

St. Mary's County Public Schools

Survey of
Teacher Participation
in
**High-Quality
Professional
Development**

2007-2008

Report by

Jeffrey A. Maher

Director of Professional and Organizational Development

May 2008



Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Overview:	2
Participation in High-Quality Professional Development Activities.....	3
Elaboration on Identification of High Quality Activities	4

Summary of Results

Participation in High Quality Professional Development.....	5
Participation in Professional Development, By Category	6
Participation in High Quality Professional Development, by Grade Level.....	7
Participation in High Quality Professional Development, by Years Experience	8
Teacher Experiences that Met the High Quality Professional Development Standard, by Survey Indicator Area	9
Primary Focus of Activities.....	12
Overall Evaluation of Professional Development	14
Favored Future Design of Professional Development	15
Definitions:	16

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

May 2008

Overview:

Organizational Structure and Goals of Professional Development—

Professional development is a continual focus of school and system improvement efforts. This became evident when the Superintendent reorganized administrative and support systems within the school system, placing a strong emphasis on professional development. The Department of Professional and Organizational Development was formed to collaborate with other departments in designing professional learning opportunities, guiding change efforts, and supporting instructional improvement efforts.

Professional development is included as a key strand in the Superintendent's Fifteen Point Plan of Priorities, and is a key facet of school improvement. The goals of professional development are consistent with the Master Plan and ESEA goals. Specifically, professional development initiatives are based on identified needs to build capacity for improvement related to these goals. In addition, professional development is designed using student data, examining root causes, teacher observation and performance, and school improvement targets. Therefore, specific objectives for professional development are differentiated based on the needs of teachers and schools. A key goal is to ensure that high quality professional development is aligned with the Maryland Professional Development Standards, and sustained, job-embedded, and meaningful work is evaluated and monitored throughout the process. A focus on high quality professional development has been clearly articulated as an emphasis in school improvement planning across the system. The survey described below provides evidence that this goal is being reached.

Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development—

Professional development continues to be a focus in terms of educational efforts to improve student achievement. *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) stresses the need for schools and school systems provide "high-quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom focused" professional development. NCLB also requires states to report annually on teacher participation in high-quality professional development.

In 2004, MSDE commissioned a survey conducted by Policy Studies Associates, Inc., in which teachers were asked to report on their participation in five categories of professional development for that school year. In 2006 and 2008, St. Mary's County Public Schools administered the survey locally. The survey questions were structured similarly, with permission from Policy Studies Associates, Inc., to utilize the same survey questions, so results are comparative. The five categories that represented long-term professional development activities (i.e., those that lasted more than one day) are:

1. Workshops, Institutes, and Academies
2. Coaching or Mentoring Programs
3. Job-Embedded Professional Development Activities
4. Conferences or Professional Meetings
5. Graduate Courses

Participation in High-Quality Professional Development Activities

MSDE set a vigorous standard to identify teachers as participants in high-quality professional development activities. This threshold was set based on the definition stated in NCLB, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development, as well as the Teacher Professional Development Standards (2004). More specifically, teachers were counted as having participated in high-quality professional development in one or more of the five categories of professional development if their responses to questions fit the following patterns, meeting 14 of 16 indicators:

- Reporting activities “frequently” or “sometimes” included **each of the four** indicators for **learning opportunities**;
- Reporting activities “very involved” or “involved” in **two of the four** indicators about **planning and decision making**;
- Reporting activities “frequently” or “sometimes” included **each of the four** indicators about **follow-up**;
- Reporting that they benefited “to a great extent” or “to some extent” in **each of the four** indicators of **benefits**.

Key Findings:

- **51% of teachers reported participating in one or more of the five categories of activities that are defined as high quality activities.** This is an increase of 6% over the previous survey.
- **The high standard of professional development is consistently illustrated in response patterns.** Teacher responses that rank experiences as high quality have increased, though the standard remained high. Of particular note:
 - The percentage of teachers who participated in *job-embedded* professional development who ranked the experience as high quality increased by **14%**. Participation in *job-embedded* professional development increased by **5%**.
 - The percentage of teachers who participated in *coaching and mentoring programs* who ranked the experience as high quality increased by **44%**. Participation in *coaching and mentoring programs* increased by **7%**.
- **The quality of professional meetings and conferences improved substantially.** The percentage of teachers participating in professional meetings and conferences that lasted one day or longer who ranked the experience as high quality increased by **10%**.
- **Teacher experiences that met the criteria for high quality increased in all activities.** Teacher participation in activities to increase knowledge and skills, follow-up activities, and benefits to classroom instruction increased in all areas.
- **Teachers expressed collaborative planning** was the most ideal learning format for professional development, with **67%** of respondents indicating this format as the most desirable.

Response Rates:

The overall number of respondents who completed this survey was **217**, as of May 7, 2008. To maintain the comparison to 2004 and 2006 studies, calculations were based on responses from teachers who spend at least 50% of their time in direct instruction of students. Therefore, responses from those who spend less than 50% of their time instructing students were removed from calculations. The N for calculations was **186 respondents**, with 94 elementary respondents, 56 middle school respondents, and 36 high school respondents.

