

**Your Chance  
to Participate**

e-LEARNING FOR EDUCATORS:

## Improving Teacher Quality and Student Achievement through High-Quality, Standards-Based, Collaborative Online Professional Development

<http://www.bc.edu/efe>

### **Q** What is the e-Learning for Educators *Initiative*?

**A** The e-Learning for Educators Initiative is a program funded under the federal Ready to Teach grants. The goal of the initiative is to establish an effective and sustainable model of online professional development to address teacher quality needs and improve student achievement. The initiative is a collaboration amongst representatives of public broadcasting stations, state departments of education in eight partner states (AL, DE, KY, MS, MO, NH, PA, and WV), the international nonprofit organization Education Development Center, Inc., and the Lynch School of Education at Boston College.

### **Q** What is the e-Learning for Educators *Research Study*?

**A** An integral component of the e-Learning for Educators Initiative is a large-scale scientific research study being conducted by Boston College, which is designed to evaluate the effect of online professional development on teacher knowledge, teacher practices, and, ultimately, student achievement. The results from this groundbreaking study will directly impact policy and practice by providing insight about the types of professional development that are effective for improving teacher quality and student achievement.

WOW! What an experience. I have appreciated everyone's feedback and efforts to ensure no child is left behind. I've learned the importance of vocabulary instruction. The techniques, games, and organizers will create a nice learning cycle of vocabulary words.

—4<sup>th</sup> grade KY teacher

I understand the necessity of effective vocabulary study; however, I have not devoted the time and energy that I should. I plan to implement some of the many great strategies that we read about and discussed via the discussion board. This research study has been extremely helpful to me as a teacher.

—7<sup>th</sup> grade  
MS teacher

I have certainly expanded my knowledge on ratios and proportions and what needs to be developed in students for them to gain an understanding of what is a ratio, proportion and to be able to examine a problem to see if it is proportional or not. I can see now where and why some of my students struggle in trying to do proportions. I need to backstep and begin with building a more conceptual understanding and then working into the procedures.

—8<sup>th</sup> grade  
NH teacher

## Q Who is eligible to participate in the research study?

A The research study focuses on four grade levels/subject areas:

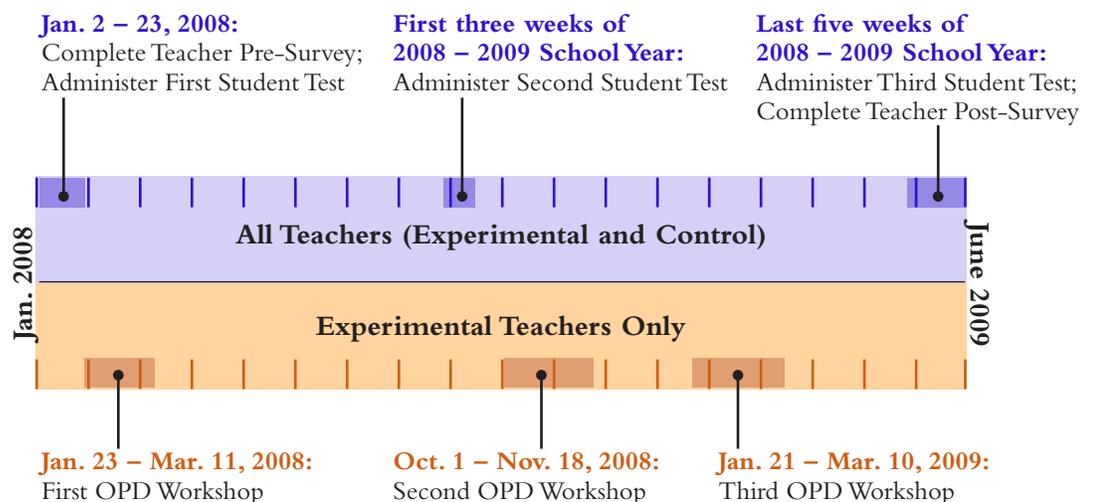
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts (ELA)
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade Mathematics
- 7<sup>th</sup> grade ELA
- 8<sup>th</sup> grade Mathematics

Any traditional classroom teacher of these four grades is eligible to participate. Teachers in inclusion classrooms are eligible. Special-education teachers, reading-only specialists, gifted teachers, technology teachers, teachers in alternative education systems, or other teachers of non-traditional classrooms are not eligible to participate in this study.

## Q How will the research study work?

A Teachers will commit to participate in the study, which spans three semesters: the spring semester of the 2007 – 2008 school year, and both the fall and spring of the 2008 – 2009 school year. Each teacher will then be randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group. Teachers in the experimental group will participate in a series of three online professional development (OPD) workshops, free of charge. Teachers in both the experimental group and control group will take two online surveys and administer three online tests to their students. The student tests must be administered in the classroom and take approximately one class period.

