



Bellingham

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## **Results of the Spring 2015 Survey of Professional Learning for Bellingham Public Schools' Certificated Staff**

This past spring, members of the Department of Teaching and Learning, in collaboration with the joint BEA-District Professional Development Committee, surveyed all certificated staff to both assess their experiences in professional learning during the 2014-15 school year, and to learn about their preferences for professional learning as we gear up for the 2015-16 school year. The survey got a strong level of response, with more than 400 certificated staff responding. In the paragraphs that follow, we report on the results from that survey that will help to inform our work on professional development now and into the future.

### **Rating Your 2014-15 Professional Learning Experiences**

Certificated staff responded to the survey were split exactly in half with respect to rating the quality of the professional learning initiated by the district (typically the morning session on a Staff Learning Htkfc {ö). As this time encompassed many different experiences, the varied responses potentially reflect both individual learning preferences as well as inconsistent quality across different course offerings. Fewer than 40 percent of teachers reported that this time had an impact on improving teaching practice.

Respondents were more positive about their building-directed professional learning, with almost 70 percent rating it favorably and nearly two-thirds saying that it improved their teaching practice.

### **Learning Format Preferences**

Respondents were clear in their belief that forms of professional learning need to follow function and that variety in staff ability to make choices for their professional growth is appreciated.

Four out of five elementary certificated staff who responded to the survey suggested that they learn best with their building PLC/grade level team. Over half of the respondents learn best with a small group of colleagues who are working on similar goals and instructional practices, regardless of where they were in the district. Those who do not have a grade-level team have valued the job-alike groups. Many respondents engage in, and want to have more opportunities for, one-to-one learning with a coach or mentor.

About half of responding middle school certificated staff preferred learning with their building team, with content-alike colleagues across the district, and with a small group of colleagues

working on similar goals and instructional practices across the district. Additional comments grouped by grade-level, content-alike or job alike.

Two-thirds of high school teachers prefer to learn with their content-alike colleagues in their building, while almost half like to learn with course-alike colleagues across the district or with a small group of colleagues who are working on similar goals and instructional practices across the district. Particular roles, like counselors and librarians, are seeking a balance between time with job-alike colleagues across the district and time with building staff to better support integrated work within the building.

Staff that teach at more than one level are looking for opportunities to learn with their content-alike colleagues across the district. There is a desire to have separate itinerant groups work together to better address special education issues as a cohesive team.

### **Learning Content Preferences**

Certificated staff throughout the district selected collaborative opportunities for planning as an important way to continue to learn with colleagues. Collaboration with an instructional coach or specialist was also a preferred approach, especially with elementary and middle school respondents. Elementary respondents in particular chose observing other staff members in action as a way to support their learning. High school respondents highlighted a preference for discussing problems of practice in small groups. Appendix A shows a more elaborated listing of the content area preferences revealed in the survey.

### **Assessment for Student Learning**

Helping students to self-assess their learning in relation to learning targets and success criteria and then enabling them to use the assessment data to determine goals and monitor their progress were the two areas of assessment literacy that more than half of the respondents across all levels selected as areas of most importance. Additionally, using formative assessment data to inform instruction and developing and monitoring student growth goals were also selected with relative frequency across all levels. Appendix B shows the more elaborated listing of interests in the area of Assessment for Learning.

### **Topics for Professional Learning**

Across all levels, the areas that received the greatest level of interest for 2015-16 were social-emotional learning, technology integration, and restorative justice/practices. The table below

<u>All</u>			
Social-emotional Learning	Technology integration	Restorative justice/practices	
<u>Elementary School</u>	<u>Middle School</u>	<u>High School</u>	<u>Multiple Levels</u>
Social-emotional Learning GLAD strategies Math	SIOP Social-emotional Learning Technology Integration	Technology Integration AVID Strategies Restorative Justice/Practices	Social-emotional Learning Technology Integration Restorative Justice/Practices

shows the top overall priority topics articulated by staff at each level, and by those who work across more than one level in the district.

**Representative Comments from Certificated Staff Survey Data**

Many certificated staff who responded to the survey included comments to embellish or elaborate on their survey choices. Comments fell into four broad categories, including: balancing school and district collaboration time; utilizing Bellingham certificated staff and external experts; ensuring opportunities for certificated staff to direct their own professional learning experiences; and valuing the opportunity for staff to provide input. Representative comments follow in each category.

**Balancing School and District Collaboration Time**

Several respondents commented on comparisons between school-directed and district-directed professional learning opportunities. Some representative examples included:

*“The quality of PD was good, and I appreciate all of the work. My team at school works very efficiently and collaboratively so I feel we would have accomplished more in less time.”*

*“The one value that I have found in district-directed PD is the rare opportunity to work with grade-level colleagues toward self-selected goals that are directly contextual for our group of learners.”*

*“It’s been incredibly supportive to have time with the district elementary counseling team.”*

*“[District-directed professional development] helped my team become more focused because we created our own investigation into the Bridges Program. We built our leadership and support within our team.”*

*“It’s important to connect. We just need a more mission driven agenda.”*

*“For teachers that don’t have content-alike colleagues in their school (e.g. visual and performing arts), having the opportunity to meet district-wide is vital.”*

*“I would really enjoy the opportunity to collaborate with other social studies teachers at other buildings.”*

*“The district ‘blanket’ staff development has little to do with my staff development needs.”*

*“It was hard to meet everyone’s needs during our Bridges Math PD. Individual work time was the most valuable on those Purple Fridays.”*

*“I love Purple Fridays. They make me feel appreciated and valued.”*

**Utilizing**



*“I like to have input and control of my own PD. I know what I know and I know what I want to learn and how I want to improve.”*

*“Thank you for the opportunity to give input and feedback. This is one of the things I love about our district.”*

## **Conclusion**

The survey results provide excellent input and guidance for decisions about professional learning this year (2015-16) and beyond. The joint BEA-District committee on professional development will use this information to assist with the vetting of professional development choice options this year that will be offered as part of staff learning Fridays.

## Appendix A: Overall Interests & Needs for 2015-16 Professional Learning

Content Area	# of teachers indicating interest on survey
Social-Emotional Learning Strategies for student behavior, including ADHD Habits of mind	

Special Education  
Autism strategies



## Appendix B: Assessment for Student Learning Needs for 2015-16 Professional Learning

Content Area	# of respondents indicating interest on survey
Students self-assessing their learning in relation to learning targets and success criteria Cognitive psychology/biology literature on retrieval practice & its impact on learning	

