GOING VIRTUAL!

The Status of Professional Development for K-12 Online Teachers

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Results from Phase One of the Going Virtual! Study Series

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to explore the practices and models of professional development being used in K-12 virtual schools and programs across the United States, and to establish base data for future studies. We conducted a national survey of online K-12 teachers, administrators and professional development trainers during the 2006-2007 academic year and specifically targeted those working with fully online programs and courses.

Although research about online professional development for adults in general, and teachers in particular, has been an emerging field of inquiry over the past five to ten years, very little is known about empirically identified practices and methods for effectively training K-12 virtual teachers and the variety of contexts in which they teach. We do know that most state-led programs have developed extensive professional development (PD) for their own teachers, but that the amount of time in PD varies greatly by program, from none to 270 hours per year. We also know that most programs use a mix of online and face-to-face training and that topics include pedagogical techniques, use of technology tools, policies and guidelines, and course design. Finally, we know that due to lack of state policy, many programs have created their own quality assurance programs to ensure quality teaching and quality of program (Watson & Ryan, 2006). Preliminary results from this study adds to this emerging knowledge base of PD for state-led programs by looking more in-depth and across multiple contexts of K-12 online schools and programs.

The framework for this study is grounded in an exploration of the contextual nature of professional development for K-12 online teachers. As such, this report provides a national snapshot and answers two main questions:

- What practices and models of teacher professional development are being used in K-12 virtual schools and programs across the country
- What are the contextual factors that influence the design of professional development?

We identified a wide range of practices used in K-12 online teacher professional development. Data was reported on the who, when, and how of PD, as well as the design and content of PD. To better understand context, we sorted much of the data using an emergent framework based on school or program model. In sorting the data using this framework, we identified some shared and some very distinct trends:

- **Amount of Training:** More than 90% of teachers reported that training had been provided or made available to them, and this percent was fairly consistent regardless of the model or program.

- **Credit for Training:** While 60% of teachers reported receiving some type of graduate, CEU, or professional credit with their training, 57% reported the training didn’t meet state requirements for certification or were unclear about meeting state requirements.

- **When PD Occurs:** The highest teacher-reported period when PD occurred was during the first year (61%). Forty percent (40%) of teachers reported receiving PD each year after the first year.
• **PD Prior to Teaching Online:** 62% of teachers and 26% of administrators report teachers receiving no training prior to teaching online. Supplemental programs reported the highest percentage of training prior to teaching online (38%).

• **Format of PD:** Training sessions are delivered in a variety of formats, with online training being the most popular at 48%, hybrid at 31%, and face-to-face at 9%. It should be noted that 12% of teachers reported that face-to-face was the only form of PD they had received.

• **Who Provides PD:** The majority of training is being provided by the school or program, regardless of the model (70% teachers, 47% administrators). Organizations are the next highest provider, then universities. A small percentage of teachers and administrators reported the district providing training.

• School-wide models reported the highest use of school-based training (70%), with only 10% of PD being handled by the larger organization. Contrast this to consortium models which reported 35% of training at the school-level, and 29% being provided by the organization.

• **Philosophy, Goals, Policies:** Overall, administrators described a “professional” orientation to the philosophy, goals, or policies that underscore their training programs, such as gaining the necessary skills and knowledge to do the job. Other emphases included improving student learning and/or outcomes, meeting standards, and the focus on the design of multimedia as an aspect of online teaching.

• **Types of PD:** 69% of teachers reported participating in ongoing training sessions, and 52% in limited one-time sessions. 34% had attended summer workshops.

• When comparing ongoing training to one-time training sessions, school-wide models used more one-time sessions (36% vs. 33%), while virtual and charter school models used more ongoing training (37% vs. 25%).

• **Common themes** across some models regarding design of PD included an emphasis on “building community” and interaction, use of a train-the-trainer model, tiered training to address needs of advanced teachers, and attendance at professional conferences and participating in social networks as forms of PD.

• **PD offerings** ranged on a continuum from “we don’t have a training program” to “over 30 professional development courses.”

• **Peer mentoring** is a commonly reported form of PD (68% teachers, 82% administrators, 85% trainers), although several teachers reported inadequacies with their peer coach. Virtual school programs reported the highest use of peer mentoring (78%), while consortium models reported the lowest use of peer mentoring (60%).

• **Individualization of PD** based on prior experience was reported most often by charter school programs (28%), and reported least often by district wide models (5%).
• **Guidelines:** Administrators reported relying most heavily on state guidelines (30%), as well as self-developed guidelines (28%) to guide development of PD.

• **Content of PD:** 75% of teachers reported receiving training in *foundational knowledge* in the field of online teaching.

• The highest reported *technology tool* training was in asynchronous tools (77%) and multimedia presentation tools (66%). The lowest reported training in technology tools was the use of design tools (26%).

• The highest reported *facilitation strategies* training was in meeting the needs of multiple learning styles (78%), and engagement and motivation in online learning (67%). The lowest reported training in facilitation strategies was in differentiated instruction based on data analysis (41%).

• The highest reported *lesson design* training was in multimedia design principles (55%). The lowest reported training in lesson design was the design of syllabi (21%).

• **Sequence of Training Topics:** Many respondents reported the use of an initial training session to introduce teachers to the features of the learning management system and content in the system. A variety of options to continued training were mentioned, including opportunities both internal and external to the school.

• **First-Year Topics:** Highest reported content covered in first-year training included knowledge of field of online teaching (63%), asynchronous communication tools (63%), LMS tools (63%), and time management strategies (63%). Least report topics included design tools (9%), graphic design principles (9%), and presentation tools (9%).

