

# Learning Teams Offer a New Twist on Professional Development

GE Foundation-backed program getting rave reviews from teachers

Using funding from a record-breaking, five-year, \$20-million grant from the GE Foundation, Cincinnati Public Schools has created Learning Teams that are transforming professional development for its teaching staff.

Instead of traditional professional development that requires teachers to gather at a central location, Learning Teams bring the coaching directly into the classroom to strengthen teaching and learning. First introduced during the last school year to improve math instruction, the teams have expanded to include all content areas.

“Learning Teams have been proven to support collaborative learning environments for both teachers and students,” says Mary Ronan, interim superintendent. “They are built upon the belief that better teachers produce better students. It is our intent that every school will have a fully functional Learning Team environment as the cornerstone of professional development.”

Learning Teams are comprised of four to eight teachers organized vertically in the elementary schools and by department in the high schools. They use a seven-step protocol to collaboratively plan, critique and revise classroom lessons to ensure

that every child understands the content. They meet a minimum of twice per month for 90 minutes, as well as 60 minutes per month during staff meetings.

“Learning Teams improve student achievement by changing the culture of teaching to one where teachers work collectively to reflect on and improve their practice,” says Tim Kraus, president of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers.



The long-range vision for Learning Teams is to build a foundation for continuous improvement of instruction. Over time, the Learning Team structure will be used as a vehicle for embedding content-specific professional development to more deeply impact and support teachers.

CPS is currently using grant funds from the GE Foundation to develop content specialists in math and science to serve on the Learning Teams. ★