

Public Abstract

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Title:An Examination of Learner-Centered Professional Development for Reluctant Teachers

The study focused on professional development practices that empowered reluctant teachers to implement and sustain improved instructional practices. Constructs were viewed through the perspective of learner-centered principles in order to connect scientifically proven practices for teaching students in the classroom to effective professional development practices for teachers.

Data for this mixed-design study were gathered from the LCPD School Practices Survey, transcripts of follow-up interviews with once-reluctant teachers, and school documents. Statistical correlations were used to analyze the variables of the quantitative portion of the study. Findings indicated that schools with higher levels of implemented learner-centered professional development also had higher student achievement and decreased teacher reluctance toward new practices and change. The qualitative data were coded and analyzed and cross-referenced with school documents. Four themes emerged as to the types of professional development that encouraged reluctant teachers to sustain new practices: (1) show them why and how; (2) empower them to safely explore; (3) emphasize their professional contribution; and (4) engage them in meaningful conversations.

This study calls for additional research to better understand the nature of administrator reluctance toward new practices, as well as how the increased leadership capacity for teachers engaged in learner-centered professional development impacts the roles and relationships within the traditional educational hierarchy. Another area for future research would be to look at how the restructuring of traditional schools into professional learning communities might impact the traditional job categories of public schools.