• **Second-Year Topics:** In the second year of training, the highest reported content by trainers were knowledge of the field of online teaching (70%), asynchronous communication tools (70%) and synchronous communication tools (70%). Least emphasis was given to graphic design principles of online lesson (20%), and instructional design principles (20%). In contrast to year 1, 60% of trainers reported teaching multimedia presentation tools in year 2.

• **Open ended comments** from participants reflected both positive statements, as well as issues and challenges, ranging from “Superior training and support. Much more than I expect to use” to “I don’t feel our training was adequate. There was so much more I had to learn by trial and error. A good part of our training was spent on learning things that did not apply to my job at the school setting (being a homeroom teacher).”

This first phase of the Going Virtual! research series addressed the need to investigate the status of PD for online K-12 teachers across the country. The data from this phase provides the foundational knowledge to inform the next phase of the study in determining not only what knowledge, skills and dispositions online teachers currently possess, but more importantly, the unique needs as expressed by teachers themselves.
BACKGROUND

The Growing Need for Professional Development for K-12 Online Teachers

The expansion in online or virtual education opportunities for students in elementary and secondary grades continues at an astounding rate. An estimated 1,000,000 high school students participate in online classes (O’Gorman, 2005). It is suggested that every state now has some form of "cyber" or "virtual" school operating within its boundaries (Long, 2004), with 38 states having either state-led online programs, policies informing online education, or both (Watson & Ryan, 2006). Forces fueling the expansion include funding shortages, outdated facilities (Clark, 2001; Fulton, 2002), and policy initiatives supportive of expanded opportunities for alternative routes to education (Hassell & Terrell, 2004; U. S. Department of Education, 2004; Web-Based Education Commission, 2000). Particularly relevant is the National Educational Technology Plan (2004) and its emphasis on e-learning as one of the key issues facing federal, state, and local education agencies with recommendations to:

- Provide every student access to e-learning.
- Enable every teacher to participate in e-learning training.
- Encourage the use of e-learning options to meet the No Child Left Behind requirements for highly qualified teachers, supplemental services and parental choice.
- Explore creative ways to fund e-learning opportunities.
- Develop quality measures and accreditation standards for e-learning that mirror those required for course credit. (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p.42)

The unprecedented explosion of online courses has resulted in increased demand for online teachers. Who are those teachers and how are they learning to teach online? And perhaps more important, how does one successfully teach online? More often than not, we find a lot of new online teachers who are struggling. Often, regular classroom teachers are asked to teach in an online environment with little or no prior experience, and with limited training. As a result, several states, as well as corporations supporting online schools, are attempting to address these questions by developing competencies for online teachers. As an example, guidelines have been developed by the National Educational Association (NEA) (2006a; 2006b), and the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) (2003; 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; 2006d). The SREB guidelines have also been adopted by the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL) (2007) but with the addition of content to address 21st Century skills.

However, along with these emerging competencies and standards is also a call for additional empirical research on effective professional development for K-12 online teachers (Dawley, 2007; NEA, 2006; Rice, 2006). While higher education has a more developed research base on best practice in online teaching due to the longer implementation cycle of online classes in university settings, the same cannot be said for the K-12 arena. As a result, educators and policymakers designing competencies for K-12 teachers currently rely on the research base from higher education and on the personal experience of trainers and educators in K-12 online education. This reliance may result in unintended negative consequences. While there are some consistencies between effective teaching in higher education and K-12 education, such as providing timely
feedback, and while there is value to the personal input of experienced online teacher trainers, there are also undocumented needs of K-12 online teachers due to the lack of empirical research in the field, the multiple unique contexts of K-12 online schools, and the unique and differing needs of young children versus those of adult learners.

**Models of Teacher Professional Development**

Traditionally, most models of professional development are based on a stage model, wherein the professional teacher moves through stages of cognitive development such as novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert level (Berliner, 1994; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Sternberg & Ben-Zeev, 2001). Although these models may vary in the number of stages and nature of each stage, they are all similar in that they emphasize the growth of the teacher in fixed sequences or stages in regard to both knowledge and skill acquisition, and have been criticized (Dall' Alba & Sandberg, 2006) for:

- Their lack of empirical evidence of effectiveness,
- Focusing on cross-sectional studies versus those investigated over time,
- The absence of adequate explanations for learners who fail to reach expert status,
- Overlooking the importance of contextualized training versus acquisition of skills and knowledge outside of embodied practice, and
- Overlooking the professional skill being developed in favor of a focus on the stages of acquisition.

To address these criticisms, Dall' Alba and Sandberg (2006) propose an alternative model of professional development emphasizing a step-wise progression of growth, on both horizontal and vertical dimensions. Whereas their horizontal dimension represents the practical knowledge and skills typically accounted for in traditional stage models (but not in a stage-like fashion), their proposed vertical dimension takes into account the variations of, and in, practice with practical knowledge and skills. The term "embodied practice" is used to describe this inclusion of both dimensions in the delivery and evaluation of professional development. Larreamendy-Joerns and Leinhardt (2006) address this as "epistimetic engagement"—learning does not occur in isolation from the context in which newly acquired knowledge will be used.