Elaboration on Identification of High Quality Activities

As stated above, high-quality professional development is determined if responses to questions fit the following patterns, meeting **14 of 16** indicators:

Being “very involved” or “involved” in **two of the four** activities about **planning and decision making**; **Looking across the activities you reported, indicate your level of involvement in determining or shaping the following elements.**

Determining the Content	Very Involved	Involved	Somewhat Involved	Not Involved
Determining the learning activities for the	Very Involved	Involved	Somewhat Involved	Not Involved
Determining the expectations for learning outcomes	Very Involved	Involved	Somewhat Involved	Not Involved
Evaluation of the activity	Very Involved	Involved	Somewhat Involved	Not Involved

Reporting activities “frequently” or “sometimes” included **each of the four** indicators for **learning opportunities**; **Looking across the activities you reported in your previous responses, indicate how often they included each of the following activities focused on improving your professional knowledge and skills.**

Clear explanations of key concepts and theories	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Demonstrations of skills and strategies related to the key concepts and theories	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Opportunities for you to practice skills and strategies, either as part of regular sessions or as assignments or projects	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Feedback and assessment of your understanding of key concepts and strategies	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

Reporting activities “frequently” or “sometimes” included **each of the four** indicators about **follow-up**; **Looking across the activities you reported, indicate how often the kinds of follow-up listed below have occurred.**

Ongoing opportunities for conversations with your colleagues, a specialist, or a mentor	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Explanation/presentations on content of the activity	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Demonstrations of skills and strategies covered in the activity	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Feedback and assessment of your mastery of skills and strategies covered in the activity	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

Reporting that they benefited “to a great extent” or “to some extent” in **each of the four** indicators for **benefits**.

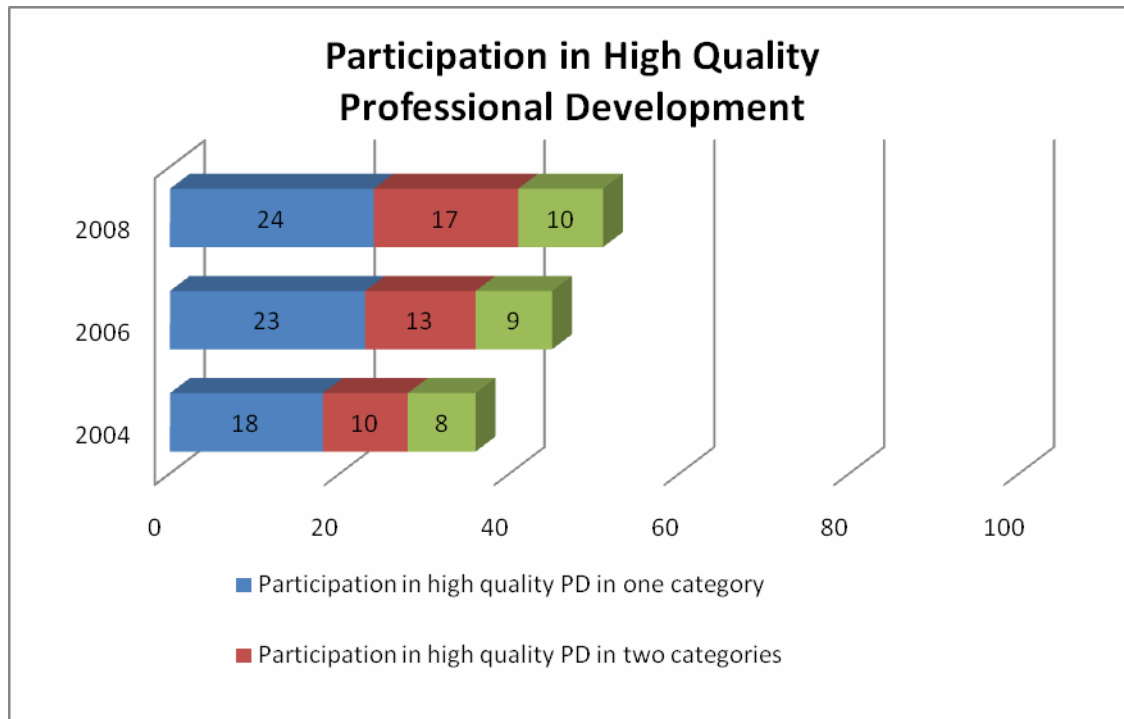
Looking across the activities reported, indicate how much you have benefited in each of the ways listed below.

Increased your knowledge of the subject(s) you teach.	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
Enabled you to add academic rigor to your instruction.	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
Helped you contribute more to your school’s planned improvement efforts.	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all
Helped you provide more differentiated instruction to address students’ learning needs.	To a great extent	To some extent	To a limited extent	Not at all

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

Results from selected exhibits are included below. All exhibits from the survey can be found in the complete attachment of exhibits from the survey administration.

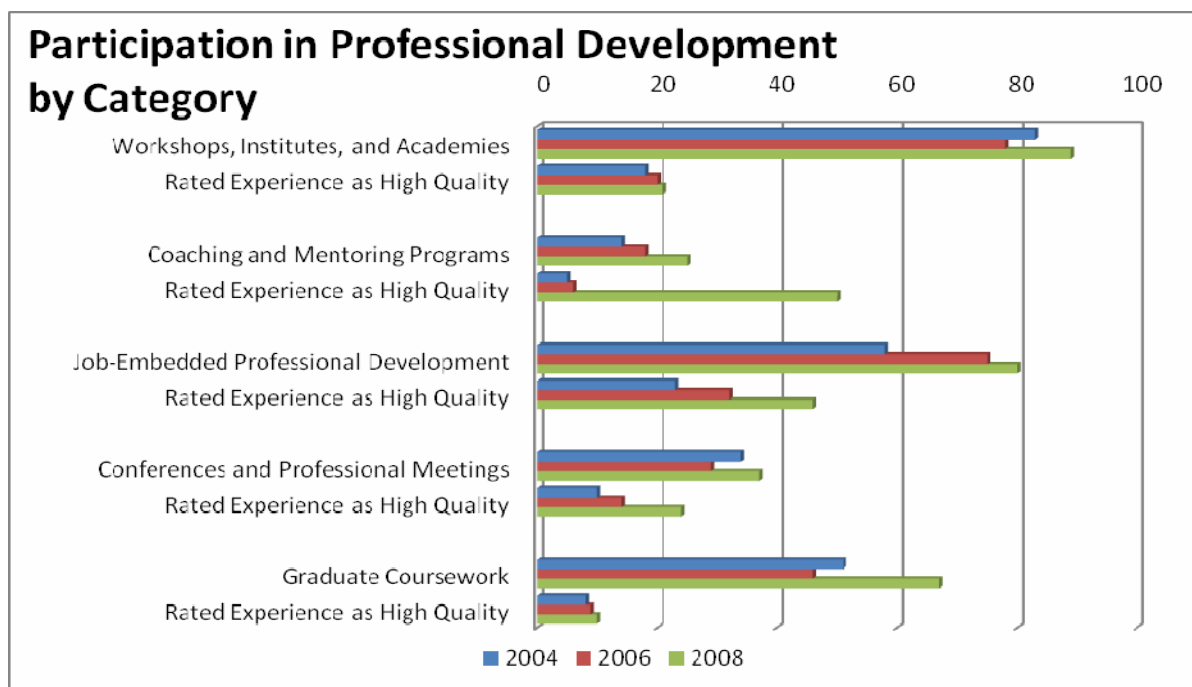
Participation in High Quality Professional Development



