Old Dominion University

ODU Digital Commons

2009

Assessment of Training Needs for Early/Primary Private School Teachers

Regina Flora
Old Dominion University

Recommended Citation

AN ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING NEEDS

FOR EARLY/PRIMARY PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHERS

A Research Project

Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of

STEM Education and Professional Studies

Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Masters of Science

In Occupational and Technical Studies

By

Regina M. Flora

August 2009

Regina M. Flora prepared this research study under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies, at Old Dominion University. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies.

Approved by:_____Date:_____

        Dr. John M. Ritz
        Research Advisor and
        Graduate Program Director,
        Occupational and Technical Studies
        Old Dominion University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS- (cont')

Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Mercy Crossing Christian Academy (MCCA) is a small private learning

institution that has an objective to offer teaching excellence. The Academy is in the

process of applying for accreditation and must employ a staff that satisfies certain

requirements. The staff is under obligation to upgrade their skills through continuous

learning that promotes professional development in their field. The educational setting at

MCCA is similar to many other pre-school and rural elementary school environments;

therefore, comparisons can be made concerning the types of professional development

the Academy should schedule for their staff. Upgrades are necessary to keep pace with

the changing needs of educators and new developments in pedagogy (American Forest

Foundation, 2007).

There are some teacher qualifications stated in the Academy's policies (Mercy,

2008), but professional development days are not scheduled on the school calendar. A

model for professional development had not been established. The Academy now desired

to schedule relevant in-house training to satisfy accreditation requirements and enhance

instruction, plus stimulate continuous learning for their diverse staff. Training needs and

projected courses had to be determined before a coordinator could create a schedule for

such professional development.

Since MCCA is a small institution, the administration was interested in

professional development courses that could benefit the entire staff and thereby positively

affect the overall quality of teaching at MCCA (J. Wood, personal communication,

February 2, 2009). The staff was very diverse in qualifications; therefore, research was

necessary to determine the courses that would provide the most benefit for the group as a whole. The researcher was able to accomplish this goal by comparing relevant training needs to the training needs of the staff. Afterwards, the researcher fulfilled the objective to project a list of courses that would provide pertinent professional development for the staff at MCCA.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine the training needs of staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy to project pertinent courses for professional development.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To guide this study, the following research objectives were established:

1. Determine training pathways appropriate for continual learning at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy.

2. Obtain self-directed learning recommendations from teachers.

3. Determine pertinent training that has not been fulfilled by the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy.

4. Project a list of pertinent courses that could fulfill training needs and aid in the professional development of the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Mercy Crossing Christian Academy is a private, non-profit institution under the governance of The Church at Mercy Crossing in Martinsville, Virginia. It was established in 2004 and currently operates a daycare, PreK program, and elementary school for kindergarten through second grade. The Academy intends to expand at least one grade level each academic year. In addition, a steady increase in enrollment is anticipated.

MCCA's employment policy stipulates that teachers and aides have certain qualifications. These qualifications are similar to the requirements of pre-school and elementary teachers at other non-accredited schools; however, in the near future, MCCA plans to process an application for accreditation through the Association of Christian Teachers and Schools (ACTS). Under their guidelines, teachers are expected to be qualified educators. In addition, the Academy's staff must satisfy annual professional development requirements stipulated by ACTS in order to maintain the official endorsement.

MCCA has always desired to provide quality services in its private learning environment, but it is now determined to offer teaching excellence. In order for the Academy to excel, the staff must continue to upgrade their skills through courses that promote professional development. Information about professional development, in-house training schedules, and leadership in this direction was lacking at the Academy. The educational setting at the Academy is similar to other pre-school and rural elementary school environments; therefore, recommendations can be made from the types of professional development mandated or suggested for other educators in similar environments.

MCCA is situated in the rural, economically deprived Southeast section of Virginia and is adjacent to the North Carolina state line. The deficiency in professional development at MCCA is similar to findings of a study conducted by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (Center for Teaching Quality, 2008). The study found professional development virtually non-existent or grossly inadequate in under-resourced, rural area schools in North Carolina. To research their problem, the Southeast Center

used school studies and teacher surveys. The researchers recommended that professional development would ensure that teachers gain necessary knowledge and skills. They also recommended that the data be analyzed and interpreted to ensure professional development opportunities were based on needs of the teachers and students. Upgrades are necessary to keep pace with the changing needs of educators in order to stay abreast of new developments in pedagogy (American, 2007).

Besides fulfilling accreditation requirements, there were other reasons to conduct a study about this problem at MCCA. Although professional development was considered beneficial by the Headmaster (personal interview, March 5, 2009), a value had not been established; therefore, they were not scheduled on the school calendar. Information about professional development was not available for the staff. The Academy desired to schedule in-house training to help the staff develop skills to enhance the curriculums, but did not have a list of available resources. The staff had not been encouraged to upgrade their skills. In addition to the outline of specific training needs and available courses, MCCA needed a coordinator for the in-house training. A standard mandated by The National Staff Development Council (2001) states that staff development requires skillful leaders who can guide continuous instructional improvement.

Although a specialty is gained through a teaching degree, a successful teacher must be a continuous learner to remain current in the level or subject. Pedagogy, defined as the study of how to teach (Leal & Leibbrand, 2008), is also a main emphasis for teaching degrees. It is important for the teacher to apply effective teaching methods, which may be updated through professional development courses. Teachers and aides at MCCA had not been motivated to become continuous learners, although there are many

professional development courses that could benefit the staff and thereby positively affect the quality of teaching at MCCA. Due to staff diversity, a study was necessary to determine the courses that should be scheduled and that would provide the most benefit for the group as a whole. A former study in an early childhood setting (Warash, Ward, & Rotilie, 2008) concluded that even small positive changes by teachers improve their classroom environment and are a step towards quality.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (Leal & Leibbrand, 2008) stipulates that needs for professional development are determined by identifying the knowledge and skills a teacher must possess to help students close learning gaps and ensure student success. The researcher intended to identify needs for professional development at MCCA by using data from prior studies and recommendations from influential organizations. Data collection at the Academy was used to determine deficiencies in the recommended areas of professional development. Afterwards, the researcher was able to project a specific list of courses that would provide pertinent professional development for the staff at MCCA.

LIMITATIONS

The following limitations were included in this study:

1. The research was conducted with the educational staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy.

2. The population was only MCCA's teachers, aides, and substitute teachers.

3. Only documented training data were considered in the study.

ASSUMPTIONS

The researcher made the following assumptions prior to the study:

1. The staff at MCCA had training needs.

2. Pertinent courses and in-house training for professional development could be determined through research.

3. Comparisons of pertinent courses could be made with the staff's completed courses to determine deficiencies.

4. Personnel records could be assessed.

PROCEDURES

The researcher initially reviewed pertinent literature and gathered information from research concerned with professional development of pre-school and elementary teachers. Requirements and recommendations in regard to professional development were obtained from the Department of Education. The data suggested certain in-house training and courses that would aid in the professional development of pre-school and elementary level teachers.

