

# Continuing professional development

What do specialists do in CPD programmes for which there is evidence of positive outcomes for pupils and teachers?

## What do we want to know?

We want to gain a better understanding of the role and work of specialists in CPD for which there is evidence of positive outcomes for pupils.

## Who wants to know and why?

Government and national agencies involved in supporting CPD (including our sponsors GTC and TDA), teachers' organisations (including NUT), and practitioners in schools and HEIs engaged in planning and implementing CPD are all interested in the role and work of specialists within CPD.

## What did we find?

- We only found studies where the results indicated a positive impact of CPD. Most studies were designed and conducted by the specialists themselves, using research approaches with limited capacity to control for the potential biases arising from such a situation.
- All specialists focused on professional development (formal input) and professional learning (embedding new practice through classroom and/or collaborative support)
- All the studies reported that the CPD contributed to changes in teacher practice in ways which were sustainable.
- Many elements of specialist input and support were common across the studies, but their configuration varied. What changed were timescales, the rhythm of meetings, patterns of input and support. The following stayed the same:
  - Specialists built the CPD processes on what teachers knew and could do already, with an emphasis on individual learning.

- In most cases, the CPD lasted longer than two terms, and the specialist contact with teachers (both scheduled and 'on call' sessions) took place over 10 days or more.
- Specialists encouraged and guided the teachers in supporting each other.
- Specialists introduced the theoretical and practical knowledge base.
- Ongoing specialist support included modeling, workshops, observation and feedback, coaching, and planned and informal meetings for discussion.

## How did we get these results?

The Review Group screened over 3,000 titles and abstracts, from which 239 studies reporting the impact and processes of CPD which involved specialists were identified. Scrutiny of the full reports led to a final sample of 22 studies for in-depth review. All these studies contained teacher and pupil data. Nineteen studies with overall medium or high weight of evidence were used to create a synthesis of findings.

## What are the implications?

The review highlighted the variety of skills specialists brought with them, and the amount of time they spent on input and support. This raises questions about developing a more sophisticated approach to identifying, developing and drawing on the knowledge and skills both of professionals within school, and across networks, so that capacity can be built around existing resources. More specifically, the review suggests the need for professional development for lead practitioners and CPD leaders to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills related to adult professional learning.



## Where to find further information

### For more information about the content of this review please contact:

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The results of this systematic review are available in four formats:

#### SUMMARY

Explains the purpose of the review and the main messages from the research evidence

#### REPORT

Describes the background and the findings of the review(s) but without full technical details of the methods used

#### TECHNICAL REPORT

Includes the background, main findings, and full technical details of the review

#### DATABASES

Access to codings describing each research study included in the review

These can be downloaded or accessed at <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/reel/>

Reports published by the EPPI-Centre in September 2007.

The EPPI-Centre's reference numbers for these reports of this review are 1504R (Report) and 1504T (Technical Report). The full citations are:

#### FULL REPORT

Cordingley P, Bell M, Isham C, Evans D, Firth A (2007) What do specialists do in CPD programmes for which there is evidence of positive outcomes for pupils and teachers? Report. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

#### TECHNICAL REPORT

Cordingley P, Bell M, Isham C, Evans D, Firth A (2007) What do specialists do in CPD programmes for which there is evidence of positive outcomes for pupils and teachers? Technical Report. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

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