



Research Report

Professional Development in Arkansas and Review of National Research

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Prepared for

**THE HOUSE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
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CONTENTS

Introduction and Purpose.....	1
Requirements For Professional Development	1
Research on the Effectiveness of PD on Achievement	1
Survey of Arkansas Teachers Regarding PD	3
PD Policy History	6
PD Funding.....	8
Arkansas IDEAS	10
PD Expenditures by Districts and Charter Schools.....	11
PD Fund Balances.....	12
Conclusion	13
References.....	14

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

According to the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) Rules (2016) Governing Professional Development, “The purpose of professional development is to improve knowledge and skills in order to facilitate individual, team, school-wide, and district-wide improvement designed to ensure that all students demonstrate proficiency on the state academic standards” (2.02). In Arkansas, professional development (PD) is funded through categorical funds to restrict the use of money for those purposes.

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the state’s PD requirements, national and international research on effectiveness of PD, the history of the PD funding, the distribution of PD funding to districts and charter schools, the expenditure of PD funding by districts and charter schools, and a survey of Arkansas teachers regarding PD.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Under state law, districts are required to develop a professional development plan that spells out the PD activities for the district. Teachers, administrators and classified employees must be involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the PD offerings (§ 6-17-704(c)(1)). Additionally, every educator is required to develop a professional growth plan that identifies PD the educator will obtain during the year based on identified needs (§ 6-17-2806(a)).

Act 969 of 2013 and department rules established that one of the following topics is required for educators each year on a rotating basis over four years (previously some of the topics were required annually):

- Two hours on parental involvement
- Two hours on Arkansas history (only for teachers who teach Arkansas history)
- Two hours of teen suicide awareness and prevention
- Two hours on child maltreatment

Act 1294 of 2013 required all teachers to have received PD in dyslexia awareness by 2014-15.

In addition to the PD required for licensed teachers, administrators also are required to receive PD in the following areas:

- Data disaggregation
- Instructional leadership
- Fiscal management

Professional development can be earned in more ways than just workshops and training sessions. ADE Rules Governing Professional Development specify that PD credit can be granted for mentoring sessions, study groups, online training, college coursework and other types of activities (8.03). Additionally, teachers may receive up to 12 hours of PD for the time spent at the beginning of the school year planning curriculum and developing instructional materials (4.07). The rules identify three types of activities that are specifically excluded from receiving PD credit: setting up a bulletin board; clerical work associated with required documents, such as an Individual Education Program for special education students; and administrative faculty meetings (4.07.8).

RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PD ON ACHIEVEMENT

Research indicates that effective teaching is the strongest predictor of student achievement gains within the control of school officials (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Hanushek, 2011; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2012; Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Darling-Hammond (2012) defines effective teaching as instruction that enables all students to learn. Landmark meta-analyses and systematic narrative reviews have shown that effective PD programs enhance knowledge and skills of teachers and achievement gains of students (Blank, 2013; Blank & de las Alas, 2009;

Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Garet et al., 2002; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Saunders et al., 2009; Wei et al., 2009, 2010; Yoon et al., 2007).

Criticism of PD in the professional literature as an effective program to improve classroom instruction and student achievement appears to have arisen from three primary sources (e.g., Gulamhussein, 2013). Foremost, there is a lack of rigorous scientific studies of the relationship between teacher professional learning and student achievement gains (Blank, 2013; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). For example, in a landmark meta-analysis of 1,300 studies of PD effects on student achievement, Yoon et al. (2007) found only nine studies that met What Works Clearinghouse (2014) standards for research evaluations. Using similar evaluation standards, a more recent meta-analysis by the Council of Chief State School Officers (Blank & de las Alas, 2009) identified 16 qualified studies in a sample of 416 investigations of the effects of PD.

Criticism also has come from the large volume of studies showing that single-shot workshops and conferences are ineffective in improving instruction and student performance because of lack of depth, follow-up applications, and relevance for many individual teachers (Blank, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Wei et al., 2009). Finally, critics often do not differentiate between PD activities that have different purposes. For example, child maltreatment and teen suicide awareness and prevention may be important issues for professional development, but they are not aimed at enhancing student achievement (Blank, 2013). In sum, the plethora of flawed research, studies of brief workshops, and failure to distinguish purposes has supported generalizations that PD is ineffective in increasing student performance.

Despite these criticisms, the preponderance of evidence from rigorous research, based on “What Works” criteria, indicates that systematically designed, well-executed, PD programs, comprised of key components, are effective in both enhancing the quality of instruction and increasing student achievement gains (Blank, 2013; Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Saunders et al., 2009; Wei et al., 2009, 2010; Yoon et al., 2007). Together, these landmark meta-analyses and narrative reviews indicate that there are key accomplishments in achieving effective PD, including fidelity of implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and modifications (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Rossi et al., 2004). Furthermore, the goals of professional learning need to be clearly focused on both acquiring comprehensive knowledge of content and pedagogical skills that can stimulate learning among diverse students (Darling-Hammond & Liberman, 2012). Learning content and skills is a developmental process comprised of sequential steps that need to be tailored to particular needs of individual teachers.