Next, personnel records were reviewed to tabulate the types of professional development courses credited to the staff. By comparing these records to suggested guidelines, the researcher was able to determine deficiencies in pertinent training. Staff interviews were conducted to determine other personal concerns about training needs.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms were used in this study:

Training needs: Areas of needed improvement in job knowledge and skills that require additional training.

In-house training: Courses that are scheduled for staff at the place of employment.

Staff: Teachers, classroom aides, and substitute teachers.

Professional development: Activities that increase teachers' knowledge, skills, and instructional strategies used to improve student achievement (United States Department of Education, 2001).

Provisional license: A temporary license that is issued with listed deficiencies to be completed prior to full endorsement.

Accreditation: A process to evaluate the educational performance of a school in accordance to stated regulations.

<div align="center">OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS</div>

Chapter I introduced the reader to a study concerning the problem of training needs in a private educational institution, Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. The setting was similar to many other pre-school and rural elementary school environments; therefore, comparisons could be made concerning the types of courses that would aid the staff in professional development. The study was significant because it provided guidelines for the professional development that was lacking at MCCA. Data and recommendations could also be valuable to other small educational institutions or stimulate further study.

As will be shown in the next chapter, there are many sources that support the professional development findings and recommendations of this case study. The literature review cites professional institutions, research studies, personal inventories, and standards that were instrumental in determining the outcomes of this study.

Chapter III presents the methods and procedures used to collect, tabulate, and analyze the data. The findings are discussed in Chapter IV. Finally, the researcher

presents a summary of the research and conclusions based on the study. Also in the final

chapter, recommendations are made based on this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter describes literature relevant to the problem study conducted for Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. It is organized in six sections: (1) the need for professional growth, (2) the basic educational requirements for pre-school and elementary teachers, (3) standards for training courses, (4) pathways for continual learning, (5) self-directed learning recommendations, and (6) relationship between literature and objectives. Each subsection concludes with remarks concerning the relevance to the research. The seventh section offers a summary of the literature review.

The resources include information, data, and recommendations about professional development for early-childhood and elementary teachers. The United States Department of Education (2001) defines *professional development* to include activities that increase teachers' knowledge, skills, and instructional strategies used to improve student achievement. According to their description in Title IX, Section 9101(34) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, professional development should include activities that:

- Improve and increase teachers' knowledge of academic subjects;
- Are an integral part of educational improvement plans;
- Give teachers the knowledge and skills to help students meet academic standards;
- Improve classroom management skills;
- Are sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused;
- Advance teacher understanding of effective instruction strategies; and

- Are developed with extensive participation of teachers, principals, parents, and administrators.

The resources described in this review of literature provided information from former studies that have been conducted in regard to professional development for early and elementary education teachers. These data were coupled with requirements and standards stated by relevant educational systems. It was also determined that an effective model for professional development should include direct teaching workshops and coursework that allows teachers to become active, engaged learners (Lieberman as cited in Brundage, 2005).

THE NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

MCCA has determined to present an educational program equal to or better than that offered in the local public school system. In the fall of 2008, the Henry County Schools (2008) offered preK-4 slots for pre-qualified students in all their elementary schools. The Academy environment has included preK classrooms and other elementary grades since 2005 and needed to develop a program of in-house training geared toward professional development for the teachers in all these levels.

National political agendas have emphasized the necessity of providing early learning experiences (Pianta, 2007). Advocates include Virginia Governor Tim Kaine who campaigned on a platform that included universal preK education. In fiscal year 2007, the largest number of states ever increased financial commitments to early education (Larson, 2007). According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2005), standards for the early education teachers are also rising. In NAEYC's recommendations, teachers in national pre-school programs should

have training in early childhood education in addition to bachelor degrees. Also Teacher Assistants should be required to have a Child Development Associate Credential.

Patrick Henry Community College (2008), located in the school district surrounding MCCA, offers an associate degree program for early educators. Old Dominion University (2008) offers distance-learning courses in education. The New College Institute (2008), a local provider of bachelor degree programs, offers a program in early childhood development. Sources for professional development are obviously available for teachers locally, but MCCA lacked a guideline for professional qualifications and development.

During the 2008-09 school year, only one teacher at MCCA possessed a degree and teaching license in elementary education. This deficiency in professional development is similar to findings of a study conducted by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2008). The study found professional development virtually non-existent or grossly inadequate in under-resourced, rural area schools in North Carolina. The private Academy under study is located in Henry County, an economically deprived area of Virginia that is located on the Virginia/North Carolina state line. To research their problem, the Southeast Center used school studies and teacher surveys. The researchers recommended that professional development would ensure that teachers gain necessary knowledge and skills to meet national standards. They also recommended that the data be analyzed and interpreted to ensure professional development opportunities that were based on needs of the teachers and students.

Many early childhood professionals and non-accredited teachers do not have credentials or a degree, yet are effective teachers that offer stimulating classroom

environments. But overall, educators with higher levels of education tend to provide higher quality classrooms (Tout, Zaslow, & Berry, 2005). Not only will proper training ensure that the Academy fulfills its goal to provide qualified educators, advocates of national preschool suggest that if a faith-based or private program meets state quality standards, they should be able to seek certain funding from education agencies (Larson, 2007). In addition, a model of professional development is necessary for MCCA to achieve accreditation and maintain it.

<div align="center">BASIC EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS</div>

According to the qualifications listed in the Mercy Crossing Christian Academy Employee Handbook (2008), teachers for levels kindergarten and above needed a bachelor's degree in science or arts. Since MCCA was a private school, state mandated credentials had not been required; however, the Academy needed to upgrade qualifications in order to be eligible for school accreditation and teacher certifications. According to the Journal of the National Association of Education for Young Children (2007), standards set by systems of educational programs have led many teachers to earn a certificate or degree.

Educational guidelines and standards set by the United States Board of Education (2001), Virginia Board of Education (2007), and Association of Christian Teachers and Schools (ACTS) (2008) provided a basic set of courses and requirements to consider. These groups assess college courses, degrees, special training, and experiences prior to issuing a teaching license, certification, credentials, and/or accreditation. A general overview of these requirements allowed the researcher to determine the staff's unfulfilled

coursework and the types of professional development courses that should be included in the final recommendations.

MCCA became a member of ACTS in 2008 with the intention of seeking accreditation through their system. ACTS (2008) also states a priority in providing certification for Christian teachers and school administrators that do not have a state endorsement and their certified teachers are deemed to be qualified educators. The association is a member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation and the Virginia Council for Private Education. The general certification requirements are similar to those issued by the Virginia Board of Education (2007).

Teachers licensed through the Virginia Department of Education (2006; 2007) are required to possess knowledge of the specific disciplines taught in their classrooms. The regulations for establishing school accreditation cite the focus of the instructional program in kindergarten through grade 3 to be reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics. An approved teacher preparation program in Elementary Education preK-6 includes English, Mathematics, Science, History, Social Science, and Arts/Humanities. In addition, there are 18 semester hours of coursework required in professional studies listed as Human Development, Reading, Curriculum and Instructional Procedures, Classroom/Behavior Management, and Foundations of Education. These credentials are evaluated by the Division of Teacher Education and Licensure. The Virginia Department of Education may issue a 3-year provisional license to teachers and cite "needs" to be met for full endorsement.

