**research question:**

**How can professional development for teachers address health and academic disparities?**

The Minnesota Partnership for School Connectedness (MPSC) is an innovative program that seeks to increase connections between sixth grade teachers and their students, resulting in increased student engagement for the most disengaged learners.

MPSC innovated traditional professional development through:
- A year-long approach
- Responding directly to teacher needs
- Routinely addressing issues of equity and diversity
- Providing professional coaching
- Conducting classroom observations and delivering timely feedback

MPSC introduced changes in teacher practice and ways of identifying and responding to students’ needs, particularly the needs of the least engaged students.

School districts that participated in MPSC changed:
- How teachers are observed in the classroom
- How student behaviors are addressed
- How the unique needs of students of color are recognized and acknowledged
- How new programming is identified to address the needs of both students and teachers alike

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**MPSC Training Framework**

The Framework supports school connectedness and student engagement by developing teachers’ relationship building skills and expanding their repertoire of teaching strategies.

**Innovative Professional Development for Teachers**
- 3-day Summer Training Institute with cohort
- Four day-long trainings during school year
- Classroom observation, feedback and coaching
- Attention to school context via on-going relationships with school and school district administrators

**Teacher Outcomes**
- Improved capacities for building relationships with students
- Increased skill in providing engaging instruction
- Enhanced focus on engaging the most disengaged learners
- Increased professional support from administrators

**Outcomes for Disengaged Students**

In general, students initially classified as engaged maintained high and fairly steady levels of engagement.

Students classified as disengaged during the Fall became significantly more engaged during the school year.

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**Teacher-Student Relationships**

**School Connectedness**

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**Student Outcomes by Level of Engagement, MPSC Student Survey**

Year 3 ● N=764 Students

Results are based on repeated measures ANOVA with covariates, including gender, race, free/reduced lunch and school. Differences in slope for engaged vs. disengaged students are significant.

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**Further exploration ...**
- Improved academic performance
- Reduced health risk behaviors
Professional Coaching

Professional coaching involves one-on-one meetings with the teachers that focus on teacher reflection, problem-solving, and growth. Research by Joyce and Showers (2002) demonstrates if the objective is to impact teaching practices in the classroom, coaching is an essential component of professional development.

Classroom AIMS Constructs

**Atmosphere**

- Sense of community;
- Democratic classroom;
- Interest, effort vs performance;
- Feedback

**Management**

- Behavioral self-regulation

**Instruction**

- Engaging content and activities;
- Instruction individualized;
- Thinking process modeled/taught

**Student Engagement**

- Behavioral indicators

Benefits of MPSC-like Teacher Professional-Development Model

- Accommodates existing educational approaches (as compared to specialized health programming).
- Evidence demonstrates in-class observation and coaching accelerate uptake.
- Productive way to address individual and systemic bias towards youth of color, disengaged learners and other special populations.
- Simultaneously supports students and teachers to address multiple health and academic issues: cultural exclusion, disparities, disconnection, disengagement, and unsafe environments.
- Aligns with healthy youth development research base.
- A single year intervention impacts multiple cohorts of students in trained teachers’ future classrooms.
- Resource efficient: likely to have high ROI.
- Ongoing relationships with school district and administrators extend reach and impact.

Prerfessional-Coaching Outcomes

Select classroom AIMS changes over 4 observations

Year 2 ▪ N=9 Teacher Fellows

**indicates significance at p<.01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom AIMS Constructs</th>
<th>Training Components</th>
<th>Outcomes (% successful participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theory &amp; Discussion</td>
<td>Knowledge (10%) Skill Demonstration (5%) Use in Classroom (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus Demonstration in Training</td>
<td>30% 20% 0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus Practice &amp; Feedback in Training</td>
<td>60% 60% 5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus Coaching in Classroom</td>
<td>95% 95% 95%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Joyce & Showers, 2002

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