teacher: "I like that it pulls in a system rather than just choosing people who say "yes" or that you know will be there. You want to train those who hide out. There is a way to help them and get them to see the overall plan and that we are all in it together."*

Superintendent: *"We look at the different tiers-core team, building team, teacher leader team. Clearly administration staff can't do everything so we consider how to build a structure where it gets to the quality teaching and learning."*

District Administrator: *"There is opportunity for growth for us and recognizing our school leaders are all different places in terms of working within a system and we use the Transform Professional Learning as a way to bring ourselves together yet also a way to differentiate. We as leadership work through in advance with principals to anticipate issues ahead of time and support our principals to create their own learning plans for each of their schools."*

Engaged leadership, as perceived by all levels of educators, is one of the major themes of this project that enables teachers to become leaders within their own buildings. In order for district leaders to provide a coherent professional learning plan that is data driven, meets the needs and circumstances of all educators and is focused on improving student learning, a distributive leadership model is necessary. Even though the results of the *Leadership and Coherence* sections of both the SAI-2 and CPDS surveys show no or slight growth, these categories were already higher than average. When coupled with insight gleaned from qualitative data there is some evidence to suggest that traditional notions of educational leadership are starting to shift and reshaping participant preconceptions of what leadership and coherence look like in practice.

1.2 Effective leadership is directly engaged in the effective use of data to drive improvement throughout the system.

Bodman, Taylor and Morris (2012) explain that with the current emphasis on accountability for student learning, teacher professional development is explicitly linked to what can be tested (p.16). Classroom data is being intentionally used relative to the planning of professional learning. The use of classroom data relative to effective teacher professional development was quantitatively explored by Desimone, Smith, and Phillips (2013) and Maerten-Rivera, Huggins-Manely, Adamson, Lee and Llosa (2015). Their findings indicate the need for further development of baseline data about how classroom data is effectively used in teacher professional development.

One of the most commonly stated and positive goals mentioned in the district action plans was “retrieving and using data.” Several focus group statements illustrate this importance of data for planning. One district called it a “cycle of inquiry” where various data sets can be continually used.

“The hard thing is to read minds, so having the data in front of us and being given the feedback in front of me by teachers helps me plan what I’m going to do next month rather than right now. More reactive rather than proactive.”

“Continuous cycle of inquiry -- we have checkpoints where we pull the data. We created a survey (perceptual) but also student achievement and growth, but also benchmark assessments, and principal non-evaluative where their teachers are and what they need (not formal) parent survey for those who tend to be disenfranchised and pulled all of these pieces together to analyze data and look for trends and opportunities/needs and developed goals.”

Interviews produced data relevant to the use of data. Most respondents reported that leaders are currently intentional about using data to align with standards. Interviewees frequently referenced Common Core and Learning Forward standards. For example,

“We are looking at data to inform professional learning at the district level, but having that be a system that is in all of our buildings and culture is a work in progress.”

“Yes, looking at data from a systems perspective also thinking about how to triangulate data this is helpful at the district office level.”

Project participants also noted that the use of data shifted relative to the thinking of the districts about deepening understanding of professional learning. Teacher leaders reported that districts currently want to ensure instruments used to gather data accurately reflect/represent districts’ challenges, demographics and needs.

“I know that (the district’s) math MSP (Measures of Student Progress) and now SBA (Smarter Balanced Assessment) data have played a large role in the decision they made to bring in the Teacher Development Group for math (and now science) instruction.”

It was found in some instances that the process of using data did not always come easy for some districts. One district focus group mentioned,

“Our data team and PLC (professional learning community) process has been the focus, but the assessment results have not been part of the process and still working on that. We aren’t there yet, but should be a direction we move towards and we can see pre/post test results.”

The category of *Data* on the SAI-2, shown below in Figure 3, demonstrated a significant statistical increase over the course of the two-year project ($t = -5.37$, $df = 3364$, $sig = .000$). The category of *Data* was among the lower of the seven categories of professional learning on the SAI-2 that reinforces the somewhat mixed results of both the quantitative and the focus group data.

There is an ever-increasing myriad of both formative and summative data available for educators. The challenge is the need to maintain a cycle of inquiry that leverages the most useful data to inform both educator and student learning.

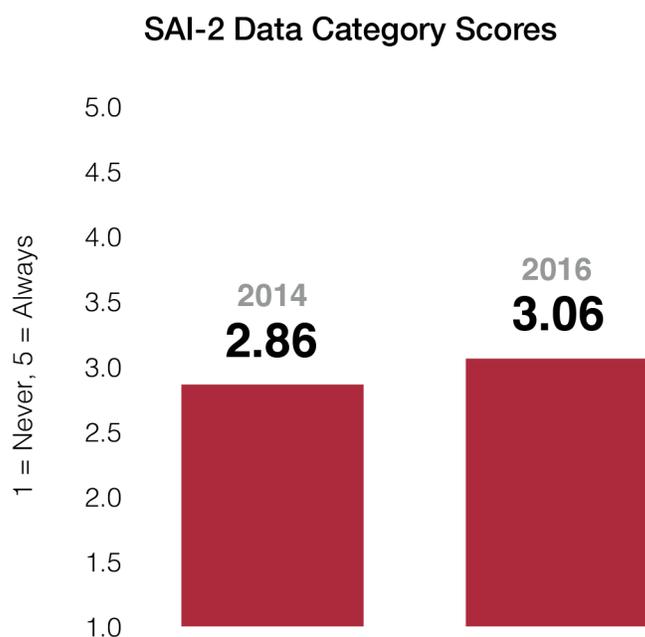


Figure 3. SAI-2 Data Longitudinal Trend

1.3 Effective leadership is engaged in the professional learning of emerging leaders throughout the system.

System-wide shifts in practice require a system-wide approach to developing leadership. Recognizing leadership capacity and providing the professional learning needed to support emerging leaders requires the intentional, focused attention of individuals and organizations through the entire educational system.

In the semantic text analysis of district action plans, several key leadership roles were identified as having a positive impact on the project moving forward. These included Fellows, teacher leaders hired by the project, the state education agency (OSPI), regional Educational Service Districts (ESDs), and the local district. Interestingly, many of the services rendered by these organizations follow a distributive leadership model. By supporting active learning in the classroom and school, teachers had the opportunity to develop the instructional expertise of emerging leaders (as in the case of the Fellows and ESD coaches) offering support to colleagues throughout the year. This suggests a more systemic approach to professional learning when compared to individual teachers seeking external opportunities to develop skills in isolation from the context of their classroom and school.

Comparing two categories on the Characteristics of Professional Development Survey (CPDS) survey, *Active Learning in the Classroom* and *Active Learning Beyond the Classroom*, may further illustrate the differences in types of services rendered. Active Learning In the Classroom may include features such as analysis of student work, creation or revision of instructional materials, alignment of instructional materials to state standards, alignment of assessments to state standards and/or curricular materials, and reflecting on effectiveness of lessons. Whereas, *Active Learning Beyond the Classroom* involves activities such as observing video clips of teaching, practicing new skills under simulated situation (like in a workshop), making presentations to colleagues, reflecting on new learning in a journal, participating in a coaching cycle, and discussing articles from books or journals.

The category of Active Learning In the Classroom was among the highest of the categories, while *Active Learning Beyond the Classroom* was the lowest of the five categories. But both categories demonstrated statistical gains from 2015 to 2016 in the participating schools -- *Active Learning in the Classroom* ($t = -5.3$, $df 1028$, $sig = .000$) *Active Learning Beyond the Classroom* ($t = -3.0$, $df 1024$, $sig .003$) (See figures 4 and 5).

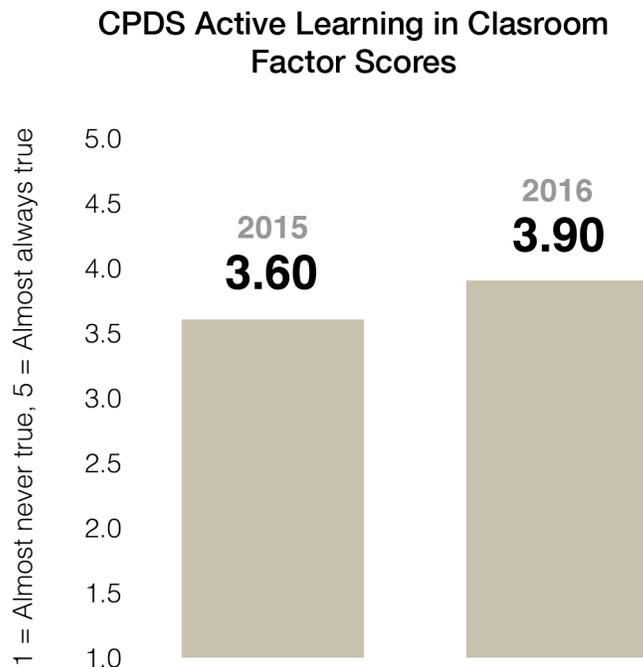


Figure 4. CPDS Active Learning in the Classroom Longitudinal Trend

These results further reinforce several key components. The use of the distributed leadership model is increasing, which is creating or at the very least sustaining an embedded model of professional learning. The external services that are rendered including the state education agency, regional offices of education support, and contracted teacher leaders are utilizing more of a push-in model of coherent and embedded professional learning opportunities.

1.4 Teacher leaders have a significant and positive impact on professional learning.

A unique aspect of the project was the emergence of teacher leaders within the districts. Tuytens and Devos (2014) found through a mixed methods study that evaluation processes that included teacher voice in planning and implementation increased teacher engagement in professional learning activities (p.254). This teacher-leader role was one of the most mentioned topics during focus groups and was always stated in a positive light as having a great impact on professional learning. Two teachers stated,

“Yes, instructional leadership both in building and district-wide, our teachers want to be distinguished in our district and as evaluators, that’s what we are pushing them to do. As an administrator, these are our own staff with the content expertise and are in constant recruit-mode to distribute leadership to our teachers. Leadership distributes to who we tap into and to those who step up.”

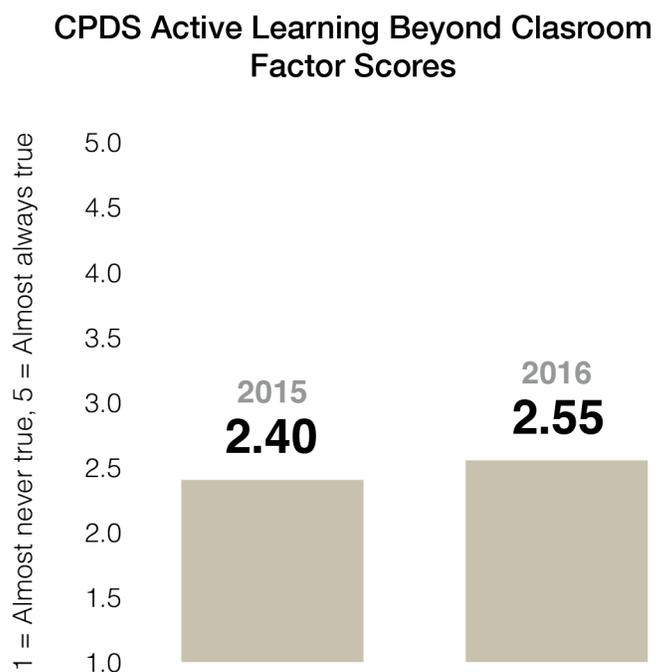


Figure 5. CPDS Active Learning Beyond the Classroom Longitudinal Trend

“It (teacher leaders) has allowed teachers to do things they’ve never done before, collaborate in teams and focus on professional learning. We are all at the same level. It’s great to all be at the same level in transforming professional learning.”

In the words of one teacher leader,

“Through our work with the project, it has really cemented in our district the culture of teacher leadership and that is a respected voice and important voice in the decision-making process...not just a participant, but a leader in the system. As a practitioner, coming from the classroom into adult learning, I equate it with our instructional framework. It gave me language to be articulate with my students. Now as a coach, understanding the seven professional learning standards has done the same with adult learners. It has given me the language to be more intentional about the decisions I’m making in terms of designing experiences for learners with specific outcomes, just like I did with my students.”

Practicing and supporting teacher leadership through the utilization of the distributive leadership model is echoed throughout this first chapter. For many districts moving from a top-down model of leadership to providing more school-based choice and teacher voice in the types of professional learning opportunities available to all educators indicates a transformational shift of practice. While for some districts this change has yet to directly impact the teacher-level (as reflected in the non-significant growth on the quantitative surveys), understanding the importance of distributing leadership to meet the professional learning needs of all educators in a coherent, district and school-based model is an important priority.

Leadership, from the district level to instructional leaders within teacher teams is an integral component of the effective implementation of professional learning. Growth data taken from the Characteristics of Professional Development Survey (CPDS) showed an increase in the category of *Coherence*, which contains items, related to distributed leadership. Overall, the factor *Leadership* remained the highest of the seven categories on the Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI-2) across the duration of the project. But there was a slight negative growth in the *Leadership* category across the duration of the project. This slight decrease in perceptions of leadership over two years of the project is somewhat disconcerting given the fact that the items in this SAI-2 factor focus on distributed leadership, culture building, advocating, active participation by leaders, and an emphasis on student and teacher learning.

The themes of “agency,” “distributed leadership” and “differentiation of professional learning” changes the conception of what traditional district leadership means and is carried out in districts. The assertion that professional learning requires engaged leadership is echoed throughout this project and is demonstrated through these different shifts in thinking and implementation of professional learning plans, leadership roles and implementation of a distributed leadership model.

Classroom data is being intentionally used relative to the planning of professional learning. One of the most commonly stated and positive goals mentioned in the district action plans was “retrieving and using data.” Project participants also noted that the use of data shifted relative to the thinking of the districts about deepening understanding of professional learning. The category of *Data* on the SAI-2 demonstrated a significant increase over the course of the two-year project. With the ever-increasing myriad of both formative and summative data available for educators, there is a need to maintain a cycle of inquiry that leverages the most useful data to inform both educator and student learning.