MCCA plans to seek accreditation in the area of preK-3 since these grade levels will be offered for the 2009-10 school year. The Virginia Board of Education's licensure

regulations for this group are similar to K-6 elementary education requirements; however, the credit hour endorsement requirements are less. Elementary teachers also have the opportunity to gain an add-on endorsement for preK-3 and preK-4 by completing an additional nine semester hours of graduate work in early childhood education. This add-on endorsement is not required to teach this level, but it does recognize additional preparation in early childhood.

Reading instruction courses are included in all these endorsement systems. Researchers agree that reading is at the center of all learning and should be incorporated into every discipline (Fleener & Morgan, 2006; Richardson, 2004). Vocabulary knowledge is the foundation for comprehension of any subject (Fleener & Morgan, 2006). Researchers have also recommended there should be more to teaching content-area reading than just the skill of reading. In order to be effective reading instructors, teachers must learn to teach affect (Fleener & Morgan, 2006). The affective domain deals with feelings and attitudes towards the reading.

Cunningham and Allington (1994) describe elementary classroom environments that offer the highest level for literacy development. According to the authors, the best way to approach reading and writing in the classroom has been researched and debated for decades. The federal government conducted an inconclusive study in the sixties when the approaches of phonics, basal, literature, and language experience were compared. Since the government's researchers could not make a recommendation, the study concluded that combination approaches work better than any single approach (Cunningham & Allington, 1994). Teachers need guidance in how to design lessons and

organize their classrooms so that all approaches to reading will be offered, plus offer a large variety of reading materials in the classroom (Cunningham & Allington, 1994).

Basic requirements stipulated by The Association of Christian Teachers and Schools were also reviewed during this research. The ACTS Certification Program (2008) qualifies non-licensed educators for the Christian and private school ministry. Under the ACTS accreditation system, qualified elementary teachers must hold a bachelor's degree with a minimum of 120 semester hours in undergraduate work. Overall, the coursework follows the basic guidelines for public school teachers with the addition of religious studies to the required 21 hours in educational studies. Other courses include elementary teaching methods, sciences, mathematics, human adjustment, oral/written communications, social sciences, humanities/fine arts, and educational technology. ACTS will issue a 2-year temporary certificate if the applicant does not meet enough requirements for a professional certificate.

ACTS (2008) also requires qualified teachers in their accredited early education schools. Certified pre-school teachers are required to possess early childhood credentials (ACTS, 2008). The basic requirements are similar to those required for the K-6 teachers. Again, additional biblical requirements could hinder otherwise qualified teachers from getting credentials, but there are national agencies that offer certifications without the religious component.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (2005) offers an accreditation system based on their expectations for increased education and preparation of teaching staff. In 2005, NAEYC issued new Candidacy Requirements for Educational Qualifications directed towards elementary head teachers and assistants. In

addition, requirements were designed to recognize experience, education, and skill sets of

early childhood educators that can demonstrate they have earned the credentials

equivalent to a child development associate. These basic requirements include:

- A minimum of 12 college credits in early childhood education

- 18 years of age or older

- High school degree or GED

- 480 hours of experience working with children (p. 3)

According to their journal, NAEYC (2007) considers these requirements essential

because they are supported by research and because they encourage educators to continue

professional development. This benefits not only the educator, but also the students, the

school, and the profession.

Requirements noted in this study from the United States Board of Education and

Virginia Board of Education (2001; 2008), along with the ACTS (2008) certification

requirements, offered a basic set of mandatory courses and requirements to stipulate at

MCCA. The list of formal courses also provided requirements to compare with the

transcripts of the staff at MCCA.

STANDARDS FOR IN-HOUSE TRAINING AND COURSES

According to MCCA's *Employee Handbook* (2008) teachers are not required to

possess formal teaching credentials; however, teachers are required to have earned a

bachelor's degree in science or arts for the level of kindergarten and above. According to

Wood (personal communication, February 18, 2009), the recently formed School

Advisory Committee mandated annual in-house training, although a model was not

designed. During August of 2008, six staff members complied by attending a training

session in Positive Classroom Behaviors.

Standards that align with the United States Department of Education (2001) have

been designed for professional development by the Virginia Board of Education (2008).

The standards assist teachers to develop a professional development plan that improves

their teaching practice. Standard 2 addresses the necessity to create quality-learning

experiences. The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* states that professional

development should include activities that improve and increase teachers' knowledge of

their subjects and enable them to become highly qualified. The Great Expectations

Tenets, provided by the United States Department of Education (2001), suggest many

workshops that incorporate hands-on components in science, mathematics, and social

studies.

Standard 4 states that the teacher must maintain a disciplined environment.

Similarly, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* stipulates that professional development

should provide a focus on classroom management. The core content should be in courses

that include motivation, positive discipline, and teaching tolerance.

Virginia's standard of Professionalism requires the teacher to take responsibility

for and participate in meaningful professional development. The United States suggests

professional development that aligns with academic standards and student achievement

standards. Examples of these courses include training in the arts, music, and writing.

Standard 3 states that a teacher should use technology to enhance instruction and

learning. Likewise the United States stipulates training in the use of technology if

appropriate; hence Virginia requires public school teachers to fulfill a technology

component. According to Richardson (2004), fundamental computer usage classes can encourage teachers to continue to develop their computer skills. In addition, literacy and technology should be presented as integral tools within content lessons since the use of technology in the classroom improves teaching and learning.

In order to be effective in the classroom, teachers should be able to incorporate technology with various computer programs, software, smartboards, WEB materials, and other technical devices to help with instruction (Richardson, 2004). When teachers are encouraged to learn more about technology, their self-directed learning is stimulated and this encourages self-directed learning in the classroom, too (Collins, 2006). This self-directed learning can greatly benefit their students (Collins, 2006); but it does require the effective teacher to be flexible, plus be a continuous learner.

The Virginia Board of Education (2008) also notes several assessments for teachers. These include relevant Praxis exams, reading and/or language assessments, and an online course in abuse and neglect recognition.

Professional development includes a large variety of courses intended to enhance teaching skills. In addition to certain basic educational requirements, in-house training and other self-enrichment courses should also follow standards appropriate for the continual learning of educators. Since such standards have not been addressed by MCCA, recommendations cited from the Board of Education were important considerations for this study.

PATHWAYS FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING

Various research studies have concluded that continuous learning through professional development prepares the educator to offer higher quality care and education

experiences for young children (Journal of National Association of Education for Young Children, 2007). This professional preparation includes in-service training and technical assistance in addition to the standard college course work required for teachers. Other components also help prepare high-quality teachers, such as on-the job experiences, classroom management programs, coaching, and constructive feedback (Pianta, 2007).

