LONG ISLAND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY
Summary Report

Written by Dr. Heather Parrott for ERASE Racism

ERASE Racism is a nonprofit organization on Long Island that advocates for the elimination of barriers to racial equity. Christina DiMeo, ERASE Racism's Educational Equity Campaign Manager, and Dr. Heather Parrott, Associate Professor of Sociology at LIU-Post, constructed and distributed a survey to collect information about the professional development on diversity issues provided to educators on Long Island and to explore what additional training may be needed. The survey was sent to all 124 district superintendents in Nassau and Suffolk counties via both a listserv of superintendents and individualized emails. This report summarizes who completed the survey, the type of professional development that educators report they have received, and the types of professional development they may be interested in taking in the future.

Participants

A total of 195 people at least started the professional development survey. Of these, 92 (47.2%) of these were full-time teachers, 37 (19.0%) were teacher assistants, 22 (11.3%) were superintendents, 16 (8.2%) were non-teaching professional staff, and 12 (6.2%) were school administrators.

Unfortunately, many people did not complete the survey in its entirety. For example, only 87 people completed the matrix question about their interest in specific types of professional development trainings. This was the case with demographic information as well. Only 81 answered the question about race/ethnicity (90.1% of respondents identified as White), 86 answered the question about gender (82.6% identified as female), and 88 answered the question about county (85.2% of the respondents school districts were in Nassau county). The 67 participants who noted their school districts were from a total of 11 districts – Copiague, East Rockaway, Levittown, Little Flower, Long Beach, Montauk, North Merrick, Riverhead, Rockville Centre, Riverhead, Southampton, and Wyandanch.
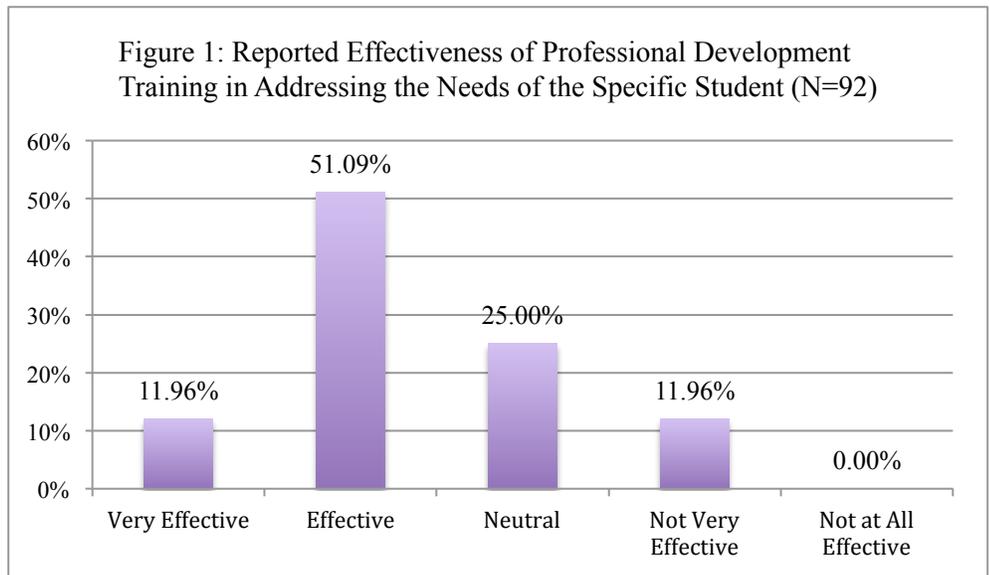
Current Professional Development

A total of 97 people answered questions about the professional development that have received, including whether it is required, what topics have been covered, whether they found it effective, and how their professional development could have been improved. The vast majority of respondents (85.6%) are required to take professional development trainings, though only 15.5% are required to take professional development specifically on diversity issues.

Almost all respondents (92.8%) reported having participated in workshops, conferences, or training sessions in the past two years. These trainings were on a wide variety of topics, including literacy circles, curriculum development, technology use, STEAM, behavioral management, autism, ADHD, (cyber)bullying, ELL services, Dignity for All Students (DASA), and gender identity.

Table 1: Percent of respondents who have participated in workshops, conferences, or training sessions on given topics (N=97)

	Percent
Race/Ethnicity/Culture	62.89%
Sexual Orientation	52.13%
Gender Equity	41.49%
Gender Identity	36.56%
Religion	15.96%
English Language Learners (ELLs) or Limited English Proficiency Students (LEPs)	61.29%
Students with Disabilities	86.67%

We also asked whether respondents had *ever* participated in workshops, conferences, or training sessions on a specific set of topics – race/ethnicity/culture, sexual orientation, gender equity, gender identity, religion, ELLs/LEPs, and students with disabilities (see Table 1). Educators were most likely to have attended professional development trainings about students with disabilities (86.67%), race/ethnicity/culture (62.89%), and English Language Learner students (61.29%) were most common.

Figure 1: Reported Effectiveness of Professional Development Training in Addressing the Needs of the Specific Student (N=92)

The majority of respondents generally found their professional development training to be either effective (51.09%) or very effective (11.96%), as shown in Figure 1. Educators were asked to describe a professional development training that they found effective or useful. The responses ranged from naming specific trainings (such as the DASA workshop), to mentioning the focus of the workshop (e.g., "They have addressed the needs of our students and diverse population"), to briefly discussing the format (e.g., "effective techniques" and "hands-on workshops").

