

Public Abstract

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The idea that teaching quality is critical to a student's success in school may be taken for granted as a logical principle. However, gaining consensus on how or what to measure to support that idea is challenging. Beyond teachers' credentials, researchers can examine how teachers develop and refine their skills with the objective of having a positive impact on student outcomes. When assessing school-level influence, one way to examine teacher quality in a school is through the professional learning environment of the teachers within the school.

This study uses school effectiveness research as a framework. SER developed from the need to acknowledge external influences on student performance but also to recognize the contributions of teachers and schools that extend beyond these influences.

Teacher survey data is used to examine relationships between best practices in teacher learning communities and professional development and growth in student achievement. The teacher and achievement data are from a representative sample of Missouri elementary and middle schools (n=308) that went through the accreditation review process in 2007-2008.

As expected, student-level characteristics showed a strong relationship with student achievement growth. However, the analysis of teacher learning communities and professional development and growth in student achievement showed no significant relationships. As the pressure of limited resources adds to the expectation for return on investment, future research must further explore interventions thought to increase teacher quality and to determine if those interventions are producing measurable gains in student learning.