According to Lieberman (as cited in Day, 1999), there are various settings that can be utilized for professional development. Teachers can gain new knowledge through teaching conferences and workshops. Coaches and mentors can be used to help teachers learn on the job. Teachers can develop through out-of-school networks, plus teachers can also learn directly from their students through responses (Day, 1999).

The advancement of technology has brought many new learning tools into the classroom, but it has also provided a convenient delivery of professional development. Many colleges, private educational organizations, outreach programs, and education departments offer a variety of WEB-based, videostream, and distance learning courses. One study found that users had a positive attitude toward internet learning, even though the participants had diverse learning styles, barriers, and personal characteristics (Olsen, 2007). The U.S. Department of Education's Teacher-to-Teacher Workshops offer a variety of eLearning courses through the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) (2006). Teachers can use these online experiences to fulfill training needs and gain professional development in specific content areas. Courses are offered in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and other subjects.

The Virginia Department of Education (2008) issues a *FUNdamentals Calendar of Activities and Ideas* for educators. The 2008-09 theme was about performance and fine

arts with tasks aligning with comprehensive standards. The suggested topics included hands-on activities in writing, reading, art, and music for every day of the school year. Researchers agree that students naturally learn by doing, but only if motivated; however, Gardner (as cited in Clinchy, 2003), a developmental psychologist, states there are few active demonstrations in our classrooms. Instead there is a lot of teacher talk followed by non-human information from books and pictures. Developmental epistemologist, Piaget (as cited in Clinchy, 2003), suggests that teachers must actively involve students in learning through materials set up for them.

Content teachers must learn to incorporate many tools other than lecture because students will engage more effectively in the subject matter (Richardson, 2004). Relevant courses in hands-on teaching methods are available from a variety of sources such as the Teacher-to-Teacher workshops (PAEC, 2006). Many other programs of study were found available near the Academy. These included outdoor classroom instruction by the American Forest Foundation (Project Learning Tree, 2007), science courses at the Danville Science Center (2009), nutrition and computer classes at the Spencer-Penn Centre (2009), and water resource training by the Dan River Basin Association (2009).

Professional development activities should give teachers opportunity to renew their thinking, find practical ideas for their classrooms, gain knowledge and skills, and enjoy learning (Brundage, 2005). In addition to a formal education, professional development should also include various settings and opportunities to improve and upgrade a teacher's skills. This professional development encompasses any pathway for natural learning experiences and planned activities that directly or indirectly benefit the teacher, students, or school in the quality of education (Day, 1999).

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING RECOMMENDATIONS

There are aspects of school cultures that do not support professional development. These include inadequate supervisory support, lack of monetary support, insufficient time, and few opportunities for discussions (Brundage, 2005). Although there are self-starters, overall administrators should help teachers understand the importance of continuing their professional development. Resources must be identified and development programs implemented to support the teachers (Brundage, 2005). As Day points out in his book, *Developing Teachers: The Challenges of Lifelong Learning,* "Successful school development is dependent upon successful teacher development" (1999, p. 2).

According to Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007), self-directed learners take the initiative to plan, carry out, and evaluate their learning experiences. Adults use a variety of methods to gain this knowledge such as traditional course work, self-directed learning, and organized instruction. The self-directed learner goes through the process of learning how to learn and develops preferences based on their own needs, experiences, and skills. Usually self-directed teachers choose their own new learning experiences; however, if courses are mandated, the professional development should be designed with significant input from teachers (Brundage, 2005).

Teachers believe that professional development is effective when it is based on their personal training needs and the needs of the students (Brundage, 2005). Activities are more effective when they align with the classroom work and student learning. The effectiveness translates into improved student performance. A good example of teacher designed training is a result of two studies (Hemmeter, Fox, Jack, & Broyles, 2007)

conducted on positive behavior support. The studies noted that teachers report disruptive behavior as one of the greatest challenges they face in providing a quality program. In regard to professional development, 500 early childhood educators cited challenging behavior to be their highest-rated training need (Hemmeter et al., 2007). Based on these studies, the researchers recommended that all educators have training for promoting social and emotional development and processes to address persistent challenging behavior.

Four life history participants recommended various courses during a study conducted by Brundage (2005). These teachers were engaged in continuous learning although their professional development was never mandatory. Their top recommendations were listed as effective curriculum workshops in science, technology, performing and visual arts, mathematics manipulatives, and hands-on critical skills.

Teachers have a duty to promote lifelong learning in their students (Day, 1999). By demonstrating a personal commitment to self-directed learning, they lead by example. Since teachers develop actively (Day, 1999), it is important for them to be involved in decisions about the direction of their own learning.

<center>SUMMARY</center>

The resources included in this chapter provided standards, information, data, and recommendations concerning professional development for early childhood and elementary teachers. The research yielded teacher qualifications, standards for training, recommended professional growth areas, personal opinions from teachers, and suggested pathways for active participation in professional development. Since MCCA needed to declare higher teacher qualifications, plus develop a program of in-house training geared

towards professional development, these prior studies and information provided a basis for projecting relevant courses and training. The following chapter consists of a description of the methods and procedures used to collect and assess the current professional development of the staff at MCCA.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This research study involved descriptive research conducted at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. The findings intend to describe the nature of the training needs of the teaching staff at the Academy. Citing formal requirements and recommendations for professional development, the researcher was able to compare existing data and personal interests. These measurements then allowed the researcher to describe the most appropriate workshops and courses for the Academy and individual staff members to consider for further professional development.

The first section of this chapter consists of a description of the population under study. Based on this description, the findings could be generalized to similar organizations. Next, the instrument design is described that was used to achieve the research objectives. The methods used to collect the data are discussed in the third section of this chapter, followed by the statistical analysis of that data. The last section offers a summary of the methods and procedures.

POPULATION

Mercy Crossing Christian Academy, located in a rural setting of Henry County in the state of Virginia, had been in operation since 2004. MCCA was a non-accredited, religiously exempt school that offered pre-school services for two, three, and four-year-olds. Classes were also taught in levels from kindergarten through second grade. The total enrollment at the time of the study was sixty-four students. The exemption allowed them to operate a school without a state accreditation.

The total number of teachers, classroom aides, and substitute teachers for the Academy was seventeen, herein referred to as the staff. Since the population was small, the entire group was used for this case study. The group consisted of five pre-school teachers, three elementary teachers, six classroom aides, and two substitute teachers.

The population for this study consisted of all women. They varied in ages from twenty-one through fifty-five. Their educational level was also diverse, as well as their fields of study. Since non-accredited private schools may set their own teaching qualifications, MCCA only stipulated that elementary level teachers had to possess a bachelor's degree or be enrolled in a degree program. Pre-school teachers and aides were not required to possess any credentials, although childcare experience was expected. Professional development was not mandatory; but in order to comply with accreditation standards, the Academy needed to assess the training needs of their teaching staff and stipulate professional development based on those needs.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

In order to cover the research objectives, specific data in regard to professional development were collected from the personnel files. These existing data were tabulated against formal requirements of educational systems and recommendations obtained through the review of literature. The checklist consisted of pertinent degrees, basic college courses, certification requirements, recommended workshops, and other standards. The checklist is presented under appropriate training pathway headings in APPENDIX A-Pathways for Professional Development.