PD also should be clearly linked to other aspects of education, such as curriculum and professional evaluation (Wei et al., 2009). Research indicates that the most effective means of professional learning involves job-embedded modeling, coaching, classroom observation and feedback, collegial collaboration, and teamwork (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). In a recent rigorous study of 135 randomly selected schools from five states, researchers at Harvard’s Center for Education Policy Research (2016) found that the frequency and specificity of feedback from classroom observations, and the number of PD days, were significantly related to student achievement in math, after statistically controlling for prior achievement, student characteristics, and teachers’ prior value-added performance (Kane et al., 2016). This study found teachers spent an average of 4.5 days in formal PD on Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Forty-five percent of teachers reported that they collaborated every week on CCSS. Thirty-six percent reported having collaborated on instruction strategies, while 28% indicated that they worked together to develop CCSS-aligned materials and assessments.

Intra- and inter-district classroom observations also have proved useful in learning new strategies and practices as well. Regular grade-level and content-specific team meetings are essential to targeted knowledge and skill acquisition (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Wei et al., 2009). Teams provide a forum for working in concert to create the culture, structures, and individual dispositions that encourage and support continuous learning aimed at improving understanding of students’ individual learning needs, making data-driven decisions regarding content and pedagogy, and promoting high

expectations. Finally, commitment to making the PD successful is essential to effectiveness (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Ronfeldt et al., 2015).

The Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE) (Darling-Hammond, 2012; Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al. 2009; Wei et al., 2009; Wei, Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2010) has conducted preeminent national and international studies of effective PD practices for the past two decades. For example, they found that a majority of schools in high-achieving nations provide time for teachers' PD by including it in their work day and/or by providing class coverage by other teachers (85% of schools in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, and Switzerland). Similar practices are common in Japan, Singapore, and other high-performing Asian countries. U.S. teachers spend about 80% of their time teaching students, compared to 60% in other high-performing countries. So, U.S. teachers have less time for collaboration and team meetings aimed at learning from one another, lesson planning, and curriculum development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Teachers in these other countries also indicated more control over educational decisions, such as PD, evaluation, curriculum development, and policies.

Many high-performing countries invest significant time in PD. For example, the Netherlands, Singapore, and Sweden require at least 100 hours of PD each year, in addition to regularly scheduled common planning sessions and collaborative team meetings (Darling-Hammond, 2009). In Singapore, the government pays for 100 hours of PD each year, which is in addition to a requirement that teachers must spend 20 hours a week collaborating and observing one another teaching.

SCOPE researchers note, "The intensity and duration of professional development offered to U.S. teachers is not at the level that research suggests is necessary to have noticeable impacts on instruction and student learning. While many teachers get a day or two of professional development on various topics each year, very few have the chance to study any aspect of teaching for more than two days. Most of their professional learning does not meet the threshold needed to produce strong effects on practice or student learning. Research suggests that professional development of 14 hours or less has no effect on student learning, while longer-duration programs show positive and significant effects on student achievement" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p. 20).

SURVEY OF ARKANSAS TEACHERS REGARDING PD

One aspect of the Adequacy Study conducted by the Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) involved an online survey of teachers in 74 randomly selected schools that were chosen for onsite interviews with superintendents and principals. BLR staff asked principals to select a teacher to distribute instructions to other teachers concerning survey participation and assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. No identifying information was requested, and there was no way to link responses to participants.

In regard to PD, teachers were asked if they felt prepared to teach the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Their responses were recorded in the table below. More than 600, or 63.3%, indicated that they felt prepared to teach CCSS. Seventy-seven teachers, or 8.1%, reported that they did not feel prepared to teach CCSS, while 146 teachers, or 15.3%, were unsure.

Teacher Survey Question: Do you feel prepared to teach the CCSS, if applicable to your position?

Value	Frequency	Percent
Yes	604	63.3
No	77	8.1
Not Sure	146	15.3
Not applicable	110	11.5
No Response	17	1.8
TOTAL	954	100

Teachers also were asked why they felt prepared or unprepared to teach CCSS. In the table below, only categories with 10 or more respondents were shown because of the large number of single-digit responses. By far, the most frequent response to this question was the professional development (PD) they received, and 22 teachers indicated they needed more PD.

Teacher Survey Question: Why, or why not?

