

What Happens When Teachers Take Charge of Their Professional Learning?

Every year, states and districts allocate significant resources toward professional learning (PL). However, teachers don’t always feel it is relevant or useful. One potential solution is to allow teachers to select PL that aligns with their needs and the needs of their students. **The Texas Center for Educator Excellence (TxCEE) at Region 18 Education Service Center (ESC 18) developed the Math Instructor Professional Learning Autonomous Network (MiPLAN) to explore this idea.**

MiPLAN allowed Grades 3–8 math teachers to choose their own PL opportunities. Teachers were expected to complete at least 24 hours of PL throughout the year to count toward state mandated requirements. The goal was to improve teacher experiences in PL, and enhance math instruction and student achievement. The American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) partnered with TxCEE to test the impacts of MiPLAN on teacher and student outcomes.

MiPLAN

reimbursed districts

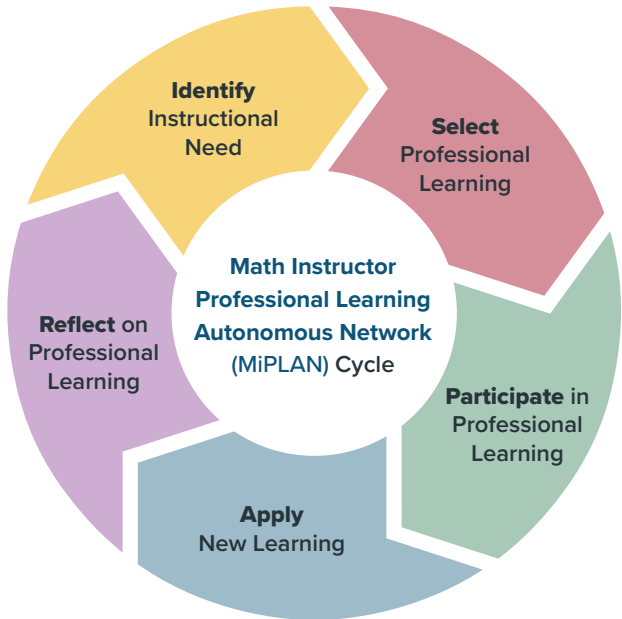
up to **\$8,000**

per teacher **for**

their chosen

PL activities.

The **5 steps** of MiPLAN:



Who Took Part

A lottery determined which schools started MiPLAN right away and which waited until the next school year to start the program. The study had two cohorts of schools across the 2022–23 and 2023–24 school years.

54

Texas schools

342

teachers

21,210

students in Grades 3–8

27

MiPLAN schools

27

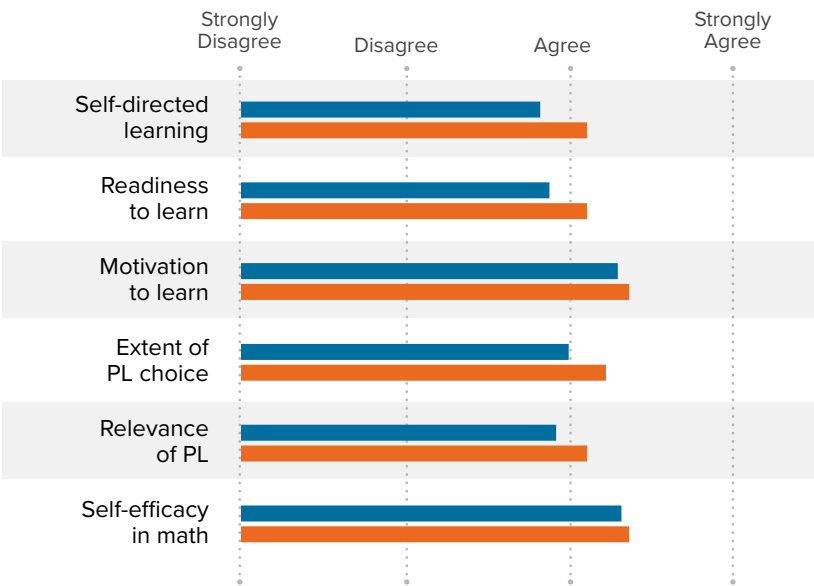
Comparison schools

What We Asked

What is the impact of MiPLAN on teachers’ attitudes and beliefs and their math instruction? Data sources - Teacher surveys - Classroom observations	What is the impact of MiPLAN on student math achievement? Data sources State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in math	What are teachers’ and district leaders’ perceptions of and experiences with MiPLAN? Data sources Teacher and administrator interviews
--	--	---

What We Found

MiPLAN teachers felt more positively about themselves as learners and their PL than **teachers in comparison schools**



MiPLAN improved teacher attitudes and beliefs around professional learning

Teachers at schools that participated in MiPLAN more often agreed or strongly agreed that their PL was relevant and reported greater motivation to learn new instructional strategies, while responses in comparison schools were mixed with more teachers selecting “disagree.” The program did not have either positive or negative impacts on teacher self-efficacy in math instruction.

Math teaching and student achievement did not change

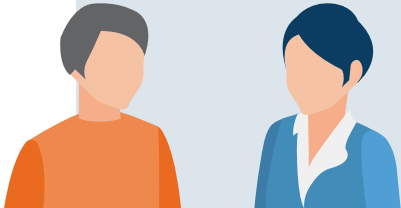
While MiPlan did not lead to significant improvement in teacher math instruction or gains in students’ math scores on the state assessment, it also did not result in any negative impacts on these outcomes. In other words, allowing teachers to choose their own PL did not hold unfavorable consequences.

Teachers and administrators differed in their views on teacher choice in professional learning

Overall, teachers appreciated the flexibility that MiPLAN offered them and the chance to select PL that was specific to their individual needs. However, some teachers noted that they did not always have the chance to make their own selections as the program intended, and administrators felt that they wanted more voice in PL decisions. In addition, while the program was intended to replace mandated PL, in most settings MiPLAN-supported opportunities were an add-on that teachers implemented on top of their required PL.

“
I wanted to choose things that I knew I needed . . . This is my first year teaching [this grade level], and I have never done small groups in guided math before, so I needed to choose something that would address that.
— Teacher

I would like more influence [on the selected PL] . . . When [teachers] look at the list of available PDs [professional developments], they might not even know what they need and our students need . . . I was trying to respect [teacher-driven selections] but would love more influence.
— District administrator
”



Insights for Practice

When teachers were empowered to take charge of their own PL, they felt better about their PL and about themselves as learners. While we did not find impacts on student achievement or overall classroom practices, these impacts may take longer to materialize. In addition, there may be other program impacts not tested within this study. For example, it is possible that improving teacher satisfaction could reduce feelings of burnout and support teacher retention. A future investigation could consider how supporting teacher choice in PL may impact these other kinds of outcomes.