Next, personal interviews were held with all the staff members. The interview was based on a set of open-end questions that was used to verify file data and gain insight

about personal interests concerning professional development. This instrument is included as APPENDIX B-Interview Questions.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The review of literature used in this study provided the mandatory and recommended degrees and courses stipulated by the Virginia Board of Education and other educational systems. A checklist was created consisting of college courses for early and elementary educators, along with recommended workshops or classes for continuous professional development.

Since human subjects were involved in this study, a notification letter was hand-delivered to each staff member in the population. The letter informed the participants about the study, the required personal data, and how privacy would be maintained. A copy of this notification is included as APPENDIX C-Notification Letter.

After the letter was presented and the checklist was created, personnel files were reviewed for credits in professional development. Transcripts, degrees, and certificates were compared against the checklist. In order to protect the identity of the population, code names were assigned to each staff member.

Personal interviews were only conducted by the researcher. Again privacy was maintained through the use of code names. During the personal interviews, each staff member was asked a set of open-end questions regarding their professional development opinions and their particular training needs. Each respondent was also asked if she needed to update her file and if she had interest in any specific courses.

Data from the personnel files were verified or clarified by each staff member during their interview. If discrepancies were noted, the employee was asked to update their personnel file. The personal checklist was revised if necessary.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The interview questions were designed to determine recommendations of professional development that could fulfill training needs for the staff. Open-end questions were used in order to obtain personal opinions. These recommendations were compared to the standards set by educational systems in order to project pertinent courses to fulfill training needs. The researcher personally conducted each interview to improve the reliability and consistency of data. The data were analyzed using numbers, percentages, and the most frequent response when applicable.

SUMMARY

Chapter III presented the methods and procedures used in this descriptive study. Sections included an overview of the population, instrument design, data collection methods, and how the statistics would be used in this case study. The research was directed toward the training needs of the teaching staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy—an early/primary private school in a rural county of Virginia.

Data were collected from personnel files and through interview questions to assure all the research goals were obtained. Each data set was then analyzed by determining the number and percentage of similar answers. Personal preferences and opinions were regarded as important data; therefore, personal interviews were based on open-end questions. Chapter IV will discuss the findings obtained through all these methods and procedures.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The problem of this study was to determine the training needs of the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy to project pertinent courses for professional development. Chapter IV will present the data acquired using the outlined methods and procedures for this study. The existing file data obtained during the research will be described along with the interview responses. An analysis of the findings will be presented.

RESPONSE RATE

The staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy consisted of seventeen teachers, classroom aides, and substitute teachers. This entire population of seventeen, representing a 100 percent response rate, was used during data collection for the study. Sixteen of 17 or 94% responded during the personal interviews.

TRAINING PATHWAYS

The first goal of this study was to determine training pathways appropriate for continuous professional development at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. The pathways were determined from the information provided by the Virginia Board of Education, ACTS, other educational systems, and teaching professionals. Training pathways included college degree programs, professional studies requirements, endorsement requirements, professional development recommendations, credentials for a CDA, and classroom aide qualifications. These pathways offer a variety of courses in professional development and are presented as the headings in APPENDIX A-Pathways for Professional Development.

INTERVIEW RESPONSES

The second goal of this study was to obtain self-directed learning recommenda-tions. The professional development checklist was reviewed with each staff member. An open-end question interview was used to inventory each staff member's opinions and recommendations concerning professional development. Sixteen of 17 or 94% participated in this part of the study.

Question 1: How do you feel about personal professional development at this time in your career?

There was a 94% response rate to Question 1. Sixteen of 17 or 94% of the staff responded with positive regard to professional development; however, two of 17 or 12% stated they would not be willing to enroll in formal college courses.

Question 2: Are you currently enrolled in any type of professional development?

There was a 94% response rate to Question 2. Six of 17 or 35% were currently enrolled in professional development geared towards early educators.

Question 3: Has your personnel file been updated with proof of all professional development you may have undertaken?

There was a 94% response rate for Question 3. Six of 17 or 35% stated their file had been updated with transcripts or certificates since employed by MCCA. All the participants were asked to review the checklist for courses that may have been overlooked and to submit missing documentation.

Question 4: What do you feel are your most important training needs?

There was an 82% response rate to Question 4. Seven of 17 or 41% stated their most important training need was concerned with classroom management and discipline.

Five of 17 or 29% felt they needed training in instructional methods. Other needs stated included communication skills and CPR.

Question 5: Are there any specific workshops or courses of special interest to you?

There was a 47% response rate for Question 5. Eight of 17 or 47% stated special interests. Of these responses, CPR was stated by three of 17 or 18%. Likewise, 18% specified science related courses that included Introductory Astronomy, Animal Science, and Project Learning Tree. Other specified courses included Human Growth and Spanish.

Question 6: Can you suggest general courses or workshops that you feel would improve your job skills?

There was an 82% response rate for Question 6. Four of 17 or 24% suggested workshops in classroom management and/or discipline. There was a wide variety of other answers that included communication skills, creative teaching aids, special needs, hands-on activities, A-Beka curriculum overview, stage presentations, and new teaching methods.

Question 7: Can you suggest types of workshops for the staff to attend as a group that would improve the overall quality of education at the academy?

There was a 94% response rate for Question 7. Eleven of 17 or 65% suggested a workshop in classroom management and/or discipline. Three of 17 or 18% specified hands-on lessons. Another 18% specified communication skills. Other professional development suggestions included special needs education, time management, and curriculum enhancement.

Question 8: Are you willing to implement new knowledge into the classroom that you gain through professional development provided by the academy?

There was a 94% response rate for Question 8. Sixteen of 17 or 94% stated an affirmative answer.

EXISTING DATA

The next goal of this study was to determine pertinent courses that had not been fulfilled by the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. Existing data were collected by noting transcript courses and professional development certificates from 100% of the personnel files of the staff members. The file data were compared to the checklist and credits were noted on each staff member's copy. If discrepancies were noted during the interview, the staff member was asked to update their employee file.

Seven of the 17 teachers, aides, and substitute teachers or 41% only had a high school diploma. Five of 17 or 29% could qualify as a Childhood Development Associate (CDA); however, none of these staff had current credentials. Seven of 17 or 41% had earned an associate degree or passed the Praxis making them eligible as a classroom aide.

Four of 17 or 24% had a bachelor's degree, but only two or 12% had this degree in an elementary education field. One teacher also had a master's degree, but the emphasis was toward adult learners. Four of 17 or 24% were eligible to be certified through ACTS as teachers; however, only one had received certification.