Double-Digit Responses	Frequency
Reasons Teachers Felt Prepared	
Some standards above students' learning curve	15
Doing them for years/experience	31
Professional development	95
Still learning them	18
Taught in college courses	16
Collaboration	15
Fit with discipline	13
Fit with curriculum frameworks	11
Good teachers teach well with any standards	14
Reasons Teachers Felt Unprepared	
Brief training not enough/need more PD	22
CCSS are not useful	27
Not applicable	15

Teachers were asked if they felt ready to prepare their students for taking the ACT Aspire exam. Their responses were recorded in the following table.

Teacher Survey Question: Do you feel ready to prepare your students for taking the ACT Aspire exam, if applicable to your position?

Value	Frequency	Percent
Yes	238	24.9
No	154	16.1
Not Sure	237	24.8
Not Applicable	278	29.1
No Response	47	5.1
TOTAL	954	100

One hundred fifty-four, or 16.1%, reported that they did not feel ready to prepare their students for taking the ACT Aspire, while 237 teachers, or 24.8%, indicated that they were unsure. There were 238 teachers, or 24.9%, who reported feeling ready to prepare students for the exam.

In addition, teachers were asked why they gave the responses shown in table above. There were 20 different responses, but only the double-digit responses were recorded in following table.

Teacher Survey Question: Why, or why not?

Double-Digit Responses	Frequency
No idea what to expect	15
Need professional development	67
Need sample items	12

Teacher Survey Question: Approximately how often do teachers typically observe one another teaching?

Value	Frequency	Percent
Never	348	36.5
Weekly	29	3.0
Monthly	99	10.4
Quarterly	237	24.8
Other	219	23.0
No Response	22	2.3
TOTAL	954	100

Over 36% of the 954 respondents indicated that teachers do not observe one another teaching. Another 47.8% responded that teachers observe one another quarterly or less often.

If teachers responded with "other" to the question on observing one another, they were asked to specify. Double-digit responses indicated that teachers observe one another teaching upon request or when needed, occasionally, or maybe once a year. Teachers who marked "other" in response to the question were asked to specify their answer.

Teacher Survey Question: Specify other.

Double-Digit Responses	Frequency
Observe upon request	33
Occasionally	12
Maybe once a year	16
Observe when needed	27
Not sure	35

About 42.7% of the respondents answered that it would be helpful if they spent more time observing other teachers in their classrooms, while 34.8% were unsure, leaving 22.5% who indicated it would not be helpful.

Teacher Survey Question: Would it be helpful for you to spend more time observing other teachers in their classrooms?

Value	Frequency	Percent
No	197	22.5
Not Sure	332	34.8
Yes	407	42.7
No Response	18	1.9
TOTAL	954	100

The high percentage of teachers who did not believe observing others teaching would be helpful to them, or were unsure, suggests that the majority of teachers do not subscribe to tenets of profession learning supported by research concerning the importance of teachers observing one another and peer collaboration (Blank, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Wei et al., 2009).

Teacher Survey Question. Approximately how often do teachers in your school typically meet in teams, or according to specialty areas, to discuss curriculum and/or instruction?

Value	Frequency	Percent
Never	11	1.2
Rarely	43	4.5
Weekly	665	69.7
Monthly	122	12.8
Quarterly	54	5.7
Other	72	7.5
TOTAL	976	

The majority of teachers (69.7%) indicated that they meet weekly to discuss curriculum and instruction. Those who responded with "other" were asked to specify their answer. The only double-digit response was "daily" (16 responses). The total number of responses indicated that a few teachers provided more than one response to this question.

PD POLICY HISTORY

The General Assembly provided PD funding for the first time in 2004-05 based on a legislative study of the state's education finance system. Under pressure from the *Lake View* lawsuit in 2003, the state commissioned Picus and Associates (Picus) to complete an adequacy study that would be used to revamp the state's education finance system. In their final 2003 report, Picus suggested that "improving teacher effectiveness through high quality professional development is arguably as important as all of the other resource strategies identified; better instruction is the key aspect of the education system that will improve student learning." The report outlined four strategies to deploy a successful professional development program¹:

- A. **Provide time during the summer for intensive training institutes.** At the time, the Arkansas State Board of Education rules required all certified staff to complete 30 hours (5 days) of professional development as part of their 185-day contract. The consultant's report noted an increase in time for PD could be implemented by adding five additional days to the teacher contract.
- B. **Provide on-site coaching for all teachers** to help incorporate practices into their repertoire and the classroom.
- C. **Allow for collaborative work among teachers during planning and preparation periods** to improve the curriculum and instructional program.
- D. **Provide funds for training** during the summer and school year.