As we see in the figure, teacher 1 is a teacher who has continued to learn additional skills and knowledge; however, her variation of knowledge and skills in her given context has not changed. Contrast that to teacher 2 who has moved both horizontally in her knowledge and skill base, as well as vertically in her ability to adapt those knowledge and skills to her given teaching context. These forms of variation in teaching practice can occur for historical, social, or contextual reasons. Because online schools vary widely in their design and implementation, Dall’Alba & Sandberg’s proposed alternative model of professional development provides an analytic framework for not only understanding...
the online teacher's knowledge and skill development, but for examining that development in the contextual perspective of a particular online school model.

**Going Virtual! Study Series**

The proposed research agenda for this series is designed to allow exploration of the contextual nature of professional development for K-12 online teachers. The agenda will consist of three distinctive phases of data collection and analysis outlined below:

**Current Phase**

**Phase 1: Descriptive**  
*The Status of Professional Development for K-12 Online Teachers*

Phase One examines the status of professional development for K-12 online teachers. What practices and models of teacher professional development are being used in K-12 virtual schools and programs across the country? What are the contextual factors (such as school philosophy, goals, state policies) that influence the design of that professional development? Questions guiding this phase of the development include items related to demographics and current practice:

1. What are the demographics of K-12 online teachers?
2. How many teachers are receiving training?
3. When does training occur?
4. How often does training occur?
5. What is the sequence of training?
6. What types/models of training are used?
7. Does training meet certification requirements?

**Remaining Phases of Study**

**Phase 2 – Descriptive**  
*Identifying the Unique Needs and Challenges of K-12 Online Teachers*

Phase Two will identify the unique needs and challenges of K-12 online teachers, and how they vary according to the context of the school or program model, and amount of prior teaching experience. Guiding questions for this phase of research will include:

1. What content, methods, and strategies for teaching online in K-12 are needed and desired?
2. How do these needs vary compared to regular classroom instructors?
3. How do the content, methods, and strategies vary across models of online K-12 schools and programs?
4. What delivery methods for professional development are preferred by online teachers?
5. What type of instructional supports are K-12 online teachers seeking in their professional development training? (i.e., course design, time on topic, trainer qualities, use of mentors)

6. What challenges do teachers and trainers face in participating in professional development? (i.e., time zones, technology availability)

Phase 3 – Evaluative

Effective Professional Development of K-12 Online Teachers

Phase Three of the research will focus on the outcomes of various professional development models in terms of the ability to meet the unique needs of K-12 online teachers, skill progression and variations in impact on teaching practice. Tentative questions for this phase are listed below, are expected to evolve further based on formative data collected in prior phases.

1. What level of alignment is demonstrated between various professional development models and practices and the articulated needs and challenges of K-12 online teachers?

2. To what extent do professional development models and practices meet the needs and challenges of K-12 online teachers, as measured by variations in impact on teaching practice and identified skill progression?

3. What key themes are emerging in training K-12 online teachers, based on alignment of needs met and amount of impact on teaching practice?

4. How might these key themes inform policy, practice, and future research of training K-12 online teachers?
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

In this study, a non-random purposive sample of 259 online K-12 stakeholders from virtual public schools, programs and organizations across the United States completed a comprehensive survey delivered via the web. The respondents represent a cross section of teachers (167), administrators/site coordinators (61) and professional development trainers or directors (15), from 41 different schools or online programs in more than 30 states. Administrators consisted of principals, assistant principals, superintendents, heads of school, directors, CEOs, technology coordinators, and others in supervisory roles, and represent significantly more than 1,200 teachers in total. See Appendix A for a complete list of participant school and program affiliations, as well as a detailed breakdown of participants’ state of employment.

Two main questions were addressed: “What practices and models of teacher professional development are being used in K-12 virtual schools and programs across the country?” and “What are the contextual factors (such as school philosophy, goals, state policies) that influence the design of that professional development?” This report addresses specific questions guiding this phase of the development, including items related to demographics and current practice:

1. What are the demographics of K-12 online teachers?
2. How many teachers are receiving training?
3. Is prior teaching experience considered in training design?
4. When and how often does training occur?
5. Describe the school philosophy and goals towards learners, curriculum, and instructional methods.
6. What is the sequence of training?
7. What types/models of training are used?
8. Does training meet certification requirements?

Participants were enlisted through a variety of means. A link to the survey was posted (twice) on the discussion forum for the North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL). The NACOL clearinghouse was searched and individual emails were sent to online K-12 school and program administrators and educational technology or distance learning state level administrators from all 50 states. In addition, known K-12 online teachers, administrators, and trainers were contacted through email.
DETAILED SURVEY FINDINGS

This section provides findings in the key areas outlined below:

- School or Program Model Affiliation
- Demographics
- Professional Development: Who, When, and How?
- Professional Development Types
- Professional Development Content
- Open-Ended Comments

School or Program Model Affiliation

A major factor driving data analysis for this study is the development of an analytic framework for considering context. One obvious contextual influence is school or program affiliation. In this study, respondents indicated affiliations with a variety of school and program models. These are illustrated in the table below. Models have been organized into a tiered framework which emerged from past research (Rice, 2005; Watson, 2005) and the results of this study. The framework is based on the fact that the vast majority of programs will fall under one of the first two categories; Virtual School or Supplemental Program. Most will also meet the criteria of either a State-wide, District-wide, or School-wide accountability system, and some may meet additional criteria for Consortium or Charter School. In many cases the data presented in the following sections will be analyzed by respondent group (i.e. teacher, administrator, and trainer) as well as by responses based on affiliation with a program or school model.