Sixteen of 17 staff members or 94% had completed some type of professional development workshop or course during their adult life. Of these sixteen, six or 35% were currently enrolled in a degree program. Within the past year, five of 17 or 29% had certified in Basic First Aid/CPR and twelve of 17 or 70% had completed online training in Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition. Six of 17 or 35% had recently attended in-service training about positive classroom behavior; however, only one of 17 had attended the last curriculum workshop offered to the Academy staff.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTIONS

The final goal of this study was to project a list of pertinent courses that could fulfill training needs and aid in the professional development of the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. The projected courses listed below were found in Virginia teaching license requirements, plus frequently suggested types of professional development found in former studies, educational systems, and the staff interviews. The following courses were readily available for the staff at MCCA:

eLearning Workshops provided online by PAEC.org

Maximizing Instructional Time Through Positive Behavior Strategies

Feedback: A Powerful Tool for Raising Student Achievement

Differentiated Instruction

Exciting Teachers & Improving Student Achievement with Assessment Data

Science and CSI: Weaving Science and Math into Lessons

Reading in the Content Areas: It's Just Different

Local Workshops

Basic computer programs (Spencer Penn Centre)

Project Learning Tree (American Forest Foundation)

Geo-cache training (Dan River Basin Association)

A-Beka curriculum seminar (Temple Christian School)

Science SOLutions (Danville Science Center)

Water Monitoring (Dan River Basin Association)

GLOBE water technology (Virginia Museum of Natural History)

College courses

preK-3 Teacher Prep programs

Communication and the Classroom

Human Growth and Development

Curriculum and Instructional Procedures

Classroom Management and Discipline

Developing Instructional Strategies

Instructional Technology

Any early childhood course

Any elementary education course

In-house Training

Basic First Aid/CPR (American Red Cross)

Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition

Improving communication skills

Creative displays and teaching aids

Trout in the Classroom

Hands-on language arts

preK-3 crafts and art

Time management

SUMMARY

An analysis of the findings for this study has been presented in Chapter IV. This

included data collected from existing files, as well as responses obtained during personal

interviews. The data were compared to relevant recommended professional development

standards set by educational systems. The findings allowed the researcher to project a list of courses and/or workshops that would help fulfill training needs of the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. The list is presented as APPENDIX D-Projections for Professional Development. Chapter V will summarize the study and then make conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the data analysis.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem of this study was to determine the training needs of the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. Chapter V overviews what was presented in the first four chapters. This includes a description of the research problem and population, information acquired through the review of literature, the methods used to collect the data, and the findings. This chapter addresses conclusions that can be drawn from the information obtained during the research. Finally, the researcher makes recommendations concerning the training needs of the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy.

SUMMARY

Mercy Crossing Christian Academy (MCCA) was a small, religiously exempt school located in rural Virginia that had an objective to offer teaching excellence. The Academy was in the process of applying for accreditation in preK-3 levels and wanted to help the staff upgrade their professional development in order to satisfy requirements stipulated by certain educational systems. The educational setting at the Academy was similar to other pre-school and rural elementary school environments; therefore, recommendations could be obtained from the types of professional development mandated or suggested for early educators in similar environments. The United States Department of Education (2001) defines *professional development* to include activities that increase teachers' knowledge, skills, and instructional strategies used to improve student achievement.

The staff, which consisted of seventeen female teachers, classroom aides, and substitute teachers, was under obligation to upgrade their skills through continuous

learning; however, the Academy favored their personal input in regard to professional development. Once the training needs and opinions of the staff had been determined, the researcher was able to project pertinent courses for professional development.

The review of literature provided insight for (1) the need for professional growth, (2) the basic educational requirements for pre-school and elementary teachers, (3) standards for training courses, (4) pathways for continual learning, and (5) self-directed learning recommendations. A checklist was created of pertinent formal coursework and recommendations for continuous professional development in the field of early education.

Existing data were obtained from transcripts and certificates located in the personnel files. Personal updates, interests, and opinions were collected through interview questions with the staff members.

Citing formal requirements and recommendations for professional development, the researcher was able to compare existing data and personal interests. These measurements then allowed the researcher to project the most applicable workshops and courses for the Academy and individual staff members to consider for further professional development.

Mercy Crossing Christian Academy (MCCA) belonged to the Association of Christian Teachers and Schools (ACTS) and intended to seek accreditation through them. ACTS did not offer standards for classroom aides; however, seven of 17 or 41% were eligible to be employed as a classroom aide in Virginia. These staff members had either earned an associate degree or passed the appropriate Praxis.

The study found five of 17 or 29% could qualify as a Childhood Development Associate (CDA); however, none of these staff had current credentials. This type of educator is qualified to teach at some preschool levels. Only one of the staff had the biblical credits required for this certification through ACTS.

The study found four of 17 or 24% had a bachelor's degree, but only two or 12% had this degree in an elementary education field. One of these teachers had been issued a license to teach at the elementary level, but it was not issued by the state of Virginia. She was certified by ACTS, but proof of certification was not in file.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions for this study were based the following research objectives:

1. Determine training pathways appropriate for continual learning at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy.

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (2005), teachers in national pre-school programs should have training in early childhood education in addition to bachelor degrees. Also teacher assistants should be required to have credentials as a Child Development Associate (CDA).

The Virginia Board of Education and ACTS required teaching endorsements for preK-3 or degrees and courses related to elementary education. Although four staff members were eligible to gain accreditation through ACTS, only one was certified and one other had applied.

All the teachers, aides, and substitute teachers needed to pursue formal professional development in the field of early education and become continuous learners.

Continuous learning through various professional development pathways was required by the state of Virginia and ACTS.

2. Obtain self-directed learning recommendations from teachers.

Since it was concluded that 100% of the staff had training needs, this study found they could also enhance their teaching skills by completing in-house training, online enhancement courses, and teacher workshops. The data comparisons and personal interviews allowed the staff to recognize their own deficiencies and consider personal pathways for continuous learning. Seven of 17 or 41% admitted they had training needs in the area of discipline and/or classroom management. Of these seven respondents, only one had completed the former in-house training focused on positive behaviors. Fifteen of 17 or 88% suggested such a workshop for professional development. This number is not surprising since former studies (Hemmeter, Fox, Jack, & Broyles, 2007) noted that teachers report disruptive behavior as one of the greatest challenges they face in providing a quality program. In regard to professional development, 500 early childhood educators cited challenging behavior to be their highest-rated training need.

3. Determine pertinent training that has not been fulfilled by the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy.

This researcher found ACTS will honor licenses issued by boards of education; however, only one of 17 staff members had been issued a license to teach at the elementary level and it was not through the state of Virginia. The Academy intended to seek accreditation through this educational system, but teachers and aides accredited through this association must meet requirements similar to those stipulated by the state of

Virginia. Both educational systems require professional development standards even for preschool teachers.

4. Project a list of pertinent courses that could fulfill training needs and aid in the professional development of the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy.

This study concluded that there were a large number of uncompleted courses and workshops that would improve teaching skills and the overall quality of education provided by Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. A checklist was created to use as an instrument with specific courses, electives, and other requirements listed under various training pathways.

