

**FACTORS RELATED TO THE QUALITY OF STAFF
DEVELOPMENT IN VIRGINIA'S REGIONAL ALTERNATIVE
EDUCATION CENTERS**

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Factors Related to the Quality of Staff Development
in Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Centers

ABSTRACT

James L.F. Parker

The purpose of this study was to provide data that could be used to improve staff development in Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Centers. Characteristics of participants and of centers were identified as factors to investigate. The personal characteristics of the participants were age, gender, position, attitude toward staff development, and total years of experience in education. The center characteristics were location, age of center, grade levels served, number of staff employed, number of students served, number of special education students served, budget for staff development, pooling of resources, center leadership, number of certified general education teachers, and number of certified special education teachers. Quality of staff development was measured on the following dimensions: learning environment, time for learning, planning, evaluation, materials, techniques, funding, content, rewards for participation, use of adult learning principles, and transfer of learning.

The design was both quantitative and qualitative. A questionnaire was mailed to 99 administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors in 26 participating regional centers. Quantitative responses were analyzed with descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and multiple regression. The qualitative phase involved three focus groups with four participants in each group – one administrative coordinator, one counselor, and two teachers. Three centers were chosen at random from three different geographic regions in Virginia – urban, suburban, and rural. Nominal group techniques were used to create a prioritized list of recommendations for staff development at the centers.

Factors that best predicted the quality of staff development were the quality of center leadership, attitude toward staff development, and grade levels served. The prioritized lists of strategies from the focus groups included funding for inservice travel, providing training during workday, using teambuilding techniques, working with stakeholders, increasing number of staff employed, and having stakeholders provide timely services. A major implication of the study was that one theory with independent predictor variables did not relate to the quality factors. A more accurate description evolved—a family of theories. The family consists of three separate theories, with each theory identified by the predictor variables that were found to be associated with specific quality variables.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Rita C. Parker, my son, George M. F. Parker, my daughter, Christina P. Barton, my mother, Kitty S. Smith, my father and mother-in-law, Worth and Grace Cox, and extended families—Barton, Kyle, McGee, Parker, and Simpson—whose love and support have been the foundation of my life.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
PREFACE	1
CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT	2
The Context of the Problem.....	2
The Problem.....	5
The Purpose of the Study.....	6
A Framework for Studying the Quality of Staff Development.....	6
Definitions of the Variables in the Study	9
Variables Related to the Quality of Staff Development: A Review of the Literature	9
CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY.....	29
Research Questions.....	29
Populations and Participants.....	29
Design and Procedures	31

CHAPTER III: THE FINDINGS	45
Descriptive Statistics for the Respondents and Center Characteristics..	45
Regression of Quality Dimensions of Staff Development in the Regional Alternative Education Centers on Personal and Environmental Characteristics.....	52
A Family of Theories.....	68
Recommendations for Improvement of Staff Development: Focus Group Summary	68
CHAPTER IV: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH	78
Summary of Findings	78
Discussion.....	80
REFERENCES.....	84
APPENDICES	
A. Description of the Twenty-nine Virginia Regional Alternative Education Centers, 2001-2002	90
B. The Survey Instrument: Staff Development Program Assessment Survey	100
C. Statistics for the Principal Components Analysis of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey	103
D. Approval of Research	106
E. Third Content Validity Questionnaire: Staff Development Program Assessment Survey	109

F. Data from the Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey	122
G. Location of Regional Alternative Education Centers by State Superintendent’s Regional Study Group and by Designation—Urban, Suburban, and Rural	131
H. Descriptive Statistics for the Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development by Domain and Item.....	133
I. Agenda for Focus Group Meetings	138
Vita.....	144

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Location of Regional Alternative Education Centers by State Superintendent’s Regional Study Group	4
2. Constitutive and Operational Definitions of the Variables in the Study	10
3. Populations, Samples and Participants in the Study by Superintendent’s Regional Study Group	30
4. Domains and Items on the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey	32
5. Means, Standard Deviations, and Alpha Reliability Coefficients for Staff Development Program Assessment Survey Scales.....	41
6. Descriptive Statistics for Respondent and Center Characteristics, <i>N</i> =99 ..	46
7. Differences in the Quality of Staff Development Ratings by Current Position, One-Way ANOVAs	49
8. Differences in the Quality of Staff Development Ratings by Location, One-Way ANOVAs.....	50
9. Differences in the Quality of Staff Development Ratings by Location, Scheffés Post-Hoc Comparisons	51
10. Differences in Quality of Staff Development Ratings by Grade Level Served, <i>t</i> -Tests.....	53
11. Differences in Quality of Staff Development Ratings by Gender, <i>t</i> -Tests.....	54
12. Regression of the Adequacy of the Learning Environment on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers	55

13. Regression of the Adequacy of the Time for Learning on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers	56
14. Regression of the Quality of the Planning for Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers	57
15. Regression of the Level of Participation by Center Personnel in the Evaluation of Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers.....	59
16. Regression of the Adequacy of the Materials and Equipment on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers	60
17. Regression of the Quality of Staff Development Techniques on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers	61
18. Regression of the Adequacy of Funding for Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers	62
19. Regression of the Relevance of Content of Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers	63
20. Regression of the Quality of the Rewards for Participation in Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers.....	64
21. Regression of the Use of Adult Learning Principles in Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers.....	65
22. Regression of the Quality of the Transfer of Learning from Staff Development to the Job on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers	66

23. Regression of the Overall Quality of Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers	67
24. A Family of Theories Explaining the Quality of Staff Development in Regional Alternative Education Centers	69
25. Strategies to Improve the Quality of Staff Development in the Regional Alternative Education Centers: Urban Focus Group	71
26. Strategies to Improve the Quality of Staff Development in the Regional Alternative Education Centers: Suburban Focus Group	72
27. Strategies to Improve the Quality of Staff Development in the Regional Alternative Education Centers: Rural Focus Group	73
28. Summary of Strategies for Improvement of Staff Development by Location	74
C1. Correlation Coefficients Among the Measures of Quality of Staff Development	104
C2. Total Variance in the Scales Explained by the Components	105
C3. Communalities	105
C4. Component Matrix	105
F1. Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey: Classification of Items into Quality of Staff Development Domains by Experts (N=18)	123
F2. Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey: Classification of Personal Demographic Items Within Domains (N=18)	125

F3. Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey: Classification of Alternative Regional Education Center Demographic Items Within Domains (<i>N</i> =18).....	126
F4. Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey: The Strength of Association of Items Within Domains (<i>N</i> =18)	127
F5. Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey: The Clarity of Items (<i>N</i> =18).....	129
G1. Location of Regional Alternative Education Centers by State Superintendent’s Regional Study Group and by Designation—Urban, Suburban, and Rural	132
H1. Means, Standard Deviations, Minimums, and Maximums for Domains and Items on the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey	134

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Lewin's field theory as it relates to the quality of staff development in the regional alternative education centers.....	7
2. Variables affecting the quality of staff development in regional alternative education centers.....	8

PREFACE

Chapter I contains a description of the problem, the context, a description of the regional alternative education centers, the problem, the purpose of the study, a description of the variables related to the quality of staff development, the theory, and the definitions of the variables in the study.

The methodology is in Chapter II. This chapter includes research questions, population and participants, design and procedures, and an explanation of both the quantitative (Phase I) and qualitative (Phase II) components of the research. Each phase is divided into instrument development, instrument administration, and data analysis.

The findings are in Chapter III. Descriptive statistics are presented for all variables, and regression statistics are presented for the relationships between the predictor and criterion variables.

Conclusions, a discussion, implications, and recommendations for practice and future research are in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER I THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

The future culture of the place called school will not be conformed but transformed by how quality staff development systems evolve. How good schools will be as educational institutions--how humane and vital they will be as places to work--will be functions of the [quality] of the investment in their personnel. (Bruce Joyce, 1990, p. xv)

Since the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, a vigorous debate on the quality of American education has engaged educators, legislators, politicians, parents, and interested citizens throughout the country (Gleick, 1995). According to the report, one of the most critical challenges faced by public schools is the continued development of personnel. Sparks (2000) put it this way: "If teachers are to successfully teach all students to high standards, virtually everyone who affects student learning must be learning virtually all the time" (p. ix). As public school leaders provide lip-service about continuous and effective professional development, "low-quality staff development experiences have left most teachers with little faith that it will actually help them to improve student learning" (Sparks, 2000, p. ix). To bridge the gap between inadequate practices and adequate practices, it is commonly believed that educators need to engage in *high quality* staff development (Guskey, 2000; Parker, 2000).

For the purpose of this study, staff development in the regional alternative education centers is defined as the career-long professional development experiences designed to improve job related knowledge, skills, and attitudes of adult learners. This career-long development affects individual competence, expectations, actions, teaching, and learning environment (Sparks & Richardson, 1997). It is the recognition of education as a dynamic, professional field and the resultant need for educators to increase their competency in a field that has a continually expanding knowledge base (Guskey, 2000).

The Context of the Problem

High-quality staff development affects the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of professionals and is linked to everyday practice. "What, when, and how many" are necessary questions to be answered in describing staff development. However, the quality of staff development is more important than these because it deals with the "value, adequacy, or usefulness" of the offerings (Guskey, 2000, pp. 32-34).

