

Study conducted by



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In collaboration with
Johns Hopkins Center
for Technology in Education
and Maryland Public Television

State of the State Survey: Professional Development

Part 4 of a series of reports on Maryland teachers and technology

The Survey of Technology Use by Maryland Teachers, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, provides a picture of how educational technology is currently being used at the classroom level.

This survey of 664 K-12 teachers from all 24 Maryland school districts, conducted in the spring of 2002, measured teachers' knowledge and skills, access to technology, and use of technology for instructional and administrative purposes.

This summary describes the types of professional development in which educators have participated, the types in which they are interested, their attitudes towards online professional development, and their experience with action research. Other topic reports from the Survey of Technology Use are also available.

Not All Teachers Have A Written Professional Development Plan

About two thirds (68%) of Maryland teachers currently have a written personal professional development plan, and three quarters of these plans (74%) address improving technology use. In 2002, the State Department of Education developed seven standards for technology-related knowledge and skills that it felt Maryland teachers should possess (for more information about the Teacher Technology Standards, see Part 2 of this series of reports.) An indicator for the standard addressing professional growth requires that all educators have a professional development plan that "includes resources to support the use of technology in life long learning." Based on their responses to this survey, a significant number of teachers do not yet meet this standard.

Eighty percent of respondents reported that there is someone at their school who is available to assist them with technology-related professional development.

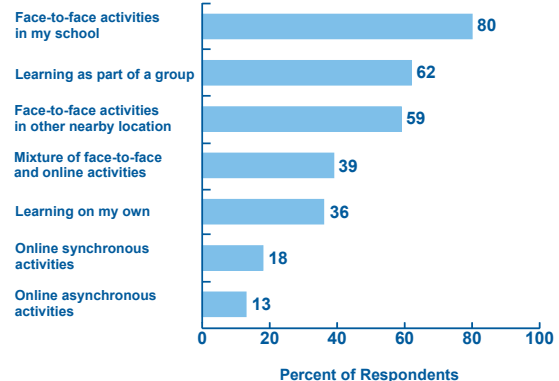
Teachers Prefer Traditional Methods of Professional Development

Almost a third of teachers (31%) have participated in online professional development activities in the past, and over a third (36%) believe that it is very likely that they will in the future. Forty-eight percent believe that it is somewhat likely that they will participate in online learning in the future, while 16 percent believe that it is not likely.

Overall, however, Maryland teachers still favor more traditional methods of professional development (Figure 1). Eighty percent prefer face-to-face activities at their school, while less than 20 percent prefer synchronous (18%) or asynchronous (13%) online activities. This pattern is particularly pronounced among more experienced teachers; among teachers with more than ten years of experience, 85 percent prefer face-to-face professional development in their school, while only 9 percent prefer asynchronous online activities. About a third of Maryland teachers (39%) indicated that they preferred professional development given as a mixture of face-to-face and online activities.

Figure 1: Teacher Preferences: Professional Development Models

(Percent of teachers who preferred each model of professional development. Respondents were given three choices: "prefer," "neutral," or "dislike.")



Maryland teachers also like to learn in groups (62%) rather than on their own (36%). This may be one of the reasons that teachers do not desire asynchronous online activities, as they feel that these activities are the most solitary and include the least direct contact between peers.

When choosing professional development activities Maryland teachers are more concerned with getting credit for a course than whether or not it leads to an advanced degree or certificate. Three quarters (75%) responded that whether or not they receive MSDE credit is important to them, and academic credit was important to two thirds (69%). Far fewer considered it important whether the activity leads to a certificate (53%) or a professional degree (49%).

Subject Area Study and Standards Are Most Common Training Topics

The two professional development topics that Maryland teachers have spent the most time studying over the past year are the in-depth study of their main subject area(s) and curriculum and performance standards; over 40 percent of teachers spent at least nine hours engaged in activities related to each of these subjects in the past year (Table 1). Curricular integration of technology was the third most common subject studied; over a third (37%) of teachers spent at least nine hours studying this subject. Over a third of Maryland teachers, on the other hand, reported spending no time at all in professional development activities devoted to addressing the needs of students with disabilities (40%) or students from diverse cultural backgrounds (40%), classroom management (47%), encouraging parent and community involvement (48%), and addressing the needs of limited English proficiency students (68%).

Table 1: Time Devoted to Professional Development

(Percent of teachers who reported spending nine or more hours in the past year participating in professional development on this topic)

In-depth study of your main subject area	43%
Curriculum and performance standards	41
Integration of educational technology	37
New methods of teaching	27
Student performance assessment	27
Addressing needs of students from diverse backgrounds	16
Classroom management	15
Addressing needs of students with disabilities	13
Encouraging parent/community involvement	10
Addressing needs of LEP students	5

Teachers Are Most Interested in Technology Integration Study

The topic that Maryland teachers are most interested in learning about is how to integrate technology into their teaching (Table 2). Three quarters of educators (75%) indicated that they were "very interested" in participating in professional development activities devoted to this topic, compared to only 2 percent who said that they were not interested at all. High school teachers, however, were less interested in learning about technology integration (66% reported being very interested) than were middle (83%) and elementary school teachers (76%).

A majority of teachers are also very interested in participating in professional development activities related to in-depth study of their subject area (70%) and new methods of teaching (55%). Slightly fewer are very interested in learning about student performance assessment (44%), encouraging parent and community involvement (44%), addressing the needs of students with disabilities (43%) or students from diverse cultural backgrounds (42%), classroom management

(41%), curriculum and performance standards (35%), or addressing the needs of students with limited English proficiency (31%).

Table 2: Interest in Professional Development, by Topic

(Percent of teachers who are "very interested" in participating in professional development on this topic)

Integration of educational technology	75%
In-depth study of your main subject area	70
New methods of teaching	55
Student performance assessment	44
Encouraging parent/community involvement	44
Addressing needs of students with disabilities	43
Addressing needs of students from diverse backgrounds	42
Classroom management	41
Curriculum and performance standards	35
Addressing needs of LEP students	31

Generally, the topics that teachers are currently studying in professional development activities reflect teacher interest. For example, technology integration, new teaching methods, and in-depth study of a subject are all among the topics that are most studied and topics that teachers are most interested in studying. In a few cases, however, professional development activities do not presently seem to be addressing teacher interests. For example, curriculum and performance standards are the second most frequently addressed topic in professional development, despite the fact that this topic is among the least important to Maryland teachers. On the other hand, over 40 percent of teachers report being very interested in learning how to encourage parent and community involvement and how to address the needs of students with disabilities, yet these topics are among the least covered.

A Quarter of Teachers Have Participated In Action Research

Action research is a process by which teachers conduct studies in their own schools and classrooms to test the effectiveness of practices. A quarter of Maryland teachers (26%) report participating in an action research project, and in almost half of these cases the research design tested the use of technology in the classroom.

Action research produces the greatest benefit when the findings are widely distributed to the educational community. Most teachers who have participated in an action research study shared their findings with peers in their school (88%), while lesser numbers shared them with other schools in their district (45%) or beyond their district (37%). Fewer still (9%) have published their action research findings.

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