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## Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development Frequently Asked Questions 2004

### 1. Why administer a survey about teacher participation in high-quality professional development?

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) requires that each state report annually on teacher participation in high-quality professional development. Further, the *Bridge to Excellence Act* requires Maryland school districts to explain their plans for teacher professional development as one of the cross-cutting themes in their master plans. In addition to meeting the Federal reporting requirement, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) anticipates that the survey results can help districts and key stakeholders review teacher professional development programs and initiatives and identify opportunities for improving them.

### 2. What does the survey ask about?

The survey asks questions about teachers' experiences in five types of professional development. The categories and the professional learning opportunities that they include are displayed in the following exhibit.

- ***Graduate courses***, including courses at the masters, doctoral, or advanced studies level available in any public or private institution of higher education in Maryland or any other state;
- ***Workshops, institutes, and academies***, including activities that last at least a day. These activities include events that are planned and scheduled in advance and may take place during the regular school schedule or after school, on the weekend, or during the summer. They may also be residential programs that last for several days or a few weeks. These events may take place in schools, the district office, some other central facility, or on a college or university campus.

- ***Coaching and mentoring programs***, including the experience of working with a coach or mentor as part of a new teacher induction program or a formal coaching or mentoring program sponsored by the district or some other entity.
- ***Job-embedded professional development***, including activities that take place during the regular school day or before or after school. Typically they involve working with colleagues, including school-based professional development staff.
- ***Conferences and professional meetings***, including events such as annual meetings of professional associations or other organizations, as well as special purpose events that may occur only once. In many cases, these events will take place out of the district or the state.

The survey asks teachers who report that they participated in one or more of the categories of professional development to indicate the extent to which their experiences reflect the presence or absence of four clusters of quality indicators. The quality indicators are listed in the left hand column in Exhibit 1, which appears on the next page.

The survey also asks teachers to look across all of their professional development experiences and indicate the extent to which these activities include consistent messages and whether they have the kinds of support they need to implement new practices. Finally, the survey asks teachers several questions about their teaching experience and current assignments. The survey does not ask any questions of a personal nature nor does it seek information that would permit identifying individual teachers.

**3. Does the survey ask teachers to rate the quality of their professional development experiences?**

No. This survey asks teachers to report about the frequency of their involvement in a variety of activities which are associated with high-quality professional development and about the kinds of benefits associated with their involvement.

**4. Is this survey aligned with the new Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards.**

The survey addresses many of the professional development standards and quality indicators, although it is not possible to rely on a survey to collect data on all of the standards and indicators.

## Exhibit 1 Professional Development Quality Indicators

PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING					
Indicators:	Very Involved		Involved	Seldom Involved	Not Involved
■ Determine content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Determine learning activities					
■ Set expectations for outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Participate in evaluation of course as professional learning					
LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES					
Indicators:	Frequently		Sometimes	Seldom	Never
■ Explanations of key concepts and theories	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Demonstrations of skills and strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Opportunities to practice skills and strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Feedback and assessment of understanding of key concepts and theories	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Feedback and assessment of mastery of skills and strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
FOLLOW UP					
Indicators:	Frequently		Sometimes	Seldom	Never
■ Ongoing opportunities for conversations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Explanations/presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Demonstrations of skills and strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Feedback and assessment on mastery of skills and strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
BENEFITS					
Indicators:	Great Extent		Some Extent	Limited Extent	Not at All
■ Increased knowledge of subject(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Increased academic rigor in instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ More differentiated instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
■ Ability to contribute to planned improvement efforts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>or</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**5. Aren't there other ways to collect data on teacher participation in high-quality professional development?**

After reviewing existing MSDE and district procedures for collecting data and reporting on teacher participation in professional development, MSDE concluded that those procedures do not provide the necessary information. Further, MSDE concluded that collecting and reporting these data from existing systems would represent a significant burden on districts. Finally, after consultation with assistant superintendents and directors of professional development, MSDE determined that by asking teachers directly about their experiences in professional development, the survey would provide the most comprehensive information and would create the least burden. MSDE also concluded that the information generated from the surveys would have a variety of uses in districts and at MSDE.

**6. How will MSDE use the survey data to report on teacher participation in high-quality professional development?**

MSDE has developed a data-based definition of high-quality professional development which is depicted in the arrangement of the black boxes in Exhibit 1. As this arrangement suggests, teachers are counted as having participated in high-quality professional development if their responses to survey items about one or more of the five categories of professional development are as follows:

- They had to report being “very involved” or “somewhat involved” in *any two of the four* activities and decisions included in questions about planning and decision making in each category of professional development; **and**
- They had to report that the professional development “frequently” or “sometimes” included *each of the five learning activities specified in survey questions about the learning opportunities*; **and**
- They had to report that follow-up “frequently” or “sometimes” included *each of the four activities specified in survey question about follow up*; **and**
- They had to report that they benefited “to a great extent” or “to some extent” in *each of the four areas specified in the questions about benefits*.

