Characteristics and Observations of Low and High Responders to Intensive Professional Development (PD)

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Rationale/Importance

A. Quality of Classrooms

♦ Intentional teaching during Pre-K predicts later higher achievement

♦ There is a wide range in quality of early childhood classrooms, especially in intentional teaching

B. PD Literature

♦ Only intensive, ongoing professional development results in substantial change in the quality of early childhood classrooms

♦ Little information is available on what amount and kind of training makes a difference, for whom, in what areas of teaching

C. Importance

♦ Substantial resources are needed for intensive/ongoing training (funding, expertise)

♦ Unanswered questions

- How to tailor to needs/settings/ characteristics
- How to decide what might work, with whom
- How to measure classroom quality
- How to measure outcomes of PD
- What factors support/hinder change

D. Purpose

♦ Describe the intensive PD provided during one year of an Early Reading First (ERF) project (2nd year)

♦ Describe response to PD based on published observation measures

♦ Examine adaptations to training goals and procedures for classrooms who were low and high responders to PD

Method

A. Context

♦ ERF project (USDOE, 2nd year)

♦ Classrooms
- 16 classes (8 extended-day, 8 half day), 12 teaching teams in 4 settings
- Public school, Head Start, community college child care, agency child care

♦ **Children**—77% low-income; 12% IEPs; 50% African-American; low scores in literacy and language areas

♦ **Teachers**—100% female; CDA to Master's degree; uncertified and certified; 1st year to 20+ years experience; 1st or 2nd year in DELL-D

B. Minimum Professional Development for All Teachers

- Institutes—30 hours
- Small Groups—20 hours of monthly small groups
- Coaching—50 hours across the year

C. Measures

♦ ELLCO Toolkit (research edition)

♦ CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System)

D High and Low Responders

♦ Selected from 12 classrooms based on gain in ELLCO scores from pre to post
- High = average 25 point gain (4 classrooms)
- Low = average 6.5 point gain (4 classrooms)

Results

A. Entry/final scores of high vs. low responders

Measure	High Responders		Low Responders	
	Fall	**Spring**	**Fall**	**Spring**
ELLCO (total)	77.75	102.75	98.50	104.50
ELLCO (average/5 pt scale)	3.52	3.96	4.39	4.75
CLASS (average/7 pt scale)	2.98	3.01	3.61	4.01

♦ Low and high responder classrooms began the year at different points on both instruments, with those making least gain having higher initial scores

♦ Positive correlations were found between fall status and spring status on each instrument - relative position remained largely the same
- ELLCO: .73, p < .01
- CLASS: .75, p < .01

♦ Negative correlation were found between fall status and amount of gain on ELLCO-classrooms with lowest fall scores make most gain; n.s. for CLASS
- ELLCO: -.69, p=.01
- CLASS: n.s.

♦ High responders had lower initial scores; low responders had higher initial scores

♦ Low responders on ELLCO made higher gains on CLASS; high responders showed no difference on CLASS

♦ Areas of highest gain differed for low and high responders (based on ELLCO gain)
- High responders to PD
  - ♦ ELLCO - environment, general classroom teaching
  - ♦ CLASS - emotional support
- Low responders to PD
  - ♦ ELLCO - language/literacy teaching
  - ♦ CLASS - instructional support

B. Work Contexts

♦ High responders/ low initial scores
- Mixture of programs - Head Start (2 of 3 classrooms), public school (1 of 4 classrooms)
- Mixture of degrees - Associate to Bachelor's
- Low to high range of experience - new teacher to 20+ years

♦ Low responders/ high initial scores
- Mixture of programs - public school (3 of 4 classrooms), community agency (2 of 3 classrooms), community college (1 of 2 classrooms)
- Mixture of degrees - Associate to Master's
- Mid to high range of experience - 5-20+ years

Results (continued)

C. Individualization of PD

♦ Quality rating system (CRIS) used to set goals for classrooms, based on benchmarks achieved

♦ Coaching goals
- high responders/low initial scores - goals set in environment; fidelity to curriculum; conducting large & small groups
- low responders/high initial scores - goals set in teacher/child interaction; use of CBMs for planning

♦ Extra Training
- DELL-D Head Start classrooms received 3 extra full-day meetings to work toward targeted entry benchmarks on CRIS (curriculum fidelity, planning, environment)
- 1st year DELL-D classroom teachers received extra training and coaching related to curriculum fidelity and establish language/literacy-rich classroom environment

Summary/Discussion

♦ Lowest scoring classrooms made most progress on the ELLCO, irrespective of program, degree, or certification (two HS classrooms, 1 public school, 1 community college)

♦ Teachers in 2/4 classrooms making most gain were 1st year teachers

♦ Entry status in Year 2 was related to
- degree
- program
- time in DELL-D
- experience

♦ Progress was related to
- where started (entry scores)
- areas targeted/coached as per benchmark rating system (CRIS)

♦ Both groups of teachers made most progress in areas targeted/coached

♦ Ceiling on ELLCO made it harder to demonstrate change in initially higher scoring classrooms

♦ The ELLCO and the CLASS appear to complement one another, capturing different aspects of teacher growth, with the CLASS capturing change beyond the ELLCO

Implications for PD Design and Delivery

♦ **Contexts (programmatic, individual) play a role, but do not explain all variation**

♦ **Extended, intensive PD (training & coaching) is needed for ALL teachers to achieve higher levels on ELLCO and CLASS**

♦ **Extended, intensive PD may be especially useful for 1st year teachers and others with lower scores**

♦ **Within any group of teachers, individualization is likely needed to address different outcomes**

♦ **Systematic observations allowed individualization of training in focus and process, both as groups and as individual classrooms**

♦ **Progress on more basic skills appears necessary before higher-level skills can be addressed**

♦ **More than one measure of teacher growth may be needed to capture a full range of outcomes important for language/literacy teaching across a range of teachers.**