	2004	2006	2008
Participation in one or more high-quality professional development activities	36%	45%	51%
Participation in high quality PD in <u>one</u> category	18%	23%	24%
Participation in high quality PD in <u>two</u> categories	10%	13%	17%
Participation in high quality PD in <u>three or more</u> categories	8%	9%	10%

The 2008 Survey of Teacher Participation in High Quality Professional Development shows that **since 2004, there has been an increase of 15%** of teachers participating in one or more high quality professional development activities, and currently, over half (51%) of teachers participate in at least one high quality professional development activity in the categories defined by the MSDE Teacher Professional Development Standards. The 2008 data shows **a 6% increase in participation since 2006.**

Participation in Professional Development, By Category



	2004	2006	2008	Four Year Trend
Workshops, Institutes, and Academies	83	78	89	+6
Rated Experience as High Quality	18	20	21	+3
Coaching and Mentoring Programs	14	18	25	+11
Rated Experience as High Quality	5	6	50	+45
Job-Embedded Professional Development	58	75	80	+22
Rated Experience as High Quality	23	32	46	+23
Conferences and Professional Meetings	34	29	37	+3
Rated Experience as High Quality	10	14	24	+14
Graduate Coursework	51	46	67	+16
Rated Experience as High Quality	8	9	10	+2

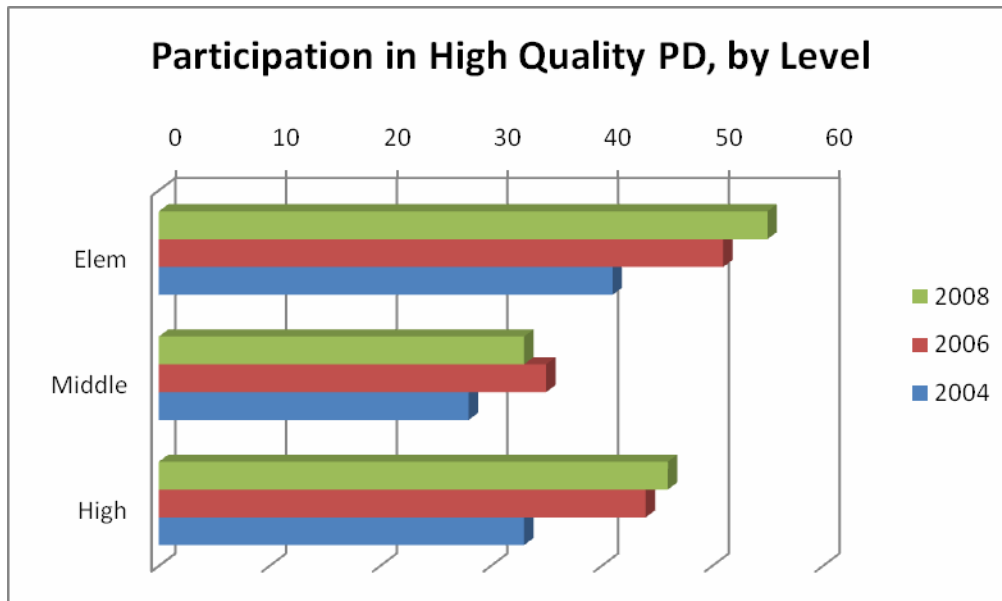
Since 2004 there has been a consistent **increase in participation in the categories that represented long-term high quality professional development** activities.

- Workshops, Institutes, and Academies: **+6% since 2004; +11% since 2006**
- Coaching or Mentoring Programs: **+3% since 2004; +7% since 2006**
- Job-Embedded Professional Development Activities: **+22% since 2004; +5% since 2006**
- Conferences or Professional Meetings: **+3% since 2004; + 8% since 2006**
- Graduate Courses: **+16% since 2004; + 21% since 2006**

Further, the percentage of teachers who participated in these activities consistently **ranked those activities as high quality** professional development at an increased level.

- Workshops, Institutes, and Academies: **+3% since 2004; +1% since 2006**
- Coaching or Mentoring Programs: **+45% since 2004; +44% since 2006**
- Job-Embedded Professional Development Activities: **+23% since 2004; +14% since 2006**
- Conferences or Professional Meetings: **+14% since 2004; + 10% since 2006**
- Graduate Courses: **+2% since 2004; + 1% since 2006**

