



LEVERAGING PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE TEACHERS' RESEARCH USE IN THEIR PRACTICES

DARREN AGBOH, PH.D.
JUNE 2021

Insights from the Center for Research Use in Education

DATA POINTS

In this data point, we draw a national sample of ~3400 classroom and special education teachers from our *Survey of Evidence in Education* to examine the professional activities that teachers report using to connect research to their classroom practices. In this survey, we asked teachers to report the presence of 1) professional learning communities (PLCs), 2) instructional leadership teams, 3) instructional coaches, and 4) professional development on research use in their schools and districts (see Figure 1). Teachers who reported that a specific organizational structure was present in their schools/districts were then asked to report how often they used that structure to connect research to their practices over the past two years (see Figure 2).

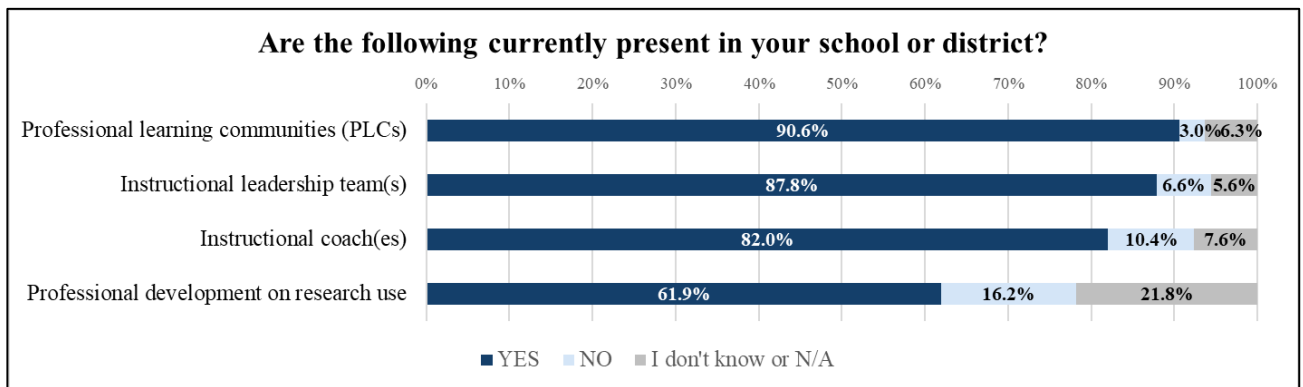


Figure 1: Professional activities that classroom teachers report are present in their schools or districts.

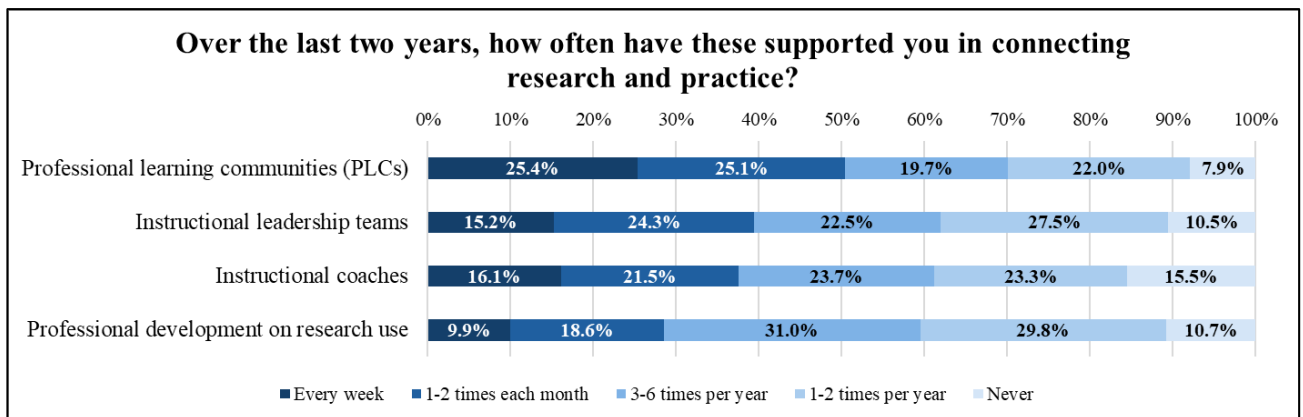


Figure 2: How often classroom teachers report that professional activities have helped them connect research to practice over the past two years.

