Education Frustration: Fixing A Broken System

Online Professional Development for Educators
About Us

Knowledge Delivery Systems™ (KDS) is a leading provider of online strategic professional development. KDS courses can apply towards state license renewal, Master’s degree programs, and career advancement for teachers and administrators at every stage of their career.

KDS courses have been taken by hundreds of thousands of educators. All courses are research-based, practical, topical, available 24/7, and aligned with requirements in all fifty states. KDS courses are taught by the nation’s leading experts in their field whose insight and methodologies have had significant impact on teacher effectiveness and student performance. Many of the KDS presenters have published books on key subjects that are important to teacher practice and have advised state and local governments on best practices.

Knowledge Delivery Systems™
110 William Street, 32nd Floor
New York, NY 10038
www.kdsi.org

Contact Us:
Toll-Free: (800) 728-0032
Email: info@kdsi.org
Executive Summary ................................................................. 5
Broken System: Can We Fix Our Public Education System? .............. 6
Quality Professional Development: What is Effective PD? ............... 7
Online Professional Development: Is It Part of a Great Professional Development Strategy? ............................................................ 8
Professional Development: Are Districts Getting Their Money’s Worth? .............................................................................................. 9
KDS Strategic Professional Development: Fixing the System ............. 11
Bibliography .................................................................................... 12
Executive Summary

Everywhere you turn, articles report that the public school system is broken. National news blames teachers and teacher unions for the myriad ills of public education, teachers blame parents, parents blame districts, and everyone blames state legislators (C. Emmons, 2011; E. Hanushek, 2011). However, blaming each other is not the answer; it is not one group or one person at fault. As a whole, public education lacks a comprehensive and effective accountability system – a specific, transparent system holding everyone accountable for outcomes while examining and improving processes, providing a system of support, and building capacity (Education Resource Strategies, 2002, 2004; K. Hawley-Mills, 2003). Clearly, the system is broken.

While most school districts invest significant resources in new teacher induction and professional development, few promote a high-quality induction program incorporating a career development strategy linked to improvement efforts (K. Haley Miles, 2003). An average district staff professional development expenditure of $10,000 per teacher could be justified and even celebrated if the results were commensurate with the cost. However, given the existing data on limited teacher effectiveness and student achievement, this is not the case.

An inclusive support system to build capacity for teachers and principals must include differentiated, in-depth, and strategic professional development based on a diagnostic review of teachers’ skills and competencies and delivered in time to impact student achievement from quarter to quarter and year to year. Delivery of quality professional development in content, pedagogy, and student engagement targeted to the identified needs of teachers will establish a cycle of continuous improvement. Creating an effective strategic professional development plan involves reconsidering practices and investments. When considering return on investment (ROI), online professional development has clear benefits and costs savings while fostering scalability, content quality, engagement, differentiation, and alignment to the overall district improvement goals.

When partnering with educational leaders, it is important to work with organizations that deliver a unique set of strategies focused on quality, impact, outcomes, and comprehensive, differentiated professional development plan that will transform educational practices. A full range of strategies based upon best practices in adult learning takes every participant from where they are to their logical next step in their career development by mastering required competencies and demonstrating successful applications to improving results for students in their classrooms. Knowledge Delivery Systems (KDS) is a trusted partner supporting critical tools to measure impact by gathering usage, perception, reflective journaling, portfolio, observation, and assessment data. Using KDS online strategic PD, teachers can receive 50 hours of in-depth, high-quality professional development (Yoon, et al., 2007) in 8 weeks, delivered by national experts and with qualitative and quantitative data to measure impact. All this is delivered at a fraction of the cost to ensure a robust, positive return on your strategic professional development investment.
Broken System: Can we fix our public education system?

The current educational climate is riddled with blame. Everywhere you turn articles report that the public school system is broken. National news blames teachers and teacher unions for the myriad ills of public education (C. Emmons, 2011; E. Hanushek, 2011). If only states and federal legislatures would give school districts more money, perhaps that would solve the problem. Some accuse unions of protecting bad teachers that should have been fired. Others blame the schools for allowing ill-prepared teachers to graduate or the monolithic school districts for being bureaucratic and unwieldy. Schools blame the unengaged parents who expect teachers to serve as surrogate parents. Parents look to charter management organizations, turnaround organizations, or charter schools free of the shackles of archaic, self-serving rules to fix the system. If you talk to families, listen to television, or read the press, everyone is to blame and the wider public is losing patience.