**7. Will districts and providers be held accountable for meeting the overall standard for high-quality professional development reflected in this definition?**

This definition and the new *Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards* articulate a vision and framework for assessing the quality of professional development and for designing professional learning opportunities that will result in improved instruction and improved student learning. All stakeholders who are committed to improving instruction and student learning should focus on the definition of high-quality professional development and the professional development standards as guidelines for their efforts. They should be accountable for maintaining this focus and for consistently

striving to improve the quality of professional development and making it easily accessible to all teachers. How stakeholders, especially districts and schools, maintain this focus and the strategies they pursue in improving the quality of professional development will depend on their priorities and needs.

**8. Is the survey administered to all public school teachers in the state?**

Yes.

**9. Are teachers required to complete the survey?**

No, but they are strongly encouraged to do so. As noted above, the results of survey can be very useful in improving existing professional development and planning new learning opportunities that are suited to teachers' needs and that will help them to be more effective in working with their students.

**10. How is the survey administered?**

In most schools and districts the survey is administered online. Teachers receive an electronic message from the State Superintendent of Schools requesting that they complete the survey. These messages contain a link to the survey and teachers can click on the link to get to the survey. Once teacher completes the survey, it is be automatically transmitted to the survey contractor, where they are maintained in secure electronic files. No surveys are transmitted to MSDE or to districts.

**11. How can teachers and others get help in completing the survey or obtain information about the survey?**

They can call the survey administrator at a toll-free number. Teachers and others can also send email messages to the survey administrator. All questions are answered within 24 hours and usually much sooner.

**12. What responsibilities do principals have in administering the surveys?**

Principals receive information about the survey and are asked to inform teachers about it. In addition, the ideal process of survey administration includes setting aside some time at faculty meeting or similar activity for teachers to visit a computer lab to complete the survey. Finally, principals are asked to encourage all teachers who do not complete surveys at the initial request to do so at their earliest convenience.

**13. What responsibilities do district staff have in administering the surveys?**

District staff serve as liaisons to the survey team and facilitate communications about the survey within their districts, especially with principals and others who may have a role in administering the survey. Once districts have received the survey reports, the liaisons may be responsible for organizing and facilitating review and discussion of the survey results and their implications for improving teacher professional development programs and initiatives.

**14. What do the district reports include?**

In 2004, the reports to the districts present the survey results for each district. A variety of exhibits display overall participation patterns as well as information about participation in each category of professional development. The reports also present information about participation by teachers at different grade levels (elementary school, middle school, high school), by subject area of teaching assignments, and by years of experience. The reports present information about the extent to which teachers' experiences are reflected in the indicators of quality. The district reports also include copies of the teacher survey annotated with the estimated response frequencies for each of the items, a copy of these *Frequently Asked Questions*, and a technical appendix.

**15. Do schools receive reports on school-level results?**

No. The relatively small number of teachers in individual schools makes school-level data unreliable and reporting these data also makes it difficult to protect the anonymity of individual respondents.

**16. What happens when survey response rates are relatively low?**

In 2004, the overall statewide response rate is approximately 55 percent. In some districts, the response rates exceed 75 percent. In other districts, the response rates are much lower. Using information about years of experience and type of certification collected through the surveys and from MSDE, the survey team is able to account for non-respondents and generate reliable estimates of response patterns for all teachers in the state and in each of the 24 districts. The analytic procedures used to generate these estimates are described in the technical appendix to the district reports.

**17. Who receives the district reports?**

In 2004, these reports will be sent to the Superintendents and to the district liaisons. A report on the statewide survey results will be available in December 2004 on the MSDE websites, <http://mdk12.org> and <http://marylandpublicschools.org>.

**18. How should districts use the survey results?**

Districts can use the survey results in a variety of ways. They can use the results to engage all key stakeholders (e.g., teachers, principals, district staff, institutions of higher education) in a comprehensive review of existing professional development programs and initiatives. The results can also guide planning and resource allocation for new initiatives. Survey data at the indicator level can help pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and these data can also inform setting specific targets for improvement and allocating or reallocating resources to support the improvement. Districts can also use the survey results to communicate about their progress in addressing the new *Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards* and in achieving goals and objectives included in their master plans. In the end, districts should recognize that the survey data and reports are suggestive but not definitive. They provide important information about overall patterns in teachers' professional development experiences, but they do not provide information about individual programs or initiatives.

**19. How will MSDE use the survey results in working with districts?**

MSDE will use the survey results to assess needs for statewide professional development programs and initiatives and to align these programs and initiatives with local priorities. As appropriate, MSDE will assist districts in using the survey results to review existing professional development and in planning new activities.