Shifts in practice require a system-wide approach to developing leadership. Recognizing leadership capacity and providing the professional learning needed to support emerging leaders requires the intentional, focused attention of individuals and organizations through the entire educational system. Several key players were stated as having a positive leadership impact moving forward. These included Fellows, teacher leaders hired by the project, the state education agency (OSPI), regional Educational Service Districts (ESDs), and the local district. The use of the distributed leadership model is increasing which is creating, or at the very least sustaining, an embedded model of professional learning. The external services that are rendered that include the state education agency, regional offices of education support, and contracted teacher leaders are utilizing more of a push-in model of coherent and embedded professional learning opportunities.

A unique aspect of the project was the emergence of teacher leaders within the districts. This role was one of the most frequently mentioned topics during focus groups and was always stated in a positive light as having a great impact on professional learning.

CHAPTER 2

Shifts in Practice Require Effective Processes and Support Structures

The partnership support of Learning Forward provided an important organizing structure for the overall coherence of the WA-TPL project. Well-described [Standards for Professional Learning](#), a robust suite of support materials and the capacity to use an aligned assessment tool to inform the work, were important contributing factors to the success realized thus far in the WA-TPL project. Other support structures included the expertise of grant funded “Coaches” working directly with Lab districts and indirectly with Critical Friend districts, and the network of Educational Service District (ESD) leads who directly supported the WA-TPL work in individual districts while building collaborative engagement between districts throughout each region. These structures and supports align with the work of Guskey (2009) and Desimone (2009) advocating developing best practices for teacher professional development that implement systems with a collectively understood common language about effective professional learning.

This comment from an educator offers insight into the kinds of shifts in practice that have occurred as a result of participating in the WA-TPL project, and succinctly affirms the assertions made in this chapter.

“I think we are seeing the value in, and beginning to have a clearer understanding of, “job embedded professional learning”...we are learning together and doing more within our buildings. For us, we added a late start opportunity that is reserved for professional learning. We created additional time for professional learning because of the WA-TPL project. We identified through this process that we needed “time” and we leveraged that; we brought it to the school board that allowed us to get a late start. We also developed building level leadership teams. The inclusiveness has allowed buildings to identify individual needs...and develop strong professional learning opportunities.”

EVIDENCE-BASED ASSERTIONS

2.1 Professional learning standards serve as an effective organizing structure for professional learning.

The use of the [Standards for Professional Learning](#) from Learning Forward served as an effective tool to inform current levels of proficiency, and served as a foundation for designing effective professional learning activities for educators. The standards provided a common language for

understanding important characteristics of effective professional learning, and became an effective organizing tool for school and district teams to use in planning and implementing professional learning experiences. Evidence gathered during focus group interviews affirmed this assertion as exemplified by these comments from two different educators:

“Every agenda has our Professional Learning Standards on them.”

“We are aware of, and align our practice to, the seven (professional learning) standards, and they are tied to our goals.”

The SAI-2 survey, developed by Learning Forward, is aligned to the seven Standards of Professional Learning. Results from multiple administrations of the SAI-2 over the duration of the project provided clear and compelling data for school and district personnel to use to identify needs and design effective professional learning experiences. The critical role of the standards based data was mentioned numerous times by educators during focus group interviews:

“The SAI-2 data aligns with the seven professional learning standards - you can’t argue with it - it compels you to do something about it; taking away the ‘no it’s not true...’ because the data tells otherwise.”

“Taking the professional learning standards...and not looking at it as “another thing,” but how can it add value to what you are already doing?”

One teacher leader framed it this way:

“As a practitioner coming from the classroom into adult learning...I equate it (professional learning standards) with our instructional framework...it gave me language to be articulate with my students. Now as a coach, understanding the seven professional learning standards has done the same with adult learners. It has given me the language to be more intentional about the decisions I’m making in terms of designing experiences for learners with specific outcomes, just like I did with my students.”

The use of learning communities and the prioritized allocation of resources also contributed to creating structures that support professional learning. The contextual implications for establishing these kinds of standards based supports for professional learning are significant. Some districts

indicated that they were still in the process of identifying needs by using SAI2 survey data to inform plans for professional learning. For example, one educator stated:

“We are still in the building of the system...structures and vehicles to ensure that we have a means to inform our practices. How does the teacher need, around professional learning, inform the building need and how does the building need inform the district need to maximize the district resources and ensure our resources are placed appropriately? When we went the other direction, we hadn’t understood the needs.”

Analyses of district action plans and individual responses from focus group interviews revealed several emerging and positive themes related to professional learning. The WA-TPL project as a whole was mentioned as the driver of professional learning in many districts. The project enabled districts to refocus efforts on making professional learning job-embedded and relevant to educators throughout the entire system. This came about through long term action planning, the design and consistent use of protocols and norms, allocation of resources, and collaborative efforts within and outside of the district.

“As a paraprofessional, it has given to us an understanding of norms and that we have value and are an important part/player to the process...we know how to be better and at the same time...get what we need...to figure this process out.”

The professional learning standards became a focal point for analyzing data about professional learning and planning for future activities. In identifying areas of success and need, one district leader shared:

“Our SAI-2 data demonstrates that we aren’t completely skillful in all seven of the Professional Learning Standards, but skilled in 4 of 7. Leadership has shown growth. Our PLC was already topped out. Student score were already good. Three areas of need were ‘learning designs,’ ‘resources’ and ‘implementation.’”

Professional development is experienced differently based on the role one has in the educational system. One system variable investigated as part of the project evaluation was the level of certification held by teachers. Given the standards based nature of teacher certification in the State of Washington, it seemed prudent to consider the potential impact certification might have on teachers’ knowledge of professional learning standards. Using a two-tier certification system,

generalizable differences between Residency and Professional teaching certificates may be a result of the years of teaching experience. However, differences between these certification groups may also be related to familiarity and use of standards to inform professional practice. Though both Residency and Professional certificates use established standards of professional practice to help teachers understand their relative strengths and weaknesses, teachers completing the Professional certificate must complete a thorough analysis of their strengths and weaknesses using the certification standards and provide evidence of professional learning/growth and impact on student learning. This rigorous process is job embedded and captured in a portfolio assessment that is externally scored.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted grouping respondents by teaching certificate and comparing overall group means on the SAI-2. The results showed statistically significant differences in average SAI-2 scores $F(5,1510)=2.88$, $p=.01$, $h^2=.01$ (a negligible effect size). A follow up post-hoc test showed a statistically significant difference between the SAI-2 average score of educators with residency certificates ($M=3.23$) and educators with a professional certification ($M=3.43$).

The results of this analysis suggest that both teacher experience and individual teacher knowledge and use of standards of professional practice may strengthen teacher knowledge of the [Standards for Professional Learning](#). It is likely that teachers with more experience and a deeper understanding of the use of standards to guide professional practice are more in touch with their professional learning needs. The processes associated with completing the Professional Certificate mirrors many aspects of those processes embedded in the Learning Forward resources aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning. Teachers with a Residency certificate and fewer years of teaching have had limited exposure to the use of standards to drive their own growth and professional practice. As a result, they rate themselves lower in terms of their knowledge of the seven professional learning standards compared to their colleagues.

2.2 Professional learning is contextualized to the effectiveness of teacher in the classroom.

The WA-TPL project caused districts to plan for and create professional learning experiences that were contextualized and personalized to each educator's unique context. This included a shift towards job-embedded activities instead of traditional workshops provided for all educators regardless of need. It is important to note that this kind of job-embedded professional learning is integral to the ongoing certification process referenced above as well as the teacher and principal

evaluation processes. Recognizing this important overlap suggests that with the careful alignment of existing structures across the system, the work of designing and implementing effective professional learning can be sustained over time. This change in professional learning processes is highlighted in the words of one educator.

“We see it as a means to put the puzzle together...using it to inform and implement additional initiatives. We have to remind ourselves continually...we can't just start in with the actions steps...our Problem of Practice...as we look at other initiatives and use our Danielson framework and cycle of inquiry, we need to use that as our foundation and lens; we are intentional to make sure that things we provide are sustainable and improved.”

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, a practical issue associated with implementing effective professional learning is time. One strategy employed by many districts was the use of time during the school day for professional learning. A late start or early release of students provided the time needed for professional learning. This requires an important combination of structural support, advanced planning, changes in policies and allocating resources.

Other evidence of contextualized professional learning is found in SAI-2 growth data related to the categories: *Learning Communities*, *Resources* and *Learning Designs*. These data gathered across the two and a half years of the project confirmed a mix of perceptions of how support structures can improve professional learning design. Figure 6 provides a graphic representation growth data for the category *Learning Communities*. The mean scores from fall 2014 to spring 2016 remained virtually the same. There were no significant differences ($t = .69$, $df = 3364$, $sig = .49$). Given other quantitative and qualitative data indicating the relative importance of learning communities and structural support for professional learning, the lack of growth may be an indication of an initial lack of clarity as to the definition of *Learning Communities* on the part of participants. As such, it would make sense that as participants deepened their understanding of the concept, they recognize the need for further growth. In other words, a lack of deep understanding may have resulted in an inflated mean score in fall 2014; and by spring of 2016 participants provide a more accurate assessment of the use of learning communities.

SAI-2 Learning Communities Scores

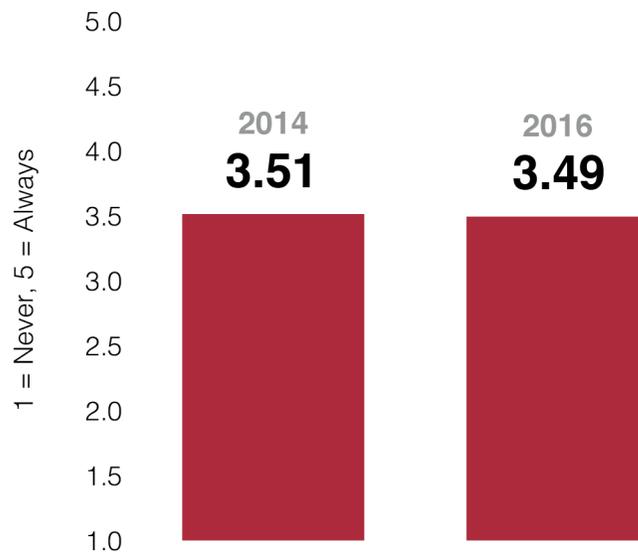


Figure 6. SAI-2 Learning Communities Longitudinal Trend

SAI-2 Resources Scores

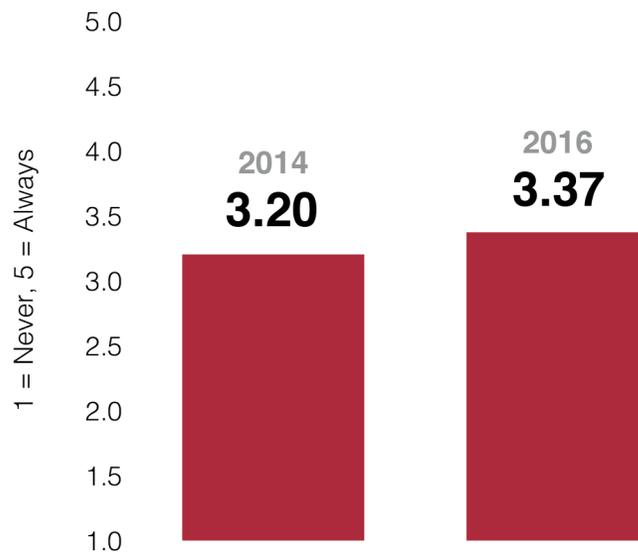


Figure 7. SAI-2 Resources Longitudinal Trend

Figure 7 provides SAI-2 data for the category *Resources*. Though the issues with inflated scores from fall 2014 administration of the survey may impact this analysis as well, it is important to note that there was a significant increase ($t = -6.1$, $df = 3364$, $sig = .000$) in participant perception of the alignment of resources needed to support professional learning.

Another important aspect of effective professional learning relates to the learning designs. This is the integration of theories, research and models of human learning into professional learning. Figure 8 compares SAI-2 data from fall 2014 to spring 2016 to bring insight into participant perception of *Learning Designs* as an integral part of effective professional learning. There was a small but significant increase in mean scores between the two administrations of the survey ($t = -3.6$, $df = 3364$, $sig = .000$). Once again, with the potential for an inflated mean score from the fall 2014 administration there is evidence to suggest that the WA-TPL has positively impacted professional learning focused on effective learning designs for improving student learning.

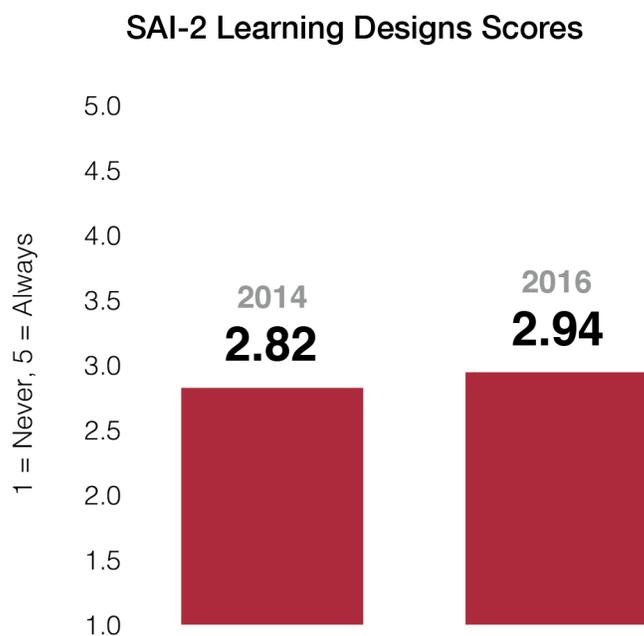


Figure 8. SAI-2 Learning Designs Longitudinal Trend

Teachers who took the CPDS survey perceived over a full point more frequent occurrences of *Active Learning in the Classroom* compared to *Active Learning Beyond the Classroom*. This may suggest that district leaders and teachers recognize the benefits of job-embedded learning activi-

ties and are implementing such activities as a common practice. The category of *Coherence* also supports the assertion that teachers are moving from decontextualized training to job-embedded systems connected to everyday classroom teaching and learning as noted in the highest and increased frequency over the course of the project. The increase in *Coherence* was also statistically significant ($t = -4.7$, $df 1028$, $sig = .000$) (see Figure 9). From these results one may conclude one of two things: teachers are engaging in more job-embedded professional learning activities and/or their understanding of what constitutes professional learning opportunities within the structure of their classroom, school and district is increasing. It is possible that historically teachers may not have classified learning activities that happen within the school day (job-embedded) as authentic professional development opportunities, but with their increased understanding of these types of designs, their identification of such activities is more accurate.