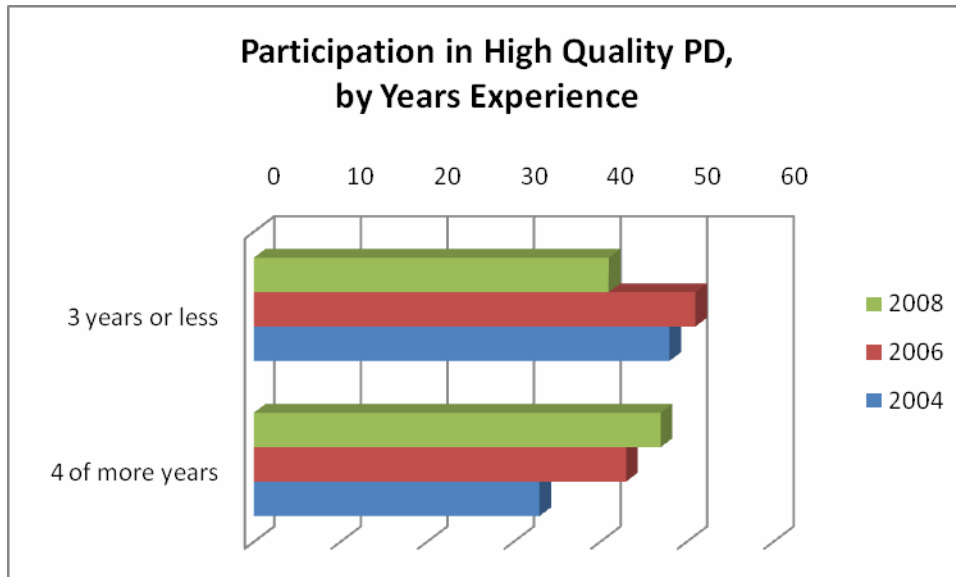
Participation in High Quality Professional Development, by Grade Level



	2004	2006	2008	Four Year Trend
Elementary	41	51	55	+14
Middle	28	35	33	+5
High	33	44	46	+13

Since 2004, there has been an **increase in the participation** in high quality professional development experiences **across all grade levels**. At the elementary level, a **14 percentage point increase** was evident over the four year period, noting a 4% increase since 2006. At the middle school level, a **5 percentage point increase** was evident over the four year period, though a 2% decline in participation in high quality professional development was noted between the 2006 and 2008 administrations of the survey. At the high school level, a **13 percentage point increase** was evident, with a 2% increase since 2006.

Participation in High Quality Professional Development, by Years Experience



	2004	2006	2008	Four Year Trend
3 years or less	48	51	41	-7
4 of more years	33	43	47	+14

In terms of experience, the number of teachers who participated in high quality professional development activities varied by the level of experience. The participation by teachers with fewer than 4 years experience in high quality activities decreased by 7 percent since 2004. *It should be noted that the N for new teachers participating in the survey was small (27).* The participation by teachers with four or more years experience in high quality professional development activities increased by 14%.

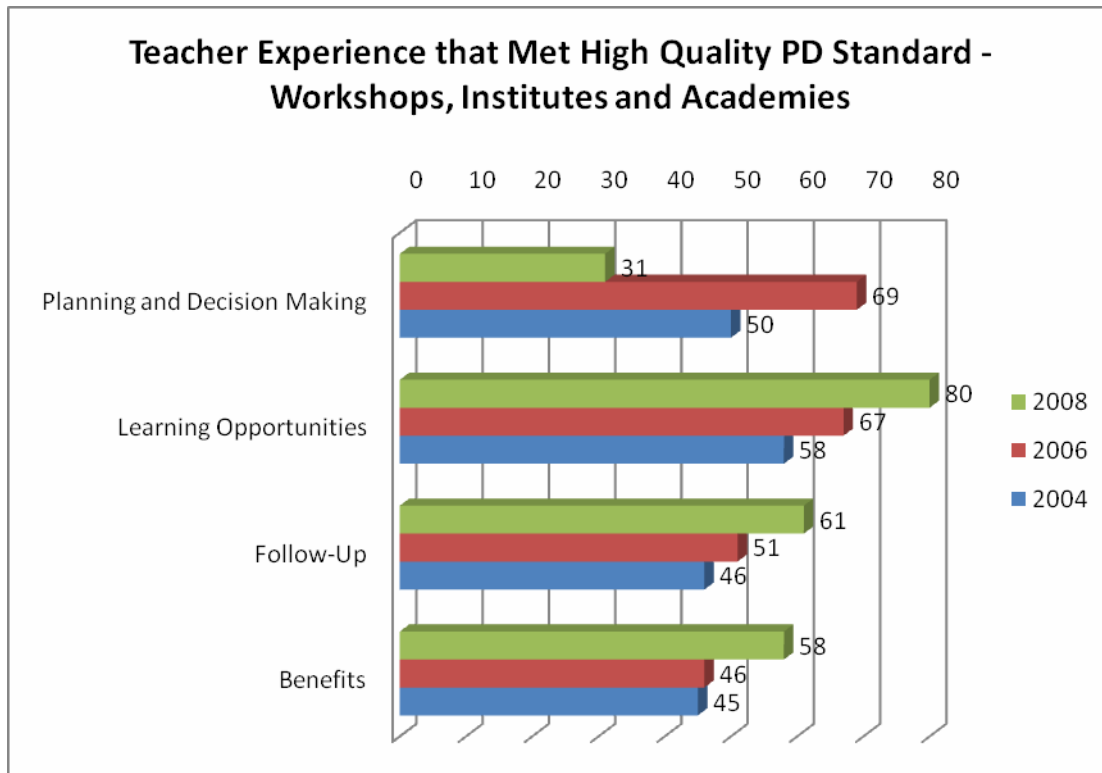
It should be further noted that concomitant to the data extrapolated by years experience is the fact that the quality of the mentoring program increased significantly, by 45% since 2004 see above (Participation in Professional Development, By Category).

	Percent			Four Year Trend
	2004	2006	2008	
English/Language Arts/Reading	35%	39%	37%	+2%
Mathematics	23%	35%	35%	+12%
Social Studies	24%	38%	*	*
Science	29%	42%	*	*
Special Education	35%	38%	55%	+20%
Elementary school teacher assigned to multiple subjects	46%	56%	57%	+11%
Other	35%	42%	31%	-4%

For the content areas of teachers surveyed, the highest degree of participation in high quality professional development was indicated by elementary classroom teachers, at **57%** (an increase of **11%** since 2004). The increase in the quality of professional development in special education is noteworthy, at **+20%** since 2004.

