Proposal Example 2

What Content Teachers Want:
Needs Assessment for ESL in Ohio [10 words]

Summary:
This paper reports on findings from a survey of secondary content and ESL teachers to identify gaps in teacher training, knowledge and existing ESL services, and to determine perceived needs for professional development. Included are recommendations for building and sustaining communities of practice to meet teachers’ needs for educating ELLs. [30 words]

Abstract:
According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), 42% of American public school classroom and content teachers reported having English language learners (ELLs) in their classrooms, but only 13% of these teachers have had training to teach linguistically and culturally diverse students (as cited in Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2008, p. 196). In light of these bleak statistics, this paper reports on a needs assessment survey conducted among secondary content and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in Ohio to identify gaps in teacher training, knowledge and existing ESL services; to determine perceived needs for professional development and resources to improve teachers’ delivery of academic content to ELLs; to ascertain ESL and content area teachers’ experiences with collaboration; and to identify factors influencing teachers’ willingness to participate in customized professional development.

Participants included 144 teachers in six public school districts comprising urban, suburban and rural areas that had among the highest enrollment of ELL students in the state. Data were obtained via a 30-item online survey consisting of fixed-item and open-ended questions, and were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Findings indicated that teachers’ knowledge of culture and pedagogical techniques for educating ELLs was insufficient; that current district ESL services were inadequate; that content and ESL teacher collaboration was sporadic at best; that teachers were acutely aware of these deficits and eager to engage in professional development for ESL; and that affordability and convenience were deciding factors in teachers’ willingness to participate in further training.

Based upon these findings, and, in conjunction with research-based models of effective collaboration among school personnel, we make a series of recommendations for a variety of stakeholders, which include the need to work toward building and sustaining communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that meet secondary content teachers’ professional development needs for educating ELLs. [300 words]

Interest Section: Secondary

This proposal was successfully accepted for presentation at national TESOL in 2009. Authors were Karen L. Newman, Keiko Samimy, and Kathleen Romstedt from Ohio State University.