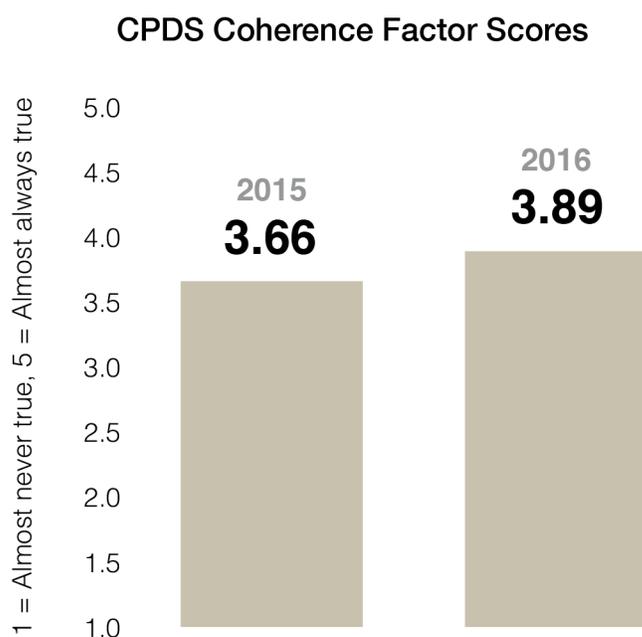


Figure 9. CPDS Coherence Longitudinal Trend

2.3 External support impacts professional learning.

The WA-TPL project design resulted in the recruitment of two different sets of participating school districts - Lab and Critical Friend. The primary difference was that Lab districts received the ongoing support of a coach and additional funding. As mentioned earlier, there was some confusion as to the role of the Critical Friend district, but they too received funding from the

project to engage in the process alongside their assigned Lab district partners. This was a design feature of the project implementation that provided an opportunity for the evaluation team to conduct some analyses and make comparisons between these two sets of districts. Considering the alignment of the of the SAI-2 to the Standards for Professional Practice and the resources used in the project, the first obvious comparison was to compare was the overall mean scores for each group. In essence, this was a comparison of participants' perception of overall quality of professional learning.

An independent t-test was conducted comparing group mean scores on the SAI-2 of those in Lab districts and Critical Friend districts. On average, participants in Lab districts had a higher perception of the overall quality of professional learning (M=3.38) than those in critical friend districts (M=3.22). This difference was significant (t=3.51, df=1527, p=.000) (see Figure 10).

An independent sample t-test was conducted comparing group means for lab and critical friend respondents on the *Collaboration* factor of the CPDS survey. On average, participants in lab districts reported higher levels of collaboration (M=3.44) than those in critical friend districts (M=3.12). This difference was significant (t = 4.13, df = 324, sig =.000) (see Figure 11).

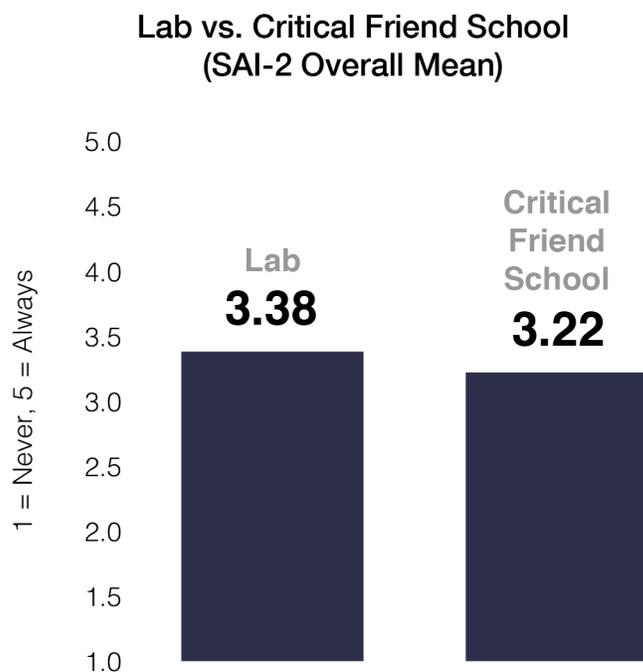


Figure 10. SAI-2 Lab vs. Critical Friends Schools Comparison

Participants in Lab districts perceived a statistically significant higher level of Collective Participation than those in critical friend districts as measured on the CPDS survey. These findings may indicate that the level of involvement in a professional development project significantly impacts the frequency of professional development with an emphasis on collaboration and content knowledge. At the very least, these results may conclude that characteristics of effective professional learning practices increase when specific, planned support structures are in place. These results, combined with previously discussed focus group feedback that confirms that the very WA-TPL project itself triggered the understanding and resulting resources for enabling a coherent professional learning system to be launched in some lab districts.

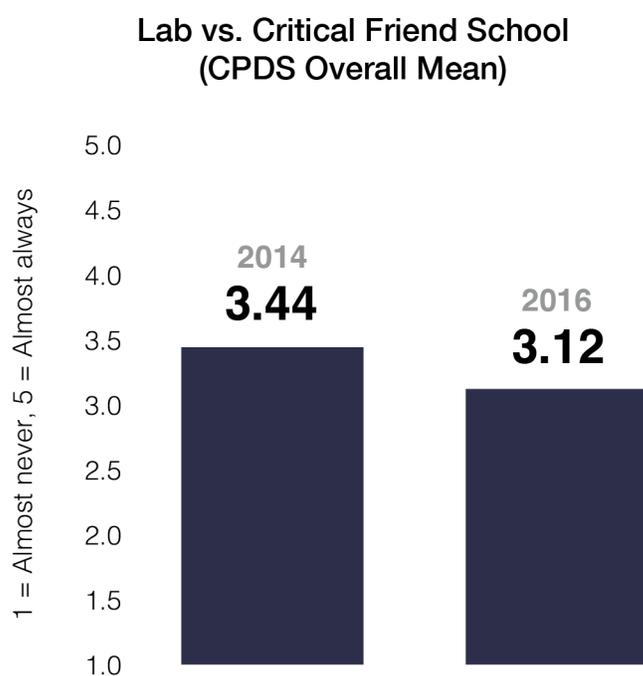


Figure 11. CPDS Collaboration Lab vs. Critical Friend Comparison

It was found that there were differences in perception of professional development between those participants in Lab and Critical Friend districts. The distinction between these two groups of WA-TPL participating districts is the addition of a project coach and additional grant funded resources. These additional levels of support appear to make a positive difference in the way educators perceived professional learning.

2.4 Teachers spend considerable time engaged in professional learning activities.

The amount of time spent in professional learning experiences along with the frequency of these

experiences has been shown by researchers to be connected to effective practice in the classroom (Desimone, 2009). This aspect was measured in the *Duration* factor of the CPDS. It was typical of teachers in this project to spend between 30 and 80 hours during a given school year engaged in professional learning activities (Figure 12). The frequency of professional learning experiences ranged widely between once a week and once a month (Figure 13). There was no significant change in duration between the 2015 and 2016 year of the project ($t = 1.0$, $df 1028$, $sig = .07$). The teachers participating in this project were already engaged in high levels of professional learning activities.

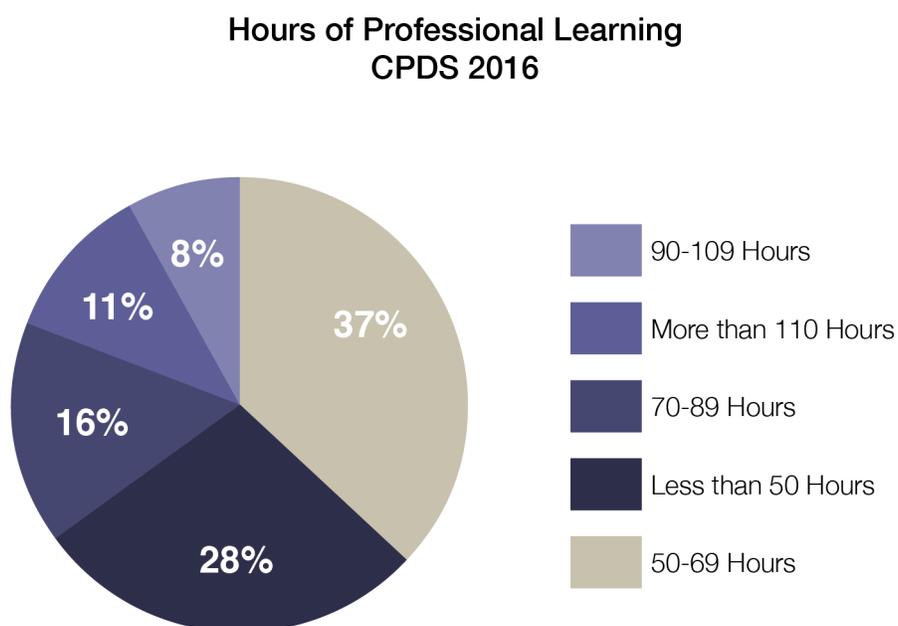


Figure 12. Hours Engaged in Professional Learning

2.5 Professional learning is linked to teacher need.

Based on data gathered during the June 2016 focus groups, the WA-TPL project helped create systemic change around teacher involvement in professional development. Focus groups indicated that new ideas and approaches to teacher leadership emerged during this process. Based on observations made by districts, these new concepts about teacher leadership provided space for both systemic change around professional development and a shift in thinking about teacher involvement in the delivery of professional development. Comments from several educators attest to the importance of alignment to teacher needs.

Teacher: “It put teachers in the driver’s seat of their learning, teacher buy-in, teachers choose what they think they want to learn, be focused.”

Regularity of Professional Learning CPDS 2016

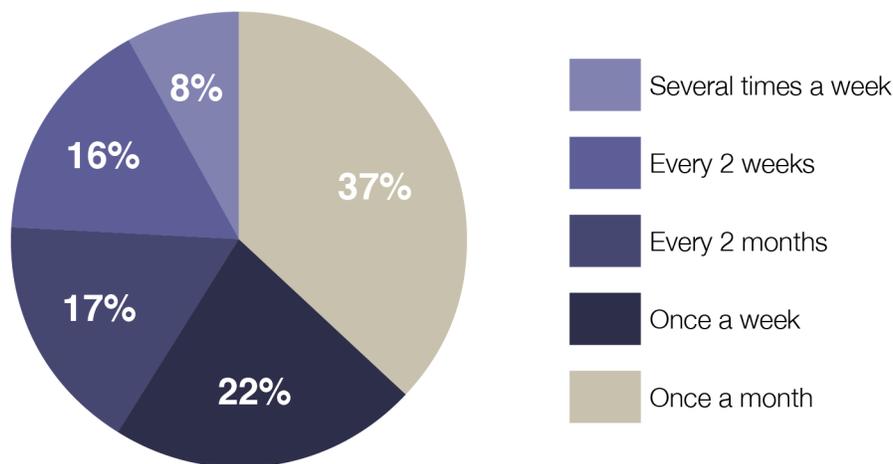


Figure 13. Frequency of Engaging in Professional Learning Activities

District Administrator: “We are aware of and align our practice to the 7 standards, and tied to goals, 3 areas we worked on and monitored through the year, transformational in that we went from a random building by building buffet of professional learning to a least a district level process that included seminars where teachers had options to select their professional learning based on their interests and needs. One in August, March and again in August.”

Teacher: “We’ve identified the needs based on teacher input.”

Washington state, like most other states, now requires teacher evaluation systems to involve multiple data sources and to be linked with frameworks for effective instruction. In Washington, this system is called the Teacher/Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP). In this project, educators indicated that professional learning was being connected to TPEP systems. Two comments from school level administrators attest to natural connections between WA-TPL professional learning

activities and teacher evaluation systems.

“Professional Development used to be sit and get with one coach to deliver training on something not of her expertise. Now we’ve grown our teachers under the Danielson framework and can offer their own professional learning.”

“This professional learning is connected to TPEP. We see it in instructional leadership both in building and district-wide, our teachers want to be distinguished in our district and as evaluators, that’s what we are pushing them to do.”

The alignment between TPEP and professional learning activities further supports the shift that has taken place in many districts towards engaging teachers in a more systematic, yet individualized approach to improving their practice.

The use of the [Standards for Professional Learning](#) from Learning Forward served as an effective tool to inform current levels of proficiency. These standards served as a foundation for designing effective professional learning activities for educators that provided a common language for understanding important characteristics of effective professional learning. The standards also became an effective organizing tool for school and district teams to use in planning and implementing professional learning experiences. Furthermore, the standards became the tool with which to determine whether a specific professional learning practice was valid and/or a priority.

The WA-TPL project as a whole was mentioned as the driver of professional learning in many districts. The project enabled districts to refocus efforts on making professional learning job-embedded and relevant to educators throughout the entire system. This came about through long term action planning, the design and consistent use of protocols and norms, allocation of resources, and collaborative efforts within and outside of the district.

The WA-TPL project helped districts to plan for and create professional learning experiences that were contextualized and personalized to each educator. A shift towards job-embedded activities instead of traditional workshops was evident as the project progressed. An important aspect of effective professional learning relates to the learning designs that include integration of theories, research, and models of human learning into professional learning. This includes the practical planning for overlap and alignment of professional learning needs with the teacher and principal evaluation processes.

The WA-TPL project design resulted in the recruitment of two different sets of participating school districts - Lab and Critical Friend. The primary difference was that Lab districts received the ongoing support of a coach, and additional funding. This was a design feature of the project implementation that provided an opportunity for the evaluation team to conduct some analyses and make comparisons between these two sets of districts.