SCHOOL OR PROGRAM MODELS REPRESENTED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School or Program Model Affiliation</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virtual School (students attend full time and move through grades)</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental Program (students attend part-time and/or receive credit from another institution)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-wide (the program or school is accountable to and managed by the state)</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-wide (the program or school is accountable to and/or managed by the district)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-wide (the program or school is accountable to and/or managed by the school)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consortium (courses and/or teachers are shared across state, district, or school borders; subgroup of virtual schools or supplemental programs)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter School (sub-group of virtual schools; can be state-wide or district-wide)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (see below)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages will not calculate to 100 because of dual associations (n=255). Other responses included UMOHS—Kaplan Virtual Education (n=2), private not-for-profit digital content provider, all models, and contract school.
Demographics

Experience and Education of Survey Respondents

The experience and education of the teachers, trainers, and administrators who responded to the survey can be seen in the two tables below. The majority of all respondents have been involved in online education for 5 years or less (93%). In general, they have between 1 and 15 years experience in the field of education overall with over half of the teachers reporting a master’s degree or better. Sixty-three percent of teachers have five or more years of total teaching experience, with 35% reporting 10 or more years of teaching experience.

### HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN AN ONLINE TEACHER, ADMINISTRATOR, OR TRAINER?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Trainer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>166</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Percent</strong></td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&gt;5 years and ≤ 10 years</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&gt; 10 years and ≤ 15 years</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&gt; 15 years and ≤ 20 years</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td>178</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### HOW MANY TOTAL YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN A TEACHER, ADMINISTRATOR, OR TRAINER?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Trainer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>66</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Percent</strong></td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&gt;5 years and ≤ 10 years</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&gt; 10 years and ≤ 15 years</strong></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&gt; 15 years and ≤ 20 years</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&gt; 20 years and ≤ 25 years</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>&gt; 25 years and ≤ 30</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td>178</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Response Count</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade Levels and Subject Areas Served by Survey Respondents

Teachers and administrators indicated that all grade levels are served by their programs with lower numbers at the earlier grades, and peaking at the 8th, 9th, and 10th grade levels as illustrated in the chart and tables below.
When examining responses to subject areas taught, the majority of teachers indicated that they teach general elementary subjects. In addition, the number of teachers who indicated they teach History, English, Mathematics, and Science was fairly evenly divided.

### SUBJECT AREAS TAUGHT (TEACHERS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Elementary</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History/Social Studies</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE/Health</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Languages</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multidisciplinary/Integrated Course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Other responses included, Life Skills/Preparing for College, Journalism (n=3), Psychology (n=2), ESL, Counselor (n=3), Academic Achievement, Driver’s Ed, Technology, Reading (n=3), PACE (Program for All Children to Excel) is a program for children that did not do well on state tests. It included weekly online lessons performed via Adobe Connect Professional.

### Professional Development: Who, When, and How?

**Teachers who Participated in Professional Development**

Teachers were asked if they had received professional development specifically related to K-12 online instruction and, similarly, we asked administrators if the teachers under their supervision had received training. Of the 167 teacher respondents, 157 (86.3%) responded they had received training and 25 (13.7%) responded they had not received training. Of the 61 administrators, 52 (89.7%) indicated that their teachers had received training, four (6.9%) responded that their teachers had not received training and two (3.5%) responded that they didn’t know.
Eighty-three percent of teachers, and 59% of administrators reported that training is required by their school or program. In addition, of the 25 teachers who responded that they had not received training, 15 of those indicated that training had been made available to them. Of the six administrators who responded that their teachers had not received training, two indicated that training had been made available to them.

**ONLINE K-12 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (TEACHERS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have you received training related specifically to K-12 online instruction?</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is training required by your school or program provider?</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Question 1: n=182, question 2: n=179

**ONLINE K-12 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ADMINISTRATORS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have any of the teachers in your school, program or organization participated in training related specifically to K-12 online instruction?</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does your school or program require teachers to participate in professional development training specifically related to K-12 online instruction?</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Question 1: n=58, question 2: n=58

Similar results were revealed looking across model of school or program. Significantly more than 80% of respondents from all models indicated that they had either received training or that training had been provided\(^1\). The highest response (92.7%) for this question was reported by those who reported an affiliation with Supplemental Programs.

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\(^1\) **Note:** Each response (based on the model) was treated separately. For example, if a person responded that his or her school or program was “Virtual school” and “School-wide”, that person’s responses to the remaining questions would be counted for both models. Therefore, all counts and percentages described for model of school or program reflect responses, and not individuals, as a single person’s responses could be counted in more than one model.
Few states currently require professional development related specifically to online K-12 instruction for online teachers; Alabama, Kansas, and South Dakota (Watson, 2006). However, we were interested in determining if the training online teachers received might facilitate advancement within their profession by providing certification or university credits. Details are included in the tables below.

