DPE

Question: What are the professional development needs of Austin Independent School District's (AISD) teachers and campus administrators?

Response:

Overview and Purpose

Annually, AISD administers staff surveys for the purpose of gathering information critical to district and state program evaluation and improvement. The primary data sources for this summary report are the AISD Campus Staff Climate and Teacher Surveys, and the AISD Employee Coordinated Survey. The Climate and Teacher Surveys were administered to AISD staff in Fall 2008, and the Employee Coordinated Survey was administered to staff in Spring 2009. The summary data provided in this report are based on survey questions provided to teachers and school administrators, including professional development needs (teachers and school administrators) and mentoring activities (new teachers only). The purpose of summarizing these results is to guide the district's professional development planning and activities.

Key Findings

The survey results for 2008–2009 were similar to those found in the 2007–2008 survey. The most commonly requested professional development topics for teachers were as follows:

- motivating students
- knowledge of resources, technology, and materials
- differentiated instruction
- managing student behavior.

Among campus administrators, the most commonly requested training topics were as follows:

- differentiated instruction
- academic rigor
- use of district technology resources for instruction.

These findings have been provided to district staff and should be taken into consideration in the district's strategic plan for implementing professional development activities.

Teacher Mentoring Activities

In the teacher survey, 18% of teacher respondents indicated they were being mentored during 2008–2009 (Table 1). These teachers were in either their first or second year of employment at AISD as a teacher, and they were assigned to an experienced mentor teacher to guide them throughout the year.

Table 1. Survey Respondents Who Were Mentored or Not Mentored, 2008–2009

Do you have an assigned mentor?	Number	Percentage
Yes	903	18%
No	4018	82%

Source. AISD teacher survey records, 2008

When the mentored teachers were asked to estimate how much time per week, on average, their mentors provided guidance to them, about 32% indicated their mentor spent 1 to 30 minutes (Table 2). Approximately 20% reported their mentors spent 31 to 60 minutes with them weekly, while 26% reported their mentors spent 1 to 5 hours with them each week. Only 10% reported their mentors spent more than 5 hours per week with them. Finally, 12% indicated their mentor did not spend any time with them, indicating that some new teachers are not receiving the guidance they need.

Table 2. Mentored Teachers' Report About Time Spent With Their Mentors, 2008–2009

On average, about how much time per week does your AISD mentor provide through one-on-one team meetings, staff development, emails, phone calls, modeling lessons, etc.?	Number	Percentage
None	106	12%
1 to 30 minutes	282	32%
31 to 60 minutes	179	20%
1 to 5 hours	225	26%
More than 5 hours	91	10%

Source. AISD teacher survey records, 2008

In a separate question (Table 3), almost two-thirds of mentored teachers indicated their mentors spent an adequate amount of time addressing the following topics with them during their time together: planning for instruction, classroom environment, instruction and communication, and professionalism.

Table 3. Mentored Teachers' Opinions About Whether Their Mentors Spent Adequate Time on Specific Topics, 2008–2009

My mentor and I have spent an adequate amount of time working on…..	Agree or strongly agree %	Don't know or NA %	Disagree or strongly disagree %
Planning for instruction (e.g., using IPGs, creating lesson plans)	71	4	25
Classroom environment (e.g., classroom management, organizing physical space)	72	4	24
Instruction and communication (questioning and discussion techniques)	72	4	24
Professionalism (e.g., reflecting on teaching, maintaining accurate records, communicating with families)	76	3	21

Source. AISD teacher survey records, 2008

Teacher's Professional Development Needs

Based on data from the Fall 2008 teacher survey, Tables 4 and 5 show the percentages of teachers who indicated they would like additional professional development activities about various topics. Table 4 shows responses by whether or not teachers were being mentored. Table 5 shows responses by school level. In each case, the topics mentioned most often by teachers as areas in which they would like to have additional support and training included the following:

- Motivating students
- Knowledge of resources, materials, and technology
- Differentiation
- Managing student behavior
- Designing classroom activities

Table 4. Professional Development Needs of Mentored and Non-Mentored Teachers, 2008–2009

It would be helpful to me if I received more support and training in the following areas. Topic*	Mentored teachers %	Non-mentored teachers %	All teachers %
Motivating students	36	27	29
Knowledge of resources, materials, technology	36	25	27
Differentiation (activities, groups, lesson structure)	38	23	26
Managing student behavior	33	16	19
Designing classroom activities	30	15	18
Engaging students in learning	27	15	17
Organizing classroom physical space	22	14	15
Communicating with families/caregivers	22	13	15
Using questions and discussion techniques	19	14	15
Assessment methods and criteria	24	11	14
Creating a classroom environment of rapport and respect	21	11	13
Assessing student learning	21	11	13
Knowing my students (academically, culturally, developmentally)	15	10	11
Using Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs)	18	7	9
Principles of learning (POL)	5	4	4

Source. AISD teacher survey records, 2008
* Indicates significant differences between mentored teachers and non-mentored teachers on all professional development needs, with the exception of POL

An analysis of differences between teachers at elementary, middle, and high school levels found that several professional development topics were mentioned more often by teachers at one school level than by teachers at other levels (Table 5). For example, middle and high school teachers more often than elementary teachers mentioned the following topics: motivating students and managing student behavior. Elementary teachers more often than middle or high school teachers mentioned the need for training on differentiation.