Participants in Lab districts perceived a significantly higher level of Collective Participation and Content than those in Critical Friend districts as measured on the CPDS survey. These findings may indicate that the level of involvement in a professional development project significantly impacts the frequency of professional development with an emphasis on collaboration and content knowledge. At the very least, these results may conclude that characteristics of effective professional learning practices increase when specific, planned support structures are in place. These results confirm that the WA-TPL project itself triggered the understanding and resulting resources for enabling a coherent professional learning system to be launched in some lab districts.

Allocating time as a consistent resource to implementing effective professional learning practices is a constant challenge. This conclusion was echoed in the results of this evaluation. It was typical of teachers in this project to spend between 30 to 80 hours during a given school year engaged in professional learning activities. The frequency of professional learning experiences ranged widely between once a week to once a month. The teachers participating in this project were already engaged in high levels of professional learning activities, and there was no significant change in the duration of professional learning over the project.

The WA-TPL project helped create systemic change around teacher involvement in professional development. New ideas and approaches to teacher leadership emerged during this process. New concepts about teacher leadership provided space for both systemic change around professional development and a shift in thinking about teacher involvement in the delivery of professional development. One systemic change that occurred during this project was that professional learning was being connected to teacher evaluation systems. This alignment between teacher evaluation and professional learning activities further supports the shift that has taken place in many districts towards engaging teachers in a more systematic, yet individualized approach to improving their practice. When these systemic changes occur, a transition from isolated professional learning activities to a more comprehensive and connected plan is formed. Teachers will be able to utilize a systemic structure for engaging in professional learning that integrates a variety of district and school initiatives that are all moving towards a single goal. District leaders can

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reconsider how to implement a plan for engaging in these initiatives through one professional learning design rather than isolated events.

CHAPTER 3

Professional Learning Requires Attention to School and District Culture

Attending to the “culture” of a school or district organization requires careful attention to a variety of indicators. Desimone (2009) articulates that professional development is not one-size fits all that can universally be applied across contexts. In this chapter we identify evidence from both qualitative and quantitative data sources. These include the review and analysis of text from interviews, focus groups and documents along with survey data that bring voice to educators whose positive rapport and collaborative engagement in professional learning has brought about an improvement of the quality of professional learning as a result of this project.

EVIDENCE-BASED ASSERTIONS

3.1 The quality of professional learning increased over the duration of the project.

The most important theme to emerge from the semantic text analysis of the focus groups was professional learning, and it was perceived very positively. Project participants regularly indicated a notable shift in the quality of professional learning. For example, the following statements attest to the growth over time:

“Since three years ago (the start of the project) to where we are now, I’ve seen a huge transformation. Teachers are willing to do innovative practices and want to do it. Teachers are risking things and if it doesn’t work, we reflect on it. We’re pushing the system to be responsive to student learning and teacher development.”

“We’ve defined professional learning quality -- surveyed staff and came up with characteristics. Our group aligned those to ‘research based best practices’...so we felt we were on solid ground.”

The quality of professional learning was linked to systemic approaches taken by the participating districts. One quote illustrates this shift over time.

“The district is thinking more systemically. It has embarked on a venture to create a yearly system/cycle for professional development including data, planning, at both the school and district level.”

The Characteristics of Professional Development Survey (CPDS) contains a subscale called coherence that includes items related to the quality of professional learning experiences. These items relate to a systematic yearly progression and focus on student learning. Significant and positive changes in the coherence subscale were observed between the spring 2015 and autumn 2016 administrations of this survey to participating educators ($t = -4.74$, $df = 1028$, $sig = .000$) (Figure 14). This result provides additional evidence for an increase in the quality of professional learning in the participating districts.

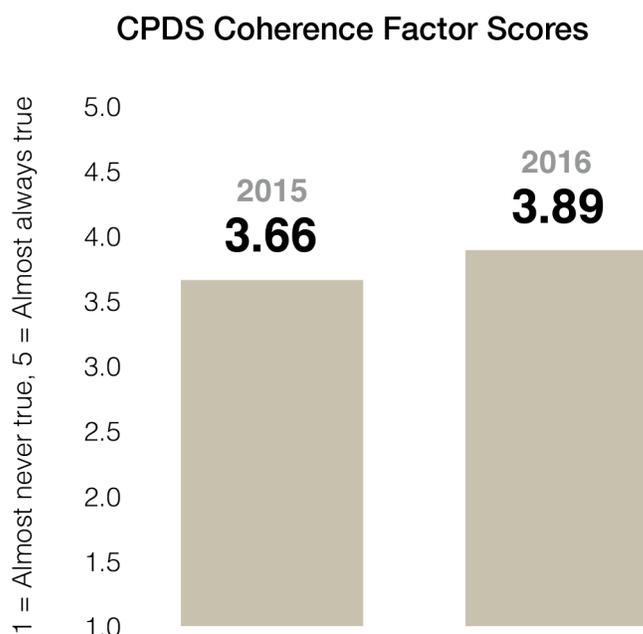


Figure 14. CPDS Coherence Longitudinal Trend

In a one-way analysis of variance statistical test comparing the differences in years of teaching experience, teachers with more professional experience demonstrated high levels of perceived quality of professional development as measured by the SAI-2 survey ($F(5,1523)=3.406$, $p=.005$, $\eta^2=.01$). A follow up post-hoc test indicated significant differences between teachers with 2-4 years of experience and teachers with 10-16 years of teaching experience, teachers with 17-25 years of teaching experience and 25+ years of teaching experience. On average, teachers with 2-4 years teaching experience had statistically significant lower perceptions of overall quality of professional development ($M=3.14$) than those with 10-6 years of experience ($M=3.35$) and those with 17-25 ($M=3.38$) and those with 25+ years of teaching experience ($M=3.42$) (see Figure 15).

A one-way analysis of variance statistical test was conducted grouping respondents by teaching certificate and comparing overall group means on the SAI-2 survey. The results showed statistically significant differences in average SAI-2 scores ($F(5,1510)=2.88, p=.01, \eta^2=.01$). A follow up post-hoc test showed that total SAI-2 score of educators with residency certificates was lower ($M=3.23$) than those with a professional certificate ($M=3.43$) (see Figure 16).

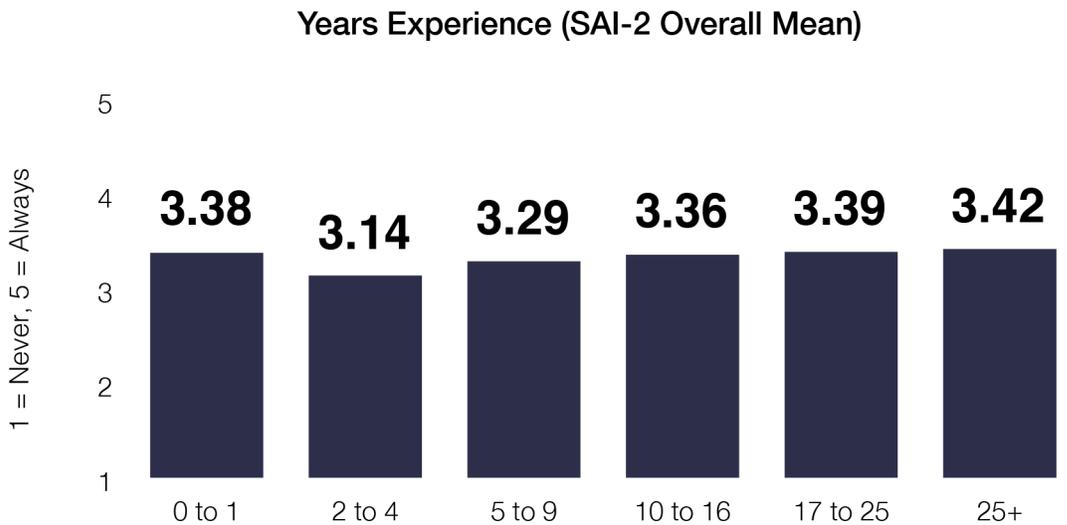


Figure 15. SAI-2 Years Teaching Experience

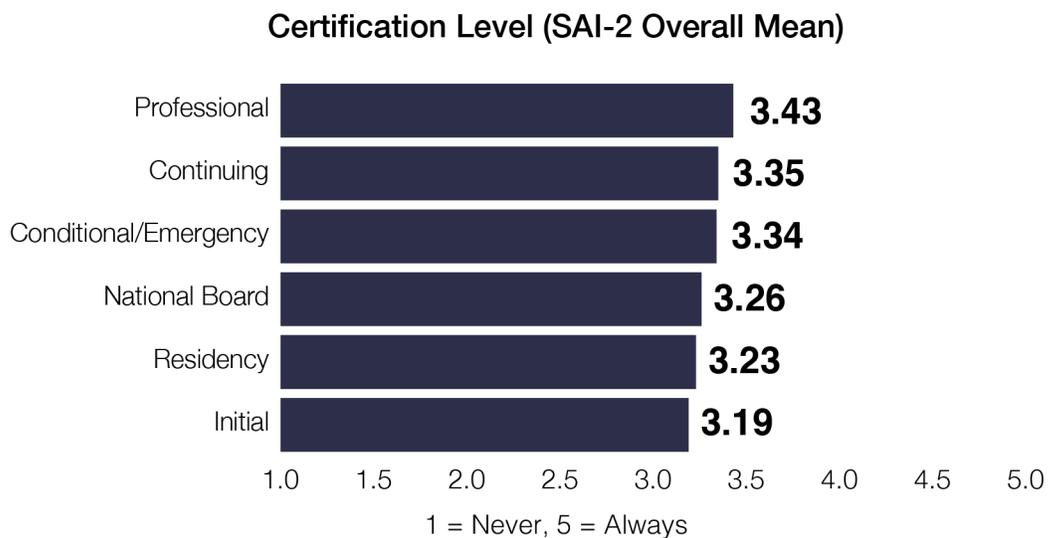


Figure 16. SAI-2 Certification Level

3.2 Teacher “voice” in planning and implementing of professional learning increased.

During the focus groups, it was evident that teacher voice was present in determining the direction of professional learning. The notion that all educators, from the superintendent to the paraeducator, can and should work together in building professional learning systems was present during the project. One teacher stated,

“It’s okay for a teacher to sit next to the super and learn together. Teachers have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to teach even the leader.”

This increase in teacher voice was characterized as “agency”. Teachers regularly saw themselves as being responsible for their own professional learning.

“Agency as teachers are also learners ourselves and as a teacher we are responsible for our own learning and to identify our own gaps and come forward with that rather than wait for someone else to see the need. Teacher voice matters and that isn’t always the case and recognize that. What am I as a teacher am going to do about that? Better ways to communicate -- ‘I’d like to see a training on that?’ ‘Can I see a resource on that?’”

As noted in Chapter 1, teachers as leaders became a focal point of the professional learning system, and this created a culture of teachers having more of a voice. One teacher leader noted,

“Through our work with WA-TPL, it has really cemented in our district the culture of teacher leadership and that is a respected voice and important voice in the decision-making process and a system of leaders that support the system -- not just a participant but a leader in the system.”

3.3 District-wide, collaborative teams improved planning and implementation of effective professional learning.

The project appeared to encourage a shift in the focus of professional learning from a disconnected individually-based approach to district wide teaming where the teams engaged in problems of practice related to teaching and learning.

“We look at the different tiers-core team, building team, teacher leader team. Clearly admin staff can’t do everything so how to build a structure where it gets to the quality teaching and learning.”

Everyone from paraeducators to the superintendent took responsibility for their own learning. Several educators described this shift in responsibility:

“Two years ago, questions about what that will look like in terms of learning, modules, roles for other buildings. This year, if you go into those buildings, you will see them working on things they’ve identified with staff and professional learning communities leading and working on it. This also opened up conversations between buildings and grade levels. When we talk about elementary schools working with middle schools and middle schools working with high schools. It opened up dialogue between buildings and created structures within and between buildings.”

“Our team is one admin from each level, supt/asst supt, instructional coach and teacher from each level. All of us are learning together and the administrators are in the trenches learning with us and taking the learning to each building. They lead by example just like our kids. This is a very powerful message.”

One administrator described the shift in their individual approach to leading:

“We aren’t doing the directing but providing the time and resources and we distribute it out to the masses. Our initiative isn’t dictation, but here are the things to work on. But the work is done by the team.”

A teacher from the same district reiterated this shift.

“They (administrators) are not afraid to let the teachers have the freedom to try new things. They’ve never said, no.”

A flattening of professional learning was perceived as a necessary component of building effective systems. One teacher leader stated,

“Side learning where we ‘flatten our structure’ and in terms of learning, it’s okay for a teacher to sit next to the superintendent and learn together. Teachers have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to teach even the leader.”

Creating flattened systems for fostering effective professional learning allowed schools to scale up

for broadened impact over time. The comment of one teacher leader bears out this phenomenon.

“I think about the layers that our rollout of our new learning for groups has been - we gather as a leadership team, we practice it as a group with some of the admin team, reflect and refine, then apply to greater admin team, then with teacher leaders as plants and we see some schools where the principal is taking that learning back to their schools, refining it and making it intentional with that group. Our intention is starting small, then expanding, expanding, expanding until it has had an impact.”

However, several hurdles to effective professional learning emerged during the project. One potential hurdle to fostering teaming is turnover in the administrative ranks. This was evident in the following comment:

“I’ll add that a real hurdle is admin teams (new principals) change all the time. It points to a need for this system, but a real hurdle with so much change. A hurdle to anticipate is what happens with a new principal?”

Another hurdle is a shift in thinking from working alone to working in teams. Teachers are not used to system-wide team approaches. For example, one teacher stated,

“Many of us are new to team processes - (We’ve been in a) culture of the Lone Ranger where people tend to do things on their own. So we’re learning how to work on a team, be mutually accountable, and how can we be within a system yet differentiate to meet all needs.”

The ever present emphasis on standardized assessment was regularly perceived by the project participants as a significant hurdle to concentrating on effective teaching and learning. During focus groups, standardized assessment was one of the most mentioned themes and its sentiment was generally negative. On the other hand, test results were also seen as a positive tool for examining data on student learning and progress. This dichotomy in thinking about assessments needs important to note and intentionally address.