By journeying down the road not taken in earlier studies, this researcher investigated the quality of staff development in Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Centers and the characteristics of the participants and the centers that contributed to the quality of staff development offered. It is hoped that participation in this study will empower the staff of the centers to evaluate critically the staff development activities provided by their centers. The results may help further the individual and professional growth of the centers' staffs.

The Regional Alternative Education Centers

The Virginia General Assembly, in enacting the Virginia Standards of Quality (Virginia Code §22.1-253.13:1), initiated the development of public alternative schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The General Assembly mandated that educational alternatives must be established "for students whose needs are not met in programs prescribed elsewhere in these standards" (Virginia Standards of Quality and Excellence, 1999, p. 4). In 1993, the General Assembly established the regional alternative education centers under the Virginia Code §22.1-209.1:2.

In 2001-2002, there were 29 regional centers in Virginia with each center designated to serve a minimum of two public school divisions (see Appendix A). The centers are located in all of the eight Superintendent's Regional Study Groups. The numbers of centers located in each regional study group are: Region 1 (3), Region 2 (3), Region 3 (3), Region 4 (3), Region 5 (4), Region 6 (5), Region 7 (6), and Region 8 (2) (see Table 1).

In 1996, the Virginia General Assembly empowered the Virginia Board of Education to provide financial support for these centers to serve public school students who had violated the Commonwealth's laws and local school board policies. In 1998, all regional centers received state funding to partially finance their operations based on a fiscal capacity formula using the Virginia Local Composite Index (Virginia Department of Education, 2003). Many of the regional centers qualified for other types of state funding to support dropout prevention and special education. By 1999, the total operating budget for the regional centers had grown to \$9,689,680 with the state contributing over one-third of the revenue at \$3,752,379 (Virginia Department of Education, 2003). The school divisions use local funds to augment these budgets. Consequently, there is the potential for disparities in funding and quality of services that can be provided to at-risk students.

Table 1

Location of Regional Alternative Education Centers by State Superintendent's Regional Study Group

Regional study group	Locations of regional alternative education centers
1	Petersburg City Powhatan County Richmond City
2	Newport News City Norfolk City Northampton County
3	King William County Stafford County Westmoreland County
4	Fairfax County Fauquier County Prince William County
5	Albemarle County Fluvanna County Lynchburg City Staunton City
6	Henry County Montgomery County Pittsylvania County Roanoke County Roanoke City
7	Bristol City Carroll County Russell County Scott County Wise County Wythe County
8	Brunswick County Nottoway County

The regional centers are governed by local school boards and are supervised by their superintendents' staffs. Each center has a staff of one administrative coordinator, at least one counselor, and two or more teachers. The facilities vary within each region and among the regions from a school-within-a-school to a separate building. While the overall mission is to facilitate at-risk students' adjustment to a regular school environment for eventual graduation, the emphasis of the alternative programs differs across centers.

Generally, the alternative education programs are scheduled during traditional school hours but may have flexible hours either in the morning or evening for the General Education (GED) students. Classes are organized to meet the needs of 3,000 plus at-risk students. The majority of the classes are organized either by grade level or by mixed grouping. Yet, some of the coursework is delivered to students working independently with computer-based curricula. Each center offers the core academic subjects and a variety of vocational-technical courses. The exception is the Fluvanna Regional Center. This center uses microcomputers and modems in a statewide distance learning network for students who receive their alternative instruction in their residences (Virginia Department of Education, 2003).

Features of service delivery are:

- annual assessment of student placement;
- intensive, accelerated instructional program with standards for academic achievement and behavior comparable to regular programs;
- low student-teacher ratio (average ratio is one teacher for 10 students);
- collaborative efforts with parents and the community;
- program evaluation;
- staff development and training. (Gerges & Hrabe, 2002, p. 5)

The regional centers in Virginia operate in accordance with their project grant charters and attempt to meet the basic needs of their students. The staff of the centers assists students who are at-risk in making a satisfactory transition back to their home schools. While no center program achieves complete success with every student, the regional centers provide a variety of alternative education services in public school education.

The Problem

The regional alternative education center staffs prepare annual staff development plans subject to approval by their division superintendents. Because the regional centers are funded by state grants, the education specialist for alternative education at the Virginia Department of Education reviews these plans

annually (Jay, 2001). They write their staff development plans, but there are other influences at the school division, state, and university levels that affect their decision making in implementing the plans. Many of the administrative coordinators of the regional centers believe that these staff development plans lack focus, exhibit fragmented content, are irrelevant to their staffs, are not fully implemented, and are not presented to their staffs using adult learning principles (Parker, 2001). They believed that a study would be helpful in learning more about the quality and improvement of staff development at the regional centers (Parker, 2001).

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide data that could be used to improve staff development in Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Centers. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data derived from this study, improvements are recommended for the consideration of center administrators, counselors, and teachers.

A Framework for Studying the Quality of Staff Development

Variables related to the quality of staff development were identified in the literature. Specific studies on humanistic psychology and staff development were reviewed. Lewin's (1935) formula of behavior as function of personality interacting with the environment [Behavior = f (Personality x Environment)] (see Figure 1) was the overall framework for the study. The interrelationships of these three major categories of variables were addressed. The ratings of the quality of staff development (i.e., learning environment, time for learning, planning for staff development, evaluation of staff development, materials, techniques, funding, content, rewards for participation, use of adult learning principles, and the transfer of learning) are the behaviors. The personal characteristics of participants represent the personality (i.e., age, gender, position, general attitude toward staff development, and total years of experience). The characteristics of the regional centers (i.e., location, age of center, grade levels served, number of staff employed, number of students served, number of special education students served, budget for staff development, pooling of resources, leadership, number of certified general education teachers, and number of certified special education teachers) are the environment (see Figure 2).

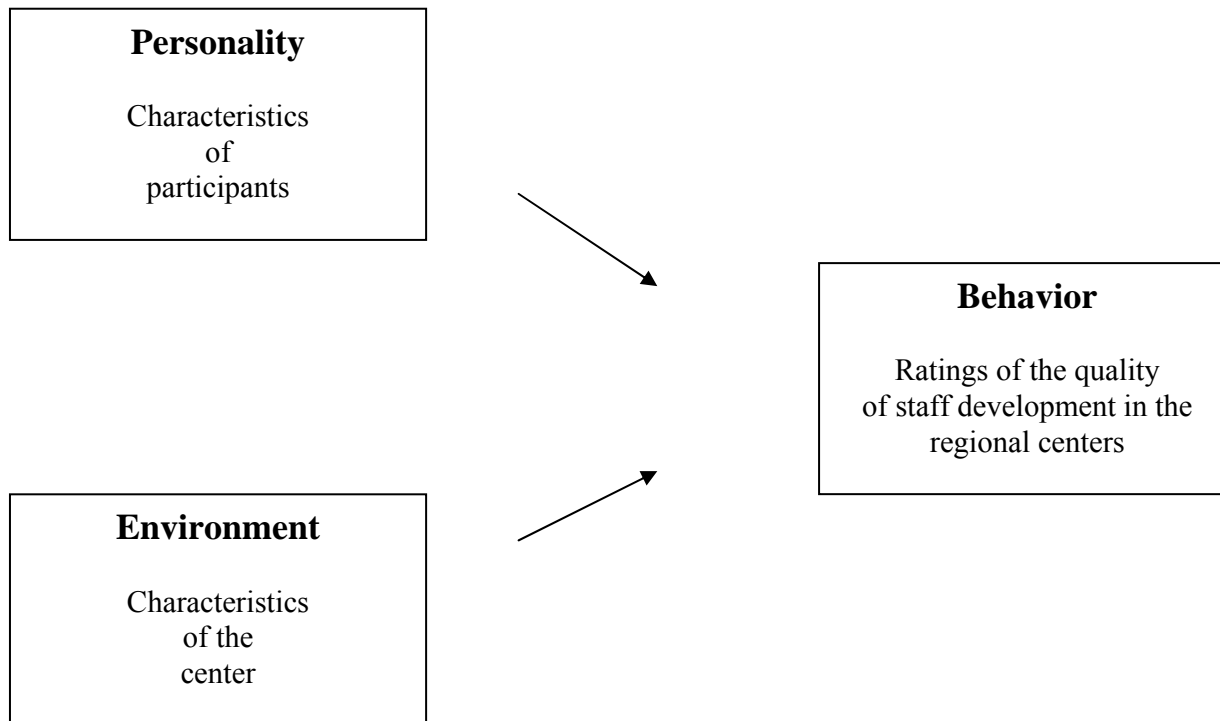


Figure 1. Lewin's field theory as it relates to the quality of staff development in the regional alternative education centers.

Created from information taken from Lewin, K. (1935). Environmental forces in child behavior and development (D. K. Adams & K. E. Zener, Trans.). *A dynamic theory of personality: Selected papers* (pp. 66-113). New York: McGraw-Hill.

