

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE-ACCEPTED RANDOMIZED CONTROL TRIAL

Job-embedded, content-focused professional learning increased student learning in Chicago.

A July 2022 study by RAND Corporation researchers Kata Mihaly, Isaac M. Opper, and Lucas Greer found that students attending schools randomly assigned to the Chicago Collaborative program had statistically significantly higher test scores than students attending schools randomly assigned to the control group.

Despite the importance of educator professional development to student learning, we still know relatively little about the effectiveness of PD programs and the various strategies or activities that comprise them (Hill et al., 2021). This experimental study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation (i3) program offers evidence of causality, suggesting that the findings could inform key stakeholders in the \$18 billion-a-year professional learning industry on the design, dosage, content, and implementation of educator professional development.

ABOUT THE INTERVENTION

From January 2018 to March 2020, Leading Educators implemented the Chicago Collaborative, a teacher PD program aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 20 schools across three local district partners: Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and two local charter districts, anonymized as District B and District C.

The program provided intensive training for one to three teacher-leaders from each participating school to deepen their pedagogical content knowledge in math and English language arts (ELA) and provided bimonthly, job-embedded coaching support to help them facilitate professional learning and practice cycles within their schools.

Core to this work was the belief that (1) the rigor, relevance, and design of the tasks students experience and (2) the expectations, pedagogical discernment, and content knowledge of their teachers affect their opportunity to meet grade-level standards and apply their learning to their future ambitions.

ABOUT THE STUDY

The authors of “The Impact and Implementation of the Chicago Collaborative Teacher Professional Development Program” conducted a randomized control trial evaluation using data from 40 schools across three school districts in the Chicago area during the 2018–2019 and 2019–2020 school years. They examined two key research questions:

1. How is the Chicago Collaborative PD program implemented?
2. Did the Chicago Collaborative PD program impact student achievement

The authors found that the Chicago Collaborative was successfully delivered, despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic at the end of the research period in 2020. The authors also found robust evidence that the Chicago Collaborative increased student test scores.

Key Findings:

1. Students in treated schools had higher test scores than students in control schools by 1.68 percentile points, which amounts to a difference of 0.05 SDs. This estimated effect is statistically significantly different from zero at the 5-percent level and holds across a variety of specifications.
2. Implementation was also strong. 95.7 percent of teacher-leaders reported that all or most mentee teachers were attending their scheduled content cycle meetings. Leading Educators’ guiding materials were also widely used: 93.3 percent of teacher-leaders reported using the materials in some manner, and most either used the materials as written or made thoughtful modifications.

[Read the full report here.](#)

[Read the WWC review.](#)

Leading Educators’ instructional improvement work has continued to evolve since this study into a variety of modular, curriculum-specific services designed to bridge research and practice in pursuit of systemic improvement.

To date, two studies that meet tier 1/2 ESSA research standards and several other quasi-experimental studies of partnerships with nationally recognized school systems confirm the rare impact of Leading Educators partnerships.

To learn more about how Leading Educators can support your system, visit leadingeducators.org/our-work.