3.4 Positive, professional relationships enhance collaboration to ensure effective professional learning.

During focus groups, educators indicated that collaboration was critical to ongoing professional

learning. For example, two comments attest to this notion:

Assistant Principal: “Before we had one office of teaching and learning, but now we’ve got three committees for Professional Learning that will require continued professional learning.”

Teacher: “There is more communication between schools and teachers can take classes from all different schools/grade levels across the district to have conversations.”

Effective professional learning experiences don’t occur in a vacuum but require positive social interactions. These interactions take time and must be built upon strong relationships, trust, encouragement, sense of collective responsibility, and the creation of social norms. These components were measured as part of the Characteristics of Professional Development Survey (CPDS) *Collaboration* subscale. On a scale of 1-5, the mean on this scale increased from 3.08 to 3.34 over a one-year period of the project (spring 2015 to spring 2016). This increase was statistically significant ($t = -5.4$, $df = 1028$, $sig = .000$) (see Figure 17).

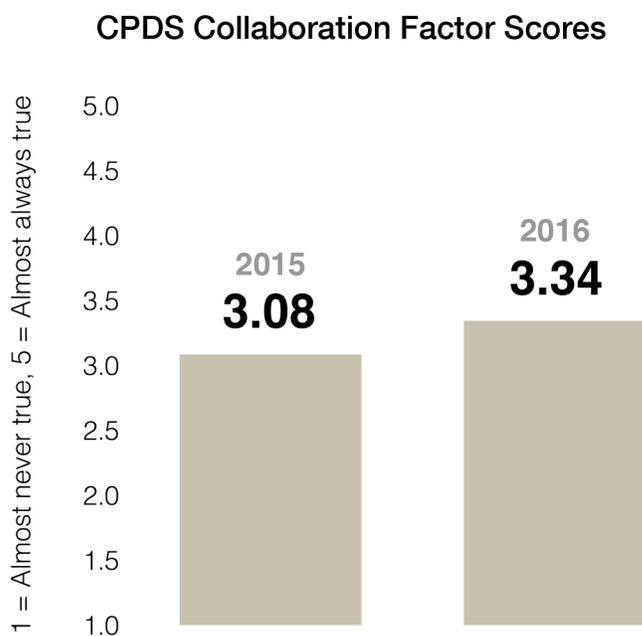


Figure 17. CPDS Collaboration Longitudinal Trend

A one-way analysis of variance statistical test was conducted comparing group means of the *Collaboration* factor on the winter 2016 administration of the CPDS by teaching certificate. There was a significant effect of teaching certification on average scores ($F(5,319)=3.03, p=.01$) with a weak effect ($\eta^2=.03$). A post-hoc test indicated significant differences in collective participation scores between those with initial teaching certificates ($M=2.99, SE=.12$) and those with professional certificates ($M=3.53, SE=.11$).

The SAI-2 survey also includes a subscale called *Learning Communities* containing questions relating to the culture around professional learning. These items focus on teaming, trust building, accountability, relationships, and shared responsibility. On a scale of 1-5, the mean on this scale remained essentially the same over a two-year period of the project from autumn 2014 to spring 2016 ($t = .62, df = 3364, sig = .49$) (see Figure 18).

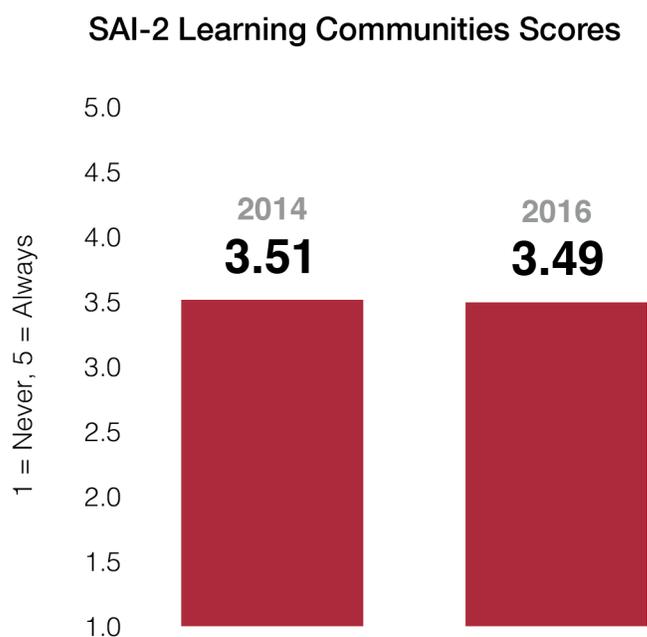


Figure 18. SAI-2 Learning Communities Longitudinal Trend

The most important theme to emerge from the data was a positive perception of professional learning. This is not surprising given the title and focus of the WA-TPL project. When coupled with the perception of educators that a notable positive shift had taken place in the quality of professional learning, there is good evidence to suggest that the quality of professional learning increased during the project. Furthermore, teachers with more teaching experience indicated higher levels of perceived quality of professional development.

The idea of teacher “voice” or “agency” is tied to many findings within this report. The structural shifts that draw teachers into the process of designing and implementing quality professional learning provide opportunities for direct input into decisions that impact professional practices in the classroom. Teacher voice was very present in determining the direction of professional learning. This increase in teacher voice was characterized as “agency”. Teachers regularly saw themselves as being responsible for their own professional learning.

School/district teams perceived a “flattening” of administrative structures that helped to develop a broad basis of input into the design and implementation of effective professional learning and a culture of common learning. With some variance between participating districts, the WA-TPL project helped to shift the focus of professional learning from a disconnected, individually-based approaches to district wide teaming where the teams engaged in problems of practice related to teaching and learning.

Several hurdles to effective professional learning also emerged during the project. One potential hurdle to fostering teaming is turnover in the administrative ranks that may cause concern regarding potential changes to plans. Another hurdle is a shift in thinking from working alone to working in teams when historically this has not been the approach. Mutual accountability and working together requires a shift in how professional learning and teaching practices are considered.

Standardized assessment was one of the most mentioned themes, and its sentiment was generally negative. On the other hand, test results were also seen as a positive tool for examining data on student learning and progress.

Effective professional learning experiences don’t occur in a vacuum but require positive social interactions which take time and must be built upon strong relationships, trust, encouragement, sense of collective responsibility, and the creation of social norms. As measured by the CPDS, each of these characteristics showed growth over the course of the project.

The SAI-2 survey contains questions relating to the culture around professional learning that focus on teaming, trust building, accountability, relationships, and shared responsibility. The mean on this scale remained essentially the same over a two-year period of the project.

CHAPTER 4

Professional Learning Impacts Teacher Knowledge and Skills

The work of Desimone (2009), Guskey (2009), Learning Forward (2011) and Maerten-Rivera et al. (2015) all advocate for high quality empirical evidence to describe the current state of teacher professional learning in the United States. Recognizing that high quality professional learning that positively impacts student learning (Goddard et al. 2007, Goddard et al., 2015) is specifically focused on teachers, improving the knowledge and skills of teachers are critical factors to improving student learning. This chapter provides a look into some of the ways the WA-TPL project has helped to shape high quality professional learning focused on improving the content knowledge and skills of teacher.

EVIDENCE-BASED ASSERTIONS

4.1 Professional learning can impact teachers' discipline-based content knowledge.

With an understanding of how district leadership creates system alignment and structural support to provide teachers with the opportunities to engage in individualized, ongoing and collaborative professional learning, it is also important to identify the kind of professional learning that improves instructional practices. Over the course of the WA-TPL project survey data was collected to determine the impact of professional learning focused on improving teacher knowledge and skills.

The CPDS survey includes a factor called Content that relates to teacher discipline-based content knowledge and how students learn content. It contains items asking teachers if, as a result of professional learning, they:

1. Gained a deeper understanding of content
2. Increased their confidence to teach content
3. Learned how to address student misconceptions
4. Developed pedagogical strategies to teach content.

The baseline and end of project means for Content were 3.3 and 3.58 respectively on a scale of 1-5 indicating a small but significant increase in average perceptions of participants' professional learning experiences that increase *Content Knowledge* (see Figure 19). This was a statistically significant increase in Content over the duration of the project ($t = -3.7$, $df = 1028$, $sig = .000$).

CPDS Content Knowledge Factor Scores

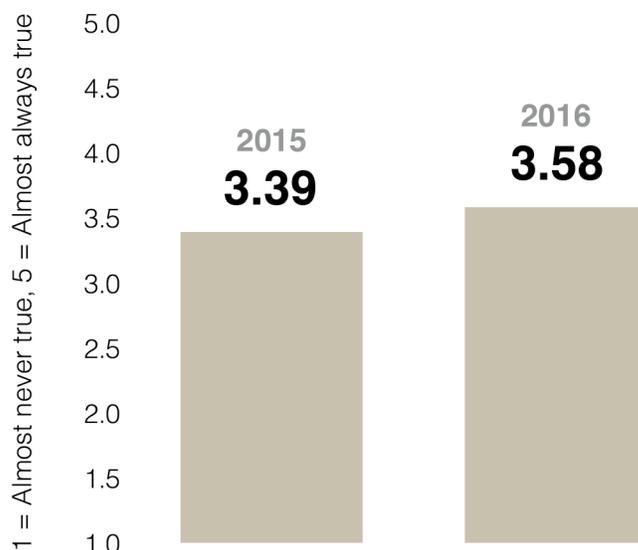


Figure 19. CPDS Content Longitudinal

Another important aspect of the project was to investigate any differences between the differentially supported Lab and Critical Friend District. Any differences would bring insight to the influence specific grant funded supports may have on professional learning focused on developing teacher *Content Knowledge* and the importance of school and district supported strategies that individualize professional learning to specific needs of teachers.

An independent sample t-test was conducted comparing the average scores of Lab and Critical Friend participants for the Content knowledge factor on the CPDS. Participants in Lab Districts reported higher average content knowledge (M=3.66) than those in Critical Friend Districts (M=3.40) (see Figure 20). This difference was statistically significant ($t=3.16$, $df = 324$, $sig = .000$). This result supports the connection between teachers' perceived quality of professional learning experiences and how that leads to and supports a more individualized improvement of knowledge and skills based on their own needs.

A teacher's knowledge of discipline specific content and their theoretical as well as practical knowledge of effective instructional practice provide the practical foundation for the effective application of this knowledge in the skillful planning and implementation of instructional practices.

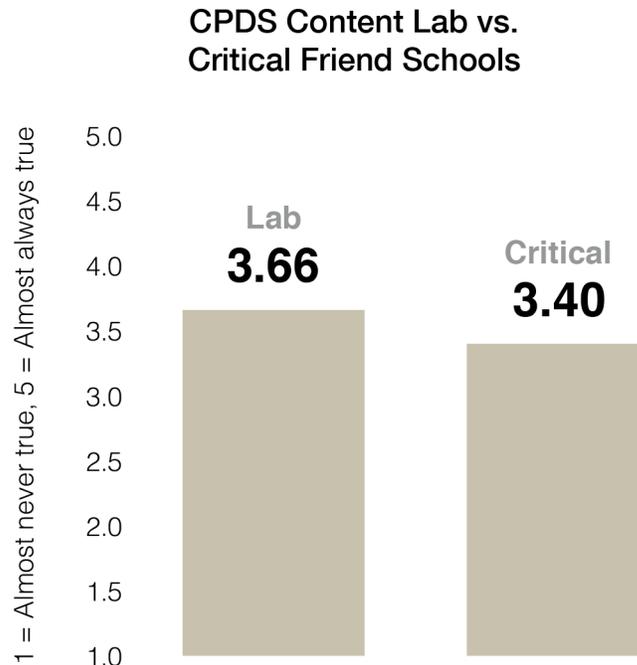


Figure 20. CPDS Content Lab vs. Critical Friend Schools

4.2 Professional learning can impact teachers’ classroom practices.

The second assertion is that effective professional learning impacts the classroom practices of teachers. During focus groups, educators had an opportunity to discuss the impact they have seen at the classroom level regarding teachers’ improvement of knowledge and skills. One teacher leader shared,

“This process has made me a better coach. As an evaluator I am able to watch what skills a teacher has in a better way. That being said, teachers are eager to show what they do best...what stands out...and share their knowledge. It really has changed what teachers are willing to try in their classroom. We’ve done a socratic seminar and inquiry process in science. They are so proud of themselves.”

As a result of the professional learning, teachers put into practice the things they learned. One superintendent stated,

“Teachers are willing to do innovative practices and we have said yes to that. If it doesn’t work we reflect on it.”

Teachers added,

“From the teacher process it’s made me more of a risk taker -- it’s made me want to try things.”

“There seems to be more focus on students leading the classroom. There’s just better involvement with the kids.”

One district administrator shared the specific changes they noted in the classroom,

“I was visiting all of the schools two years ago and looking at the hardware and what teaching ‘looked’ like. I saw a lot of okay, but traditional teaching. Now, not a single row of desks. All students are in groups, there is student collaboration, student talk. I’ve seen a lot of changes in the way that instruction is being delivered.”

Each of these statements by educators provide insight into the kinds of shifts in practice associated with teachers who see themselves as learners and approach the process of planning and implementing effective instruction as part of their own professional growth. Though certainly reflective of the impact the WA-TPL project has had on professional learning that impacts instructional practice, the comments above are an indication of a deeper shift in school and district culture that emphasizes learning as the central tenet for everyone -- student and educator.

The WA-TPL project was often one of many simultaneous projects occurring in districts. As one teacher stated, “WA-TPL is not in a vacuum. It is difficult to control for variables, but it has a net positive effect.”

But a district administrator noted that the WA-TPL project became a central focal point for all work around professional learning.

“As we continue to work through other projects and initiatives, we are using this (WA-TPL) to inform our practice and implement additional projects. We need to remind ourselves about this, use the seven standards, have them informed by Danielson, and cycles of inquiry. As we bring on other initiatives, we need to use this as our foundation and lens, so we are intentional with what we add and its sustainable.”

