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Professional Development for Middle School Math and New Standards Curriculum: Current Experiences of Teachers and Administrators

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Professional Development for Middle School Math and New Standards Curriculum: Current Experiences of Teachers and Administrators

Abstract

In 2009, President Obama, in conjunction with the National Governors Association and the Council for Chief State School Officers, supported the federally adopted Common Core State Standards Agenda (Achieve.org, 2013). The purpose of this agenda was to increase standards for all students, with provisions for student achievement to be linked to teacher performance. The teacher performance connection created a need to better prepare teachers for the new standards curriculum. As teachers implemented the Common Core State Learning Standards for Mathematics (CCSSLM), they needed to develop a deep understanding of the new mathematical practices and skills. With the short timeline for implementing the Common Core State Learning Standards, effective professional development strategies needed to be thoughtfully planned. An understanding of best practices surrounding professional development for middle school mathematics teachers was essential. This qualitative study explored what professional development opportunities are most effective for implementing a new curriculum for middle school mathematics teachers. Data were collected and analyzed using three focus groups and a document review of professional development plans from selected school districts. Collectively, focus group participants shared their beliefs about what professional development opportunities and resources were available to support the implementation of the CCSSLM. The study resulted in recommendations based on themes that emerged from the focus groups for school districts, middle school math teachers, and policy makers to provide guidance on creating effective professional development opportunities aligned with Malcolm Knowles's adult learning theory (1990).

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Professional Development for Middle School Math and New Standards Curriculum:
Current Experiences of Teachers and Administrators

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