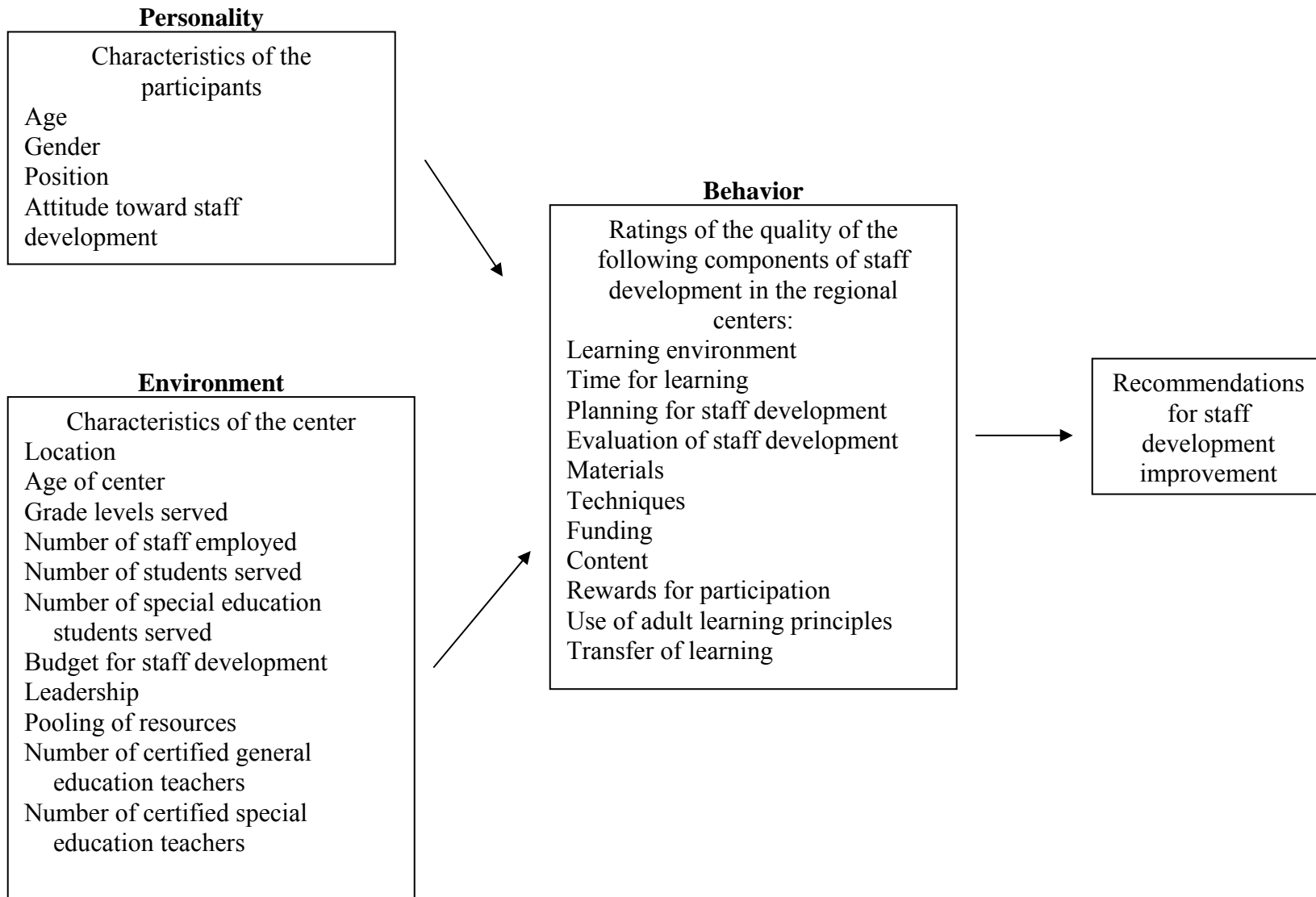


Figure 2. Variables affecting the quality of staff development in regional alternative education centers.

Rogers (1969), Skinner (1969), and Knowles (1990) explained that the individual can make the difference between adequate and inadequate staff development. Later, Mattorazzo (1985) described Lewin's theory in greater detail whereby "behavior is a function of all positive and negative forces...operating upon the individual at a given time, as well as the person's perception of those forces" (p. 353). In combining the thoughts of the behaviorist, humanist, and developmentalist, this researcher believes that the behavior of adult learners is the interaction of the individual's attitude towards life's experiences, the organization, and personality.

Definitions of the Variables in the Study

The constitutive and operational definitions of the quality of staff development, personal variables, and the environmental variables are in Table 2.

Variables Related to the Quality of Staff Development: A Review of the Literature

Quality staff development programs are successful when they are adequately researched, well planned, competently managed, and systematically evaluated (Orlich, 1989). The effectiveness of alternative education centers is partially due to the quality of staff development, and personality, environment, and behavior. A search of the literature on these three components provided information that resulted in the following elaboration of the framework explaining the variation in the quality of staff development. The quality of staff development (behavior) is associated with the characteristics of the people participating (personality), and the characteristics of the center (environment).

The Quality of the Staff Development

Defining the quality of staff development has been an arduous task. Typically, educators have viewed staff development as several days of school workshop activities and as credit hours for job certification (Monahan, 1996). In this study, the quality of staff development is defined as the total professional experiences that improve job-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes of adult learners in education over the span of a career. Staff development is used synonymously with professional development and is linked to everyday practices (Guskey, 2000; Parker, 2001). The renewal of adult learners' skills on the job is an educational process that is intentional, ongoing and systemic (Guskey, 2000).

Table 2

Constitutive and Operational Definitions of the Variables in the Study

Variable	Definition	
	Constitutive	Operational ^a
Overall quality of staff development in the regional alternative education centers.	Rating of the quality of staff development by respondents across all of the following domains of quality.	The mean score for items 1-55 and 61-65.
Adequacy of the learning environment	The adequacy of the learning climate in facilitating teacher creativity, new ways of teaching, teacher engagement, teacher interest in professional growth, and the belief that all students can learn.	The mean score for items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.
Adequacy of time for learning	The adequacy of time provided during the school day for participants to engage in the learning process, to exchange ideas, to acquire new skills, and reflect on their development.	The mean score for items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.
Quality of the planning for staff development	The quality of planning for professional staff development, including setting clear goals, collaborating with participants, assessing participants' needs, developing strategies for achieving the goals, and developing strategies for reviewing the achievement of goals.	The mean score for items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.
Level of participation of center personnel in the evaluation of staff development	The level of participation of center personnel in assessing the quality of inservice training and the data collected, rating information on outcomes and strategies, and making decisions about improving the center's programs.	The mean score for items 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued)

Variable	Definition	
	Constitutive	Operational
Adequacy of materials and equipment	The adequacy of information, documents, audiovisual materials, and computer equipment and software in the staff development training.	The mean score for items 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.
Quality of staff development techniques	The quality of observational, modeling, and simulation methods used in the staff development training.	The mean score for items 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.
Adequacy of funding for staff development	The adequacy of financial resources used to plan and implement the staff development of the regional center.	The mean score for items 31, 32, 33, 34, 35.
Relevance of the content of staff development	The relevance of the subject matter of the staff development to professional responsibilities, best practices, valid research, job issues, and professional interests.	The mean score for items 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45.
Rewards for participation in staff development	The extent to which participants are able to renew their licenses, receive praise for helping colleagues, receive certificates of completion, receive praise for job well done, and feel a sense of accomplishment.	The mean score for items 46, 47, 48, 49, 50.
Use of adult learning principles in staff development	The extent that the staff development is based on the interests of participants, real-life situations, use of personal experiences in solving problems, communication with colleagues, and self-pacing of learning.	The mean score for items 51, 52, 53, 54, 55.
Transfer of learning from staff development to the job	The extent to which participants are able to use acquired skills and knowledge on the job for the solution of job-related problems, accountability, and working with colleagues.	The mean score for items 61, 62, 63, 64, 65.

(table continues)

Table 2 continued)

Variable	Definition	
	Constitutive	Operational
Leadership	The extent to which the center's leader is able to improve the center's staff development, inspires participation, praises those who participate, participates in the staff development, and permits the selection of staff development to meet individual needs.	The mean score for items 56, 57, 58, 59, 60
Attitude toward staff development	Respondents' feelings about staff development generally.	The mean score for items 66, 67, 68, 69, 70 with reversed scoring on items 67, 69.
Age	Age at last birthday.	Item 71, age in years.
Gender	Respondent was male or female.	Item 72 (Code: Male = 1, Female =2)
Current position	Current position of the respondent at the regional center (administrative coordinator, teacher, or counselor).	Item 73 (Code: Administrative Coordinator = 1, Teacher = 2, Counselor = 3)
Total years of experience	The number of years the respondent has worked in education through the year 2001-02.	Item 74
Location	Geographic location of the regional center as indicated by Superintendent's Regional Study Group. There are eight in Virginia.	Item 75 (Code: Gp1 = 1, Gp2 = 2, Gp3 = 3, Gp4 = 4, Gp5 = 5, Gp6 = 6, Gp7 = 7, Gp8 = 8)
Age of center	The number of years the center has participated in the state's regional alternative education program.	Item 76, age of center in years.
Grades served	The grades served in the regional center.	Item 77 (Code: Grades 4-6 = 1, Grades 7-12 = 2)
Number of staff employed	The number of staff employed at the regional center – teachers, counselors, and administrative coordinator.	Item 78, the number in each group.
Number of certified general education teachers	The number of certified general education teachers.	Item 79
Number of certified special education teachers	The number of certified special education teachers.	Item 79
Number of students served	Total student head count for the year 2001-02.	Item 80