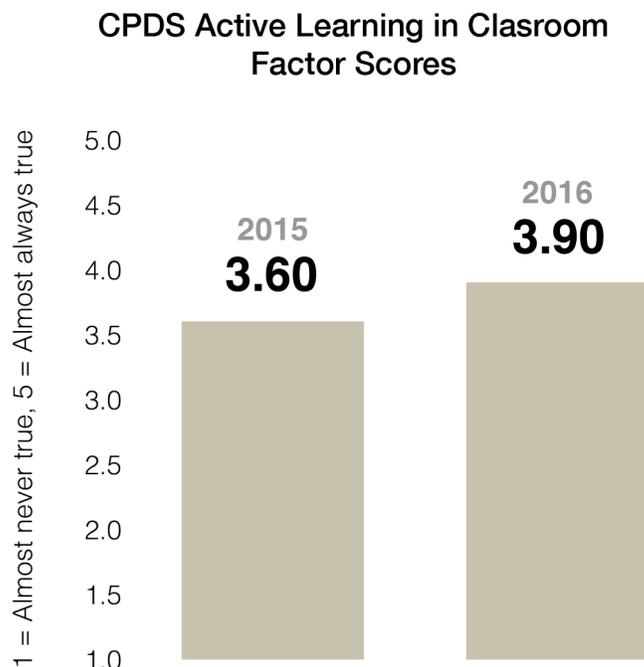


Figure 21. CPDS Active Learning in the Classroom Longitudinal Trend

The CPDS survey includes a factor called *Active Learning in the Classroom* that relates to teacher professional learning about effective pedagogical strategies. It contains items asking teachers if as a result of professional learning they analyzed student work, created instructional materials, wrote learning objectives, adapted curriculum, and wrote assessments aligned with learning standards. The baseline and end of project means for *Active Learning in the Classroom* were 3.6 and 3.9 respectively on a scale of 1-5 demonstrating above average perceptions about professional practices (see Figure 21). There was a statistically significant increase in *Active Learning in the Classroom* over the duration of the project ($t = -5.3$, $df = 1028$, $sig = .000$).

An important part of the story of this project and an ethical obligation as evaluators is to report insight associated with data that reflects no significant change over the timespan of the project. The SAI-2 survey includes two factors that relate to teacher skill and classroom practice: *Implementation* and *Outcomes*. Though it may seem odd to include them, the following two figures suggest that no growth or change in mean scores for these factors. Given the corroborating data already discussed from the CPDS factors, the lack of growth in *Implementation* and *Outcomes* associated with the SAI-2 may be an indication of an overall inflated perception of the presences of these factors by participants during the first administration of the SAI-2; or it may simply be a function of the original design of the survey instrument. Whatever the case, it is wise to recognize the

limitation of the SAI-2 when conducting analyses on specific factors.

The *Implementation* factor contains items that focus on teaching practice, professional reflection on teaching, and feedback on classroom implementation. The baseline and end of project means for *Implementation* were 3.28 and 3.3 respectively on a scale of 1-5 demonstrating average perceptions about professional practices (see Figure 22). There was no statistically significant change in *Implementation* over the duration of the project ($t = -.57, df = 3364, sig = .572$).

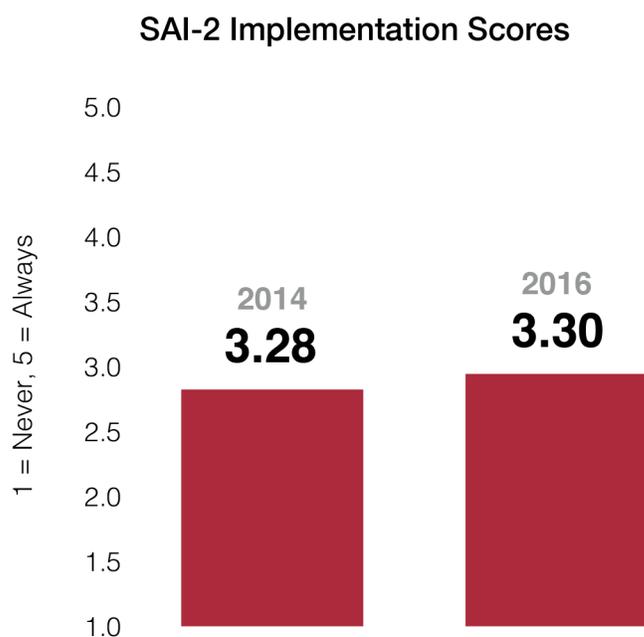


Figure 22. SAI-2 Implementation Longitudinal

The SAI-2 *Outcomes* factor contains items that focus on teacher performance standards and new professional learning. The baseline and end of project means for *Outcomes* were 3.4 and 3.3 respectively on a scale of 1-5 demonstrating average perceptions about professional performance (see Figure 23). There was a statistically significant decrease in *Outcomes* over the duration of the project ($t = 1.96, df = 3364, sig = .05$).

Finally, in considering participant perception of the presence of job-embedded, classroom focused, professional learning, an independent sample t-test was conducted comparing the average scores of participants in Lab and Critical Friend for the *Active Learning in the Classroom* factor on the CPDS. Participants in Lab Districts reported higher average scores for *Active Learning in the Classroom*

(M=3.99) than those in Critical Friend Districts (M=3.70) (see Figure 24). This difference was statistically significant ($t=3.24$, $df = 324$, $sig = .001$). Teachers in Lab Districts perceive that their overall professional learning activities are of higher quality than noted by teachers in Critical Friends Districts. These differences suggest that some aspect of the differential support received by Lab Districts compared to Critical Friend Districts was influential in developing and implementing high quality professional learning that was focused on classroom practices and contextualized to the ongoing work of improving teaching and learning.

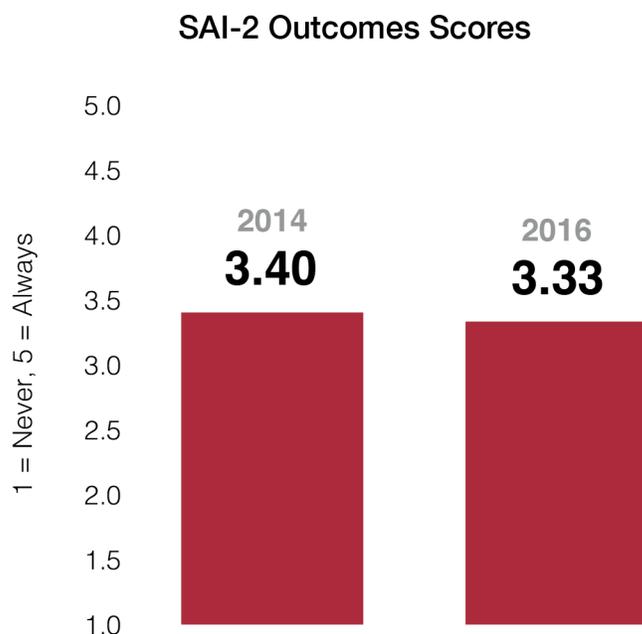


Figure 23. SAI-2 Outcomes Longitudinal

The *Content* factor of the CPDS showed a significant increase over the project in average perceptions of participants’ professional learning experiences that impact content knowledge. The professional learning during the project assisted in the development of content knowledge that is taught and learned by students. Participants in Lab Districts also reported higher average content knowledge than those in Critical Friend Districts.

As a result of the professional learning, teachers put into practice the knowledge and skills they gained. The impact the WA-TPL project has had on professional learning and instructional practice is clear, and there exists evidence of a deeper shift in school and district culture that emphasizes learning as the central tenet for everyone, student and educator. The WA-TPL project was often one of many simultaneous projects occurring in districts but it was noted that the WA-TPL project

became a central focal point for all work around professional learning.

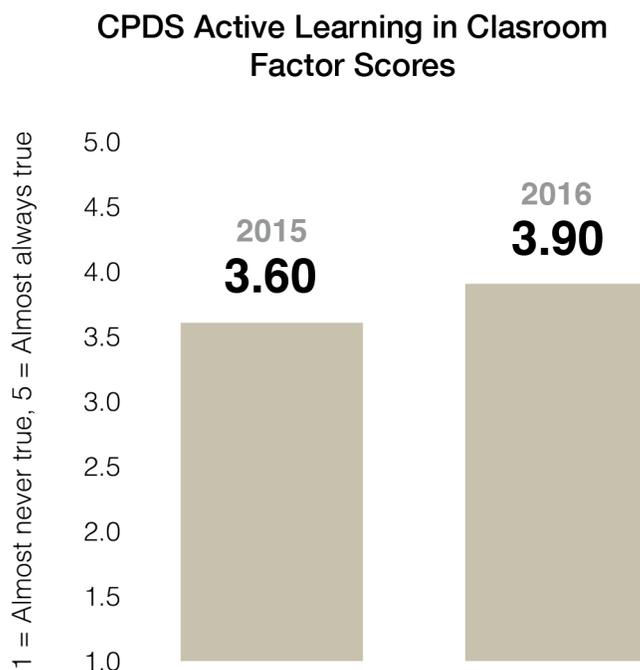


Figure 24. CPDS Active Learning in the Classroom Longitudinal Trend

There was a significant increase in the CPDS factor *Active Learning in the Classroom* over the duration of the project. Teacher participants were applying effective pedagogical practices in their classrooms. Given the potential impact on student learning, this factor should continue to be emphasized during professional learning. There were no changes in the SAI-2 factor *Implementation* and there was a decrease in the factor *Outcomes*. Given the corroborating data already discussed from the CPDS factors, the lack of growth in *Implementation* and *Outcomes* associated with the SAI-2 may be an indication of an overall inflated perception of the presences of these factors by participants during the first administration of the SAI-2; or it may simply be a function of the original design of the survey instrument.

Teachers in Lab Districts perceived their overall professional learning activities are of higher quality than noted by teachers in Critical Friends Districts. These differences suggest that some aspect of the differential support received by Lab Districts compared to Critical Friend Districts was influential in developing and implementing high quality professional learning that was focused on classroom practices and contextualized to the ongoing work of improving teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 5

Professional Learning Directly Relates to Student Learning

Regardless of the initiative, when professional learning is considered, at the forefront of every educator's mind is the question "How will this impact my students?" Unfortunately, the system wide impact of professional learning on student achievement is difficult to trace. Quantitative methods have significant limitation for three primary reasons:

1. The lack of a system wide deployment of a comprehensive professional learning initiative.
2. The effect of unknown variables on student learning.
3. The ineffective assessment of professional learning.

Qualitative methods used to assess the impact of professional learning on student achievement are limited to the context within which the professional learning takes place. In short, it cannot be assumed that the same result will occur in another context.

Using the combination of both methods, a "mixed methods" approach, to evaluate the WA-TPL project provided significant insight into effective professional learning that does indeed positively impact student learning. Though limited, what follows are the evidence-based assumptions linking professional learning with student learning.

EVIDENCE-BASED ASSERTIONS

5.1 Teacher professional learning is related to student learning.

One of the assumptions of this project is that professional learning impacts student learning. Within the larger scope of educational research there is strong qualitative data to affirm this assumption. However, the broad array of variables influencing student learning makes it very difficult to manage quantitative data to affirm this assumption. Both qualitative and quantitative data from this project provide evidence affirm this assumption: professional learning does ultimately impact student learning. Recently, the work of Roenfeldt et al. (2015) and Goddard et al. (2015) explored the development of and implementation of professional development at the school level relative to student learning.

Multiple bivariate correlations were run to explore the relationship between professional learning components within a particular school and the percentages of students meeting standard on the

spring administration of the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) state achievement test. The analyses were run on a small sample of elementary and middle schools; high schools were not included since a large proportion of high school students did not take the SBA during the first year of implementation. The unit of analysis for this question is a school building. These units were created by finding schools with over 20 individual responses in both the SAI-2 and the CPDS. From the administration of the SAI-2 there were 23 middle and elementary schools with greater than 20 individual responses per school. There were seven elementary and middle schools with over 20 individual responses on the CPDS. School average percentages of students meeting standard on the SBA were taken from OSPI’s school report card website. Correlations were run both for the overall total average on the SAI-2 with percentages of students meeting standard in math and English language arts (ELA) on the SBA. Correlations were also run between the school factor averages from the CPDS and the percentage of students meeting standard in math and ELA.

In a limited sample of respondents from seven schools, professional learning factors from the CPDS were correlated with ELA and math SBA scores (see Table 1). Several key positive correlations were found. *Active Learning in the Classroom* was strongly correlated with math but not ELA scores. Professional learning focused on *Content Knowledge* showed a strong and positive correlation with student achievement in math but it was not correlated with ELA scores. *Active Learning Beyond the Classroom*, *Coherence*, and *Duration* were not correlated with any achievement scores. These results indicate that professional learning focused primarily on content knowledge that students are learning and that includes opportunities for teachers to apply pedagogical strategies within their own classrooms may be the best way to ultimately impact student learning.

CPDS Factor	ELA	MATH
Active Learning in the Classroom	.74	.81*
Active Learning Beyond the Classroom	.48	.62
Content Knowledge	.75	.77*
Coherence	.33	.35
Collaboration	.81*	.89**
Duration	.55	.53

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at te 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1. CPDS Factor Correlations with SBA Math and ELA

Correlations were also calculated between the overall means of SAI-2 and SBA student achievement scores in math and ELA. It was found that the overall means of the SAI-2 were not correlated with student achievement scores.

In discussing the impact of the professional learning associated with the WA-TPL project on student learning, there were several themes shared by multiple districts. Primarily, there was a tertiary effect of the WA-TPL project on student learning, mainly through using the project as a way to implement other district and school-based initiatives. Another noteworthy conclusion was the impact of other aspects of student learning besides academic that has changed, including classroom climate, student attitude towards learning and creation of a stronger support structure for struggling students. In describing the general impact of the project on student learning, one teacher stated, “There seems to be more focus on students learning in the classroom. There’s just better involvement with the kids.”

One instructional coach indicated how the professional learning helped with classroom climate.

“(There are) fewer behavior issues because we were able to identify and individualize student needs.”

