Professional Development Needs Assessment Summary, 2007-2008

The information summarized here comes from the 2007–2008 Austin Independent School District (AISD) Teacher Survey[1], which was sent to AISD teachers, and the 2008 AISD Employee Coordinated Survey, which was sent to a sample of campus principals and teachers.

Recommendation 1: Provide teachers with support and training about instructional techniques and resources (i.e., especially technology) they can use in the classroom.

In the teacher survey, 33% of teachers reported they needed professional development opportunities related to integrating technology with instruction. Furthermore, 24% of teachers wanted training about motivating students, and 23% wanted more training about differentiation (e.g., activities, groups, lesson structure). Another 22% wanted training related to their knowledge about resources and materials as well as about designing classroom activities.

Recommendation 2: Prior to the start of school, and continually throughout the school year, provide teachers who are new to AISD with support and training about key instructional techniques and resources.

In the teacher survey, higher percentages of mentored teachers (i.e., teachers new to AISD within the past 3 years) than of non-mentored teachers (i.e., at AISD more than 3 years) reported they needed professional development opportunities and support related to topics such as knowledge about resources and materials, motivating students, differentiation, designing classroom activities, and managing student behavior. For example, 39% of mentored teachers, compared with 18% of non-mentored teachers, indicated they needed support and training about knowledge of resources and materials. A higher percentage of mentored teachers (35%) than of non-mentored teachers (20%) wanted support and training about designing classroom activities. Thirty-three percent of mentored teachers, compared with 16% of non-mentored teachers, needed help in managing student behavior.

Recommendation 3: Provide teachers with professional development support tailored to their school level.

When teachers were asked about their training needs, differences were noted by school level (elementary and secondary). For example, a greater percentage of elementary teachers (35%) than of secondary teachers (31%) reported wanting more training and support about integrating technology with instruction. A greater percentage of secondary

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[1] Cornetto, K. & Doolittle, M. (2008). E-Team Report: In what areas of professional development do teachers say they would like additional support and training? (DPE Publication 07.49). Austin, TX: Austin Independent School District.

teachers (30%) than of elementary teachers (21%) reported needing support and training about motivating students. A greater percentage of elementary teachers (25%) than of secondary teachers (20%) expressed a need for training about differentiation.

Recommendation 4: Provide teachers with professional development opportunities that focus on instructional strategies to help students with educational needs.

Almost half (49%) of teachers responding to the employee coordinated survey reported they needed more professional development opportunities to learn about instructional strategies to help English language learner (ELL) students meet state academic standards. In addition, 44% indicated they wanted professional development sessions to learn about instructional strategies to help students with special education needs (e.g., dyslexia or learning disabilities).

Recommendation 5: Provide teachers with training about the use of student assessment tools and data analysis to guide instruction, and provide support for integrating technology in instruction.

When asked about other instructional strategies in which teachers felt they needed additional training, 52% reported they needed help with developing student assessment and evaluation tools, and 48% wanted help with the integration of technology in the teaching of core subject areas. Approximately 41% reported they wanted more training about how to use student achievement data in their instructional planning.

When asked what type of training would help teachers improve implementation of the district's curriculum or instructional planning guides, 43% of teachers reported they would like training about item analysis to use results of benchmark testing to inform planning for future instruction.

Recommendation 6: Provide administrators with professional development opportunities that focus on how to differentiate instruction for students' varying education needs.

When campus administrators were asked what professional development opportunities would help them better support teachers, most (79%) chose training about differentiating instruction for students with unique education needs (e.g., ELLs, students receiving special education services, and students receiving advanced academic services). Approximately 69% said they and their teachers would benefit from receiving training about academic rigor in the curriculum, and 61% wanted training about the use of the district's technology-based resources to better use test data. About half (51%) wanted more training about professional learning communities.