In conclusion, the study only found one staff member currently qualified as an early education teacher in Virginia or currently qualified based on accreditation standards set by ACTS. Studies conducted by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2008) also found professional development virtually non-existent or grossly inadequate in under-resourced, rural area schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Requirements for teacher qualifications and accreditations were derived from standards set by educational systems having an influence on Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. The findings of this study allowed the researcher to make several recommendations with regard to professional development at the Academy.

First, the researcher recommends that all staff members receive a copy of the checklist for standard requirements and further professional development. The teaching staff should be advised to pursue a formal course of study and/or continuous professional development. MCCA must stipulate these requirements and place qualified personnel in

teaching positions in order to become an accredited academy. According to the Journal of the National Association of Education for Young Children (2007), standards set by systems of educational programs have led many teachers to earn a certificate or degree. Since only two staff members had completed the basic studies in preK-3, the projected list of courses included requirements stipulated by the Virginia Board of Education (2007), United States Board of Education (2001), and Association of Christian Teachers and Schools (2008).

Next, the researcher recommends that all staff members receive a copy of the projected list of professional development courses and workshops. This list was derived through recommendations of educational systems, literature review, and the staff interviews. It consists of classes readily available for the staff. High emphasis was placed on the staff's personal opinions in regard to their own professional development. Teachers believe that professional development is effective when it is based on their personal training needs and the needs of the students; therefore, the professional development should be designed with significant input from teachers (Brundage, 2005).

Thirdly, the researcher recommends that transcripts and certification copies be required from all staff and future applicants. In addition, the personnel files should be updated annually with proof of continuous professional development.

The fourth recommendation is for MCCA to stipulate that their educators be continuous learners. The number of professional development points should be based on recommendations set by ACTS and/or the Virginia Board of Education. In addition to self-directed learning, the Academy should schedule professional workshops for the staff throughout the year.

The researcher also recommends that application for accreditation be postponed until the staff is prepared for their positions or qualified staff in place. All the standards should be reviewed by the administration. The accreditation process is time-consuming and only worth the expense after the Academy believes it can meet all the requirements.

Finally, the researcher recommends that MCCA designate a professional development coordinator to schedule workshops throughout the school year and oversee compliance. A standard mandated by The National Staff Development Council (2001) states that staff development requires skillful leaders who can guide continuous instructional improvement. In-house training would vary depending on the availability, but workshops should include topics of special interest to the staff. In particular, workshops in discipline and classroom management should be routinely scheduled. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (Virginia Board of Education, 2008) stipulates that professional development should provide a focus on classroom management. The core content should be in courses that include motivation, positive discipline, and teaching tolerance. This researcher's Projections for Professional Development was based on needs of the current teachers and students.

The information collected through this study should be used to help fulfill training needs of the staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. The Academy is a non-accredited school, but it has an objective to offer teaching excellence. In order to employ a staff that satisfies certain accreditation requirements, MCCA must stipulate a guideline of requirements for professional development. As Day points out in his book, *Developing Teachers: The Challenges of Lifelong Learning,* "Successful school development is dependent upon successful teacher development" (1999, p. 2).

REFERENCES

ACTS. (2008). *Acts member benefits and information*. Retrieved March 2, 2009 from
    http://actsschools.org/acts_benefits.htm

ACTS. (2008). *Teacher and administrator certification*. Retrieved March 2, 2009 from
    http://actsschools.org/forms/Tchr_Admin_Certification.pdf

American Forest Foundation. (2007). *Project learning tree: PreK-8 environmental
    education activity guide*. Washington, D.C.: American Forest Foundation.

Brundage, S.E. (2005). *Factors related to the pursuance of professional development by
    elementary school teachers.* Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT
    3179256).

Center for Teaching Quality. (2008). *Teacher working conditions toolkit.* Retrieved
    February 6, 2009 from http:// www.teacherworkingconditions.org/
    profdevelopment

Clinchy, E. (2003). Rethinking "academic" achievement: Is this what we really want for
    our children? *Progressive Perspectives, 4(2).* University of Vermont. Retrieved
    March 1, 2009 from http://www.uvm.edu/ ~dewey/monographs/
    RethinkingAcademics.html

Collins, A. (2006, July). How society can foster self-directed learning. *Human
    Development, 49,* 225-228.

Cunningham, P.M., Allington, R.L. (1994). *Classrooms that work: They can all read &
    write.* New York: HarperCollins.

Dan River Basin Association (2009). *Education*. Retrieved March 16, 2009 from
    http://www.danriver.org/Education/Education.htm

Danville Science Center. (2009) *Science solutions*. Retrieved March 6, 2009 from
    http://www.dsc.smv.org/

Day, C. (1999). *Developing teachers: The challenges of lifelong learning*. Philadelphia:
    Falmer.

Fleener, C., & Morgan, R. (2006). *Reading in the content areas*. (6th ed.). Belmont, CA:
    Wadsworth.

Hemmeter, M.L., Fox, L., Jack, S., & Broyles, L. (2007). A program-wide model of
    positive behavior support in early childhood settings. *Journal of Early
    Intervention*, *29 (337).*

Henry County Schools. (2008). *Preschool program*. Retrieved March 13, 2009 from
    http://www.henry.k12.va.us

Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2007, March).
    *Professional development: Educational qualifications of program administrators
    and teaching staff*. Retrieved February 21, 2009 from
    http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200703/BTJProfDev.asp

Larson, T.A. (2007). *State-funded national preschool for all four-year-olds:
    Recommendations for implementation*. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital
    Dissertations. (AAT 3273303).

Leal, T. & Leibbrand, J. (2008). *Teaching in America: Opportunity & challenge*.
    National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Mercy Crossing Christian Academy. (2008). *Employee handbook: Personnel policies and
    procedures.* Mercy Crossing Christian Academy.

Merriam, S.B., Caffarella, R.S., & Baumgartner, L.M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood*.
    San Francisco: John Wiley.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (1997). Springfield, MA: Merriam Webster.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2005). *NAEYC early
    childhood program standards*. Retrieved February 21, 2009 from
    http://www.naeyc.org/academy/standards

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2006). *Timeline for meeting
    teacher qualifications*. Retrieved February 21, 2009 from
    http://www.naeyc.org/academy/criteria/teacher_qualification_timeline.html

National Staff Development Council. (2001). NSDC's standards for staff development.
    Retrieved February 5, 2009 from http://www.nsdc.org/standards/index.cfm

New College Institute. (2008). *Bachelor's degree programs*. Retrieved March 13, 2009
    from http://www.newcollegeinstitute.org/Academic_Programs.aspx

Old Dominion University. (2008). *Distance learning*. [Pamphlet]. Old Dominion
    University @ Patrick Henry Community College.

Olsen, H.M.B. (2007). *Considerations for delivery of online professional development for
    childcare professionals*. Retrieved from ProQuest Digital Dissertations. (AAT
    3275939).

Panhandle Area Educational Consortium. (2006). *Teacher-to-teacher workshops*. Retrieved February 14, 2009 from http://www.paec.org/teacher2teacher/ map.html

Pianta, R.C. (2007, January). Preschool is school, sometimes: Making early childhood education matter. *Education Next*. 44-49.