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued)

Variable	Definition	
	Constitutive	Operational
Number of special education students served	Total special education student head count for the year 2001-02.	Item 81
Budget for staff development	Total staff development budget for the year 2001-02.	Item 82, in dollars.
Pooling of resources	Whether or not there is pooling of financial resources for staff development by supporting school divisions.	Item 83 (Code: Yes=1, No=2)
Has a mission to address specific goals	Whether or not the center has mission that addresses academic standards, parent involvement, quality of staff development, and discipline.	Item 84 (Code: Yes=1, No=2 for each part of the item)
Focuses on the quality of staff development	Whether or not the center focuses on the quality of staff development in technology, conflict resolution, classroom management, violence prevention, special education services, or other.	Item 85 (Code: Yes=1, No=2 for each part of the item) with open-ended responses for other.
Focuses on academic standards to improve student achievement	Whether or not the center focuses on academic standards to improve student achievement by returning students to the sending school to graduate, having students earn a high school diploma from the sending school without returning to the sending school, having students earn a GED, preparing students to take the GED test, having students earn an alternative education diploma, receiving remedial instruction, reducing student drop-out rate, or securing student employment or work-study before graduating.	Item 86 (Code: Yes=1, No=2 for each part of the item)

Note. Item 82 calculated on a per staff member basis. Items are in the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey in Appendix B. The scale for items 1-70 was 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly disagree. When scoring was reversed, the scale was 1=4, 2=3, 3=2, 4=1.

Quality staff development is a purposeful and intentional process that can produce positive change and improvement. To ensure that this process occurs, the following steps are recommended: (1) begin with a clear statement of purposes and goals, (2) ensure that the goals are worthwhile or have value, and (3) determine how the goals can be assessed and made useful in the workplace (Guskey, 2000, p. 18).

The improvement of staff development is an ongoing process whereby educators must acquire knowledge and skills over a span of a lifetime and must be linked to everyday practices. Daily experiences on the job such as curriculum development, professional readings, classroom observations, and professional conversations are opportunities for educators to improve their knowledge and skills. “The challenge is to take advantage of these opportunities, to make them available, to make them purposeful, and to use them appropriately” (Guskey, 2000, p. 19).

The improvement of staff development is a systemic process that occurs at all levels of the organization—individual, school, division, state. Lessons learned from the past have taught “educators that fragmented, piecemeal approaches to staff development do not work” (Guskey, 2000, p. 19). If improvements at the individual educator level are not promoted by the organization, then the promise of improvement in the quality of staff development likely will not be fulfilled. With a shift from individual staff development to a systemic approach, all levels of the educational system are directly affected.

Throughout their careers, educators have broadened their life’s experiences with new concepts and updated their skill levels with staff development. Knowles (1990) argued that the use and transfer of learning is crucial in the development of a “skillful adult learner” and must be included as a factor in describing staff development. By building on their various learning experiences, adult learners can “plan—and even rehearse—how they are going to apply their learnings to their day-to-day lives” (p. 50).

In describing the five practices of exemplary leadership, Kouzes and Posner (2002) focused on leadership standards that set the stage for action. One of the principles they defined was to “encourage the heart.” As adults work in their careers, they can become weary and dispirited. One of the functions of leadership is to encourage others to carry on and never give up. “Genuine acts of caring uplift the spirits and draw people forward ... in a culture of celebration” (p. 19). Encouraging the heart is a leadership standard that relates to individual and group rewards with quality performance, especially in the learning process of staff development.

In 1995, the National Staff Development Council and the National Association of Secondary School Principals [NSDC/NASSP] proposed a set of standards for staff development. They were to be used by educators and public school systems to improve the quality of their staff development. By studying these standards, individuals and groups could strengthen their professional staff development. They included: leadership, time for learning, content, planning, budgeting, evaluation, techniques, and transfer of learning in the job (Sparks, 1995).

The ideas of Guskey (2000), Knowles (1990), Kouzes and Posner (2002), and the standards of the NSDC/NASSP (1995) were the bases for defining the elements of the quality of staff development in this study. These elements are: (1) the adequacy of the learning environment, (2) the adequacy of time for learning, (3) the quality of the planning for staff development, (4) the level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development, (5) the adequacy of materials and equipment, (6) the quality of staff development techniques, (7) the adequacy of funding of staff development, (8) the relevance of the content of staff development, (9) the rewards for participation in staff development, (10) the use of adult learning principles in staff development, and (11) the transfer of learning from staff development to the job.

The Personal Characteristics of Participants and the Quality of Staff Development

How are the personal characteristics such as age, gender, position, attitude toward staff development and total years of experience related to the quality of staff development as perceived by administrative coordinators, counselors, and teachers in the regional alternative education centers? Explanations for and research related to the following relationships are presented: (1) age and the adequacy of time for learning, (2) gender and the overall quality of staff development, (3) position and the perceptions of the quality of the planning for staff development, (4) attitude toward staff development and the use of adult learning principles in staff development, and (5) attitude toward staff development and the quality of rewards for participation in staff development.

Age and the Adequacy of Time for Learning

Age is related to the adequacy of time for learning because older adult learners need more time.

In a case study conducted by Withnall and Percy (1990) at the University of Lancaster, United Kingdom, the authors focused on a West Midlands metropolitan town where five percent of the population was seventy-five years or older. Twenty

retired people—thirteen women and seven men—were interviewed to share their experiences in acquiring and using basic adult skills such as reading, writing, oral communication, and computational activities. Five adults were age 60-64, eight were 65-69, and the other seven were 70 plus. Withnall and Percy observed that the participants (ages 70 plus) took more time than the adults (ages 60-69) for learning: (1) in the reading and writing skills due to their physical impairments such as poor eyesight, holding a pen, and forming letters, (2) in using oral communication skills—talking and listening—due to hearing impairment, and (3) in feeling insecure with their computation skills. The authors concluded that there was a need to encourage senior adults to improve their time for learning because the oldest adult learners required more time by using certain technologies—calculators, visual magnification, literacy—which would support them in the acquisition of basic skills. Relative to this study, the subjects were much older than those one would find in staff development programs in public schools.

In another study, Grubbs (1981) developed a survey—Student Educational Orientation Questionnaire (SEOQ)—for 20 midwestern schools of theology. Of the 122 faculty and 332 students who were surveyed, the faculty included ages ranging from middle to older adults, while the students represented younger adults. The author wanted to know how pedagogical and andragogical techniques during training were affected by one of the variables—age. The term pedagogy is derived from the Greek meaning the art and science of teaching children. Likewise, andragogy is defined as a lifelong process for adults in learning how to learn and apply the skills of self-directed inquiry (Knowles, 1980). Grubbs analyzed the responses and found that the faculty members in their middle and senior years needed more time for learning during their inservice training.

Lundberg (2001) studied the identifying aspects of age and time limiting effects on learning. She used the College Student Experiences Questionnaire to survey a total population of 20,000 among 20 higher-education institutions. Approximately 4,600 adult learners were in the sample population. More women (57%) participated than men (43%). The sample population by age had three age groups with their percents of the populations. They were: Ages 20-23 (51%), 24-29 (29%), and 30 and older (20%). Time limiting aspects in learning involved off-campus responsibilities, peer relationships, and time on task for learning. Time-limitations of off-campus responsibilities and peer relationships hampered learning more for ages 20 to 29, but not for adult learners aged 30 and older. The oldest age groups were mostly affected by working longer hours in the learning process as compared to the younger aged groups.

For adult learners of different ages (18 to 70 plus), the oldest adults need more time to process information, exchange ideas, acquire new skills, and reflect

on their self-directed development. Based on these very limited findings, age appears to be related to the time needed for learning.

Gender and the Perception of the Overall Quality of Staff Development

Do men and women evaluate professional development differently? MacDonald and Stratta (1998) focused on adult-aged students' perceptions of, responses to, and experiences with professional development. This study was conducted at the University College in Worcester, United Kingdom. The researchers organized two groups of six participants with a ratio of 2:1 female to male students. Group interviews were held twice a year. Students had a history of previous relationships with non-academic work such as rearing children and vocational careers. In the final analysis, based on an interpretation of the interviews by the authors, males, more than females, tended to be (1) more strongly attracted to their studies and the techniques as tools to achieve personal goals, (2) more career oriented and saw educational training as a means for career switching, (3) more confident in pursuing professional training, and (4) more desirous of having a professional identity. On the other hand, females expressed (1) ambivalence about their academic learning due to demands at home and in their school training, (2) the relevance of parenting experiences to learning, (3) a more sensitive view on how they perceived their learning experiences, and (4) a need to prove themselves intellectually. The adult students' genders influenced strongly how they perceived the value of their educational training and how they made accommodations to achieve their personal and professional goals as they related to their prior experiences.

Ogden (1994) interviewed teachers on how they perceived their inservice training. Of 395 participants, 106 were male and 289 were female. They were asked to write about the characteristics of their professional development training at a regional university. Men and women evaluated their training differently. Males saw it requiring fairness between the genders, providing good communication, and enhancing responsibility in and beyond the classroom setting. Females desired their professional development to reflect creativity, show nurturing qualities, provide enthusiasm and knowledge. By evaluating their professional development, men and women became more informed about how to measure the characteristics of their training and to determine the quality of their professional development.

