

What is Lesson Study?

What exactly is Lesson Study? Well, to get started, we're going to talk about what's effective professional learning or professional development for educators.

There's four main components that it consists of. It should be intensive, ongoing, and closely connected to classroom practice. It should focus on student learning and address the teaching of specific curriculum content. It aligns with school improvement priorities and goals. And builds strong working relationships among teachers. Research has described these four components as supports for effective professional learning.

So, how does this relate to Lesson Study? Those four points are divided up into this graphic organizer. The first one: intensive, ongoing, and closely connected to classroom practice. One thing that's great about Lesson Study is that it is job-embedded PD. It occurs over a series of weeks; it's not a quick, two-day training. It's teachers meeting weekly. Another great aspect about Lesson Study is teachers get to choose what they want to work on—what they want to investigate. Which is fairly new to many PDs I've attended and ones I've seen where, typically, professional developments are very subject- or content-focused, or on specific standards; and in this case, teachers actually get to choose what they want to learn more about. And the third one—teachers research content and best practices specific to their instruction.

The second one—focusing on student learning—these phases, which we'll get into a little bit more in depth here, but you can see in each phase there is something focused on the student. For example, the first one, which is examine the data and identify a standard, you're looking at students' strengths—where they can grow. Phase 2, when you're planning, a lot of it has to do with anticipating student responses and predicting misconceptions that students may be coming with. And the Teach and Observe phase: there's a lot of data collected on what students are doing—not what the teacher's doing. And in Phase 4, Reflect and Revise—it's focused on how students understood the content that was presented to them in the lesson and if there's any revisions that can be made to help get them to the goals that have been set.

The third quadrant over here—aligns with school improvement priorities and goals. It's very easy to align Lesson Student to campus improvement plans because it hits on so many of these points: it's data driven; it's built to identify the gaps and close those gaps; it's teachers doing collaborative work and trying to figure out instructional strategies; and it's cyclical and has teachers being reflective, which is a key component of a lot of the improvement priorities and goals on campuses and the T-TESS that's come out.

The fourth one, building strong working relationships among teachers: Lesson Study is all about collaboration. Throughout the entire process, teachers are working together. There is not a time when teachers are by themselves. Every meeting is a group meeting, and they're collaborating. So, it's building those positive relationships, and kind of opening up the conversation around best practices and content knowledge, and all those things we want our teachers to be talking about.