

BEYOND PD: TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN HIGH-PERFORMING SYSTEMS

Key Takeaways

- Across all four high-performing systems analyzed—British Columbia (Canada), Hong Kong, Shanghai (China) and Singapore — professional learning is central to teachers’ jobs.
 - It is not an “add on,” something done on Friday afternoons or on a few days at the end of the school year.
 - Teacher professional learning is how they all improve student learning; it is how they improve schools; and it is how they are evaluated in their jobs.
- The high-performing systems analyzed focus on professional learning as a driver for improved student achievement in different ways:
 - **Singapore** is known for very rigorous teacher education and a highly structured career ladder with different pathways tied to performance appraisal and required individualized and on-going training.
 - In **Shanghai**, teacher induction is a critical component in the process of ensuring high-quality teaching as well as ongoing mentoring, career ladder options, and performance-based pay.
 - **Hong Kong** builds teachers’ capacity in lesson observation, using a ‘learning study’ method adapted from a program in Japan. It involves intense observations of one particular lesson (repeatedly), helping teachers improve their skills.
 - In **British Columbia**, the majority of teacher learning is in inquiry-based groups, which occur within one to two class periods per week. Most inquiry projects research one particular area for most or all of the school year, allowing for deep learning that changes teaching practice on a sustained basis.
- While these systems are quite different, key to all of them is that collaborative professional learning is built into the daily lives of teachers and school leaders. This is reinforced by resourcing policies that free up teachers’ time for collaborative professional learning. For example:
 - The average teacher in Shanghai teaches for only 10-12 hours per week.
 - Singapore invests significantly in teachers as professional learning leaders with leadership roles that recognize excellence in professional learning, helping teachers to lead professional learning within their own schools and to align teacher needs and broader school objectives.

- Professional learning in high-performing systems is built on an improvement cycle that is aimed at improving student learning. The cycle's key steps include:
 1. Assess students' learning to identify their next stage of learning,
 2. Develop the teaching practices that provide for the next stage of student learning, and
 3. Evaluate the impact of new practices on student learning so that teachers can refine their practice.

- High-performing systems leverage the improvement cycle to turn schools into true learning organizations. At a school level this is achieved by focusing on the following key components:
 - School improvement is organized around effective professional learning that reflects the principles of adult learning.
 - Roles created for expert teachers to lead professional learning in schools and throughout the system.
 - Schools and systems recognize the development of teacher expertise—with expertise regularly developed through school-based research of how to improve student learning and then shared and recognized across multiple schools and districts.
 - Teachers and school leaders share responsibility not only for their own professional learning but the learning of other teachers.
 - Collaborative professional learning is built into the daily lives of teachers and school leaders.

- High-performing systems develop specialist expertise among their teachers.
 - Professional learning leaders are champions of the profession and of proven teaching practices.
 - They set objectives, develop programs and train experienced teachers who hold key roles in developing other teachers in schools.

Read the full report, *Beyond PD: Teacher Professional Learning in High-Performing Systems* at www.ncee.org/BeyondPD/