Table 5. Teachers' Professional Development Needs, by School Level, 2008–2009

It would be helpful to me if I received more support and training in the following areas.	Elementary school teachers %	Middle school teachers %	High school teachers %	All AISD teachers %
Motivating students*	24	32	36	29
Knowledge of resources, materials, technology	27	24	24	27
Differentiation (activities, groups, lesson structure)*	27	19	22	26
Managing student behavior*	17	20	21	19
Designing classroom activities	17	17	19	18
Engaging students in learning*	14	21	19	17
Communicating with families/caregivers*	13	14	18	15
Organizing classroom physical space*	16	11	14	15
Using questions and discussion techniques*	15	14	12	15
Assessment methods and criteria*	14	10	12	14
Creating a classroom environment of rapport and respect*	11	14	17	13
Assessing student learning*	14	10	10	13
Knowing my students (academically, culturally, developmentally)*	9	13	13	11
Using Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs)*	9	6	11	9
Principles of learning (POL)	4	3	5	4

Source. AISD teacher survey records, 2008
* Indicates significant differences between teachers by school levels for that professional development need.

Based on results from several years of data from the Spring Employee Coordinated Surveys, Table 6 shows that since 2006, strategies for differentiated instruction and integration of technology in the classroom have been two of the most requested professional development needs among teachers.

Table 6. Top-rated Teachers' Professional Development Topics, 2006 Through 2009

Professional development topic	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %	2009 %
Strategies for students with special education needs	45	44	44	57
Strategies for English language learners (ELLs)	34	28	49	43
Designing curriculum extensions and modifications for diverse learners	43	46	28	39
Integration of technology for teaching core subject areas	40	43	33	49

Source. AISD Employee Coordinated Surveys, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009

Campus Administrators' Professional Development Needs

  Principals and assistant principals were surveyed about their professional development needs in their role as the instructional leader of their campus. Table 7 shows differences between elementary, middle, and high school administrators regarding their professional development needs. The topic selected most often by all principals (55%) was training focused on academic rigor in all curriculum areas, followed by differentiating instruction for students with special education needs (52%), differentiating learning for English language learners (ELLs) (51%), differentiating instruction for gifted/talented students (40%), supporting teacher leaders (40%), and professional learning communities (PLCs) (37%). The topic chosen most often by elementary administrators was training about academic rigor in all curriculum areas (55%). The topic chosen most often by secondary administrators was differentiating instruction for ELLs (67%).

Table 7. Campus Administrators' Professional Development Needs, 2008–2009

Professional development topic	Elementary administrators %	Secondary administrators %	All campus administrators %
Training about academic rigor in all curriculum areas	55	58	55
Differentiating instruction for students with special education needs	53	50	52
Differentiating instruction for English language learners (ELLs)	47	67	51
Differentiating instruction for gifted and talented students	40	42	40
Supporting teacher leaders	38	50	40
Professional learning communities (PLCs)	38	33	37
Using district technology-based resources to help make use of test data	34	33	34
Distance learning or professional development activities for principals that are offered online	25	42	28
Communicating effectively with parents, PTAs, and community members	25	42	28
Item analysis to use the results of benchmark testing	26	33	28
Communicating effectively with campus staff	23	42	26
Retaining teachers	23	25	23
Overview of Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs)	19	33	22
Campus crisis management	17	42	22
Budgeting and other financial issues	15	25	17
Highly qualified teacher requirements	15	17	15

Source. AISD employee coordinated survey records, 2008

Table 8 reflects campus administrators' professional development needs reported most often from 2006 to 2009. These topics include differentiation, academic rigor, technology, and professional learning communities.

Table 8. Top-rated Campus Administrators' Professional Development Topics,
2006 Through 2009

Professional development topic	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %	2009 %
Differentiation (differentiated instruction) for student learning needs	75	74	79	**
Academic rigor in the curriculum	50	71	69	55
Technology to use student achievement data	41	54	61	34
Professional learning communities	*	54	51	37

Source. AISD Employee Coordinated Surveys, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009

* Indicates this item was new beginning with the 2007 survey

** Indicates this question was written as differentiation only in the 2006 through 2008 surveys, and then it was rewritten as three separate questions in the 2009 survey: differentiation for special education students (52%), ELLs (51%), and gifted/talented students (40%).