The Legislature responded to these recommendations with a variety of new policies. First they added five days to teachers' contracts. Act 59 of the 2nd Extraordinary Session of 2003 extended the basic contract for teachers from 185 days to 190 days, to include a total of 10 days of professional development. To pay for these additional days, about \$101 per student was added to the funding allocated for teacher salaries. The foundation funding rate established by Act 59 included funding for 2.5 instructional facilitators to help with the on-site coaching O&P recommended. Act 462 of 2003 called for teachers' to have planning periods (200 minutes each week) in increments of no less than 40 minutes to allow for more collaborative work with other teachers. And Act 59 provided \$50 per student, or \$25,000 for a prototypical school of 500 students, to bring in trainers, pay for travel associated with intensive summer institutes and cover other miscellaneous PD costs.

¹ *An Evidence Based Approach to School Finance Adequacy in Arkansas*. Lawrence O. Picus and Associates. Final Report—September 2003. Page V, 37.

These provisions remained relatively unchanged through 2013. That year the General Assembly significantly reduced the amount of PD funding provided to districts. In an effort to buoy the public school employee insurance plan, Act 2 of the 1st Extraordinary Session of 2013, reduced the PD funding rate by 40%, from \$54.00 (which had been established for FY2015 during the 2013 regular session) to \$32.40 per student. This change was expected to free up \$10.1 million, with the intention of appropriating an additional \$10 million in General Revenue in 2015 for public school employee health insurance. This funding change was made with the expectation that the State Board of Education would reduce the required number of professional development hours from 60 to 36.

ADE's subsequent effort to lower the number of required PD hours in the rules was complicated by the fact that a separate section of state law—the statute governing the basic teacher contract—still required 10 days of professional development. That meant that for the 2014-15 school year, districts were required to provide teachers with 10 days of professional development, but they received less money to provide it.

In 2015, the General Assembly passed Act 44, which reduced the number of PD days in the basic teacher contract from 10 to six.

According to ADE's Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts, the 190-day basic contract consists of:

- 178 student interaction days
- Two days for parent-teacher conferences
- 10 days for professional development; the rules are scheduled to be amended to six days to mirror state law.²

Because the total number of contract days did not change, while the number of days for professional development was reduced, districts now have four remaining contract days without a specified purpose. To find out how districts are using those four days, the BLR asked the following question in a survey of all district superintendents and open enrollment charter school directors:

District Survey Question: The General Assembly recently reduced the number of days school districts are required to use as Professional Development (PD) days from 10 to six, but did not reduce the number of days required in the basic teacher contract. What is your district doing with the remaining four days? Four options were provided from which respondents could choose. The responses were as follows:

Answer	# of Districts / Charter Schools	%*
Increasing the student-interaction days	4	1.6%
Continuing to treat them as PD days	216	86.7%
Paying teachers for these days, but not requiring them to work	2	0.8%
Other	39	15.7%

*Note: the percentages sum to more than 100% because some districts selected more than one response.

Districts that selected "Other" in response to the question above, were asked to describe how they use the four days. The following table lists the uses districts described.

² The current version of the Rules Governing Standards for Accreditation still requires 10 days of PD, despite the statutory change. ADE has indicated that they are in the process of revising these rules and will correct this standard to reflect statute and references to required PD hours in other ADE rules.

Answer	# of Districts / Charter Schools	%
Combine PD & work	15	38.5%
Classroom work	10	25.6%
Mix of PD, work, and parents	4	10.3%
Collaboration	4	10.3%
3 days PD & 1 work day	1	2.6%
Based on needs on teacher	1	2.6%
Curriculum, data analysis	1	2.6%
Incorporated as after-school time	1	2.6%
Parent conferences	1	2.6%
Schedule training (not PD)	1	2.6%

*Note: Rounding causes the sum to be 100.3%

PD FUNDING

The following table shows the per-student amount of professional development funding the state has provided since 2006-07. The cut in funding in 2015 was the result of Act 2 of the 1st Extraordinary Session of 2013. The savings generated by the reduction were redirected to the public school employee insurance plan.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
PD Funding Rate	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$51	\$52	\$53	\$32.40	\$32.40	\$32.40
% Change	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	2%	-39%	0%	0%

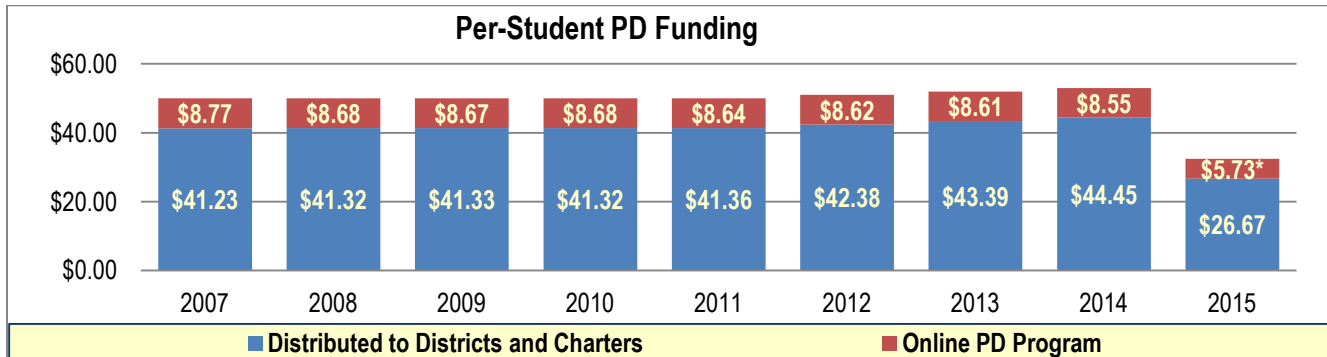
Most of the professional development funding is distributed to school districts on a per-student basis. However, up to \$4 million of the total PD funding has been set aside each year to develop and maintain a statewide online professional development program for educators.