*For Social Studies and Science, the population sample of respondents was less than 5

Teacher Experiences that Met the High Quality Professional Development Standard, by Survey Indicator Area

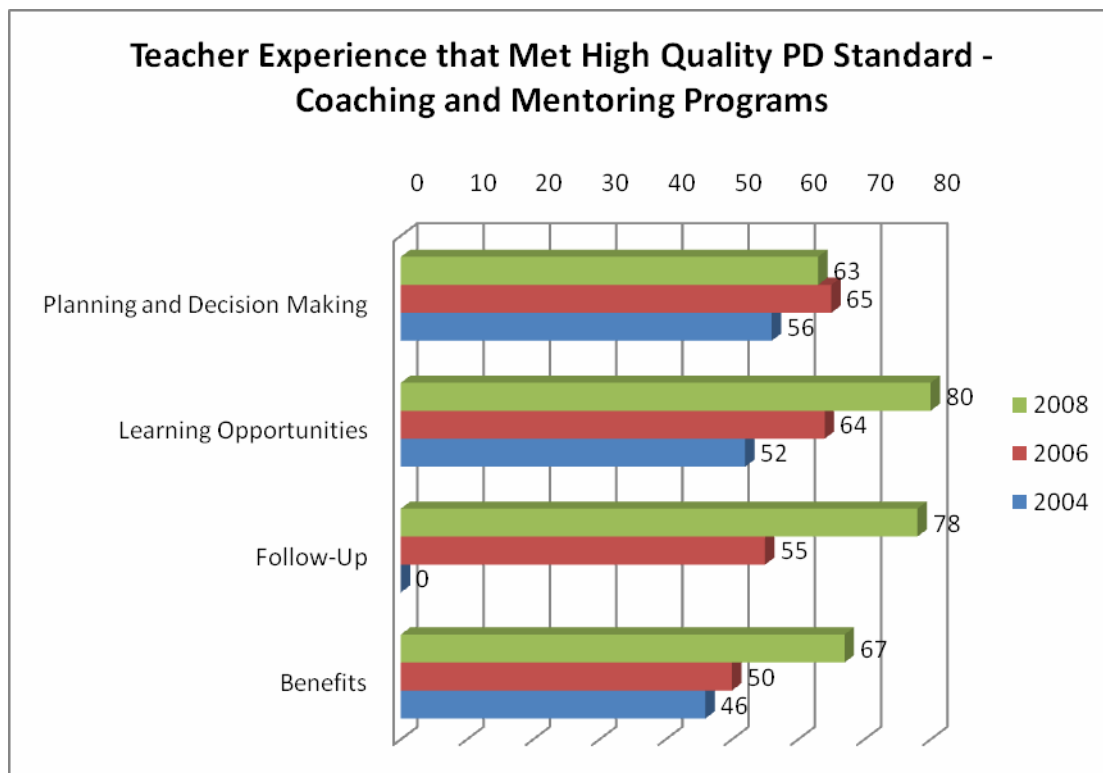


In the above chart, teacher participation in the category of **Workshops, Institutes, and Academies**, is delineated by Standard Area. In this category, **80%** of teachers who reported participating in activities to increase learning opportunities that enhanced their knowledge and skills, meeting the Maryland criteria for high quality in the 2007-2008 school year. This represents **an increase of 13%** since the 2006 administration of the survey, and compares to 67% from the 2005-2006 school year. **61%** of teachers reported participating in follow-up activities that met the high quality standard (**a 10% increase** from 2006); and **57%** of teachers reported benefits to their instruction resulted from participating in these activities (**a 12% increase** from 2006).

It should be noted that there is a substantial decline in the number of teachers who reported participating in the planning and decision making for this category. Only 31% of teachers reported that activities met the Maryland standard for high quality. The indicators in this standard area included:

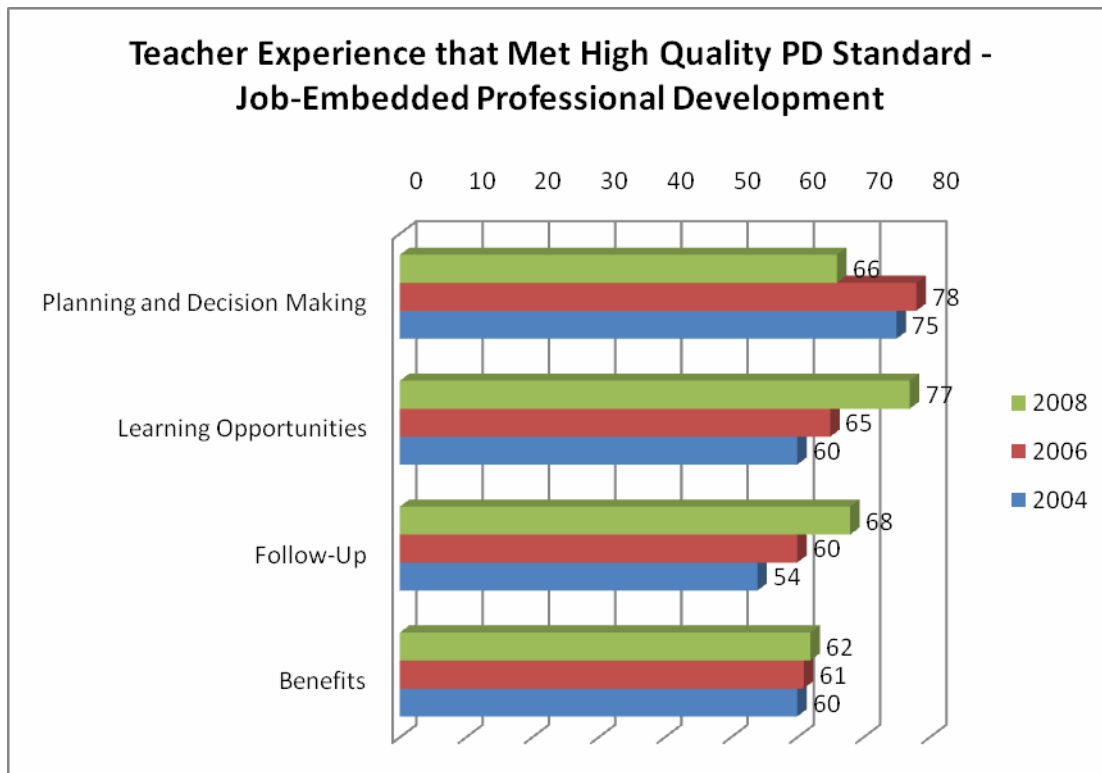
- The participant was involved in determining the content;
- The participant was involved in determining the learning activities;
- The participant was involved in determining the learning outcomes; and
- The participation was involved in the evaluation.