### Timeline



## **Q** What are the benefits for participating teachers?

**A** All participating teachers (experimental and control group) will receive instant detailed feedback from the online student tests. This feedback can be used to assess student learning and inform future instruction. All participating teachers will also receive a **\$300 stipend** upon the completion of all study requirements.

Teachers in the experimental group will be eligible for graduate credits and state-specific continuing education credits. Please visit our website for specific details about these credits.

Teachers in the control group will have access to the online professional development workshops, free of charge, for one calendar year after the study completes (June 2009 – June 2010).

## **Q** Who will be conducting the research study?

**A** Researchers at the Technology and Assessment Study Collaborative (inTASC) at Boston College will be conducting this research study. inTASC is a not-for-profit research group housed within the Center for the Study of Testing and Educational Policy, which has been conducting research on educational interventions for over twenty years. inTASC works collaboratively with schools, educational institutions, and businesses in research projects focusing on the applications of computer-based technologies to teaching, learning, and assessment. To date, research conducted by inTASC has had important impacts on large-scale testing policies and practices, including the implementation of computer-based state testing systems and computer-based testing accommodations.

I have learned a lot about Tier 2 words and graphic organizers. I won't look at vocabulary development as being dull or drab in the future.

—4<sup>th</sup> grade MO teacher

I liked this class because it was interesting to see the different viewpoints of teaching math in many different states. I was amazed at how similar we all seemed to feel that solving proportions was simply cross multiplying when the class began. It really did not matter if we were teachers with little experience or teachers with lots of experience. I learned that I need to spend more time on proportional reasoning and looking at proportional problems without numbers.

—8<sup>th</sup> grade KY teacher

## **Q** What online professional development workshops will be offered?

**A** The online professional development workshops were designed specifically for this research study, are based on state and national standards, focus on topics with which students typically struggle, and address both content knowledge and pedagogical techniques. Each workshop is seven weeks long and requires approximately 4 – 6 hours of work per week. All workshop requirements can be completed online. Workshops do not have a set meeting time and work can be completed at your convenience throughout the duration of the workshop.

Full syllabi for each workshop can be found on our website. Workshop availability is contingent upon continued funding from the USDOE Ready to Teacher grant. The series of courses in each grade level is:

- **4<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts**
  - Best Practices for Vocabulary Instruction in the Elementary Classroom
  - Promoting Reading Comprehension Skills in the Elementary Classroom
  - Teaching Writing in the Elementary Classroom
- **5<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics**
  - Using Models to Understand Fractions
  - Algebraic Thinking in Elementary School
  - The Complexities of Measurement
- **7<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts**
  - Best Practices for Vocabulary Instruction in the Middle School Classroom
  - Promoting Reading Comprehension Skills in the Middle School Classroom
  - Teaching Writing in the Middle School Classroom
- **8<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics**
  - Proportional Reasoning
  - A Conceptual Introduction to Function: Using Visual Models
  - Geometric Measurement

I plan to include time for students to practice using the manipulative to master the fraction solving process, then progress them through to the abstract problem solving procedure. At first this may seem more time consuming, but I think it will lead to less re-teaching, therefore lead to less time needed to master the concepts. I also feel this method will lend to reaching more students by meeting the needs of the poor math student and greater reinforcement in the higher math student, and maybe even the chance for learners to change their view of math in general, and enjoy the process of learning it.

—5<sup>th</sup> grade  
MO teacher

## **Q** How can I sign up or get more information?

**A** Full details can be found on our website: <http://www.bc.edu/efe>. The website also includes a registration form to submit if you are interested in participating in the study.

You can also contact the researchers directly with questions:

- General Information: [efe.research@bc.edu](mailto:efe.research@bc.edu)
- 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers:  
**Sheralyn Dash**  
[dashs@bc.edu](mailto:dashs@bc.edu)  
617.552.6230
- 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers:  
**Jessica Masters**  
[jessica.masters@bc.edu](mailto:jessica.masters@bc.edu)  
617.552.3574

Out of all the concepts I have taught this year, fractions seems to be the most difficult for students to comprehend. This class has helped reinforce many of the concepts of teaching I learned in my math classes in college. I really liked the online manipulative sites and plan on integrating them into my math curriculum next year. I think math is such an important subject and any way we can make it more fun and exciting is helpful. So many students say they “hate” math and I want to change that!

—5<sup>th</sup> grade UT teacher

I found that we have some of the same weaknesses in our use of vocabulary in the classroom. However, I find that after reading action plans of others, we seem to all have the same weaknesses. It makes me happy to see that our students will benefit from what we have learned in our class this summer. At the same time I have to feel bad for all of the students who do not have a teacher that has gone through this class. I wish you luck on putting your plan into action. I hope that I will have the time to follow through with all of my plan. If not at least the majority of it. My second goal will be to share this information with other teachers so their students will also benefit.

—7<sup>th</sup> grade MO teacher