In 2005, the Legislature passed Act 2318 of 2005, creating the Arkansas Online Professional Development Initiative (§ 6-17-707). Special language included in Act 2131 of 2005 (Section 29) authorized ADE to use up to \$4 million of the total appropriation for professional development to "develop and implement statewide professional development support systems for teachers that will benefit student achievement." This special language has been included in each Public School Fund appropriation bill until the 2015 legislative session. (For a discussion about the change in 2015, see page 10.)

The idea for the statewide program was to pool resources and create one online system that individual school districts and co-ops could not afford to develop individually, but that would be free to districts to use. ADE set up the online system by awarding grants to the Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN) and other organizations to establish and maintain a portal for online courses, known as ArkansasIDEAS. The program develops some course content and subscribes to course content developed by outside vendors. Teachers can log on to the program and take courses for which they may receive professional development credit. While AETN typically receives the majority of the program funds, other organizations, such as educational cooperatives, higher education institutions and the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators have received funding in the past.

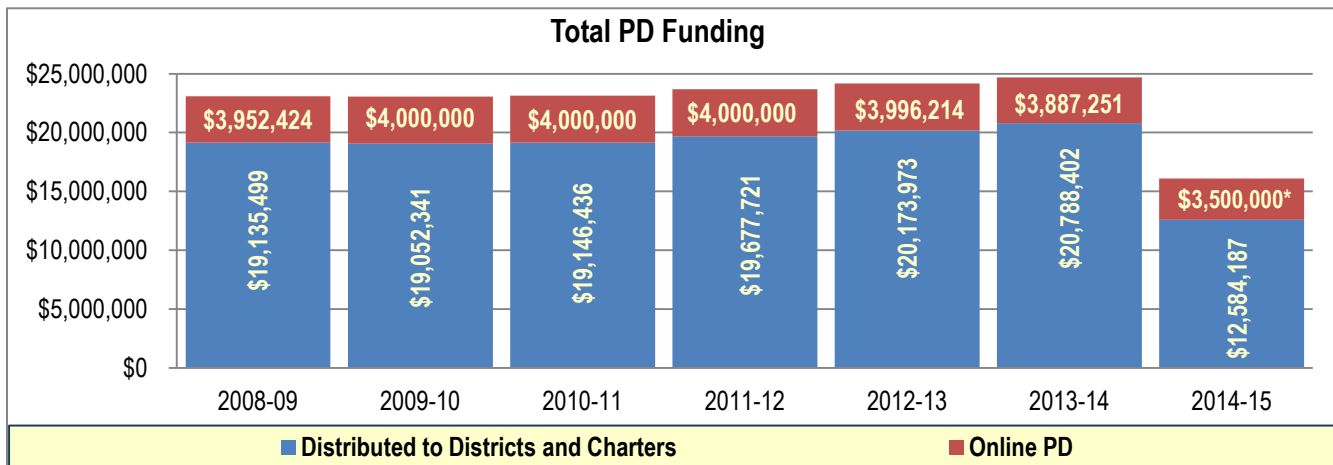
The allocation of \$4 million for statewide professional development resulted in the reduction of the per-student rate paid to school districts by more than \$8 per student. Though the districts were losing some of the PD funding, legislators hoped the statewide program would offer an efficient online course delivery system that would be free to educators and their employers.

The following chart shows the total amount of PD funding distributed per student each year for the last nine years. It shows the amount distributed to districts and open enrollment charter schools and the amount set aside for use under the statewide online PD program.



Data Source: The per-student amount distributed to districts and charter schools comes from the Arkansas Department of Education’s State Aid Notice for each year. The remaining amount was calculated as the PD funding rate, minus the amount distributed to districts and charter schools. *ADE supplemented the \$5.73 per student with reserve funds to provide a total of \$3.5 million for the online PD program.

The following chart shows the total funding provided for professional development. Like the previous chart, the figures are broken into the amount provided to districts and charter schools and the amount allocated to the online PD program.