In truth, there are deep-rooted systemic problems in public education. Effective organizations, public and private, measure multiple key-performance outcomes and analyze their processes ensuring that both the people and the operations are optimized to improve outcomes and return on investment (ROI). They encourage employees to acquire the skills required to be successful and provide a system of supports to help them develop and grow in their careers. “The most powerful strategy school systems have at their disposal to improve teacher effectiveness is professional development.” (Hirsh, 2010) However, good professional development is not the same as a good professional development strategy. A good professional development strategy is the nucleus of a good district strategy for school improvement and increased achievement (Hawley Miles, 2003).

School districts invest significant resources in professional development without a comprehensive examination of true costs. While line items specifically listing staff development total $3,000 - $5,000 annually per teacher, the real or “hidden” cost of professional development quickly increases that amount. Hidden costs include salaries, facilitates, fees, substitutes, stipends, materials, travel, and equipment. Staff development studies estimate costs of $8,000 - $12,000 per year per teacher. An average staff development spend of $10,000 per teacher could be justified and even celebrated if it resulted in a career development strategy linked to improvement commensurate with the cost. However despite huge investments in professional development, student achievement has not improved, teacher effectiveness has not improved, and teacher retention has not improved. The system remains broken and the frustration grows.

Blaming each other is not the answer; it is not the fault of one group or one person. To fix the system, everyone must take responsibility ensuring the public education system enables U.S. children to be globally competitive. Education plays a vital role in transforming the U.S. in the knowledge economy player envisioned in The World is Flat (Friedman, 2005). By increasing the educational firepower of our youth, we’ll be globally competitive players retaining and excelling in the most coveted occupations. The U.S., along with China, India, Brazil and the European Union seek skilled and innovative talent; increasingly that talent exists within countries other than the U.S. We can agree that if we don’t fix our education system coveted jobs will be outsourced to the detriment of our nation.
Quality Professional Development: What is effective PD?

Acknowledging that the teacher quality is strongly correlated with student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Jordan, Mendro, & Weerasinghe, 1997; Rice, 2003; Rivken, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997), and that effective professional development is the most powerful strategy to improve teacher effectiveness (Hirsch, 2010), effective professional development is crucial to fixing the system. The educational workforce must engage in effective professional development —continually, collaboratively, and on the job—to address common problems and crucial challenges where they work (SETDA, 2008).

Effective professional development is defined as that which leads to improvements in teacher knowledge or practice or in student learning outcomes (Jaquith, Mindich, Wei, Darling-Hammond, 2010). Research suggests key elements for professional learning require a common and clearly articulated vision for professional development that permeates policy and practice first and foremost, as well as a pervasive vision leading to an efficient and well-organized infrastructure for facilitating in-depth, engaging, professional development supported by stable resources. The REL Southwest’s Reviewing The Evidence On How Teacher Professional Development Affects Student Achievement (2007) reviews more than 1,300 studies identified as potentially addressing the effect of teacher professional development on student achievement in three key content areas. They assert that only nine met the What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards, attesting to the paucity of rigorous studies that directly examine this link. This meta-analysis found that teachers who receive substantial professional development—an average of 49 hours—boost students’ achievement. (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, Shapley, 2007)

To build capacity, strengthen content and pedagogy knowledge, transform practice, and increase student achievement, effective professional development must be:

- Strategically focused on specific curriculum content and pedagogies needed to teach that content effectively
- Designed to engage teachers in active, collegial learning that allows them to try out ideas in the classroom and make sense of what they are learning in meaningful ways
- Presented in an intensive, sustained, and continuous manner over time (with an average of about 50 hours or more on a given topic associated with changes in practices that produce gains in student achievement)
- Linked to analysis of teaching and student learning, including formative use of assessment data
- Supported by coaching, modeling, observation, and feedback
- Connected to teachers’ collaborative work in school-based professional learning communities and learning teams
- Integrated with other school-level policies or reforms, so that there is a coherent approach to curriculum, instruction, assessments, and professional development. (Wei et al., 2009)
Online Professional Development: Is it part of a great professional development strategy?

“Online classes are not only as challenging as traditional courses, but if designed the right way, they can boost your collaborative, multitasking and technology skills—more so than their in-person counterparts,” asserts Dr. Mega Subramaniam, Assistant Professor in the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland (A. Moses, NEA Member Benefits Site). A set of randomized trials provided a body of evidence that a series of online professional development courses targeting specific student learning needs can have positive effects on teacher knowledge and instructional practices. This study indicates that teachers’ participation in a coordinated series of online professional development courses have effects that translate into improvements in targeted student outcomes. The findings from this study support the continued implementation of online strategic professional development. The choice is no longer whether face-to-face or online experiences are more effective; well-designed programs can leverage the power of each modality, creating results that neither approach could achieve alone.

