

UTAH

UTAH UTILIZES EDUCATORS TO CREATE COMMUNITIES OF LEARNERS AND LEADERS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

The Utah Office of Education created a program in which educators take individual responsibility for professional learning to better understand the standards and impact the classroom. When Utah adopted the Common Core State Standards, the Utah Office of Education (USOE) wanted to ensure their educators had the content knowledge to understand and implement the standards to impact students. After researching what types of professional learning models worked, USOE created the Utah Core Academy in 2012.

THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SERIES

The Professional Learning Series is the evolution of the original Core Academy. Core Academy was a summer program that included four days of face-to-face courses that first focused on English language arts and mathematics and later included science and social studies after the first two years. USOE organized the Academies to be in 15 geographically diverse locations across the state to ensure accessibility. During the Core Academy, USOE enabled teachers to be facilitators and also a part of the design process. USOE saw professional development as an opportunity to expand the world of a teacher thus creating a cadre of teacher leaders in Utah. The Core Academy began with design teams of 5-6 educators who created instructional modules for specific learning tasks focused in content areas. This rigorous process created intensive facilitation opportunities where educators could work on their facilitation skills, create a solid understanding of the standards and help guide the design process. Through the Core Academy, educators formed cross school and cross district relationships which helped educators from different schools share and support others. The cross pollination built a positive unintended network of educators.

The Core Academy changed its name to the Professional Learning Series in the spring of 2015. Due to the needs of the educators, the Professional Learning Series offers more components online, and more ongoing opportunities throughout the year. USOE incorporated online components from the Teaching Channel and the School Improvement Network and housed it on the Utah Education Network. One of the reasons why USOE moved this to an online structure was to encourage educators to continue to work on their craft throughout the year, not just in the summer. Having opportunities to learn in an online setting also provides more flexibility to educators who want to improve but are not able to carve out time for face to face meetings. The [Utah Education Network](#) houses interactive webinars, self-guided modules, and teacher-facilitated courses and provides educators the flexibility to browse through webinars and modules independently or in educator communities.

GOING FORWARD

USOE continues to elevate the profession of teaching by offering the Professional Learning Series to educators who seek out continuous improvement and by providing leadership opportunities for teachers. Since 2012, thousands of educators have participated in Utah's Professional Learning Series. Although numbers declined in 2014, incoming data suggests the redesign of the series is better meeting the needs of teachers in 2015. One reason for the decline is perhaps the fact that some districts have since created their own networks based on the foundation of this state-led initiative. USOE continues to plan other ways to provide development to Utah educators and elevate the teaching profession.

For more information, please visit Utah's [Professional Learning Series](#) site.