Data Source: Department of Education Grants Summarized by the Division of Legislative Audit

* In 2014-15, ADE supplemented the \$5.73 per student from the Professional Development categorical funding with agency reserve funds.

For FY15, the General Assembly reduced PD funding from \$53 per student in FY14 to \$32.40 per student, about a 39% reduction. Of that reduction, the portion provided to the districts and charter schools was reduced by 40% and the portion set aside for the online PD program was reduced by 33%.

	FY14	FY15	Difference
Districts/Charters	\$44.45	\$26.67	-40%
Online PD	\$8.55	\$5.73	-33%
Total	\$53.00	\$32.40	-39%

However, the \$5.73 per student that was set aside for online PD would have totaled only about \$2.7 million that year. ADE indicated that the department supplemented this amount with reserve funds to pay AETN a total of \$3.5 million for the online PD program. According to the department, the funding the General Assembly provided for professional development in the Public School Fund exceeded the amount needed to cover the \$32.40 per student. ADE used these excess funds to pay AETN the full cost of continuing the online program.³

For FY2016, ADE decreased the amount of the per-student funding distributed to districts and charters from \$26.67 to \$26.05 (a total decrease of about \$293,000), leaving \$6.35 for the online PD program.

³ Hollowell, C, Arkansas Department of Education, February 19, 2016 email.

The department has indicated that it has provided AETN the full \$3.5 million, again using excess funding the General Assembly provided.⁴

	FY15	FY16
Districts/Charters	\$26.67	\$26.05
Online PD	\$5.73	\$6.35
Total	\$32.40	\$32.40

One issue that may be of concern is ADE's authority to direct some of the PD funds to AETN in the 2015-16 fiscal year. Passed during the 2015 legislative session, the Public School Fund appropriation bill (Act 987) did not include the special language that had long authorized ADE to use up to \$4 million of the PD funding for the online program. The language was removed as part of a broader effort by the General Assembly to eliminate unnecessary special language generally. Even without the language, ADE has continued to withhold a portion of the \$32.40 per student for the online program. When asked whether ADE has the authority to withhold this funding from districts and charter schools, Greg Rogers, Assistant Commissioner for Fiscal and Administrative Services, argued that that it does.

"A.C.A. § 6-17-707 is the Arkansas Online Professional Development Initiative. Under § 6-17-707(c) it requires the commissioner to work with AETN and local school districts to develop a statewide online professional development program that includes quality professional development courses. Additionally, under § 6-17-707(d)(1)(A) The Arkansas Educational Television Network shall support the delivery of the online professional development courses developed as part of the initiative to teachers and administrators in each school in each school district in the state via the internet.

So the funding used from the PD categorical is used to partner with AETN as required under the above statute for the ArkansasIDEAS online professional development portal. The MOU agreement with AETN and ADE is for \$3.5 million which is the identified cost of continuing and improving the ArkansasIDEAS online system."⁵

If ADE's assessment that the department does have authority to withhold this funding is accurate, the absence of the special language means there is no limit on the amount of money ADE could withhold from districts and charter schools for the online PD program. In the current year (FY16), the department has limited it to resemble spending in previous years. However, if no statutory language is added directing the use of this funding, ADE will remain unlimited in future years.

ARKANSAS IDEAS

The ArkansasIDEAS portal offers online training and resources on a variety of topics to allow teachers to meet PD requirements. The portal also offers PD designed to help teachers understand new statutory requirements or other changes, such as the implementation of Common Core State Standards and the dyslexia intervention requirements.

At the end of the 2014-15 school year, the ArkansasIDEAS portal offered educators 457 courses, for a total of nearly 710.5 PD credit hours. A total of 56,402 educators had registered with ArkansasIDEAS. This figure represents the total number of educators who have registered since the program's creation, including those who left the profession, moved out of state or registered once and never used the portal again.

In 2015, ArkansasIDEAS switched to a new Learning Management Software (LMS). The LMS user registration system is now integrated in ADE's educator licensure system, allowing teachers who are registering to use ArkansasIDEAS to be more quickly identified as licensed educators and granted access. The new system requires all users to register or reregister, allowing a fresh look at the numbers

⁴ Hollowell, C, Arkansas Department of Education, February 19, 2016 email.

⁵ Rogers, Greg, Arkansas Department of Education, Feb. 3, 2016 email.

of people actually using the system. By the end of December 2015, 20,537 educators had registered to access the portal.⁶

In 2014-15, educators earned more than 200,000 PD credit hours through the AETN portal. The total number of credit hours earned each year has been rising steadily since at least 2010.

