Building a Research Infrastructure for Studying PL: Learnings from RPPL’s Early Years
As we wait for folks to join, please drop in the chat...

1. Name
2. Organization/district
3. What brings you here today?
How to engage

CHAT your reactions/comments/thoughts/ideas

Q&A
Use Q&A to ask presenter(s) questions

You’ll be muted unless you raise your hand and the presenter calls on you

 Reminder: This webinar is recorded
**Today’s Agenda**

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Many existing studies of PL look at the overall effects of broad packages of PL within very specific contexts.

- These studies provide little information about how to design new PL going forward.
- Generalizing from these studies to a wider population and understanding context-specific effects can be difficult.
- Hard to know what research tells us about PL design features and the variation across specific contexts and populations.
What if the providers delivering PL in districts across the country could turn themselves into laboratories through sustained research-practice partnerships to better study what PL design features work, for whom, and under what conditions, to improve educational outcomes for historically marginalized students?

RPPL’s defining question:
What are we learning...

1. ...about the knowledge base on professional learning?
2. ...about how to do better research?
3. ...about where to go from here?
I. Building the PL Knowledge Base
1. The consensus view of what works in PL isn’t well supported by recent evidence.

- PL program effects aren’t always concentrated among beginning teachers - veterans have a lot to gain.
- Programs including explicit summer workshop time for teachers outside the school year provide on-average greater gains for students.
- Adaptation - with guardrails - can be more effective than maintaining simple program fidelity.
- Shifts in teacher content knowledge are often disconnected from classroom improvement.
2. The latest research suggests the importance of PL that creates social accountability for shifting practice and offers content built around teachers’ day-to-day interactions.

- Significant impacts across programs that contain instructional coaching
- Importance of built-in follow-up and checkpoints to support teachers through implementation challenges
- Emphasis on modeling, analysis, and rehearsal – and practice-supportive materials
- Explicit focus on teacher-student relationships
3. There is a 
dearth of 
knowledge 
about how best 
to personalize 
PL to meet 
individual needs.

Teachers and leaders often have separate ideas 
about the types of data that should be used to 
identify PL needs – and this divergence can lead to 
markedly different views about whether specific 
PL strategies are most useful and appropriately 
adapted to school and classroom contexts.

Instructional coaching offers a research-backed 
way to customize feedback; yet we know relatively 
little about which elements of a coaching system 
are most effective and important.
4. Districts have few templates or models to follow as they make decisions on how to allocate resources toward PL.

Annual spending on PL exceeds $37B annually with about 70% of the total spent on district staffing.

Spending on PL has been rising faster than cost-of-living, but commensurate with other education increases.

There are big differences across districts, and state policies aren’t significantly reducing variation.

Bigger districts spend more per teacher and smaller percentages on outside contracts.
II. Building a Stronger Research Infrastructure
1. Multi-layered partnerships let us better understand the PL landscape...

1. RPPL & PL-Orgs
2. PL-Orgs & Districts
3. PL Facilitators & Teachers
1. ...but building investment in PL experimentation on a large scale remains a challenge.
2. Centering equity in PL research requires attention both to process and outcomes.

RPPL partners and affiliates have thought deeply about what it means to support specific groups of students and to prioritize diverse viewpoints.

We as a network still need to figure out what it means to routinely build this awareness into our research designs. How can we design research that acknowledges diverse expertise? How can we ensure that power and prestige imbalances don’t silence important voices?

RFP proposals offered thoughtful frameworks for how to build equity-responsive research, but we see an opportunity to build a common language as a network.
3. Measurement matters...

- Researcher-developed and validated measures are not aligned to the needs of PL orgs and school partners.
- Measures are often not designed to incorporate questions of equity in practices and student experiences.
- Data collection practices are inconsistent and capacity for data collection and analysis is often limited.
3. ...and unless we get better at data collection across our network, we will struggle to accelerate our research efforts.
4. Ownership of PL data can be ambiguous and requires coordination and approval from multiple partners.
III. Where We Go from Here
RPPL members and affiliates are asking crucial questions that have the potential to deepen learning across the network.

Proposals submitted through RPPL’s first network RFP competition highlighted the places we have the most to learn

- **Building stronger, more empathetic teacher-student relationships**
  - How can we help math teachers build their capacity to take on the perspectives of their students?
  - How can we support teacher collaboration aimed at deepening relationships to build student academic identities?

- **Individualizing PL to teacher and student needs**
  - What sequence of coaching supports works best for new teachers?
  - How can coaches supplement HQIM with specific, just-in-time information about student misconceptions?

- **Expanding the use of technology to support HQIM**
  - When and how can generative AI best scale PL opportunities?
  - Which types of feedback are best delivered through facilitators and coaches?
Q&A
Thank you for joining us today!

Please take our survey!

Interested in joining the RPPL network as an affiliate? Email kmorales@rpplpartnership.org to learn more.

Sign up for RPPL's newsletter and connect with us on LinkedIn and Twitter/X to stay up to date on our latest news.