



IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS, STAFF, PRINCIPALS AND ADMINISTRATORS ON A LIMITED BUDGET

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Introduction

Schools are facing significant budget cuts. In every sector of the economy, when budget cuts come down, training is one of the first areas to be cut. In education, this has been no exception. Therefore, how do school districts, charter schools, and private schools in the PreK-12 arena, make available excellent professional development in a low cost manner? This article addresses this question by proposing a new model for professional development funding and course offerings.

Most people will agree, with the challenges our PreK-12 educational system faces, that this is not time to cut out much needed professional development for teachers and principals. This article addresses this issue with an innovative approach to funding training in our PreK-12 schools.

The New Model For Funding Professional Development

The method currently in place for providing training for teachers and principals is either for internal professional development in the school (school district) to provide training or outside trainers are hired to provide the training. Teachers and principals would receive these

courses for free, and the school, school district, charter school or private school organization

would bear cost of the training. Certainly, teachers have been paying for some courses.

The new model we propose is a hybrid in numerous respects. First, school districts, charter and private school organizations, would not pay for this professional development training. Teachers, staff and principals, and in some cases, schools, would pay for this training. In fact, they would receive money from the vendors that provide the training. For example, 10% of the total proceeds of the training would go to the school district for the following activities:

1. Administer the overall training program
2. Certify the training provider
3. Let teachers know about the training
4. Assist with certification of the courses for credit for the teacher
5. Provide record keeping of who takes the course for official school purposes (advancement, salary determination, etc.)

Under this system teachers, principals, and administrators would pay for their own training. They would buy the training they want from the menu of offerings provided by the approved vendors. The downside of doing this is that teachers have very limited salaries and this is going to hurt their pocketbook to some extent.

However, if the vendors can provide training programs on a large scale, either in-classroom or through elearning or hybrid platforms, the cost per unit of training will go down significantly. Since vendors under this system will absorb no marketing costs (since the schools and school districts will let their teachers know about the offerings), this will reduce the costs of training. Third, the reduction of per unit costs of training will meet the need for schools to become more efficient. .

In fact, this approach could produce higher quality training and would be more responsive to what teachers desire since teachers would be paying for the courses. Further, it would expand the offerings of training to rural school districts and districts that are not currently investing significantly in training.

This “market” approach has several advantages. Today, every school district, charter or private school organization builds its own professional development courses and systems. This system will be more efficient because it allows for school districts and buyers of training to purchase from national organizations. Second, under this system, vendors will respond to feedback and improve their programs quickly when teachers, staff and principals evaluate them negatively. Third, this system opens up training to more teachers, staff and principals than the current system can accommodate.

This approach could create responsive, national organizations, or at least statewide organizations, capable of providing high quality, low cost training programs. School districts, charters, and private school organizations would become cash positive for undertaking this system. They would provide low-cost but highly valuable roles supporting this new system. These educational organizations could use this money to address the budget cutting environment they face.

Teachers, administrators and principals would be paying for the training. However, having them be the purchasers of their training will make them better consumers and lead will improve the training, and participant retention and outcomes.

The Benefits and Win-Win Nature of This New Training Model

First, teachers, administrators and staff will win by having a large number of professional development options at a low cost. Second, educational organizations will win because they will receive 10% of the total proceeds of the courses in their market. Third, innovation will be a clear winner as new courses and distribution systems are generated by this revenue sharing model. Fourth, the general public would win as the the entire training system for teachers would become more transparent. Universities and other training vendors would win as they can earn a reasonable return for training larger numbers of teachers than they can reach today with their current training methods. Finally, this will reduce the cost of training teachers, administrators and principals, and thus, everyone will win.

Conclusion

This new revenue sharing model is bold. The time is right for our nation to employ a new economic model for providing professional development for teachers, administrators, staff and principals. This new model begins to transform and modernize our professional development training system in PreK-12 education.

About the Author

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