

***Additional Support for Learning Teams*** (January 2002)

By Judy Arter

What are the characteristics of professional development that improve teaching practice? Are these characteristics common to professional development as it is currently offered? A current, large-scale, Federally funded, longitudinal study addressed these questions. The researchers found that PD is most effective when it\*:

- is “organized as a reform type, such as a study group, teacher network, mentoring relationship, committee or task force, internship, individual research project, or teacher research center, in contrast to a traditional workshop or conference;”
- is of longer duration.
- “emphasizes the collective participation of groups of teachers...”
- offers “opportunities for active learning”
- “promotes coherence...by encouraging the continued professional communication among teachers,...”

They also found that teachers in their longitudinal sample do not typically receive consistent high-quality professional development.

The evidence continues to grow on the effectiveness of learning teams based professional development.

This study is reported in the **American Education Research Journal**, Winter 2001, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 915-945. *What Makes Professional Development Effective? Results From a National Sample of Teachers*, by Michael S. Garet, et. al.

(\*Designing Effective Professional Development: Lessons from the Eisenhower Program, Executive Summary, American Institutes for Research, October 1999. You can order a copy from the federal government at [Edpubs@inet.ed.gov](mailto:Edpubs@inet.ed.gov).)