

Can Online Courses Help Fix Teacher Professional Development?

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Back-to-school for teachers usually means back-to-school meetings, meant to rally and inspire the staff for the start of a new school year and the return of the students to campus.

The response to back-to-school meetings, though, is sometimes mixed. Many back-to-school professional development workshops that teachers attend are one-and-done affairs, and there is a high probability that whatever was covered in one of those workshops will not be implemented in the classroom or the teacher's instruction. Laura Fleming, a former classroom teacher and current library media specialist, writes: "If we have heard it said once, we have heard it said 1,000 times: Professional Development is Broken." So, is there a way to fix teacher professional development?

Fleming writes that online courses may provide a solution to broken professional development or even situations where schools do not provide professional development training for their staff. She suggested that, even though on the surface it does not appear to be the best course of action, having individual teachers manage their own professional development via online courses is possibly better than a one-size-fits-all approach. There are numerous online courses readily available on a wide variety of topics that should appeal to most educators. Educators can take courses at their own pace and on a schedule that works for them on topics that they feel are personally relevant to their own professional development. Teachers often times will go ahead and sign up for online courses and pay for those courses out-of-pocket without their schools even knowing about it.

Schools can compare the costs of these courses with other types of professional development events (for example, one-day or longer conferences) and consider building in these online offerings to the professional development menu available during the school year. Schools can also help move this process forward by partnering with the agencies that offer these trainings. It helps both teachers and schools know what courses will be offered to teachers and ensuring that schools are getting the most bang for their buck.

Ultimately, what Fleming envisions is professional learning that is tailored to the needs of teachers. It's something similar to learning paths that many schools have in place for their students. If it's good enough for the students, why not the teachers as well?

Source: <https://www.techlearning.com/tl-advisor-blog/can-online-courses-help-fix-teacher-professional-development>