	PD Credit Hours Earned
2010	87,875
2011	99,904
2012	100,630
2013	151,843
2014	187,245
2015	209,594

PD EXPENDITURES BY DISTRICTS AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

The table below shows the total amount of funding provided to school districts and charter schools and the expenditures they made from those categorical funds. (The expenditures do not include any PD funding districts and charters transferred to other categorical funds.) The table also calculates the PD funding and expenditures as a per-student amount. These data show that collectively districts spent about 11% and 8% more professional development funding than they received in 2013 and 2014, respectively. They were able to spend more money than they received in PD funding, in part, because they transferred money from other categorical funds (such as National School Lunch, English language learner and alternative learning environment state categorical funds). When the funding was reduced in 2015 without a commensurate reduction in the required number of PD hours, districts spent about 41% more than they received under the PD statute.

	Total PD Funding Provided by Statute	Transfers From Other Categorical Funds	Total PD Expenditures*	Per-Student PD Funding Provided by Statute	Per-Student PD Expenditures
2012-13	\$20,173,973	\$2,085,266	\$21,181,539	\$43.39	\$45.56
2013-14	\$20,788,402	\$2,832,728	\$21,049,638	\$44.45	\$44.98
2014-15	\$12,584,187	\$4,273,795	\$17,089,118	\$26.67	\$36.22
2015-16*	\$12,309,392	TBD	TBD	\$26.05	TBD

Note: PD funding above shows the amount of funding calculated after penalties stemming from Act 1220 of 2011 were removed. PD expenditures exclude transfers made from PD to other categorical funds.

*2015-16 Funding amounts are based on preliminary figures.

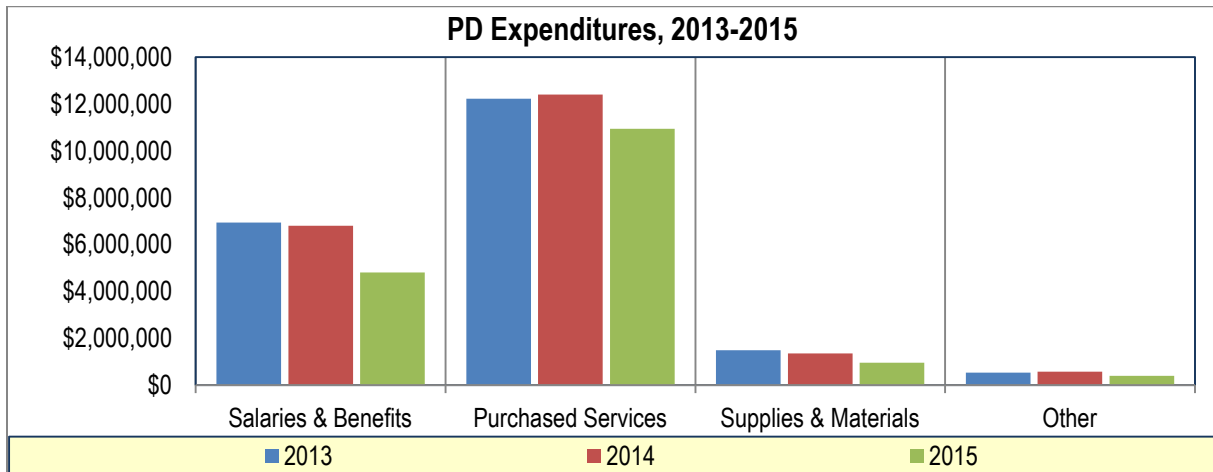
The table below indicates that, on a per-student basis, the traditional school districts collectively spent more of their PD funding than the 18 open enrollment charter schools. This does not necessarily mean that school districts spent more money in total on professional development, only that they spent more of the categorical funds for this purpose. Districts and charter schools are allowed to use other types of funds (e.g., federal funds) to pay for professional development expenses. Expenditures on professional development using other types of funds are not reflected in this analysis.