McGivney (2004) argued that men and women perceived their staff development differently. In her study of all adult learners over the age of 25 in the United Kingdom, she found several gender differences to explain why men and women did not complete their professional courses. Men felt that course length,

financial costs, and work conflicts caused them to withdraw before completion of course work. In comparison, women withdrew prematurely because they perceived that family commitments, inadequate childcare, and cost of childcare overwhelmed them. Women also experienced major conflicts between their family and student roles. They had to withhold from view their studies so that they were not accused by their families of spending too much time on their professional development and neglecting their domestic responsibilities. Adult learners regardless of their gender need to successfully complete their professional courses, but in reality, men and women make choices in not completing their course work based on their perceived gender differences, life's goals and everyday occurrences.

Gender is an important variable in this study. Based on these very limited findings, males would be expected to rate staff development higher than females because they perceive to have a stronger identity with career opportunities, techniques as tools, professional training, content of staff development, and professional responsibility. Gender is included to confirm or disconfirm this hypothesis.

Position and the Perception of the Quality of the Planning for Staff Development

Position is related to the perception of the quality of the planning and leadership for staff development. Three positions existed in each of the regional centers. They were as follows: administrative coordinator, teacher, and counselor.

Principals play key roles in improving the quality of planning for staff development in regular school settings (Fullan, 1992). Likewise, the administrative coordinators in the regional alternative centers play similar roles and set expectations for staff development, including assessing needs, setting clear and achievable goals, and supervising the staff (Jay, 2001; Parker, 2001).

The other positions in the regional centers are teachers and counselors. Their perceptions of planning for staff development differ depending on how well informed they are in the planning process (Fullan, Connelly, & Watson, 1990). Planning includes setting clear goals, collaborating with participants, assessing needs, developing strategies for achieving goals, and reviewing results.

In a symposium at Fairfax, Virginia, Baumgartner (2007) stated that the position of the public school teacher is overwhelmed by the lack of planning for staff development and curriculum instruction. Over 300 members of the Fairfax Education Association attended this "Town Meeting on Time." The most important aspects of their professional development training as it related to the quality of planning included:

- (1) Teachers need to be treated as professionals,

- (2) Teachers experience less ability to self-direct their professional planning,
- (3) Teachers must eliminate as many unnecessary [staff development] meetings as possible ... to improve quality of planning,
- (4) Teachers need to direct their own planning, and
- (5) Teachers need to restructure their school day to collaborate and plan with fellow teachers. (p. 2-3)

Teachers are members of the professional staff that directly influence student achievement. They perceive the need for quality planning to acquire knowledge and skills in their staff development.

Administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors are active participants in the planning for staff development. They should give a high response rating in their survey. In the case of the administrative coordinators, they are the primary planners in the regional centers and should evaluate the staff development higher (Public Agenda Survey, 2001). Based on these limited findings, position and the perceptions of the quality of the planning for staff development appear to be related.

Attitude Toward Staff Development and the Quality of the Use of Adult Learning Principles in Staff Development

Attitude toward staff development and the use of adult learning principles in staff development may be related. Knowles (1978) noted that educators in public schools are adult learners whose professional growth is affected by their personal attitudes. Cafarella (1993) summarized the findings of previous research by Knowles (1978). She found that adults have self-perceptions toward: (1) being independent and self-reliant, (2) being motivated to learn, (3) becoming actively involved in the learning process, (4) sharing quality ideas in a non-competitive training experience, (5) building on past knowledge and life-time experiences, (6) becoming partners with the teacher in the learning process, (7) feeling that their experiences are valued by all participants, and (8) making decisions in a learning environment of mutual trust. Staff development grounded on these self-perceptions can inspire educators to embrace favorable attitudes toward self-development. Consequently, as the use of adult learning principles increases, the attitude toward staff development becomes more favorable.

Huebner, Walker, and McFarland (2003) argued that organizations who serve youth must seriously promote a positive attitude toward the quality of staff development and training. They observed that staff development is used as a means to initiate programs and activities but is rarely perceived as an on-going process for adult learning, sharing ideas on content, building on previous

knowledge, and allowing participants to make decisions and express opinions. The Moving Ahead course was designed to incorporate these adult learning principles in a 40-hour format at 10 sites over 4 years. The sample population included 600 youth-services staff at the U.S. Army installations around the world. Three facilitators put into practice interactive teaching methods that would appeal to adult learners with learning styles. At the end of each training session, participants reflected on the knowledge and skills learned and how these ideas could be used at their work sites. The research revealed how the participants felt about the quality of staff development:

- (1) Improved their ability to articulate their central role as professionals in nontraditional education,
- (2) Increased their understanding of different styles of learning and those they preferred,
- (3) Improved their ability to design activities in exciting yet safe environments,
- (4) Increased their ability to involve youth as partners in planning and implementing the learning activities, and
- (5) Increased their ability to understand and apply experiential learning at their work sites. (p. 219)

As the Moving Ahead course changed from a pilot project to an on-going adult learning program, the adult learners were encouraged to contribute their thoughts about how to improve the quality of their staff development. Consequently, their attitude toward staff development changed from being complacent learners to being active and reflective adult learners.

Based on these limited findings, it appears that attitude toward staff development and the use of adult learning principles are related. When adult learning principles are used on staff development, participants' attitude becomes more favorable toward staff development.

Attitude Toward Staff Development and the Quality of Rewards for Participation in Staff Development

A relationship exists between attitude toward staff development and the quality of rewards for participation in staff development. Brophy (1983) found that professional businessmen and educators' attitudes become more favorable when their participation in professional staff development was recognized and rewarded.

Parker (2001) observed educators' attitude toward participation in inservice training became more favorable when the reward system was linked to job effort. For example, when a group of teachers was recognized for completing an inservice

activity on a timely basis, they received verbal or written praise by the facilitator for doing their job well.

Kouzes and Posner's (2002) "encouraging the heart" has an effect on educators' attitudes toward the quality of a reward. Parker (2001) noted that when educators in the regional centers received a high mark for an inservice activity, they had a more favorable attitude toward staff development as they celebrated their success. Based on these observations, participants with a favorable attitude toward staff development are predicted to give a higher response rating for the quality of rewards that they receive for participation in staff development.

Center Characteristics and the Quality of Staff Development

How are the center characteristics such as location, age of center, grades served, size of staff employed, size of student population served, and expenditures for staff development related to the quality of staff development as perceived by administrative coordinators, counselors, and teachers in the regional alternative education centers? The following is a brief discussion of these factors: (1) location and the adequacy of the funding of staff development; (2) age of the center and the adequacy of the learning environment; (3) grade levels served and the quality of staff development; (4) number of students served and the adequacy of funding of staff development; (5) number of staff employed and the adequacy of the funding of staff development; (6) budget for staff development and the adequacy of materials and equipment; (7) budget for staff development and relevance of content; (8) budget for staff development and the transfer of learning; (9) pooling of resources and adequacy of materials and equipment; (10) pooling of resources and relevance of content; (11) pooling of resources and the transfer of learning; and (12) quality of center leadership and the transfer of learning.

Location and the Adequacy of the Funding of Staff Development

A relationship exists between location and the adequacy of the funding of staff development. The location of school facilities and the adequacy of the funding of staff development often have been discussed and analyzed by public school officials. Whether a school is located in an urban, suburban, or rural area, monies should be budgeted for educators to learn new strategies, acquire new skills, develop local curriculum, and network with colleagues. Quality staff development that is funded adequately should have a long-lasting effect on curriculum, teaching, and learning (Black, 1998; Mizell, 1997).

Knowles (1980) addressed the funding of educational programs for continuous staff development. In his observations, funding practices varied across

the country, yet there were several basic principles that apply to all public education or private institutions:

- (1) a financial goal needs to be established;
- (2) a detailed plan for budgeting income and expenses needs to be formulated;
- (3) approval for funding needs to be properly authorized;
- (4) an adequate voucher system needs to be maintained to account for professional workshops, tuition, travel, and purchased materials;
- (5) funding accounts need to be audited annually, and
- (6) a financial report needs to be published annually (pp. 191-192).

Whether the funding of quality staff development occurs in the public schools or in the private sector, the adequacy of funding was crucial for innovative professional improvement.

In a case study of 23 rural public school districts in central Kentucky, Stevenson, Neel, Cobb, and O'Shea (1980) found that the adequacy of the funding of staff development was affected by location. Within the central portion of Kentucky, there were 163 schools with 3,281 professional employees. As independent school districts, they could not adequately fund a quality staff development program. Therefore, the 23 local educational agencies entered into a consortium called the Professional Development Center Network. The collaborative effort among these rural school districts and the College of Education of Western Kentucky University set the following goals:

- (1) to assess the problems and concerns of each professional;
- (2) to establish a staff development training system to be responsive to the professional needs of each professional employee;
- (3) to assist in identifying the developmental needs of the school districts' programs, and
- (4) to design and deliver quality staff development activities to meet the needs of each district in the consortium (Houston & Pankratz, 1980, p. 78).

By establishing the Professional Development Center Network, their collaborative efforts in a rural location enabled them to adequately fund and implement quality staff development.