### CERTIFICATION AND CREDITS ASSOCIATED WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (TEACHERS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Did the training you received qualify for or meet your state requirements for recertification?</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Did the training you received provide CEU, graduate, or other professional development credit through a university or other crediting institution?</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Question 1: n=147, question 2: n=151

### CERTIFICATION AND CREDITS ASSOCIATED WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (TRAINERS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How much of the training you offer qualifies for or meets state requirements for certification?</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How much of the training you offer provides CEU, graduate, or other professional development credit through a university or other crediting institution?</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Question 1: n = 13, question 2: n=13

### When Professional Development Occurs

The highest teacher-reported period when professional development occurred was during the first year (61%). Professional development each year of teaching was reported by more than 40% of teachers. Thirty eight percent of teachers also reported receiving professional development prior to teaching in an online school or program. Conversely, this means that 62% report they did not receive any professional development prior to teaching online. However, administrators report that 74% of the teachers under their supervision received professional development prior to teaching online.
When the data is sorted by program or school model, those associated with Supplemental Programs report the highest occurrence of professional development prior to teaching online (38.1%), almost double the responses for Virtual Schools and Charter Schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Before Teaching Online</th>
<th>During 1st Year</th>
<th>After 1st Year</th>
<th>Each Year</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virtual School</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplemental Program</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State-Wide</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-Wide</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Wide</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consortium</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter School</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How Professional Development was Delivered**

Training was delivered in a variety of formats, with the vast majority of respondents (teachers, administrators, and trainers) reporting a mixed approach across individual training sessions, i.e. online training, either alone or in combination with other forms of training (Online 46%, Hybrid 27%, Face-to-Face 27%).

However, when looking at teacher reported data, 12% reported receiving training delivered only in a face-to-face format (see figure).
Who Provided Professional Development?

Responsibility for providing professional development appears to fall on the school or program with which respondents were affiliated, as reported by a majority of teachers and administrators. Teachers also reported receiving some of their training through university courses.

When the data are sorted by model, the majority of respondents indicated that their affiliated school or program has been primarily responsible for providing professional development, although differences were noted when comparing School-Wide (70%) and Consortium (35%) models. Not the emphasis on School-Wide professional development at the school/program level versus Consortium professional development at the organizational level.
The Design of Professional Development

Philosophy and Goals

Administrators were asked to describe the philosophy, goals, or policies that underscore the training program for their local school or program. Most administrators described what could be labeled as a “professional” orientation to the professional development of teachers. This approach involves giving the teacher the skills, capability, and knowledge in order to effectively teach online, and that training be ongoing. Representative comments included:

“Teaching is teaching. But, teaching online requires a different set of skills and a different attitude towards student responsibility and teacher guidance.”

“The training program is focused on orienting a new instructor to the program. It is also focused on continuous training that will help to enhance the instructor’s capabilities and knowledge level.”

“All staff [members] are strongly encouraged to participate in conferences, workshops, courses, and similar activities relative to their assignments and continued professional growth.”

Additional areas mentioned by more than one administrator included the need for interaction between teachers and students, to improve student learning, and to meet state/national standards, and the focus on the design of multimedia as an aspect of online teaching. Representative comments include:

“Communication /interaction with students serves as the primary goal…Differentiation is key in ensuring that all students are successful.”

“…The ongoing training is required to keep teachers current, develop strong relationships between teachers, and to allow for knowledge-sharing between teachers.”

“…To improve our program and improve our student success rate with online learning. Be prepared for national standards and/or state-mandated training for online teachers.”

“Most of the training is designed to enhance online learning through multimedia production.”

“The big push right now is to engage students with interactive [activities], movies, gizmos, that they are not passive learners.”
**Professional Development Types**

Teachers were asked to indicate the types of professional development activities in which they participated. Ongoing Training Session received the highest number of responses as shown below:

The highest reported response, when the data was sorted by model, was also Ongoing Training from those affiliated with Virtual Schools (37.2%) and Charter Schools (37.2%). In addition, there are a higher number of responses for One-Time Sessions by those affiliated with School-Wide programs.
Teachers were asked to provide the number of each training opportunity, directly related to online instruction, that they participated in. The highest reported responses indicated participation in at least one graduate course (42.2%), two limited, one-time sessions (29.3%), one summer workshop (37.7%), and six ongoing training opportunities (26.2%).

**NUMBER OF TEACHER REPORTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of training opportunities</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer Workshop</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Course</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing Training</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited One-Time Session</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments on Professional Development Types**

To provide more insight into the specific attributes of professional development opportunities for teachers, we asked both teachers and trainers to provide a detailed description through open-ended responses. Due to the variety of training models, programs, and options, this open-response question provided a plethora of means by which online teachers are receiving professional development. Common themes reported include:

- An initial training session, either face-to-face or online, to familiarize teachers with the school or program, and the features of the particular learning management system used by the program.
- Ongoing training sessions are typically offered and/or required throughout the year. Ongoing training may be handled directly by larger schools or programs, while some schools allow teachers to receive professional development through options external to the school.
- Many reported an emphasis on the need to “build community” among teachers, students, and/or parents, as an aspect of training.
- Larger organizations reported the use of a train-the-trainer model wherein training was received by trainers at the organizational level who then returned to their regions or local contexts to provide training, implying that organization training must be contextualized to meet various state requirements.
- Some organizations are reporting the use of “tiered” professional development models wherein experienced online teachers have the opportunity to receive advanced training.
- Several respondents reported the use of professional conferencing and social-network activities, such as attending webinars, as an accepted form of professional development in their schools.

**Continuum of Professional Development**

Training models ranged on a continuum. Representative comments illustrating that continuum include:
“We don’t have a training program.”

“2 orientation workshops on-line.”

“We did an online quiz and test that took about 1 week to complete.”

“Four-day workshop for 8 hours a day.”

“2 days 4 times a year.”

“Summer workshop that lasted one week. Online classes that last from 4-6 weeks.”

“Mostly college courses that lasted for 3 hours one night each week, or summer courses that were 3 hours, 2 days/week.”

“…We average 5-6 staff training sessions per year, approximately 16-20 days annually.”

“Offerings vary from 1 day f2f and 4 weeks online to 2 days f2f and 6 weeks online, to monthly f2f and 18 weeks online.”