Bringing effective and strategic professional development practices into an online environment provides several powerful advantages that reinforce National Staff Development Council (NSDC) recommendations and standards, realizing job-embedded professional development that is “just-enough, just-in-time, just-for-me.” Online professional development has clear benefits and costs savings while fostering scalability, content quality, engagement, differentiation, and alignment to the overall district improvement goals. These benefits include:

- Reduction in travel expense – This is an obvious one. No trainer travel, no teacher travel = no travel expenses.
- Minimize time out of the classroom – Students don’t learn when teachers aren’t teaching. E-Learning eliminates teachers’ time out of the classroom.
- Training can take place anytime – Self-paced e-Learning allows students to attend training when it is convenient for them. It removes the coordination of effort between trainer and student. It eliminates the factor that some associates may not receive training in a timely manner due to it not fitting into their schedule. E-Learning also provides the ability to start and stop training as needed, as opposed to traditional classroom training.
- Faster learning – With self-paced e-Learning, the control of learning shifts from the instructor to the student. In a typical instructor led course, the learning pace is determined by a common denominator – typically, the slowest student. In a self-paced course, the student drives the learning experience. This leads to a 60% faster learning curve (Hambrecht, 2001).
- Increase retention of material – e-Learning has been shown to increase retention of class material. The Research Institute of America found that 33 minutes after leaving a lecture, only 58% of the material covered is retained. That drops to 35% just 7 days later. The study finds that the e-Learning experience increases the retention rate 25-60% when students have control over the learning process as well as an opportunity to revisit the training as needed.
- Recognize growth potential – In a Price Waterhouse Coopers study, 70% of Fortune 1000 companies cited insufficient training as a challenge to their growth. The cost of improperly trained associates within an organization is hard to price. But think about the rework involved when errors are made or the time wasted while an associate hunts for answers to questions that should be addressed by proper training.
Online strategic professional development engages educators in high-quality learning by adhering to best practices in adult learning and promotes differentiated coursework while enabling teachers to engage collaboratively with colleagues that share their learning needs. By delivering effective, differentiated online professional development, districts leverage the powerful advantages of technology and the online learning environment while realizing cost savings, scale critical instructional practices, differentiating teacher learning, advance strategic human capital management, maintaining intentional fidelity, and transforming broken systems into working systems.

**Professional Development: Are districts getting their money’s worth?**

Providing 50 hours of training to 5,000 teachers in a traditional face-to-face model requires 6-8 years and $4.5 million dollars to accomplish with questionable or unknown impact. However, using online strategies, teachers are able to receive 50 hours of in-depth, high-quality professional development in 8 weeks delivered by national experts with a consistent message while gathering usage, perception, reflective journaling, portfolio, observation, and assessment data to measure impact. All this is delivered at a fraction of the cost (Created by Bruce Haslam and Beth Sinclair at Policy Studies Associates).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training 5,000 teachers</th>
<th>Training 5,000 teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours of PD: 50 hours</td>
<td>Hours of PD: 50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time: 6 – 8 years</td>
<td>Time: 8 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost: $4.5 million</td>
<td>Cost: $765,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact: ?</td>
<td>Impact Measured and known</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consider the following scenarios that illustrate the efficacy of strategic online professional development:
Scenario 1:

An urban district with 200,000 students, 25,000 teachers, and 230 schools struggles to promote the district initiatives regarding differentiated instruction and response to intervention. The district has three professional development trainers that have delivered a 2-hour face-to-face overview of the initiatives for all administrators. The district hired a national expert for 4 days of in-district training. The national expert presentation accommodated 125 people at each training session and 30 trainers per each session. With recent budgets cuts and fiscal issues, the district is at loss of how to provide adequate in-depth training for all 25,000 teachers. Travel costs from driving to the sessions at an estimated cost of $.60 per mile for 25,000 with a 20 mile round trip for six (6) 6-hour training sessions = $1,800,000; cost of the national expert for 50 days to present to 500 people per session at $5000 per day = $250,000; total facilities costs including the 500 seat auditorium with equipment costs ($4,800 per day) = $240,000; cost of the half-day substitute teachers $100 per day X 25,000 teachers X 6 training days and 1 presentation day = $17,500,000. The total additional cost (cost of district trainers and district facilities not calculated) to provide this 48 hours of training in differentiated instruction in 18 weeks = $19,790,000. In 9-weeks, KDS delivers two (2) 45-hour courses in differentiated instruction and response to intervention by nationally recognized experts and access for administrators and coaches to a data console enabling them to track the progress and support the learning of teachers in completing dynamic, flexible, and collaborative training = $7,450,000 for 50,000 course seats with more than 2,250,000 hours of learning. The KDS solution represents a cost savings of $1,230,000 while training 25,000 teachers in half the time with twice the content.

