

Why GAO Did This Study

DODEA provides pre-kindergarten through grade 12 education to about 70,000 children of military service members and Department of Defense (DOD) civilian employees serving domestically and overseas. Similar to civilian school districts, DODEA requires its 5,800 teachers to engage in professional learning that helps them hone their knowledge and skills to better help students meet academic standards.

Senate Report 117-39 and House Report 117-118 include provisions for GAO to assess professional learning at DODEA schools. This report describes: DODEA's professional learning approach, results of DODEA teacher surveys, and how DODEA has addressed barriers teachers anticipated when implementing professional learning in the classroom.

GAO analyzed about 130,000 closed-ended responses from DODEA's professional learning teacher surveys that covered summer 2018 through the end of 2021, the most recent period available. GAO also analyzed a nongeneralizable sample of open-ended survey comments on anticipated implementation barriers for the 2021-2022 school year, the most recent period available. In addition, GAO reviewed relevant federal laws, regulations, and agency guidance, and interviewed agency officials. GAO held four discussion groups with DODEA officials, which were selected for their familiarity with professional learning at DODEA, and held a separate civilian discussion group with professional learning specialists familiar with DODEA's professional learning standards.

View [GAO-22-105464](#). For more information, contact Jacqueline M. Nowicki at (617) 788-0580 or nowickij@gao.gov.

K-12 EDUCATION

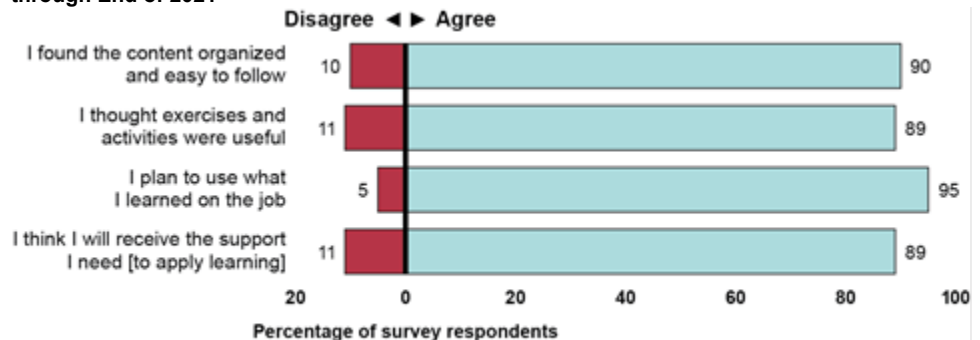
Teachers Generally Responded Positively to Professional Learning at DOD Schools

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA), which educates children of military families, has implemented a unified approach for offering teacher professional learning to facilitate implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). These standards are intended to help students succeed in the global economy. According to DODEA officials, having a common set of academic standards and a consistent approach to professional learning helps ensure educational continuity for DODEA's mobile student population. Key components of DODEA's approach include annual professional learning plans, consistent training on standards, and evaluation of professional learning results.

DODEA teachers generally reported positive views of agency-wide professional learning events, according to GAO's analysis of closed-ended teacher survey data from summer 2018 through the end of 2021. For instance, the large majority of respondents reported that professional learning events were useful and that they planned to use what they learned on the job (see figure).

Teacher Survey Responses to DODEA-Wide Professional Learning Events, Summer 2018 through End of 2021



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) teacher survey data. | GAO-22-105464

However, DODEA teachers reported some anticipated barriers when implementing professional learning in the classroom, which DODEA officials have acknowledged and taken steps to address. The most common barriers GAO identified in its analysis of open-ended teacher survey comments were related to time and resources. DODEA officials recognized these barriers and described their responses to them.

- Time.** Officials acknowledged that the pace of CCRS implementation has been challenging for some teachers. To support them, officials said the agency implemented the standards over multiple years and professional learning specialists provided classroom-based assistance.
- Resources.** Officials said they understood that teachers may not have access to all desired technological resources, but said the agency's goal is to support teachers within existing resource constraints. For instance, district professional learning specialists said they have developed guidance to help teachers use available technology resources, and provide just-in-time technological assistance.