Due to specified outcomes of the VSC and measures for learning identified through the data analysis, the above decline is consistent with the notion that pre-specified outcomes are the norm.



In the above chart, teacher participation in the category of **Coaching and Mentoring Programs**, is delineated by Standard Area. In this category, **80%** of teachers who reported participating in activities to increase learning opportunities that enhanced their knowledge and skills, meeting the Maryland criteria for high quality in the 2007-2008 school year. This represents **an increase of 16%** since the 2006 administration of the survey, and compares to 64% from the 2005-2006 school year. **78%** of teachers reported participating in follow-up activities that met the high quality standard (**a 23% increase** from 2006); and **67%** of teachers reported benefits to their instruction resulted from participating in these activities (**a 17% increase** from 2006).

It should be noted that there is a substantial decline in the number of teachers who reported participating in the planning and decision making for this category. 63% of teachers reported that activities met the Maryland standard for high quality. This decline of 2% is not significant, and is consistent with the practice that mentoring and coaching allows for participant input in the focus of the coaching activity.



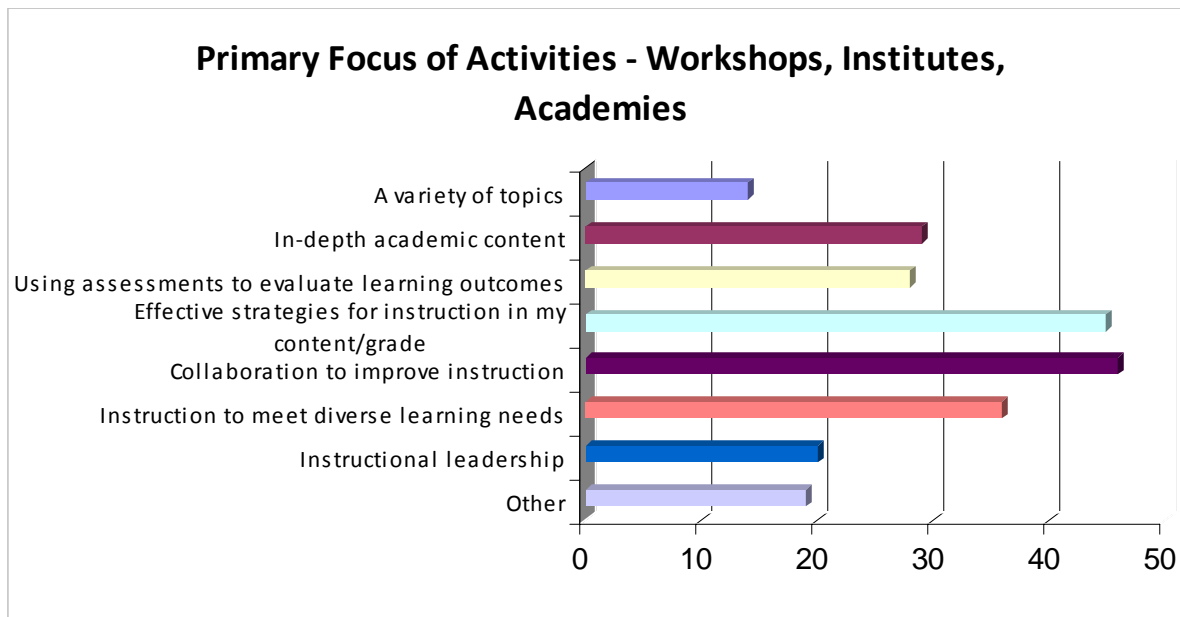
In the above chart, teacher participation in the category of **Job-Embedded Professional Development**, is delineated by Standard Area. In this category, **77%** of teachers who reported participating in activities to increase learning opportunities that enhanced their knowledge and skills, meeting the Maryland criteria for high quality in the 2007-2008 school year. This represents **an increase of 12%** since the 2006 administration of the survey, and compares to 65% from the 2005-2006 school year. **68%** of teachers reported participating in follow-up activities that met the high quality standard (**an 8% increase** from 2006); and **62%** of teachers reported benefits to their instruction resulted from participating in these activities (**a 1% increase** from 2006).

It should be noted that there is a substantial decline in the number of teachers who reported participating in the planning and decision making for this category. 66% of teachers reported that activities met the Maryland standard for high quality. This represents a 12% decline from the 2006 survey administration. The indicators in this standard area included:

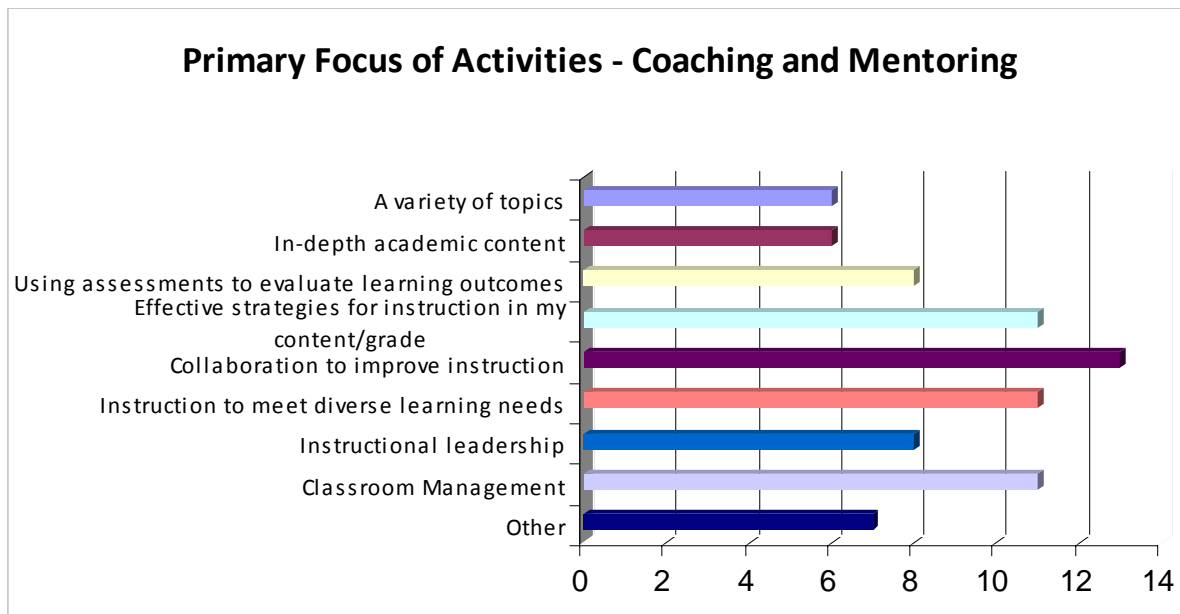
- The participant was involved in determining the content;
- The participant was involved in determining the learning activities;
- The participant was involved in determining the learning outcomes; and
- The participation was involved in the evaluation.

Due to specified outcomes of the VSC and measures for learning identified through the data analysis, the above decline is consistent with the notion that pre-specified outcomes are the norm.

Primary Focus of Activities

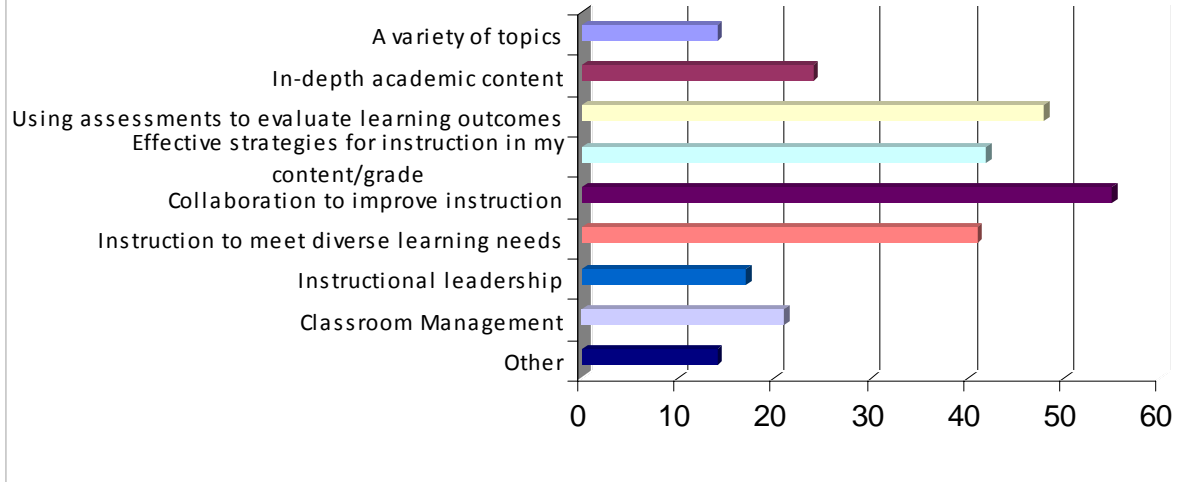


The above data indicates the primary focus of workshops, institutes, and academies, was on instructional improvement, including both strategies (45%; 59% of respondents who participated in workshops) and collaboration (46%; 61% in category). The next highest focus area was on designing instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students (36%; 48% in category). These percentages are of the total number of respondents.



In terms of coaching and mentoring programs, the prime focus areas were instructionally centered, with collaboration to improve instruction noted most (13% of total respondents, 63% of those who participated in coaching and mentoring).

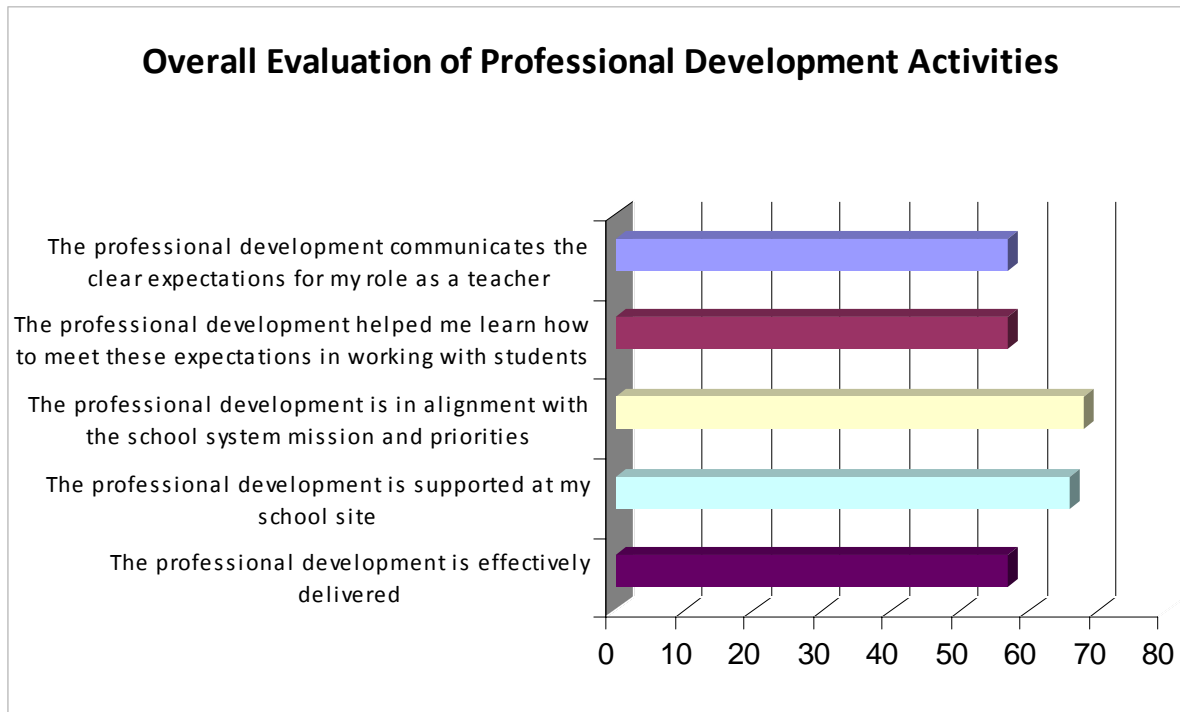
Primary Focus of Activities - Job-Embedded Professional Development