In another case study, the largest urban public school district in Houston, Texas, had 200 schools with 18,000 professional educators. The Houston Independent School District (HISD) educators realized that designing and implementing a quality program of staff development was a complex and difficult undertaking in an urban location (Baptiste & Baptiste, 1980). In a collaborative effort, HISD was able to provide the necessary funding to support a workable quality staff development program. Within two years, the quality of the staff development underwent a comprehensive improvement, and the Houston schools raised the quality of instruction and educational services, the standards of the

city's school district as a whole, the individual professional growth of employees and job satisfaction of school employees (Houston & Pankratz, 1980, p. 95).

Based on past discussions with the Virginia Department of Education and the regional center administrative coordinators, Parker (2001) noted that the 29 regional centers located in urban, suburban, and rural areas of Virginia differed in the funding of staff development. This was based upon the following: (1) how many school divisions were in the regional center (the number of participating school divisions varies from two to twenty-one), and (2) the location of the regional centers (urban, suburban, or rural). The funding of quality staff development differed based on location. The urban and suburban centers were able to provide more funds per staff member than the rural locations.

In conclusion, location and the adequacy of the funding of staff development appear to be related. Participants in this study are expected to give higher quality ratings when their centers are adequately funded.

Age of the Center and the Adequacy of the Learning Environment for Staff Development

Age of the center is a factor related to the adequacy of the learning environment for staff development. Jay (2001) and Parker (2001) discovered in their conversations with the regional centers' administrative coordinators that those centers that have been in existence for at least five years showed the most improvement in an adequate learning environment. Parker (2001) found that the majority of the administrative coordinators were interested in knowing more about the age of a center and how it relates to the adequacy of the learning environment.

Regional centers that are five or more years old have had more time to improve the adequacy of their learning environment; therefore, participants should give a higher rating to the adequacy of the learning environment than participants in centers that are less than five years old.

Grade Levels Served and the Quality of Staff Development

No studies were found that directly related grade levels served and the quality of staff development.

Grades (4-12 and 7-12) are a focus of the data collection in the survey. Educators are anticipated to perceive a greater need for improving staff development for grade levels 4-12 because they understand the problems of at-risk student characteristics across the wide range of grade levels served and have instructed them at several levels of an academic curriculum. By instructing these students for longer periods of time in grades 4-12 as compared to a shorter period of time in grades 7-12, educators have engaged their students in a greater variety

of real-life experiences. Consequently, educators have seen the need for better staff development opportunities to improve learning environments, materials and equipment, curriculum content and funding in their regional centers (Parker 2001). Participants who serve a broader range of grades (4-12) in the regional centers are expected to give a higher response rating to the quality of staff development.

Number of Students Served and the Number of Staff Employed and the Adequacy of the Funding of Staff Development

The number of students served and the number of staff employed are related to the adequacy of the funding of staff development. All regional centers received state funding to partially finance their operations, which includes staff development, based on a fiscal capacity formula using the Virginia Local Composite Index (Virginia Department of Education, 2003). Many of the regional centers qualified for other types of funding such as dropout prevention and special education. The base figure that the state used in the fiscal capacity formula was the size of student population served in each of the regional centers. Consequently, differences in the sizes of student population due to larger percentages of suspended and expelled students have implications for the size of staff employed during a school year and the adequacy of funding for staff development.

Based on the responses by the administrative coordinators, the regional centers with larger student populations and larger numbers of staff seem to receive more adequate staff development funding. In the larger centers, the staff development funding per staff member ranged from \$400 to \$1,775 while in the smaller centers, the funding ranged from \$130 to \$200 (Parker, 2001).

Duke (2002) and his associates at the University of Virginia found that over 3,000 at-risk students attended the regional centers and 200 educators worked in them. In their annual reports, they offered 25 recommendations for program improvement. Funding of the regional centers rated fifth of 25 recommendations by the administrative coordinators' responses in this report (Gerges & Hrabe, 2002).

The participants in centers with high levels of funding for staff development should give a higher rating to the adequacy of staff development than those in centers with low levels of funding for staff development. With these findings, the researcher believed that the adequacy of funding was a critical variable to be examined in this study.

Budget for Staff Development, Pooling of Resources, the Adequacy of Materials and Equipment, the Relevance of the Content of the Staff Development, and the Transfer of Learning from Staff Development to the Job

Funding for staff development is expected to be related to the adequacy of materials and equipment, the relevance of the content of the staff development, the transfer of learning from staff development to the job, and overall ratings of the quality of staff development. As public school educators grow professionally, they must be adequately trained, well-prepared, and supported with staff development throughout their careers (Sparks & Hirsh, 1999). Likewise, regional center budgets must support with adequate funds the administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors who require materials, equipment, and relevant subject content for staff development.

Citing the research of Little, Gerrity, Stern, Guthrie, Kirst, and Marsh (1988) and the research of Miller, Lord, and Darney (1994), Stout (1996) explained that in 1995 school districts in the United States spent between \$1,700 to \$3,500 per educator on staff development, which included materials and equipment. On average, a school district spent 0.5% of its budget on raising the performance levels of its staff while private industry spent nearly four times as much (Klein, Medrich, & Perez-Ferreiro, 1996). Parker (2001) noted that the regional center staffs that are supported by wealthier school divisions and have several school divisions in their consortium may pool their resources and spend larger amounts of dollars for staff development.

Although disparities between the public and private sectors, and wealthy and poor school divisions exist, public school leaders and regional center staffs must show good intent to support staff development activities with fiscal resources and coordinate their efforts in the expenditure of funds for staff development materials and equipment.

The Thomas Jefferson Center for Educational Design has conducted many case studies since 1998. In the annual reports, 29 regional centers reported they had a state budget of over 10 million dollars in 2000. Yet the average staff development budget estimated per staff member was only 500 dollars or less than 1 percent of the total budget. Duke (2002) argued that due to budget limitations educators needed to be very selective in developing their staff development. Even with budget limitations, content should continue to be based on valid research, proven in practice and relevant to the educational site. He recommended that the centers pool their resources to support existing center budgets, add materials and equipment and increase their faculty space. As the task of education becomes more complex and demanding in the regional centers, the expenditure of more dollars

for higher quality staff development, administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors become increasingly critical.

Tucker (2002) conducted a case study of Virginia's Elementary Alternative Projects. Her research investigated seven projects that were funded by the state. They were associated with the preexisting alternative education regional centers in Virginia. Of the seven projects, four were in urban areas, one was in suburban, and two were in rural areas. In 2001, the Virginia General Assembly budgeted \$50,000 for each project. Grade levels 3 to 5 were served. They included one full-time teacher plus one or more aides. On an average, each project served 35 students with creative instructional materials. Staff development and training consisted of less than 1 percent of their budget. Teacher mentors provided assistance and used proven teaching practices at each work site. Tucker argued that elementary at-risk students needed to receive alternative education and services at an early age with appropriate funding. Without continued state funding, five out of the seven projects would be reduced or discontinued in the future. The wealthier urban school divisions planned to continue to support their projects with local funds and/or grants.

Based on these studies, wealthier school divisions and school divisions that can pool their fiscal resources budget more dollars for adequate materials, equipment, and relevant subject content for staff development. Participants in centers that have higher budgets for staff development are more likely to give a higher response rating to the adequacy of materials and equipment, the relevance of the content of the staff development, and the transfer of learning from staff development to the job than participants in centers with lower budgets for staff development.

Quality of Center Leadership and the Perception of the Quality of Staff Development

Center leadership is closely associated with the perception of the quality of staff development. It is a role that appears to be evolving from being a gatekeeper to change agent (Little et al., 1988). Administrative coordinators, like principals, are expected to communicate and coordinate staff development with their regional center staffs. They conduct and receive inservice training, make schedule adjustments, facilitate learning, and do basic and applied research.

Sparks (1995) addressed the quality of leadership in public schools. He encouraged principals, teachers, and other instructional personnel to continue the development of their leadership skills through ongoing staff development. Maxwell (2002) advocated that a successful leader in education, military or a company must be a lifelong "learner of leadership" (p. 16). To master the skills of

leadership, an educator needed to perceive that a quality program of professional study must include readings, listening and viewing audio-visuals, and attending seminars. Quality leadership is developed by an ongoing professional process and it “takes a lifetime” (p. 22). Likewise, knowledgeable and skillful administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors who hold critical positions in the regional centers need to seek improvement in the quality of their own staff development. The administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors must be responsible for providing quality leadership if staff development is to be successful (Parker, 2001).

In a case study, Gall (1984) designed the Valley Educational Consortium (VEC) staff development program in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. This regional program consisted of ten small school districts, one college, and three community agencies. The goals of this project were twofold: (1) improve the quality of instruction in mathematics in 15 elementary schools and (2) train principals in leadership skills to improve the quality of staff development. The schools were divided into two groups. The first group had the principals actively involved in training teachers. The second or control group required the principal to be minimally involved in the staff development. The participating principals in the first group attended two and one-half day training sessions for teachers, conducted pre- and post- observation teacher conferences, and sought improvements with teachers as necessary. The research revealed that carefully planned staff development with active quality leadership by principals was crucial in successful staff development.