	236 Districts	18 Charter Schools
PD Per-Student Expenditures	\$36.43	\$26.93

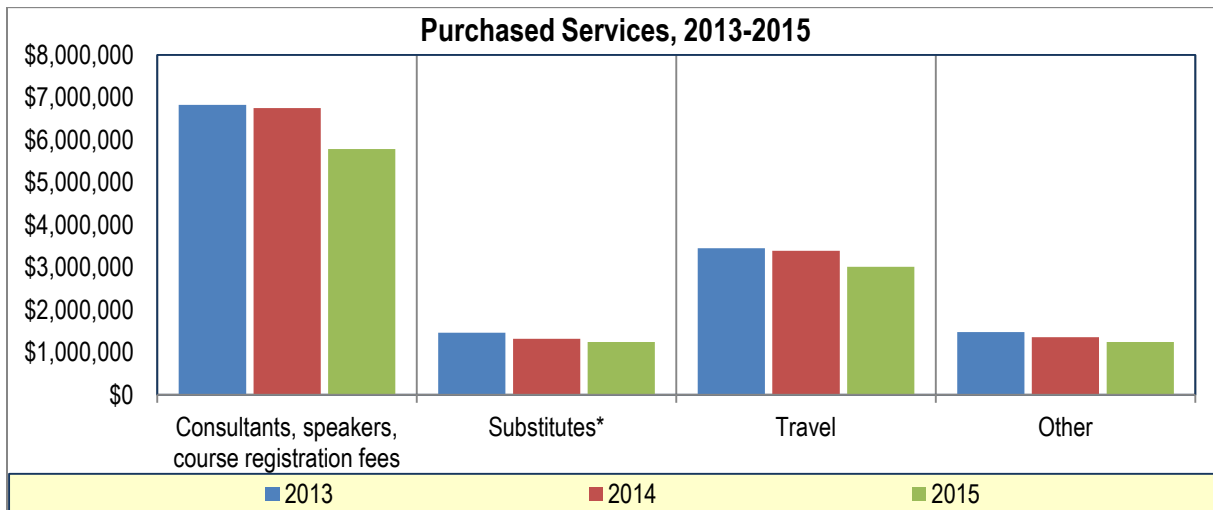
In 2014-15, 162 districts and charter schools spent less than the statewide average per-student PD expenditure and 92 spent more. Per-student expenditures ranged from \$5.29 (Woodlawn School District) to \$261.35 (Augusta School District).

⁶ ArkansasIDEAS Report, FY 2015-2016, Quarter 2

The chart below shows how districts have spent their PD funding over the last three years. The majority has been spent on purchased services. These types of expenditures could include hiring a speaker to lead a workshop or a school improvement consultant to mentor staff. Purchased services can also include substitutes hired to fill in for a teacher who is participating in a day of training.



The following chart provides additional detail about the purchased services expenditures shown in the chart above. About half of all purchased services expenditures is spent on consultants, speakers, course registration fees and other similar services. A quarter of these expenditures is spent on travel costs.



* Substitutes, both those hired directly by the districts and those hired through an outside company, are included in this Purchased Services chart. Substitutes who are hired directly by the districts were included in the salaries and benefits category in the previous chart.

PD FUND BALANCES

Districts and charter schools are allowed to carry over funding from one year to the next. Any PD funding they do not spend during the year becomes a fund balance at the end of the year. At the end of 2014-15, 199 districts and charter schools had PD fund balances collectively totaling \$4 million.

	Total PD Fund Balance	Districts/Charters with PD Fund Balance	Districts/Charters without a PD Fund Balance
2013	\$3,508,961	208	47
2014	\$4,760,246	209	46
2015	\$3,998,329	199	55

*Includes one district with a balance of less than \$1

The majority of districts' and charter schools' PD fund balances are relatively small, with just 17 having a fund balance over \$50,000.

Ending Fund Balance	Number of Districts and Charter Schools		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
\$0	47	46	55
\$.01-1,000	38	25	32
\$1,001-\$10,000	91	84	85
\$10,001-\$50,000	64	80	65
More than \$50,000	15	20	17

CONCLUSION

Professional Development (PD) is a program of continuing education activities for teachers, administrators, and some classified staff aimed at improving teaching skills and increasing knowledge. The state provides funding to help districts pay for professional development programs, such as the cost of bringing in a speaker or paying the travel costs and registration fees for conferences. Professional development was established as one of the state's four categorical programs to ensure districts spend the funding only on professional development.

In 2015, the state provided about \$16 million for professional development. About \$3.5 million of that funding was dedicated to the online professional development program, while the remaining \$12.5 million was distributed to charter schools and school districts. The total was a decrease from previous years when about \$24.7 million was provided for professional development. The funding reduction was the result of 2013 legislation aimed at redirecting funding to public school employee health insurance. In 2015, Act 44 reduced the number of hours of PD required in the basic teacher contract from 10 days to six to mirror the reduction in funding.

Despite this change the overall number of teacher contract days did not change, leaving four days in the basic teacher contract that no longer have a specified purpose. The vast majority of districts indicated through the BLR's district survey that they are continuing to use those days as PD days for their teachers.

Districts and charter schools are allowed to transfer money between categorical funds, and in 2014-15, they transferred more than \$4 million of from other categorical funds to support professional development needs. Using the transferred funding, districts collectively spent about \$17 million on professional development.

The BLR's teacher survey suggests that significant numbers of teachers feel prepared to teach the Common Core State Standards in part due to the professional development they received. They appear to feel less prepared to ready students for the ACT Aspire, and some teachers expressed a desire for more professional development in this area. There is an impressive volume of evidence nationally that indicates peer observation of teaching and collaboration are vital to improving student performance, along with other established practices such as coherent and concentrated ongoing PD focused on content and skills directly relevant to individual teachers. However many of the surveyed Arkansas teachers said they never or rarely observe one another teaching. About 43% said doing so more often would be helpful. Nearly 70% of teachers said they meet in teams or according to specialty areas at least weekly.

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