As the teachers engaged in the professional learning over time, there began to be an increased emphasis in the classroom on active learning, problem solving, and critical thinking which impacted student motivation. Statements by teachers attest to this shift to higher-level cognitive approaches.

“Students are learning perseverance, more project based learning. A whole different perspective. Kids are engaged. . . looks like baby steps but change in the students is phenomenal.”

“Student enthusiasm is really amazing when you make them in charge of their own learning.”

“My students came up with their own lab design, questions, redesign, then presented a research symposium.”

WA district administrator adds,

“Teachers are offered an opportunity to lead by example. When you are collaborative, you see mini professional learning communities in your own classroom and the mindset of authority kids pick up and they are more interested in finding their own answers rather than looking to the teacher.”

In the focus groups, an assistant principal responded to the above comment with the following statement:

“I was doing an evaluation of a teacher and the kids (three years ago) read a story and answered the questions. They were not engaged. Three years later (now) the kids are in the gym and there are four different socratic seminars happening and they are comparing and contrasting gender roles from 1865 to now. They are so much more engaged in their learning... It is mind-blowing that this is the same teacher and their change in practice from then to now. The use of student voice, students are fired up, discussing social justice and it is so much more powerful!”

A Superintendent shared how the project, while difficult to directly connect to student learning, helped create a common focus and language.

“I’m not so sure it is because of the Professional Learning standards, but the true impact is when the Middle School hit “focus” for SPED” and we introduced WA-TPL at the same time. What it did, with the principal’s leadership was provide a structure to look at this “focus” issue and they defined it. With both the focus and the professional learning standards, classroom instruction is currently different and the student achievement is different. We have common language and we are looking at data and defining what data is. It’s changed how we even look at and define data.”

A principal echoed this theme with the following comment:

“This student growth can’t be attributed only to WA-TPL. We are blessed to have a WA-TPL coach to help us. This program (WA-TPL) is really important because it went right into what we are doing and we learned even more. It is all intertwined and goes together with our other district initiatives and is another strengthening factor with staff.

TPL is not only a validation, but a support and an opportunity to take a deeper look. We can put names to things.”

In the semantic analysis of district action planning documents, the three most commonly used themes were student learning, Common Core Standards, and assessment. All three of these were used in positive sentiment. The action plans developed by the districts were focused on linking learning and standards in an effort to impact student learning.

5.2 Professional learning that uses collaborative processes impacts student learning.

Within the same sample of schools another very interesting relationship emerged. Professional learning that involves Collective Participation from the CPDS displayed very strong and positive relationships with student achievement in math and ELA measured by the SBA (see Table 1 above). This finding aligns with the body of work published by Goddard et al. (2007) and Goddard et al. (2015), exploring the relationship between educator collaboration and student achievement relative to how the school as a system functions. These findings build off the work of Roenfeldt et al. (2015) and Goddard et al. (2015), who found that the development and implementation of professional development at the school level impacts student learning. These findings help build the body of evidence about the impact of professional learning at the system level, rather than focusing on outcomes at the individual classroom level.

During focus group interviews there was a consistent message regarding how professional learning through collaborative efforts impacted student learning. A semantic analysis extracted several major topics discussed during the focus group interviews and also determined whether these themes were discussed in a positive, neutral or negative way. The results indicated that the use of collaborative practices was an important aspect of improving student learning outcomes, both directly, but also through making programmatic improvements in a systematic and collaborative way.

There were also several examples shared of teachers collaborating across the school to ensure a viable curriculum and similar experiences regardless of the teacher. One teacher put it this way:

“WA-TPL has offered an opportunity to lead by example. When you are collaborative, you see mini professional learning communities in your own classroom and the mindset of authority kids pick up. (They are) more interested in finding their own answers rather than looking to the teacher.”

One district administrator noticed,

“The High School science teachers had done a lot of collaborative work and seeing students have common experiences, engaging in the same assessments, was not common at the high school. Now, teachers design assessments and all students are having the same experiences and students move as a whole rather as separate classes with different teachers.”

A teacher also noted this impact on student experiences,

“Teachers have designed their schedule so they can teach all kids and teachers move across classrooms. The team of three teachers can bring more content to the students because they each bring their own expertise to all kids rather than just students in their own classroom. It is more like one big classroom rather than three small classrooms.”

A district administrator speaks to a challenge of how to scale up the impact of collaboration on student learning:

“We’ve got small sets of evidence of improved student learning, and right now our work with TPL is priming the pump. We are now at the tipping point. Through the coaching pathway we have created, the teachers say that the skills I’ve learned has transferred into conversations I’ve had with students in my classroom. So the issue is “scale” and how to move to transfer. I want to implement learning communities as a structure to help us scale up and that will then touch everyone in the district. If we do learning communities well that will impact everyone in the district.”

Direct cause and effect statements regarding the impact of professional learning on student learning are difficult to make given a host of confounding variables in educational settings. However, relationships were explored in this project. In a limited sample of respondents, some professional learning factors from the CPDS were correlated with student achievement as measured by Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) scores as required by the State of Washington. *Active Learning in the Classroom* was strongly correlated with math but not English Language Arts (ELA) scores. Professional learning focused on *Content Knowledge* showed a strong and positive correlation with student achievement in math but it was not correlated with ELA scores. *Active Learning Beyond the Classroom*, *Coherence*, and *Duration* were not correlated with any achievement

scores. Correlations were also calculated between the overall means of SAI-2 and SBA student achievement scores in math and ELA. It was found that the overall means of the SAI-2 were not correlated with student achievement scores.

Using other data sources, a tertiary effect of the WA-TPL project on student learning was noted. This occurred mainly through using the project as a way to implement other district and school-based initiatives. Another noteworthy conclusion was the impact of aspects of student learning besides academic that changed, including classroom climate, student attitude towards learning, and creation of stronger support structures for struggling students. As the teachers engaged in the professional learning over time, there began to be an increased emphasis in the classroom on active learning, problem solving, and critical thinking which impacted student motivation.

In the semantic analysis of district action planning documents, the three most commonly used themes were student learning, Common Core Standards, and assessment. And all three of these were used in positive sentiment. The action plans developed by the districts were focused on linking learning and standards in an effort to impact student learning.

Professional learning that involves *Collaboration* from the CPDS had very strong and positive relationships with student achievement in math and ELA measured by the SBA. There was a consistent message from project participants regarding how professional learning through collaborative efforts impacted student learning. The results indicated that the use of collaborative practices was an important aspect of improving student learning outcomes directly, but also through making programmatic improvements in a systematic and collaborative way.

CONCLUSIONS

In response to a clearly identified need for professional learning that would transform the instructional practices critical to the deep learning associated with the newly adopted Common Core State Standards, the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction received a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The WA-TPL project was not simply to transform the professional learning in participating districts, but to impact the larger system across the state by providing insight into the processes that support the development and sustaining impact of effective professional learning.

This Evaluation Report captured many of the important emerging themes associated with the implementation of this large-scale professional learning project. This comprehensive project evaluation report provided a detailed analysis of this project and the lives impacted by the work. Five themes were distilled from the original WA-TPL project outcomes and were used to frame the five chapters that make up the body of this report. Each chapter above ended with a conclusion section provided a distilled summary of the findings. Recommendations for future professional learning activities are provided below. This section concludes with overall identified strengths, challenges, and recommendations.

When district leadership utilizes a research-based approach to making decisions about the design of professional learning opportunities, individual school leaders are better able to make decisions about how to meet the needs of all educators. Districts should continue to utilize the [Standards for Professional Learning](#) as a means to not only communicate priorities to school leadership and teachers, but to also provide further opportunities, mentorship and support in enabling a site-based distributive leadership model.

With the increase in using data to make professional learning decisions, both during the planning and implementation of these activities, it is recommended and encouraged to continue to increase data literacy at all levels. This continuum of data based decision-making should be evident throughout the system. District level leaders should continue to make informed decisions regarding the design of professional learning opportunities that are aligned to the district's strategic plan, while at the same time, teachers in grade level teams can also use the formative assessment process and use specific student data to inform their own instructional next steps which are also aligned to school and district goals.

Districts should continue to consider the system-wide approach to professional learning, thereby differentiating the implementation of such, based on the unique needs of educators within each school, yet aligned to district-based initiatives. This means that a variety of methods of support need to be considered. Districts should not only build up their own educators to become professional learning leaders and facilitators, but should also consider ways in which external resources can improve the effectiveness of the design. District leaders, once they have created a vision for what needs to be a focus within each school (with input from schools), can then consider what methods will work best to meet these needs. A continuum of services should be considered and utilized, from site-based teacher leaders to ESD and state-level experts that can offer further support as needed.

There is a need to continue to practice and support teacher leadership through the utilization of the distributive leadership model. Implementing more school-based choice and teacher voice in the types of professional learning opportunities available to all educators can lead to a transformational shift of practice that will eventually impact the classroom teacher level. Understanding the importance of distributing leadership to meet the professional learning needs of all educators in a coherent, district and school-based model is an important priority.

Teacher experience, individual teacher knowledge and use of standards of professional practice may strengthen teacher understanding of the [Standards for Professional Learning](#). Therefore, teachers with more experience and a deeper understanding of the use of standards are more in touch with their professional learning needs. Educators can improve their own knowledge of the professional learning standards in order to make informed decisions regarding what types of experiences they need to improve personally. Allowing opportunities for teachers to engage with and learn about the Standards will allow them to customize their own learning needs more effectively.

A practical issue associated with implementing effective professional learning is time. A late start or early release of students during the school day can provide the time needed for professional learning. This requires an important combination of structural support, advanced planning, changes in policies and allocating resources. When this integration of both theory and practice happens, the work of designing and implementing effective professional learning could be sustained over time.

The additional levels of support provided to Lab Districts appeared to make a positive difference in the way educators perceived professional learning. This finding further supports the recommendation that districts can improve differentiating the professional learning designs that include external resources, if and when they are needed.

The findings may suggest several of aspects regarding the allocation of time as a support. There may be a threshold for the amount of time allocated towards professional learning activities that may be set and not able to be modified due to a variety of circumstances. The challenge is to maximize the time provided. Since every district makes their own decisions regarding how they provide release time which may include early release, late start, and/or embedded within the school day, it is important to assess whether the time provided is in alignment with the specific design of the activities being offered. Does the time provide benefit and improve the professional learning experiences, or does it become a hindrance? District leaders ought to be able to provide justification of how the time allocated to professional learning aligns with and promotes the most effective means of collaboration.

When educators are involved in designing effective professional learning as a priority in their district, this may create a more positive culture. Teachers with more experience may also be valuable assets when seeking voice and choice in designing activities so it is important to carefully consider who is involved in making such decisions. Volunteerism, while a common practice, may not always be the best way to solicit input and make decisions and a variety of ways to involve teachers should be considered.

Involving teachers in making decisions and implementing professional learning provides an important sense of “agency” that enables and empowers them. All educators, from the superintendent to the paraeducator, can and should work together in building professional learning systems.

The dichotomy in thinking about assessment needs is important to note and intentionally address. Understanding and recognizing the pressure associated with standardized assessment to leverage test results as a useful tool for examining data on student learning and progress is also vital. Another recommendation includes further work to flatten professional learning as a necessary component of building effective learning focused system.

It is important to continue to focus on and build relationships, trust and collective responsibility in order to continue to grow professionally and collegially. Teachers are more inclined to open their

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classroom for others and to share personal practice when trust and professional relationships are strong.

The greater support system provided to Lab Districts might be able to provide a greater focus on content related to the disciplines teachers teach in their classrooms. Professional learning activities should be directly linked to teachers' content knowledge and be collaboratively supported as they teach that content to students.

Professional learning focused primarily on content knowledge that students are learning and that includes opportunities for teachers to apply pedagogical strategies within their own classrooms may be the best way to ultimately impact student learning. Districts should coordinate their professional learning plans in order to integrate standards, teaching and learning, and assessments.

STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Strengths of the Project

The following are key strengths of this project as evidenced in the project evaluation:

1. The professional learning was coherent in relation to distributing leadership and connecting to teacher needs.
2. Leadership systems began to be distributed creating a more flattened structure.
3. The [Standards for Professional Learning](#) provide a meaningful data for identifying needs and tracking changes over time.
4. Districts used multiple sources of data in planning and monitoring professional learning activities.
5. The use of data increased over the duration of the project.
6. The use of the distributed leadership model is increasing which is creating, or at the very least sustaining an embedded model of professional learning.
7. External agencies provided push-in services for assisting with professional learning.
8. Teacher leaders emerged as a key component in supporting professional learning at the district and school building level.
9. The Standards for Professional Learning became an effective organizing tool for school and district teams to use in planning and implementing professional learning experiences.
10. The WA-TPL project, while not the single initiative in districts, served as a central driver to help make professional learning job-embedded and contextualized.
11. External systems of support from key partners including regional and state offices of education assist in professional learning.
12. The teachers participating in this project were engaged in high levels of professional learning activities.
13. Professional learning was meaningfully linked to mandated teacher evaluation systems helping address individual teacher needs.
14. The quality of professional learning increased over the duration of the project.
15. The systems established during the project provided teacher voice in the planning and implementation of professional learning.
16. Leadership structures flattened via the collaborative nature of district systems.
17. Strong and trusting relationships among professionals provide for collaborative systems.
18. Teacher content knowledge increased and higher levels of participation in the project provided higher levels of content knowledge.

19. Professional learning experiences are being directly applied in classroom settings.
20. Aspects of professional learning, namely content knowledge, collaboration, and classroom application, are highly correlated to student learning.
21. Classroom applications of professional learning resulted in a more positive classroom climate, student engagement, and increased levels of higher levels of cognitive learning.