“15 week online graduate course in K-12 online teaching.”

“Over 30 professional development courses for educators, administrators, paraprofessionals, site-based council community members, counselors, etc. Most courses are 7 weeks in length and offer 12-24 hours of CEU credits.”

**Mentoring or Peer Coaching**

We were also interested in determining the extent to which mentoring, peer coaching, and individualized training were considered in professional development opportunities. Sixty eight percent of teachers, 82% of administrators, and 85% of trainers reported the use of mentoring or peer coaching strategies. If a respondent indicated “other,” their responses generally indicated either some form of mentoring was available, was being developed, or the availability of a less formal form of mentoring.
Responses sorted by school or program model indicate high use of mentoring or peer coaching strategies by virtually all programs or schools with a low of 60% for those affiliated with Consortiums.

**IS MENTORING OR PEER COACHING PART OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?**
(SORTED BY MODEL - TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS & TRAINERS)

- Virtual School: 78.3% Yes, 18.9% No, 2.8% Other
- Supplemental Program: 66.7% Yes, 27.5% No, 5.9% Other
- State-Wide: 65.9% Yes, 28.7% No, 4.7% Other
- District-Wide: 74.2% Yes, 22.6% No, 3.2% Other
- School-Wide: 73.7% Yes, 21.1% No, 5.3% Other
- Consortium: 60.0% Yes, 25.0% No, 10.0% Other
- Charter School: 76.1% Yes, 21.1% No, 2.8% Other
- Other: 87.5% Yes, 12.5% No, 2.8% Other

**Individualized Professional Development**

In addition, one half of trainers indicated that professional development was individualized based on prior teaching experience. Twenty-four percent of administrators responded that their training was modified to reflect prior experience and 21% of teachers responded that they were given options based on their prior experience. As the following chart illustrates, the findings when the data were sorted by program or school model are similar.

**WAS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INDIVIDUALIZED BASED ON PRIOR EXPERIENCE?**
(SORTED BY MODEL - TEACHERS & TRAINERS)

- Virtual School: 21.7% Yes, 45.0% No, 16.7% Don't Know, 15.8% Other
- Supplemental Program: 12.5% Yes, 65.6% No, 9.4% Don't Know, 12.5% Other
- State-Wide: 21.7% Yes, 52.2% No, 13.0% Don't Know, 13.0% Other
- District-Wide: 5.3% Yes, 63.2% No, 26.3% Don't Know, 5.3% Other
- School-Wide: 16.7% Yes, 25.0% No, 33.3% Don't Know, 25.0% Other
- Consortium: 12.5% Yes, 75.0% No, 6.3% Don't Know, 6.3% Other
- Charter School: 27.6% Yes, 34.5% No, 22.4% Don't Know, 15.5% Other
- Other: 45.5% Yes, 36.4% No, 9.1% Don't Know, 9.1% Other
Respondents who indicated professional development was modified were provided an opportunity to explain how. A sample of these descriptions follows:

“We have professional development at every other staff meeting in which we cover many different topics. More choices will be available next year.”

“If they see a need, they find a way to offer it.”

“Most of the choices were mine, some were required.”

“Since I had basic tech competency certificate, I was offered the opportunity to build on that experience by learning new programs, effective online communication and teaching strategies, etc. I was also provided with a tremendous amount of personal support from more experienced online teachers and from my subject area coordinator.”

“We are able to attend conferences or attend college classes.”

“Had a choice of classes to take.”

“We get to choose the workshops most beneficial to us and our area.”

“Professional development was tailored relative to my content area (secondary mathematics) and experience teaching online.”

“Within our school setting, it is a priority to "play to the strengths" of each staff member. While professional development for all contains common components so that we are all on the same page, staff [members] are encouraged to develop a professional development plan individually and to pursue projects that meet the needs of our students, as well as utilizing the talents and past experiences of staff.”

**Professional Development Content**

**Guidelines Used in Professional Development**

In order to determine what knowledge and skills administrators deem important for their teachers, they were asked what guidelines, if any, they follow in developing a professional development program. Thirty percent of administrators reported using state guidelines, and about the same number (28.7%) also reported using self-developed guidelines to direct professional development.
WHAT GUIDELINES DO YOU FOLLOW IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM? (ADMINISTRATORS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SREB (Southern Regional Educational Board)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEA (National Educational Association)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State in which school resides</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other state guidelines</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-developed guidelines</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not follow any guidelines</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Development Content Reported by Teachers

Teachers were asked about the topics of professional development they had received. Topics were divided into four major categories: Foundational Knowledge, Tools, Facilitation Strategies, and Lesson Design.

- **Foundational knowledge**: 74% of teachers received training on practice-based knowledge, 57% reported receiving training on theoretical foundations.
- **Technology tools**: 91% of teachers reported receiving training in how to use learning management systems. Seventy-eight percent of teachers reported receiving training in both synchronous and asynchronous technologies.
- **Lesson design**: The most-reported topic under lesson design was “multimedia design principles” (55%). More than 31% of teachers reported receiving no training in online lesson design.
- **Facilitation strategies**: The most-reported topic under facilitation strategies was “meeting the needs of students with multiple learning styles in the online classroom” (78%).