According to our findings, 90.6% of teachers reported that PLCs are present at their schools. Of the teachers who report PLCs as present in their schools and districts, roughly 50% report using PLCs to connect research to their practice at least once a month, and 25.4% of teachers report using PLCs to connect research to their practices weekly. Additionally, 87.2% of teachers reported that instructional leadership teams existed in their schools, and 82% reported that instructional coaches were present. Nearly 40% of teachers reported using instructional leadership teams and coaches to connect research to their practices monthly. Professional development on research use was reported by 61.9% of teachers, with 21.8% of teachers reporting that they are unaware if such an activity exists in their schools or districts. Finally, the majority of teachers with access to professional development on research use report using this organizational structure in connecting research to their practices 3-6 times per year (31%), with 9.9% of teachers using this structure weekly!

To further understand teachers' use of these professional activities, we calculated the average number of times in a school year that elementary, middle, and high school teachers use these activities in connecting research to their practices (see Figure 3). On the average, elementary school teachers report using PLCs, instructional leadership teams, and instructional coaches each for roughly 11-12 times per school year. Middle school teachers report using PLCs and instructional leadership teams for roughly 10-11 times per school year and report using instructional coaches for roughly 9 times per school year. High school teachers report using PLCs roughly 12 times per school year, instructional leadership teams roughly 10 times per school year, and instructional coaches roughly 8 weeks per school year. Professional development on research use was reported as used roughly 6 times per school year, regardless of school level.

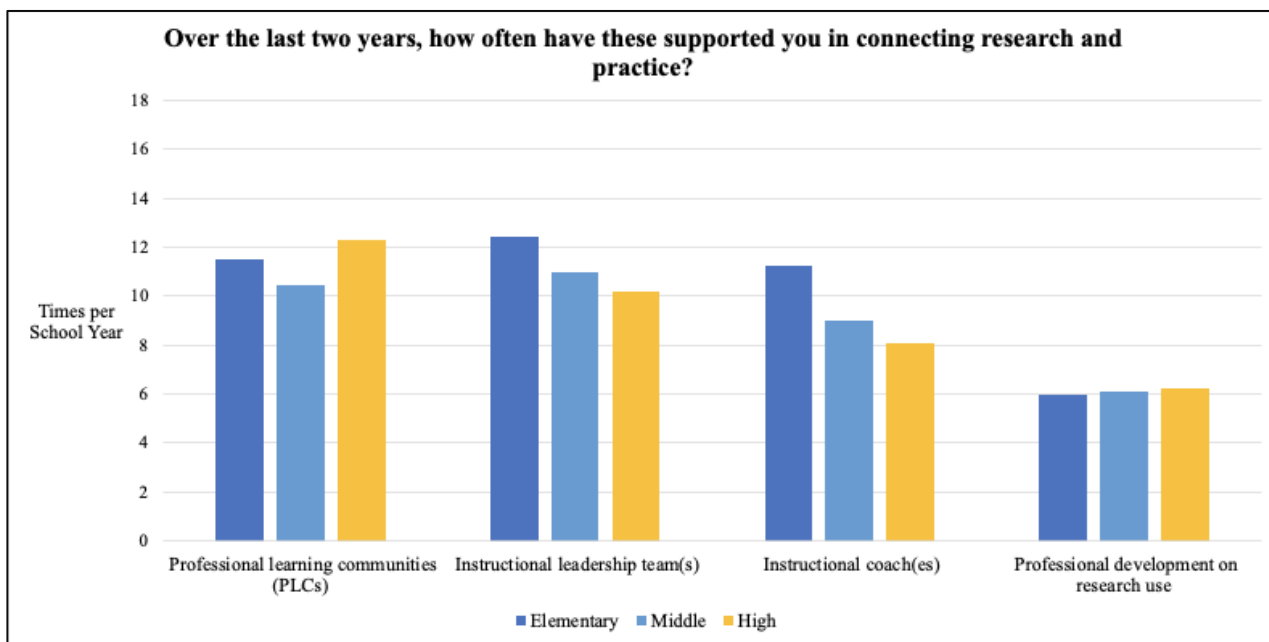


Figure 3: Professional development activities classroom teachers report utilizing to connect research and practice, by elementary, middle, and high school.

There are some limitations to these findings. These data are survey items, and thus have the potential for self-report bias. For example, teachers in this sample may differ in their definitions of what constitutes professional development on research use, or what it means to connect research and practice. Because of this, teachers could possibly have different interpretations of the survey items in ways that may have biased their responses.

Based on survey results, most teachers and schools report using professional activities to connect research to practice on a regular basis, more than once a month, during the school year. These data clarify perceptions of the frequency that elementary, middle, and high school teachers use each of these professional activities to connect research to practice. Given this information, what might principals and education leaders do to encourage teachers to make classroom decisions based on education research?

To learn more about CRUE and Research4Schools, find us:

www.research4schools.org

 @Rsrch4Schls