Key Challenges of the Project

The following are key challenges for the project as evidenced in the project evaluation:

1. Aspects of leadership, specifically as measured by the SAI-2, did not positively increase over the project duration.
2. There were notable challenges associated with leadership roles within districts moving from centralized to distributed systems of professional learning.
3. Districts that engaged in lower levels of project participation (Critical Friend Districts) received less support and displayed lower perceived levels of professional learning quality than districts receiving higher levels of support (Lab Districts).
4. Administrative turnover potentially causes changes in professional learning plans and implementation.
5. Working collaboratively requires attention to relationships and trust building.
6. Standardized assessments are perceived as a potential negative hurdle while at the same time being seen as a positive data source.
7. Building positive professional cultures takes time.
8. There was no noted growth in the implementation of professional learning and a decrease in the outcomes of professional learning as measured by the SAI-2.
9. Not all aspects of professional learning were related to student learning.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Based on the key strengths and challenges presented above, the evaluation team gleaned a variety of insights that may be helpful in the implementation of the project toward accomplishing the ambitious goals set out in the original proposal and reflected in the evaluation of the project itself. These recommendations could also be applied to future efforts.

1. Districts should use research-based approaches to making decisions about the design of professional learning opportunities.
2. Ensure the system-wide use of the [Standards for Professional Learning](#) as a means to

- communicate priorities and site-based, distributive leadership model.
3. Clarify leadership roles regarding professional learning systems.
 4. Continue to increase data literacy at all levels.
 5. Develop ways to sustain professional learning initiatives in the face of staff and administrator turnover.
 6. System leaders should ensure that decisions regarding the design of professional learning opportunities are aligned to the district strategic plan.
 7. Design professional learning to support teachers' use of student learning data to inform their own instructional practices aligned to school and district goals.
 8. Districts should consider system-wide professional learning designed to address the unique needs of educators within each school.
 9. Districts should not only build up their own educators to become professional learning leaders and facilitators, but they should consider ways in which external resources can improve the effectiveness of the design.
 10. A continuum of services should be considered and utilized, from site-based teacher leaders to regional and state-level experts that can offer further support as needed.
 11. Improve educator knowledge of professional learning standards in order to make informed decisions regarding what types of experiences they need to improve personally.
 12. Identify creative ways to effectively use time for professional learning
 13. All educators, from the superintendent to the paraeducator, can and should work together in building professional learning systems.
 14. Districts should seek to understand and recognize the pressures associated with standardized assessment and leverage test results as a useful tool for examining data on student learning and progress.
 15. Focus on building relationships, trust and collective responsibility for professional learning.
 16. Professional learning activities should directly be linked to teachers' content knowledge and be supported as they teach that content to students.
 17. Support systems should be scaled up statewide in order to build high quality professional learning.
 18. Professional learning focused on content knowledge and classroom application should be emphasized in order to maximize impact on student learning, classroom climate, and cognitive levels.

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Appendix A

WA-TPL Evaluation Plan

Project Outcome	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Evaluation Outcomes	Data Sources and Timelines	Sampling	Design	Data Analysis
Student Achievement	What is the impact of the project on student achievement?	Eighty percent (80%) of students (~70,000) in thirty-three (33) WA-TPL districts will demonstrate growth on state and district-identified English Language Arts (ELA) and math assessments.	Students will demonstrate growth over time in the areas of ELA and Mathematics.	State and District identified ELA, Math, and science assessments (annually) Smarter Balanced Assessments (annually) State Assessments (annually) District Assessments?	All Laboratory Districts All Critical Friend Districts	Quasi-experimental design Causal Comparative Longitudinal and repeated measures	Descriptive Statistics Inferential statistics

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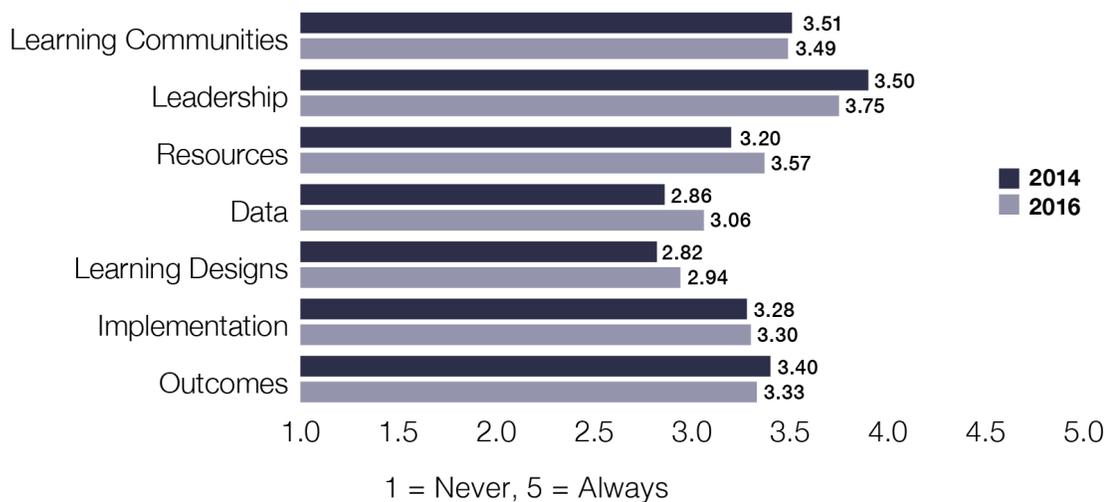
Project Outcome	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Evaluation Outcomes	Data Sources and Timelines	Sampling	Design	Data Analysis
Professional Learning Opportunities and Resources	How are teachers' knowledge and skills impacted by the project? How do teachers use student growth data to influence their practices?	Administrators, teacher leaders, and classroom teachers from thirty-three (33) WA-TPL districts and at least ninety (90) non-WA-TPL districts actively engage in and benefit from professional learning grounded in the shifts within CCR standards. XX% report professional learning resources to be effective in building capacity with educators and teams at the local level.	Participating teachers will increase their knowledge of the CCSS including both standards and practices. Participating teachers will increase their knowledge of their designated professional learning plan, including how to collect data of student growth over time.	Characteristics of Teacher Professional Development (CTPD) (pre and post PD annually) Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI-2) (pre and post PD annually) Observations of professional learning (annually) Structured Interviews (annually in spring)	All WA-TPL and non-WA-TPL districts	Descriptive Quasi-experimental design Causal Comparative Longitudinal and repeated measures	Descriptive Statistics Inferential Statistics for comparisons Analytic Induction
Structures and Processes to Support Professional Learning	What structures and processes are needed to support the professional learning of teachers?	A professional learning plan is created (or modified) for the state and districts to utilize to develop comprehensive systems of professional learning that includes a vision and definition of professional learning that aligns with research-based practice, standards for quality and expectations for results of professional learning, policies that support equity of access to professional learning, and resources to develop individual, school, team, school system capacities needed to ensure success for all educators and their students.	Participating teachers will increase their knowledge on how to create, build and sustain effective professional learning over time. This includes maintaining the opportunities, resources and time needed to build and sustain such activities.	Completed Professional Learning Plan (annually) Structured Interviews (annually) Policy Documents (annually)	Stratified sample of WA-TPL districts	Descriptive	Content Analysis

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Project Outcome	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Evaluation Outcomes	Data Sources and Timelines	Sampling	Design	Data Analysis
Leadership	How do leaders engage with data sources to make decisions about professional learning and support systems?	WA-TPL state and district partners access, analyze, and interpret student, educator, and system data from multiple sources to make decisions about professional learning and that uses formative and summative, qualitative and quantitative student, educator, and system data to articulate professional learning needs and support system improvements.	District leaders will engage in ongoing regional professional learning groups focused on the implementation of TPEP as facilitated by ESDs.	Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI2) (pre and post PD annually) Observations of professional learning (annually) Structured Interviews (annually) Implementation documents (annually)	All WA-TPL districts	Descriptive Causal comparative	Descriptive Statistics Inferential Statistics Analytic Induction
Culture	What professional behaviors and actions are supportive of teacher collaboration and student learning?	One hundred percent (100%) of WA-TPL state partners and districts demonstrate alignment of behaviors and actions grounded in trusting relationships at all levels that are focused on student and educator learning and collaboration.	Behaviors and actions will reflect trusting relationships focused on student and teacher learning and collaboration.	Standards Assessment Inventory (SAI-2) (pre and post PD annually) Observations of professional learning (annually) Structured Interviews (annually)	All WA-TPL districts	Descriptive Quasi-experimental design Causal Comparative Longitudinal and repeated measures	Descriptive Statistics Inferential Statistics Analytic Induction

Appendix B - Summary SAI-2 and CPDS Results

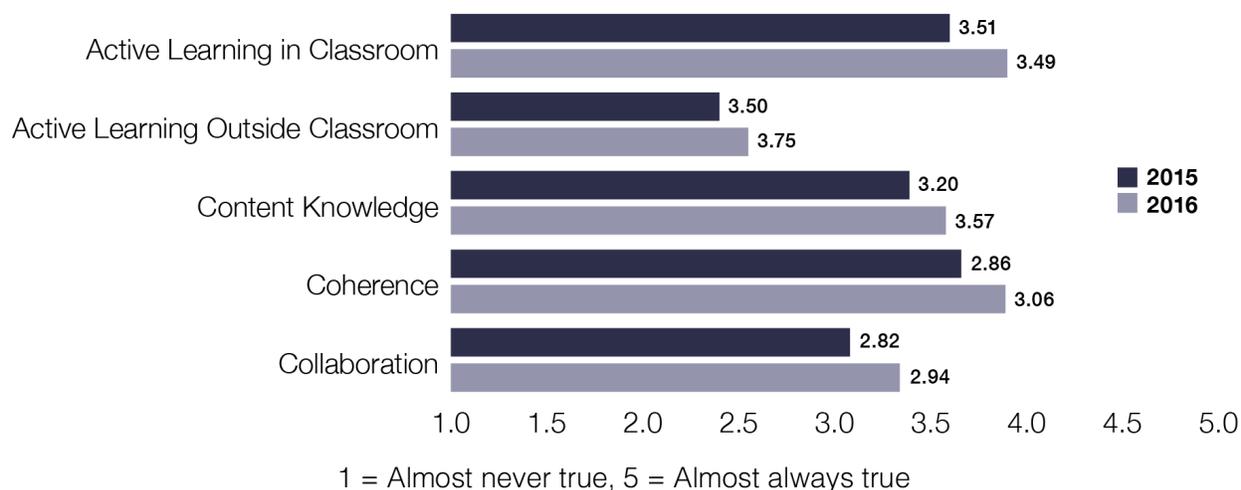
SAI-2 Autumn 2014 to Spring 2016



Summary of SAI-2 Longitudinal Changes

SAI-2 Factor	Year	Mean	t	sig	Direction of change
Learning Communities	Autumn 2014	3.5085			
	Spring 2016	3.4884	.70	.49	No change
Leadership	Autumn 2014	3.8994			
	Spring 2016	3.7454	5.2	.000	Decrease
Resources	Autumn 2014	3.1996			
	Spring 2016	3.3743	-6.1	.000	Increase
Data	Autumn 2014	2.8629			
	Spring 2016	3.0620	-5.4	.000	Increase
Learning Designs	Autumn 2014	2.8222			
	Spring 2016	2.9414	-3.6	.000	Increase
Implementation	Autumn 2014	3.2758			
	Spring 2016	3.2958	-.57	.572	No change
Outcomes	Autumn 2014	3.3984			
	Spring 2016	3.3317	2.0	.05	Decrease

Characteristics of Professional Development Survey (CPDS)



Summary of CPDS Longitudinal Changes

CPDS Factor	Year	Mean	t	sig	Direction of change
Active Learning in Classroom	2015	3.6038			
	2016	3.9048	-5.3	.000	Increase
Active Learning Beyond Classroom	2015	2.4052			
	2016	2.5466	-3.0	.003	Increase
Content Knowledge	2015	3.3947			
	2016	3.5807	-3.7	.000	Increase
Coherence	2015	3.6561			
	2016	3.8934	-4.7	.000	Increase
Collaboration	2015	3.0784			
	2016	3.3437	-5.4	.000	Increase
Duration	2015	2.9120			
	Spring 2016	2.8403	1.0	.32	No change

Appendix C - Semantic Text Analysis Summary

Action Plan Summary

Keywords	Topic/Chapter	Sentiment Score	Sentiment
Retrieving and Using Data	Leadership	1	Positive
Fellows	Leadership	1	Positive
Leadership	Leadership	0.88	Positive
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	Leadership	0.68	Positive
Educational Service Districts	Leadership	0.68	Positive
WA-TPL	Support Structures	1	Positive
Professional Learning Community	Support Structures	1	Positive
Action Planning	Support Structures	1	Positive
Protocol	Support Structures	0.99	Positive
Grants	Support Structures	0.98	Positive
Networking and Collaboration	Support Structures	0.98	Positive
Resources	Support Structures	0.9	Positive
Learning Design	Teacher Knowledge and Skills	1	Positive
Professional Learning	Teacher Knowledge and Skills	1	Positive
National Board Certified Teacher	Teacher Knowledge and Skills	0.99	Positive
Reflection and Feedback	Teacher Knowledge and Skills	0.84	Positive
Student Learning	Student Learning	1	Positive
Common Core State Standards	Student Learning	0.93	Positive
Assessments	Student Learning	0.88	Positive

Focus Group Summary

Keywords	Chapter	Sentiment Score	Sentiment
instructional leadership	leadership	0.57	Positive
teacher leadership	leadership	-0.83	Negative
WA-TPL	support structures	0.85	Positive
teacher evaluation systems	support structures	0.72	Positive
collaboration	support structures	0.7	Positive
IC Maps	support structures	0.6	Positive
collaboration	support structures	0.55	Positive
Educational Service Districts	support structures	-0.47	Negative

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Learning Forward	support structures	-0.57	Negative
middle school	culture	0.5	Positive
growth mindset	culture	-0.51	Negative
high school	culture	-0.6	Negative
professional learning	teacher knowledge and skill	0.9	Positive
teaching and learning	teacher knowledge and skill	0.78	Positive
best practices	teacher knowledge and skill	0.74	Positive
TPEP	teacher knowledge and skill	0.66	Positive
professional development	teacher knowledge and skill	0.51	Positive
advanced courses for students	student learning	0.98	Positive
learning	student learning	0.5	Positive
test results	student learning	0.45	Positive
3rd grade	student learning	-0.49	Negative
standardized test	student learning	-0.8	Negative