Specific details regarding content included in teacher professional development is illustrated in the four following charts:
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTENT: TECHNOLOGY TOOLS  
(TEACHERS)

- Asynchronous (delayed time) communication tools: 77.2%
- Multimedia presentation tools (i.e. PowerPoint, Snag It, Camtasia, etc.): 66.4%
- Data analysis tools (i.e. Microsoft Excel): 43.0%
- Assessment tools (i.e. QuizStar, RubiStar, LMS test generator): 40.3%
- Design tools (i.e. html editing, Web page creation tools): 26.9%
- Other tools that have been addressed in your training?: 9.4%
- None of these topics were covered in my training: 0.0%

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTENT: LESSON DESIGN  
(TEACHERS)

- Multimedia design principles (i.e. the appropriate use of text, graphic, audio, and video representations): 54.6%
- Instructional design principles for online lessons: 41.8%
- Graphic design principles of online lessons (i.e. font size, contrast, negative white space): 35.5%
- None of these topics were covered in my training: 31.9%
- Design of syllabi: 21.3%
- Other lesson or curriculum design concepts that have been addressed in your training: 1.4%
Meeting the needs of students with multiple learning styles in the online classroom 78.1%
Engagement and motivation in online activities and lessons 67.1%
Building community within the online classroom 65.8%
Promoting appropriate student netiquette (web etiquette) 63.7%
Meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the online classroom 62.3%
Managing groups and collaboration in the online classroom 58.9%
Effective asynchronous discussions 56.9%
Time management 54.8%
Promoting parental involvement 54.1%
Effective synchronous discussions 51.4%
Identifying at-risk students 43.2%
Active listening 41.8%
Differentiated or individualized instruction based on data analysis 41.8%
None of these topics were covered in my training 4.8%
Other facilitation strategies that have been addressed in your training? 3.4%
Professional Development Content Reported by Trainers

Trainers were asked about the content and concepts covered in the first two years of professional development. Specifically, they were asked to select content and concepts covered in the first year of training and then to select content and concepts covered in the second year. The question was developed to get at any differences in content covered in initial training versus more advanced training. Trainers indicated a large number of items included in professional development over a two year period. The charts below provide detail. The content has been sorted from highest occurrence to lowest in the first year. What is perhaps most notable is what is not covered. Multimedia presentation tools (0.0%), design of syllabi (0.0%), assessment tools (18.2%), data analysis tools (18.2%), strategies for differentiated instruction (9.1%), and design tools and concepts (9.1%) were the content least covered in year one. Many of these were covered in year two but at lower percentages, in general, than other content and concepts.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTENT COVERED IN THE FIRST TWO YEARS (TRAINERS)

- Knowledge of the field of online teaching and learning (i.e. standards, terminology, classifications, methods, or trends) 63.6% (Year 1), 70.0% (Year 2)
- Asynchronous (delayed time) communication tools 63.6% (Year 1), 70.0% (Year 2)
- Learning Management System Tools (i.e. gradebook, test generator, dropbox, announcements, content storage, etc.) 63.6% (Year 1), 60.0% (Year 2)
- Time management strategies 63.6% (Year 1), 60.0% (Year 2)
- Synchronous (real time) communication tools 54.5% (Year 1), 70.0% (Year 2)
- Strategies for meeting the needs of students with multiple learning styles in the online classroom 54.5% (Year 1), 50.0% (Year 2)
- Strategies for engagement and motivation in online activities and lessons 54.5% (Year 1), 60.0% (Year 2)
- Strategies for promoting parental involvement 40.0% (Year 1), 54.5% (Year 2)
- Foundational principles, generalizations, or theories related to online teaching and learning (i.e. theory of distance learning, learning theory) 45.5% (Year 1), 50.0% (Year 2)
- Strategies for building community within the online classroom 45.5% (Year 1), 50.0% (Year 2)
- Strategies for managing groups and collaboration in the online classroom 45.5% (Year 1), 40.0% (Year 2)
- Strategies for facilitating effective asynchronous discussions 45.5% (Year 1), 60.0% (Year 2)
- Strategies for facilitating effective synchronous discussions 45.5% (Year 1), 60.0% (Year 2)
Going Virtual!

Professional Development Content Covered in the First Two Years (Trainers - Continued)

- Strategies for meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the online classroom
  - Year 1: 36.4%
  - Year 2: 50.0%

- Strategies for identifying at-risk students
  - Year 1: 36.4%
  - Year 2: 40.0%

- Strategies for promoting appropriate student netiquette (web etiquette)
  - Year 1: 36.4%
  - Year 2: 50.0%

- Active listening techniques
  - Year 1: 36.4%
  - Year 2: 30.0%

- Other content or concepts covered in training
  - Year 1: 27.3%
  - Year 2: 30.0%

- Assessment tools (i.e. QuizStar, RubiStar, LMS test generator)
  - Year 1: 18.2%
  - Year 2: 30.0%

- Data analysis tools (i.e. Microsoft Excel)
  - Year 1: 18.2%
  - Year 2: 60.0%

- Strategies for differentiated or individualized instruction based on data analysis
  - Year 1: 18.2%
  - Year 2: 40.0%

- Multimedia design principles (i.e. the appropriate use of text, graphic, audio, and video representations)
  - Year 1: 18.2%
  - Year 2: 30.0%

- Design tools (i.e. html editing, Web page creation tools)
  - Year 1: 9.1%
  - Year 2: 30.0%

- Graphic design principles of online lessons (i.e. font size, contrast, negative white space)
  - Year 1: 9.1%
  - Year 2: 20.0%

- Instructional design principles for online lessons
  - Year 1: 9.1%
  - Year 2: 20.0%

- Multimedia presentation tools (i.e. PowerPoint, SnagIt, Camtasia, etc.)
  - Year 1: 0.0%
  - Year 2: 60.0%

- Design of syllabi
  - Year 1: 0.0%
  - Year 2: 0.0%
Open-Ended Comments

Survey participants were provided an opportunity to make additional comments at the end of the survey. Responses were fairly evenly divided between positive statements regarding the support of particular schools and programs in meeting the needs of teachers through professional development and those comments providing insight into challenges and issues facing all stakeholders.

