

# **Professional Development for Middle Grades Teachers: Does One Size Fit All?**

by

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## **Abstract**

Teacher pre-service training and preparation, certification and licensure, and ongoing career-long professional development are critically important components in ensuring that America's middle-grade schools are staffed with highly qualified teachers. These components are particularly at issue for middle level schools where the majority of teachers do not have the types of specialized middle grades teaching certification and licensure necessary to specifically address the academic and developmental needs of young adolescents. Professional development is seen as a way to provide teachers with the knowledge and skills they did not gain in pre-service education. Unfortunately, the frequency and depth of most professional development currently provided to classroom teachers falls well short of meeting their needs. This study examines the professional development activities and needs of middle grades teachers in Arkansas, Louisiana, Michigan, and Mississippi. It discusses why the "one size fits all" approach to professional development is problematic and also stresses the importance of examining professional development needs from differing perspectives (e.g., administrator vs. teacher). Additionally, it recommends that professional development data, like student achievement data, can and should be disaggregated to provide more detailed information about the varying needs of sub-groups of teachers (e.g., certification type, years of experience).

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