Drago-Severson (2000) conducted an ethnographic longitudinal study of center leadership at the Gardner Academy in Boston. The study addressed key questions related to the quality of staff development: (1) What principals do to support adult learning in a school? (2) How school leaders shape leadership practices to support an on-going staff developmental process for themselves and their teachers. Interviews and observations using inquiry and self-directed methods with the principal, her teachers, and staff were completed over a four year period. Sixty-five hours of dialogue were reviewed and analyzed with the principal, 11 of 28 teachers and staff volunteers. The sample population varied in the number of years in education, number of years at the center, gender, race, and positions held. The researcher revealed that the principal’s center leadership reflected on the support of professional staff development, focused on collaboration, and created opportunities for use of adult learning principles in the center’s learning environment. The participants perceived that the center’s leadership was instrumental in supporting “transformational learning and development in adults” as a journey or growth process in adult learning (p. 37).

The quality of staff development depends on the quality of the center leadership exercised by the administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors in the regional centers. Based on the little evidence this researcher could find, leadership appears to be related to the perception of the quality of staff development.

In the next chapter, the methodology of the study is described. The research questions, populations, design, and procedures form the framework of the chapter.

CHAPTER II METHODOLOGY

Research questions are stated, populations are described, and the quantitative (Phase I) and qualitative (Phase II) components of the research are presented in this section. Each phase was divided into instrument development, instrument administration, and data analysis.

Research Questions

Three questions guided the development and implementation of the study.

1. What are the relationships between participants' ratings of the quality of staff development in regional alternative education centers and the following personal characteristics of these participants: age, gender, position, attitude toward staff development, and total years of experience in education?

2. What are the relationships between participants' ratings of the quality of staff development in regional alternative education centers and the following characteristics of the centers: location, age of center, grade levels served, number of staff employed, total number of students served, number of special education students served, budget for staff development, quality of center leadership, pooling or not pooling of resources, number of certified general education teachers, and number of certified special education teachers?

3. Given the findings for the relationships between the quality of staff development and the personal and center characteristics, what recommendations can be made for improvement in staff development in alternative education centers?

Populations and Participants

Twenty-six of 29 Regional Alternative Education Centers in Virginia volunteered to participate in this study. The three populations in these 26 centers were all of the administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors for a total of 321 educators. Participants were limited to one administrative coordinator, two teachers, and one counselor for a total of 104 center educators. Ninety-nine participated and the other five educators refused to participate by not returning their surveys. From centers that had more than one counselor, one counselor and two teachers were randomly selected by the researcher. If there were two administrators, the researcher selected the administrative coordinator who was the on-site manager of the center (see Table 3).

Table 3

Populations, Samples, and Participants in the Study by Superintendent's Regional Study Group

Alternative education centers by superintendent's regional study group	Populations A/T/C	Samples A/T/C	Participants A/T/C
Group 1			
Petersburg City	1/2/2	1/2/1	0/1/1
Powhatan County	1/2/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Richmond City	1/19/6	1/2/1	1/2/1
Group 2			
Newport News City	2/25/2	1/2/1	1/2/1
Norfolk City	2/8/3	1/2/1	1/2/1
Northampton County	1/5/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Group 3			
King William County	2/17/2	1/2/1	1/2/1
Stafford County	1/9/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Westmoreland County	1/3/1	1/2/1	0/1/1
Group 4			
Fauquier County	2/8/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Prince William County	2/28/3	1/2/1	1/2/1
Group 5			
Fluvanna County	1/16/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Lynchburg City	1/5/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Staunton City	1/7/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Group 6			
Henry County	1/2/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Montgomery County	1/2/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Pittsylvania County	1/3/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Roanoke City	1/14/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Roanoke County	1/3/2	1/2/1	1/2/1
Group 7			
Bristol City	1/2/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Carroll County	1/3/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Russell County	1/38/6	1/2/1	1/2/1
Wise County	1/15/2	1/2/1	1/2/1
Wythe County	1/2/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Group 8			
Brunswick County	2/2/1	1/2/1	1/1/1
Nottoway County	1/4/1	1/2/1	1/2/1
Total	32/244/45=32	26/52/26=104	24/49/26=99
	1		

Note. A=Administrative Coordinator; T=Teacher; C=Counselor.

Approval for this study was granted by the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Institutional Review Board after submitting an Application for Approval of Research Involving Human Subjects. A letter of approval was received from the education specialist for alternative education at the Virginia Department of Education to proceed with this study among the regional alternative education centers (see Appendix D).

Design and Procedures

The quantitative and qualitative phases of the study were divided into instrument development and data analysis. In the quantitative phase, the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey was based on the researcher's personal experiences, the literature, and Lewin's (1935) field theory. It was mailed to 99 educators in 26 regional centers. For the qualitative phase, the focus group interviews were designed using Delbecq, Van de Van, and Gustafen's (1975) focus group protocol. It was administered to 12 educators in three regional center staffs in three different Virginia locations.

Phase I: The Staff Development Program Assessment Survey

The researcher designed the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey (SDPA) (see Appendix B). Using the researcher's personal experiences, the literature, and Lewin's (1935) model—Behavior = f(Personality x Environment)—three major categories of variables were identified: personal characteristics of the participants, characteristics of the centers, and the ratings of the quality of the components of staff development in the regional centers. Items for each variable were created and compiled to form the Staff Development Program Assessment, a mail survey.

Development of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey

The researcher developed questions for three major categories—personal characteristics of respondents, center characteristics, and perceived quality of staff development—using the methods recommended by Dillman (2002). The three categories and their related variables and questions are in Table 4. Each question was designed to quantify the participants' responses. Staff development at the centers was rated in the following domains: adequacy of the learning environment, adequacy of time for learning, quality of the planning for staff development, level of participation in the evaluation of staff development, adequacy of materials and equipment, quality of staff development techniques, adequacy of funding of staff development, relevance of content of the staff

Table 4

Domains and Items on the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey

Measures of the quality of staff development

The adequacy of the learning environment: My center's inservice training...

1. Supports the idea that all students can learn.
2. Helps me to be creative in my work.
3. Helps me to develop new ways of teaching students to be successful.
4. Keeps me engaged in learning.
5. Allows me to maintain my interest in professional growth.

The adequacy of time for learning: My center's inservice training...

6. Is generally offered during the workday.
7. Includes time to exchange ideas with my fellow educators.
8. Includes time to engage in the learning process with colleagues.
9. Includes time to acquire new skills.
10. Includes time to reflect on my professional development.

The quality of the planning for staff development: My center's inservice training is designed...

11. Cooperatively with all participants.
 12. With an assessment of participants' needs.
 13. With clear goals.
 14. With strategies for achieving the goals.
 15. With strategies for reviewing the achieved goals.
-

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Measures of the quality of staff development

The level of participation of the evaluation of staff development: During the evaluation of my center's inservice training...

16. I am asked to assess the quality of inservice training.
17. I am able to assess the data collected from participants.
18. I am able to make decisions about improving my center's programs.
19. I am asked to rate information on the strategies of staff development.
20. I am asked to rate information on the outcomes of the staff development.

The adequacy of materials and equipment: During the inservice training at my center...

21. I am provided needed supporting documents.
22. I have access to all necessary information.
23. I have the opportunity to use current computer equipment.
24. I have the opportunity to use current software information.
25. I have the opportunity to effectively use audio-visual equipment.

The quality of staff development techniques: During inservice training at my center, I am able to...

26. Review the quality of various training methods.
27. Choose quality methods of training.
28. Observe the professional excellence of other educators.
29. Model a high degree of technical skills.
30. Simulate the special characteristics of best practices.

The adequacy of funding for staff development: My center's financial resources...

31. Allow me to travel to staff development activities.
 32. Help me to pay the registration costs for professional workshops.
 33. Reimburse me for tuition costs.
 34. Help me to pay for the copier costs for staff development.
 35. Allow me to purchase instructional materials.
-

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Measures of the quality of staff development

The relevance of the content of staff development: The subject matter of staff development at my center is related to...

36. My professional responsibilities in assisting all students.
37. Best practices in individualized instruction.
38. Best practices in hands-on instruction.
39. Best practices in flexible scheduling.
40. Best practices in small class size.
41. Best practices in conflict resolution.
42. Best practices in computer assisted instruction.
43. Valid research in alternative education.
44. Issues in my job.
45. My professional interests in assisting all students in alternative settings.

The rewards for participation in staff development: Because of the inservice training at my center...

46. I am able to renew my educational license.
47. I receive praise for helping my colleagues.
48. I have a sense of accomplishment.
49. I receive a certificate of completion at the end of course work.
50. I receive praise for doing my job well

The use of adult learning principles in staff development: The inservice training at my center is based on...

51. My interests.
 52. Realistic life situations.
 53. The use of personal experiences of participants in solving problems.
 54. Communication with my colleagues.
 55. The desire to learn at my own pace.
-

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Measures of the quality of staff development

The transfer of learning from staff development to the job: As a result of the inservice training at my center, I am able to...

61. Use my acquired knowledge in my job.
 62. Solve job-related problems.
 63. Use the acquired skills in my job.
 64. Work more effectively with colleagues in my job.
 65. Convey higher expectations for accountability in my job.
-

Measures of the characteristics of participants

Attitude toward staff development: Staff development activities generally...

66. Improve my skills.
67. Contribute little to my professional growth.
68. Stimulate my thinking.
69. Have little value for me.
70. Allow me to critically reflect on my educational beliefs.