Scenario 2:

A district with 25,000 students and 1,500 teachers has traditionally had an 8.4% annual attrition rate. This equates to losing 126 teachers per year...and 630 teachers in five years. Each year the district hires 126 new teachers only to lose about 50% of them within the first five (5) years in the classroom. After a budget review, the district calculated an annual investment of $10,000 per teacher for recruiting, hiring, training, coaching, and supervising. Over the course of the last five years, the district watched as their $6,300,000 investment walked out the door. KDS delivers 45 hours of classroom evaluation criteria training by a national expert, as well as entree to the mentoring and induction kit (4 courses each with 45 hours of course work by nationally recognized experts) and access for administrators and coaches to rich resources such as the Facilitators’ Resources, and Study Guides, online discussion boards, teacher portfolios, and self-assessment tools linked to dynamic, scalable, and targeted training = $469,350 for 3,150 course seats or more than 141,750 hours of learning. The KDS solution represents a cost reduction of $5,830,650 over five years and increase in teacher retention.

Scenario 3:

A district with 100,000 students, 10,000 teachers, and 130 schools across 2,000 square miles received a $7 million grant and committed $1 million in district funds to strengthen teacher expertise in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). The grant required extensive data regarding the impact of the dollars for training including change in teacher knowledge base, teacher practice, teacher self-assessment in comfort with instructional technology, course completion, student and teacher work examples. The district considered hiring 10 consultants (50 days each), national experts (10 days), a project evaluator (75 days), and two district trainers for 100 days of in-district training. This plan enabled all 10,000 teachers to receive seven (7) 6-hour sessions. The cost of the year long training plan was $8,000 per teacher. Travel costs from driving to the sessions at an estimated cost of $.60 per mile X 1000 teachers X 7 sessions X 30 mile round trip = $168,000. The total additional cost (cost of district trainers and facilities not calculated) to provide this training in instructional technology in 100 days = $8,168,000. The use of KDS to deliver the Digital Educator kit (6 courses each with 10-15 hours of course work by nationally recognized experts) and access for administrators to a data console enabling them to track the progress and support their teachers participation in an online professional learning community and on a dynamic online training platform = $1,00,000 for 60,000 course seats or more than 270,000 hours of instructional technology training for EVERY teacher immediately... at a cost saving of $7,168,000.
KDS Strategic Professional Development: Fixing the System

Clearly districts invest significant resources in professional development of teachers but the investment is not structured for maximum effect. Investment varies widely across schools and programs in ways that do not dependably match the varying needs of students, teachers, coaches, principals, and schools. There is little guidance and no accountability for the effective use of this important investment (Hawley Miles, 2003).

When partnering with educational leaders, Knowledge Delivery Systems (KDS) brings a unique set of strategies focused on quality, impact, and outcomes. KDS tailors a comprehensive, differentiated professional development plan that will transform educational practices. In each case, partners leverage the approach of a blended model; one that uses the full range of effective, research-based strategies, supported by online, face-to-face and blended interactions. Similarly, a full range of strategies based upon best practices in adult learning takes every participant from where they are to their logical next step on their career development by mastering required competencies and demonstrating successful application to improving results for students in their classrooms. KDS courses are delivered online in an easy-to-use platform that is accessible to learners around the clock. To measure impact, KDS supports critical tools to gather usage, perception, reflective journaling, portfolio, observation, and assessment data. KDS provides all of this to ensure a robust, positive return on your professional development investment.

KDS structures strategic professional development for maximum effect that will transform public education and deliver the following outcomes:

- Less time out of the classroom
- More efficient use of dollars
- Strengthened processes and support
- Virtual learning communities
- Increased teacher capacity
- Increased teacher retention
- Increased teacher effectiveness
- Increased student achievement – the ultimate goal!

Blank, R., de las Alas, N. (2009). Meta Analysis Study of the Effects of Teacher Professional Development with A Math or Science Content Focus on Improving Teaching and Learning. CCSSO.