When asked to think about a less effective training and describe what could have been improved, the answers from the 53 responding educators were remarkably consistently. First and foremost, educators want professional development trainings to provide them with practical strategies that they can apply to their classrooms. This was noted by 13 of the educators (24.52%) responding to this question. Second, many educators (15.09%) desire more real-life examples within the trainings, including "more input from those in the trenches." Third, 15.09% of these educators desire more hands-on or interactive training, rather than just lecture. An additional three teachers suggested the inclusion of small groups, with one suggesting dividing groups by subject area and another suggesting dividing by grade level. In sum, educators would like professional development training to be more practically oriented and engaging.

Desired Professional Development Opportunities

We included a number of questions on the survey to assess what professional development opportunities Long Island educators may want or need, including how interested they would be in taking professional development trainings on a given set of topics, what challenges educators face within their classrooms or schools, and an open-ended question asking what professional development opportunities would be helpful.

Based on the results in Table 2, educators are interested in a wide array of topics. Educators are most interested in professional development training about engaging parents/guardians in student learning and supporting student learning in diverse classrooms. Over 85% of surveyed educators were either somewhat interested or very interested in each of these training topics. Respondents were least interested in training on working with immigrant students and teaching English Language Learner students, and respondents were most ambivalent about professional development related to religious diversity.

Table 2: Answers to Question "How interested would you be in taking a professional development class on the following issues?"(N=87)

	Not interested	Don't know or neutral	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Mean (SD)
Supporting student learning in diverse classrooms	2.30%	11.49%	42.53%	43.68%	3.28 (0.75)
Examining implicit bias, privilege, internalized racism, and institutionalized racism	6.90%	12.64%	31.03%	49.34%	3.23 (0.92)
Teaching Limited English Proficient (LEP) or English Language Learner (ELLs) students	10.34%	19.54%	33.33%	36.78%	2.97 (0.99)
Working with immigrant students	13.79%	22.99%	35.63%	27.59%	2.77 (1.00)
Engaging parents and guardians in student learning	1.16%	12.79%	31.40%	55.65%	3.40 (0.75)
Addressing lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT) parented families.	8.14%	17.44%	38.37%	36.05%	3.02 (0.93)
Addressing religious diversity	4.71%	36.47%	35.29%	23.53%	2.78 (0.86)
Examining the effects of poverty and concentrated poverty on educational achievement	3.45%	12.64%	41.38%	42.53%	3.23 (0.80)
Utilizing curriculum materials on diversity	3.45%	17.24%	41.38%	37.93%	3.14 (0.82)
Developing policies that encourage diversity in classrooms, schools, and districts	3.45%	16.09%	36.78	43.68%	3.21 (0.83)

Educators were asked to reflect upon the biggest teaching challenges within their classrooms and schools, as well as what training topics would be most helpful to meet these challenges. The most commonly reported challenge (see Table 3) was meeting the varied needs and abilities within the classroom (23.08% of respondents). One classroom teacher remarked that there were "too many children with challenging needs are in one classroom and not enough adults available to give them the help they need." While many educators noted a range of student backgrounds and abilities, one educator bluntly summarized her main challenge as "illegal Hispanic students who don't speak English." Respondents also frequently discussed the challenges associated with a lack of parent involvement, home support, and/or parent follow-through (16.72%), as well as the frustrations associated with state testing (13.85%).

Finally, educators were asked what professional development trainings would be most helpful to them. Out of the 48 responses to this open-ended question, three topics stood out as being particularly desired. First, 12 of the educators (25.00%) expressed a need for diversity training or, more specifically, training about race issues.

For example, one respondent asked for training on "communicating effectively with different cultures and ethnicities" while another wanted training on "promoting diversity and inclusivity." Another educator noted that "any PD that focuses on the changing population and the current issues affecting students as people in out classrooms is helpful in keeping us grounded as educators." Second, nine educators (18.75%) relayed that they want to learn strategies for differentiating instruction and meeting the needs of academically diverse student populations, echoing the findings from Table 2. This point was closely connected to the third suggested training topic - teaching students with disabilities or special needs. A total of eight educators (16.67%) desired more training about students with disabilities, and often specifically about how to meet their needs along with the rest of their students. There was a wide range of other suggestions for professional development, including desires for training on behavior management, strategies for getting parents more involved, strategies for working on writing, "creative activities to encourage the children to work as a team," and "how to incorporate music, yoga, and art to reduce classroom student stress."

In summary, Long Island educators want practical, interactive professional development trainings that give them tangible teaching strategies for meeting the needs of diverse groups of students and better involving parents in student learning.

Table 3: Most Commonly Reported Challenges Based on Open-Ended Question: "What Are The Biggest Teaching Challenges You Face in Your Classroom or School?" (N= 65)

	Number	Percent
Varied Needs and Abilities within Classroom	15	23.08%
Parent Involvement / Support from Home	11	16.92%
Testing	9	13.85%
SES/Poverty	7	10.77%
Time	7	10.77%
Behavioral Problems	7	10.77%
Students with Disabilities	4	6.15%
Addressing Cultural Diversity/Sensitivity	4	6.15%
Support from Administration	4	6.15%
Student Motivation/Disengagement	3	4.62%
Class Size	3	4.62%

Table 4: Most Commonly Desired Trainings Based on Open-Ended Question "What Training Topic(s) Would Be Most Helpful to You?" (N=48)

	Number	Percent
Diversity Training/Training on Race Issues	12	25.00%
How to Address Varied Needs and Abilities	9	18.75%
Students with Disabilities	8	16.67%
Parent Involvement/Communication	4	8.33%
Behavioral Management	3	6.25%

For any questions about the survey or this report, please contact Dr. Heather Parrott, heather.parrott@liu.edu.