

TEACHERS OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN:
RESPONSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF GRADES 6-12 MATHEMATICS
TEACHERS FROM ONE DISTRICT

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Abstract

This is a case study of one district, examining secondary mathematics teachers' perceptions of professional learning and teacher professional development. Research questions include: a) Why did the teachers from this district want to learn professionally? b) What did the teachers from this district want to learn? c) How did the teachers from this district want to learn? Some quantitative data and mainly qualitative data was collected and analyzed for this project. Participants included thirty-five grades 6-12 mathematics teachers of different years of experience representing eight schools, and one mathematics district coordinator. Major findings suggest that teacher learning is largely dependent on the contexts within which they are situated. All teachers, even those who don't attend district-sponsored professional development, engage in professional learning. Teachers were found to be motivated to learn professionally for three reasons: student learning and advancement, teacher career advancement and promotion, and district requirements for learning. Even though, novice and experienced teacher needs differed significantly, most of the teachers described needed professional development related to eight mathematics topics: content, curriculum, assessment, student learning, instructional strategies, classroom management, teaching philosophies, and technology. Teachers described working with other mathematics teachers in the building (and district) as most effective professional learning opportunities, amongst which common lesson planning and reflections, community learning, and sharing of instructional ideas was emphasized strongly by all teachers.