In terms of job-embedded professional development, the most highly noted focus area was collaboration to improve instruction, with 55% of the respondents (80% in category). The next highest focus area was using assessments to evaluate learning outcomes (48%; 70% in category), followed by designing effective strategies for instruction (42%; 62% in category) and designing instruction for diverse student learning needs (41%, 60% in category).

Overall Evaluation of Professional Development

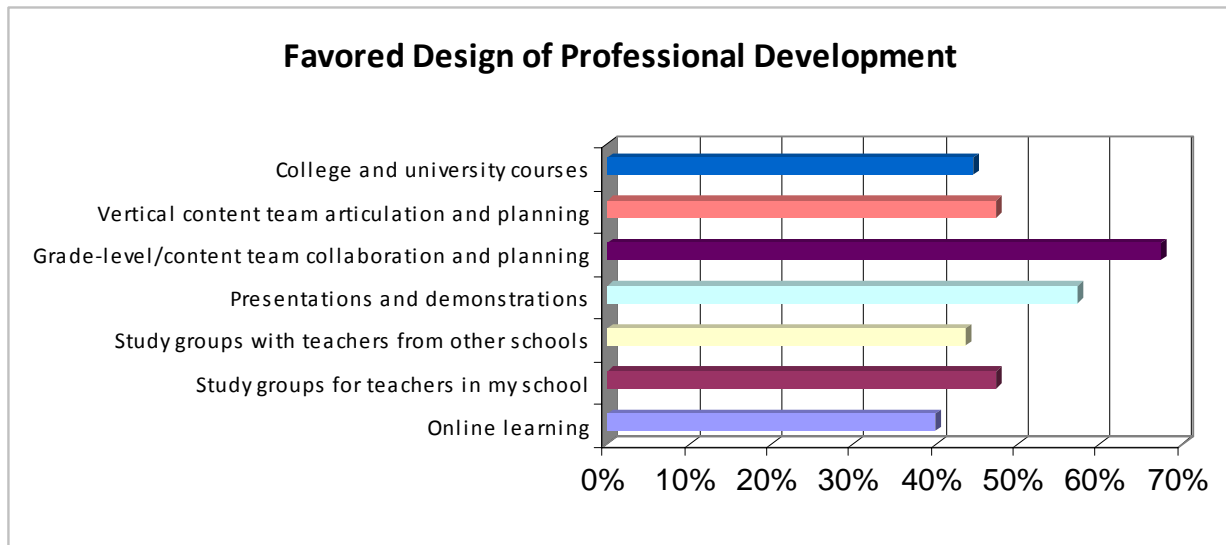
Respondents were asked to look across ALL of the professional development activities in which they have participated during the period from July 1, 2007 to the present and to check all statements with which they agreed.



Overall Evaluation	Percent
The professional development communicates the clear expectations for my role as a teacher	57
The professional development helped me learn how to meet these expectations in working with students	57
The professional development is in alignment with the school system mission and priorities	68
The professional development is supported at my school site	66
The professional development is effectively delivered	57

Favored Future Design of Professional Development

Professional development can take a variety of forms. Respondents were asked to check all of the options below to which they believe is a desirable option for future professional development.



Noted above, **collaborative planning** was the most ideal learning format for professional development, with **67%** of respondents indicating this format as the most desirable.

It should be further noted that at the recommendation of the Superintendent and the calendar committee, and subsequent approval of the Board of Education, four (4) two-hour early dismissal days were added to the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 calendars for the purpose of collaborative planning. This decision is supportive of the teachers' favored design for professional development.

Definitions:

Workshops, Institutes, or Academies:

These activities include events that last a day or longer and are planned and scheduled in advance and may take place during the regularly scheduled professional development days, after school, on the weekend, or during the summer. Note that an activity that includes multiple sessions that add up to at least a day are included in this category.

Coaching and Mentoring Programs:

These activities include working with a coach or mentor as part of a new teacher induction program or a formal coaching or mentoring program sponsored by the district or some other entity. Does NOT include informal coaching relationships.

Job-Embedded Professional Development:

This includes activities that often take place during the regular school day or before or after school. Typically they involve working with colleagues, including school-based professional development staff (e.g., IRT, supervisor, PLC lead...).

Some examples of job-embedded professional development include:

- Teacher study groups
- Teacher networks
- Collaborative Meetings of grade, subject, or department teams (excluding meetings that focus on routine administrative and operational issues/tasks)
- Professional Learning Communities (PLC)
- Collaboration on curriculum development or lesson planning
- Collaboration on reviewing student work