Project Learning Tree. (2007). *Environmental Education Activity Guide*. American Forest Foundation.

Richardson, J. (2004).Content area literacy lessons go high tech. *Reading Online 8 (1)*. Retrieved March 14, 2009 from www.readingonline.org

Spencer-Penn Centre. (2009). *Upcoming events and more*. Retrieved March 16, 2009 from http://www.thecentreatspencerpenn.com

Tout, K., Zaslow, M., & Berry, D. (2005). Quality and qualifications: Links between professional development and quality in early care and education settings. In *Critical Issues in Early Childhood Professional Development*, eds. M. Zaslow & I. Martinez-Beck, 77-110. Baltimore: Brookes.

United States Department of Education. (2001). High quality professional development: *Title IX of Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001*.

United States Department of Education. (2001). *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

Virginia Department of Education. (2006). *Regulations establishing standards for accrediting public schools in Virginia-2006.* Retrieved February 14, 2009 from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Accountability/soafulltxt.pdf

Virginia Department of Education. (2007). *Licensure regulations for school personnel.* Retrieved March 2, 2009 from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Compliance/TeacherED/nulicvr.pdf

Virginia Department of Education. (2008, May 21). *Virginia standards for the professional practice of teachers.* Retrieved February 14, 2009 from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/newvdoe/virginia_prof_practice_ standards.pdf

Warash, B.G., Ward, C., & Rotilie, S. (2008). An exploratory study of the application of early childhood environment rating scale criteria. *Education, 128,* 645-658.

Zaslow, M. & Martinez-Beck, I. (Eds.). (2005). *Critical issues in early childhood professional development*. Baltimore: Brookes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A- PATHWAYS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Early/Primary Education (preK-3rd)
Requirements and Professional Development Recommendations

Staff Code_____

Professional Studies Requirements

Human Growth and Development
Curriculum and Instructional Procedures:
      Family Roles in development
      Basic Foundation Blocks
      Communicating skills
      Informal play settings
Classroom and Behavior Management
Foundations of Education
Language Acquisition
Reading

Supervised Teaching Experience (1yr)
Educational Technology
Child Abuse Recognition

Endorsement Requirements

Completed preK-3 Teacher Prep Program
     OR
Completed Liberal Arts/Sciences Bachelor's Degree and credits include:
English in Composition
English in Oral Communication
English in Literature
4th English
1st Mathematics
2nd Mathematics
3rd Mathematics
1st Science
2nd Science
3rd Science (another field)
1 Science Lab
American History
World History
Geography
Economics
1st Arts and Humanities
2nd Arts and Humanities

Professional Development Recommendations

Performance/Fine Arts
Biblical Studies
Hands-on Science
Hands-on Social Studies
Hands-on Language Arts
Creative Curriculum preK and K
Math Manipulatives
Motivation of the Student
Positive Discipline
Positive Behavior
Reading in Content Areas
Reading Comprehension
Assessments
Constructive Feedback
Developing Critical Skills in Students
Any Online Professional Development Course
Any Technology Workshop
Any additional Early Childhood Education courses

Classroom Aide

Any Associate Degree
Or
Passed Praxis exam for Early Childhood Education

Childhood Development Associate Credential (CDA)
(For lower levels not requiring a full teaching license/endorsement)

18 years or older

High school degree or GED

480 hours of experience working with children within the past 5 yrs
(180 school days @ 3 hours a day= 540 hours)

12 credits in Early Childhood Education
(4 college courses)

APPENDIX B- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel about personal professional development at this time in your career?

2. Are you currently enrolled in any type of professional development?

3. Has your personnel file been updated with proof of all professional development you may have undertaken?

4. What do you feel are your most important training needs?

5. Are there any specific workshops or courses of special interest to you?

6. Can you suggest general courses or workshops that you feel would improve your job skills?

7. Can you suggest types of workshops for the staff to attend as a group that would improve the overall quality of education at the academy?

8. Are you willing to implement new knowledge into the classroom that you gain through professional development provided by the academy?

APPENDIX C- NOTIFICATION LETTER

To: All Teachers, Aides, and Substitute Teachers at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy

From: Regina Flora, Administrative Assistant

Date: April 15, 2009

Re: Problem Study for Training Needs

The staff at Mercy Crossing Christian Academy should be fully aware of the intent to seek accreditation through the Association of Christian Teachers and Schools. The Association does stipulate certain qualifications for teachers and aides in schools that they endorse. If the educators do not possess formal teaching endorsements, ACTS will also certify staff members that have proper credentials.

Since it is very important for the Academy to align with teaching standards, we found it necessary to study the training needs of the staff. I will be conducting this problem study during the research component of my Master's degree through Old Dominion University. The goal and objectives have been established and I have already gathered information from relevant studies and systems that endorse teachers and accredit schools. The next step involves collection of data. Data collection will take place after April 1, 2009 and the final study will be submitted in August.

My study must include data that I obtain from human subjects; therefore, I must give you proper notification. I want to assure you that this study will benefit you as well as the academy; however, I will be unable to draw conclusions without assessing your current qualifications and personal opinions. I need to use the existing data in your personnel file and obtain your opinions and suggestions through personal communications. This information will only be used for the purpose of this study. Your identity will be protected from all sources outside the Academy, including Old Dominion University.

After the data is gathered and compared to teaching standards set by ACTS and the Virginia Board of Education, I will be prepared to analyze the findings. You will receive a copy of the summary of the study and the conclusions drawn from the findings. This study will enable me to project a guideline of certain courses and in-house training necessary to fulfill the training needs of the staff. This model will also provide a valuable resource as you consider professional development and the upgrade of your teaching skills.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions or reason to decline, please discuss the matter with me as soon as possible.

Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX D- PROJECTIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

eLearning Workshops provided online by PAEC.org

Maximizing Instructional Time Through Positive Behavior Strategies

Feedback: A Powerful Tool for Raising Student Achievement

Differentiated Instruction

Exciting Teachers & Improving Student Achievement with Assessment Data

Science and CSI: Weaving Science and Math into Lessons

Reading in the Content Areas: It's Just Different

Local Workshops

Basic computer programs (Spencer Penn Centre)

Project Learning Tree (American Forest Foundation)

Geo-cache training (Dan River Basin Association)

A-Beka curriculum seminar (Temple Christian School)

Science SOLutions (Danville Science Center)

Water Monitoring (Dan River Basin Association)

GLOBE water technology (Virginia Museum of Natural History)

College courses

preK-3 Teacher Prep programs

Communication and the Classroom

Human Growth and Development

Curriculum and Instructional Procedures

Classroom Management and Discipline

Developing Instructional Strategies

Instructional Technology

Any early childhood course

Any elementary education course

<u>In-house Training</u>

Basic First Aid/CPR (American Red Cross)

Child Abuse and Neglect Recognition

Improving communication skills

Creative displays and teaching aids

Trout in the Classroom

Hands-on language arts

preK-3 crafts and art

Time management