

Effective Teacher Professional Development Provided by Speech-Language Pathologists



The role of a school speech-language pathologist (S-LP) usually includes providing professional development (PD) to school teams. Effective in-service teacher PD has been shown to have a significant impact on student outcomes. Not all PD is equally effective, however. Research has identified key ingredients of effective teacher PD. These include:

1. Revisiting prior learning

Facilitate learning by linking PD content to current teaching practices. Spend time in classrooms prior to providing PD so that you can refer to specific classroom practices.

2. Managing cognitive load

For example, place points that go together on the same PowerPoint slide, provide handouts in advance, and use learning routines that are already familiar to teachers (e.g., turn & talk).

3. Setting and agreeing on goals collaboratively

Provide school-level rather than district-wide PD to plan goals with the school team based on their specific needs.

4. Presenting information from a credible source

Include evidence-based practice in all aspects of speech-language pathology service delivery and PD content.

5. Instructing teachers on how to perform a technique

Adopt explicit step-by-step strategy instruction. Keep in mind that teachers are not generally trained in strategies that may be very familiar to S-LPs (e.g., expansion or using sentence frames).

6. Modeling the technique and providing models of effective practice

Set up or facilitate opportunities for teachers to observe other teachers who master specific practices as a means to build teacher capacity.

7. Incorporating opportunities for rehearsing the technique

Include role playing, analyzing reading or writing samples as a way to build in practice.

8. Monitoring and providing feedback

Schedule classroom visits with teachers who are open to this and provide feedback in this context.

9. Providing prompts and cues

For example, send teachers a reminder to apply a new skill at a precise time (e.g., formative assessment in phonemic awareness at the start of the kindergarten year).

10. Providing affirmation and reinforcement after progress

Motivate teachers to continue investing effort by highlighting progress during individual or team discussions or meetings.

11. Prompting action planning

Leave time before the end of the PD session for participants to reflect on and plan possible next steps. This planning piece can be included in the PD exit ticket.

12. Encouraging monitoring

For example, encourage teachers to keep record of when new practices are integrated in their classroom practices.

13. Prompting context-specific repetition

New skills are best learned if they have been practiced at least twice. Plan for practice opportunities during or after the PD session.

14. Providing subject specific examples

Include subject and grade level examples specific to your participants to enhance meaningful learning.

15. Supporting collaboration among teachers

Invite teachers to sign up for the PD session as subject, grade or cycle teams to foster collaboration.

Effective teacher PD delivered by school S-LPs can be very powerful and can help make a significant impact on closing student achievement gaps. However, PD also requires a time commitment from teachers who have an increasing amount of professional responsibilities. We must therefore design and deliver PD that justifies this time investment. Planning with the above considerations in mind is a great start.

Reference

Sims, S., Fletcher-Wood, H., O'Mara-Eves, A., Cottingham, S., Stansfield, C., Van Herwegen, J., Anders, J. (2021). What are the Characteristics of Teacher Professional Development that Increase Pupil Achievement? A systematic review and meta-analysis. London: Education Endowment Foundation. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/evidence-reviews/teacher-professional-development-characteristics>