Positive Statements

Several schools and programs received very positive comments regarding not only their professional development processes, but also the attitudes and commitment to quality education for the students they serve. A sampling of positive comments is included below:

“____ has been a pleasure to work with and for. It is a very professional group of individuals who are genuinely interested in providing the highest level of online education to its students.”

“I work for both _____ and _____ and I received very beneficial training from both. It is information that I have applied in my classroom and seen results. I am very grateful for all the training that is offered to me and look forward to this summer’s conference for both _____ and _____.

“Superior training and support. Much more than I expect to use.”

“Having completed my Master’s Degree with an online program, I was highly impressed with the program that _____ uses and the tools that they provide and teach to their instructors to better meet the needs of our learners.”

“Thorough, specific, clear and concise. We are developing training for other online high schools.”

“_____ really tries to develop the teacher’s online abilities. The training is extensive but teachers come out of it feeling that they have developed their online skills considerably.”

“Our district training program launches this year in its expanded format. The district is slow to move toward the virtual environment, but I am hopeful that this will give us the opportunity to ensure high quality learning experiences for our students. So often, we are encouraged (or required!) to begin a new initiative without the time to carefully plan and reflect on the experience. I know that our venture into online learning in my district is moving at a snail’s pace. As a public school district in a state facing major economic troubles, we have limited financial resources to draw upon.”
Issues and Challenges

Issues or challenges suggested in the open-ended comments mainly reflect the difficulties in adjusting to the quickly changing landscape of virtual education in the K-12 realm. Some respondents indicated a general feeling of inadequacy in professional development and a perception that, although they are receiving training, it is mostly reactive rather than proactive. Some also suggested that training prior to employment was more effective than the limited efforts within the program or school. A sampling of comments is included below:

“My training was adequate. I don’t know if there is a program that could cover every possible topic in education, especially online education.”

“I wish it would have been more. I am an experienced teacher and have taken online courses during my career. I intend to take more classes on online instruction in the near future. If I were a new teacher, I would have been in trouble. My trainer, while a nice person, was not particularly engaged. He went over the basics with me during the in-house training, but was only sporadically available thereafter.”

“Understandably, in-house training has been largely a reactive, task-specific experience to address issues that arise or are created by an innovation, a change of policy, or enrollment growth. Having said that, teachers are encouraged through various incentives to take advantage of outside courses and training that deepen personal competence and enhance teaching skills and leadership opportunities.”

“I came into the school with more training and computer knowledge than the school provided. The school has also not provided training in areas that would interest me or build my abilities to higher levels of competency for interacting with students online. We do not design curriculum at our school; it is provided to us. Modifications are left up to the teachers individually, but we are not currently "trained" on differentiating or modifying to special needs.”

“I don’t feel our training was adequate. There was so much more I had to learn by trial and error. A good part of our training was spent on learning things that did not apply to my job at the school (being a homeroom teacher).”
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Participant School and Organization Affiliations

Apex Learning
Arkansas Virtual High School
Baltimore County Public School’s e-Learning Initiative
Broward Virtual School, Broward Virtual University
Colorado Online Learning
Connections Academy
eHigh School, Cobb County School District
Electronic Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT)
Evergreen Internet Academy
Florida Virtual School (FVHS)
Fulton County (GA) Virtual Campus
Hamilton County Virtual School
Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA)
Idaho Distance Education Academy (I-DEA)
Illinois Virtual High School (IVHS)
Insight Schools
K-12 Inc.
Kentucky Virtual Schools (KVS/KVHS)
Louisiana Virtual School (LVS)
Michigan Virtual School (MVS)
National University Virtual High School Programs (NUVHS)
NCREL/Learning Point Assoc.
North American Council for Online Learning (NACOL)
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC-DPI)
NYS Teacher Center Online Academy
Odyssey Charter School
Oregon State University K-12 Online
Richard McKenna Charter School
Spokane Virtual Learning (SVL)
Stetson University
Turner Virtual Learning Center
University of Miami Online High School (UMOHS)/Kaplan Virtual Education
Virtual High School (VHS)
Virtual Learning Academy (VLA)
West Virginia Virtual School
Wisconsin Virtual School
Location of Survey Respondents

LOCATION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

- Alaska: 0.4%
- Arizona: 3.3%
- Arkansas: 0.4%
- California: 6.9%
- Colorado: 4.5%
- Florida: 9.4%
- Georgia: 0.8%
- Idaho: 21.2%
- Illinois: 0.8%
- Kansas: 0.4%
- Kentucky: 0.8%
- Louisiana: 0.4%
- Maryland: 0.4%
- Massachusetts: 0.8%
- Michigan: 1.2%
- Minnesota: 3.7%
- Montana: 0.8%
- New York: 0.4%
- Nevada: 1.6%
- North Carolina: 0.4%
- Ohio: 6.9%
- Oklahoma: 0.4%
- Oregon: 7.8%
- Pennsylvania: 17.1%
- Rhode Island: 0.4%
- Tennessee: 0.4%
- Virginia: 1.2%
- Washington: 1.2%
- West Virginia: 0.4%
- Wisconsin: 3.7%
- Multistate: 1.6%