

 **AUDIO**  
4:14 min

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## Professional Development for Teaching Writing Effectively

Catherine D'Aoust  
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### Topic **TEACHING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BE EFFECTIVE WRITERS**

#### Highlights

- » Many kinds of professional development can support teacher use of evidence-based practices. They are best facilitated by literacy coaches, professional learning communities, and lesson study groups.
- » Teacher networks can provide in-person professional meetings and online networking through learning management systems.
- » In one district that developed its own learning management system, teachers posted questions online and received timely responses from other teachers who shared their resources and provided clarifications on different issues.
- » Implementation of evidence-based practices requires differentiation both within grades and between grades.

#### About the Interviewee

Catherine D'Aoust was the coordinator of English language arts, K-12, in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District in Mission Viejo, California, where she was responsible for implementing and monitoring a comprehensive district language arts program focusing on instruction in reading and writing in language arts and across content areas. She is the co-director of the University of California site of the National Writing Project, where she assists teachers in fostering their writing

abilities and enhancing their teaching practice in writing. Ms. D'Aoust is a contributing author to books on writing, including *Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process*, *Thinking Writing*, and *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom: An Introduction*.

## Full Transcript



🔊 00:04 My name is Catherine D'Aoust, and I am the co-director of the University of California, Irvine's writing project. I was a member of the expert panel for the IES Practice Guide *Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers*.

🔊 00:17 I think within the Practice Guide, there is a strong emphasis on the fact that writing is the most complex of all human mental activities. Reading this guide is the first step to improving teaching practice and lessening the complexity of teaching writing.

🔊 00:34 Many kinds of professional development support teacher use of the research-based strategies in this Practice Guide. This range includes in-services, book clubs, inquiries, classroom observations, professional learning communities, lesson study, and many more. This process is best supported through literacy coaches, professional learning communities, and lesson study, which bring teachers together to discuss effective practice.

🔊 01:01 These forms of professional development are usually coordinated by site or district leadership. Networks are a great way to enhance professional development for teachers, for they support teachers as they learn and extend their teaching practice using these research-based strategies.

🔊 01:18 Teacher networks can be established in real time, where teachers come together and discuss the challenges and successes of their implementations. These discussions provide opportunities to problem solve as well as to celebrate accomplishments.

 **01:31** For administrators, they also provide informal accountability for the use of new strategies or the refinement of existing strategies. Particularly important in these networks is the sharing between veteran and new teachers. Experienced teachers are knowledgeable oftentimes about these research practices and are able to draw upon their classroom experiences to help beginning teachers.

 **01:53** Networks are also enhanced through the use of learning management systems in which teachers come together through discussion boards to post their successes as well as seek answers to the implementation questions as they arise. Additionally, these systems can include teacher lessons, links to supportive websites, and videos showing these research-based practices in classrooms similar to the context of other teachers from their sites or within the district.

 **02:20** I've worked in a district that utilized a learning management system that provided a discussion board for teachers to share questions and responses about the implementation of classroom practices. I've seen and read responses from teachers as they have been challenged in implementing research-based strategies, where they have actually posted their questions and had responses from other teachers, both beginning new teachers as well as veteran teachers, either responding to the question with answers and strategies that they might use, or clarifying the use of a strategy, or possibly even clarifying the question even further.

 **03:02** As an example, a teacher might pose a question about collaboration and “how do you find time to conference with all of your students in your very busy teaching schedule?” And I've seen expert teachers then post a response about how they have managed their classroom and brought in collaboration to enhance their practice.

 **03:20** The discussions on these discussion boards are generally monitored by a literacy coach, someone who has expertise in the field, to make sure that the responses are directing teachers to practices that really will enhance instruction.

 **03:36** Application of these research-based strategies is context based. The depth of implementation of these strategies is going to differ based on the grade level of students. Additionally, students at the same grade level are often at different developmental stages. This means that the implementation of strategies in this guide are going to require understanding the differences in writing development of students of different grades as well as within a grade. Context-based implementation will require some differentiation in the use of the strategies.

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