Demographic data: The following questions about yourself will help interpret the results:

71. My age at my last birthday was _____ years.
 72. My gender is _____ male, _____ female.
 73. My current position at the regional center is _____ teacher, _____ counselor, _____ administrative coordinator.
 74. My total years of educational experience at the end of the 2001-02 school year _____.
-

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Measures of the characteristics of centers

My center's leadership...

- 56. Continually strives to improve staff development for center personnel.
- 57. Inspires me to participate in staff development activities.
- 58. Praises me for my participation in staff development.
- 59. Participates in the staff development activities.
- 60. Permits me to select staff development activities that meet my needs.

Demographic data: My regional center...

- 75. Is located in Superintendent's Regional Study Group number (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
- 76. Has participated in the state's regional alternative education program for the following number of years (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 77. Serves the following grades (circle all that apply): 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 78. Employs the following number of employees: ____ administrative coordinator, ____ teachers, ____ counselors.
- 79. Employs the following number of certified teachers: ____ general education, ____ special education.
- 80. Served a total number of ____ students for the school year 2001-02.
- 81. Served a total number of ____ special education students for the school year 2001-02.
- 82. Had a total budget for staff development in the school year of 2001-02 of: \$ _____
- 83. Is supported by school divisions who pool their financial resources for staff development (circle one): Yes, No
- 84. Has a mission to address these goals (check all that apply): ____ academic standards, ____ parent involvement, ____ quality of staff development, ____ discipline
- 85. Focuses on the quality of staff development in these areas (check all that apply): ____ technology, ____ conflict resolution, ____ classroom management, ____ violence prevention, ____ special education services, ____ other: _____.

(table continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Measures of the characteristics of centers

Demographic data: My regional center... (continued)

86. Focuses on academic standards to improve student achievement by (check all that apply):

- returning students to sending school to graduate.
 - having students earn a high school diploma from sending school without returning to sending school.
 - having students earn a GED.
 - preparing students to take the GED test.
 - having students earn an alternative education diploma.
 - receiving remedial instruction.
 - reducing student drop-out rate.
 - securing student employment or work-study before graduating.
-

Note. Items are in the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey in Appendix B.

development, rewards for participation in staff development, use of adult learning principles in staff development, and the transfer of learning from staff development to the job. Personal characteristics were age, gender, position, attitude toward staff development, and total years experience. The characteristics of the centers were location, age, grade levels served, number of staff employed, number of students served, number of special education students served, budget for staff development, quality of leadership, pooling of resources, number of certified general education teachers, and number of certified special education teachers.

In constructing the instrument, the researcher wrote the survey questions with care. It was important to start with good questions because the participants' responses to the questions would provide significant data in the study. Coughlin (1990) provided the following basic guidelines for writing questions:

- (1) Questions should be short, simple, and direct.
- (2) Questions should be understood by every participant.
- (3) Questions should give unambiguous answers.
- (4) Questions should avoid a predetermined response by the participant.
- (5) Questions should avoid unstated assumptions.
- (6) Questions should avoid leading the participant.
- (7) Questions should avoid embarrassing the participant.
- (8) Questions should elicit only one response.
- (9) Questions should provide all possible alternatives on an issue.
- (10) The survey needs to be brief because of participants' time.
- (11) Participants need to have all available information to answer survey questions.

Principal components analysis of the staff development program assessment survey. A principal components analysis was run on the scale scores of the Staff Development Program Assessment (SDPA). Due to the moderate to high correlations among the 11 scales (.61 to .86) and the single component that explained 76.7% of the variance in the measures, the quality measures were judged to be one dimensional. That dimension is overall quality. Thus, an overall scale score was calculated by averaging the scores of the 11 measures, and a multiple regression analysis was conducted using that score as the dependent variable (see Appendix C for statistics related to the principal components analysis).

Content Validation of the Survey

The content validity of the items on the SDPA was tested three times with individuals not connected with the study (see Appendix E). The first two tests were administered to 18 members of principal preparation cohorts at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Abingdon, and Roanoke, Virginia. The third test was administered to 18 members of a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Evaluation Team at Woodlawn School in Carroll County Public Schools, Virginia. The team had 17 teachers and one administrator.

With each test group, the researcher briefed the participants as a group on how to complete the content validation instrument and the variables related to the quality of staff development. The items in the instrument were arranged by a major group. Items in the quality domains were randomized. The researcher designed the instrument to document the responses of the validating groups (see Appendix E). It appeared to the researcher that the participants had adequate information to complete the content validation and understood the questions being used to measure each factor.

The participants were asked to complete four tasks: (1) read the directions and definitions for each part of the content validation instrument, (2) read each item and circle the number of its domain, (3) read each item and rate its association with the selected domain on a scale from one to four with four being the strongest association, and (4) read each item and rate the clarity of the item on a scale from one to three with three being the clearest level.

Participants were asked to express any concerns they had with the instrument or its administration. They stated that the instrument appeared to be well researched, that the researcher had presented the instructions for completing the content validation in a satisfactory manner, and that the purpose of the survey was meaningful for educators. In the second testing, many of the participants were concerned that the instrument needed to be administered not during the night class but during a morning hour when participants would be fresher. The researcher took the advice of the second group and then administered the third test during a pre-school inservice workshop on the morning of August 14, 2001. The content validation instrument was revised after each administration to correct for any concerns expressed by the participants. After the third test, the researcher accepted the items on the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey and were judged sufficient for the purposes of the study with the strength of association (3.5 of 4.0) and clarity of items (2.5 of 3.0) (see Appendix F).

Reliability of the scales on the staff development program assessment survey. The internal consistency of the rating scales was assessed with Cronbach's

alpha (Cronbach, 1951). Alpha coefficients are reported for each of the following scales: adequacy of the learning environment, adequacy of time for learning, the quality of the planning for staff development, the level of participation of the evaluation of staff development, adequacy of the materials and equipment, quality of staff development techniques, adequacy of staff development funding, relevance of the content of staff development, rewards for participation in staff development, use of adult learning principles in staff development, transfer of learning from staff development to the job, quality of center leadership, attitude toward staff development, and overall quality of staff development (Table 5). The coefficients ranged from .75 to .99. All were judged sufficient to include the scales in the analyses. The very high alpha for the overall measure of the quality of staff development is evidence that quality of staff development is unidimensional.

Administration of the Survey and Follow-up Procedures

The Staff Development Program Assessment (SDPA) Survey was sent to the participants through the United States Postal Service. A tri-fold SDPA questionnaire, a cover letter, and a stamped return address envelope were mailed to each participant. A postcard was mailed one week after the scheduled return date to remind participants to return their surveys. A cover letter and a replacement questionnaire were mailed after three weeks to those participants who still had not returned the survey. A final certified mailing was sent after seven weeks to the non-responding participants. An enclosed letter emphasized the importance of their participation, and a replacement questionnaire was enclosed. Each survey was assigned an individual identification number. By using this Total Design Method (TDM) (Dillman, 2002), follow-up mailings were sent only to those respondents who failed to return their surveys. This lowered the cost of the survey and assured that only one instrument was returned by each participant. Neither names nor social security numbers were used as identifiers. Each participant completed the survey in private, and the code assignment sheet was destroyed at the close of the data collection.

Scoring of the Survey

For the eleven quality of staff development scales, the quality of center leadership scale and the attitude toward staff development scale, participants were presented with a series of statements related to the study (see Appendix B) and were asked to indicate their level of agreement with those statements by selecting 1 of 4 choices: 1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4= strongly agree. The overall measure of the quality of staff development was the average score across all items in the eleven quality scales. Scoring codes for all items are in Table 2.

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, and Alpha Reliability Coefficients for Staff Development Program Assessment Survey Scales

Scale	Number of items	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
Adequacy of the learning environment	5	99	3.19	.81	.95
Adequacy of time for learning	5	99	2.91	.83	.91
Quality of the planning for staff development	5	99	2.89	.83	.93
Level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development	5	99	2.78	.85	.89
Adequacy of materials and equipment	5	99	3.06	.80	.91
Quality of staff development techniques	5	99	2.87	.74	.92
Adequacy of funding for staff development	5	99	2.85	.85	.88
Relevance of the content of staff development	10	99	2.92	.80	.94
Rewards for participation in staff development	5	99	2.93	.79	.89
Use of adult learning principles in staff development	5	99	2.83	.74	.92
Transfer of learning from staff development to the job	5	99	3.09	.70	.97
Quality of center leadership	5	99	3.09	.75	.92
Attitude toward staff development	5	99	2.91	.81	.76
Overall quality of staff development	70	99	2.94	.80	.99

Note. The scale was 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly disagree.

Scores were obtained by averaging the item responses for each scale. Higher scores represented higher amounts of the variables measured. Of the seventy items measured, sixty-eight were positively worded items and two were negatively worded items (numbers 67 and 69). The negatively worded items were reverse scored: 1=4, 2=3, 3=2, 4=1.

Analysis of the Survey Data

All data were checked and verified by the researcher. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the data. Means and standard deviations were computed for the following independent variables: age, attitude toward staff development, total years of experience, age of center, number of students served, number of special education students served, budget for staff development, and quality of center leadership. Frequencies and percentages were reported for gender, position, center location, grade levels served, number of staff employed, pooling of resources, and certificates held by teachers in the centers. Means and standard deviations were computed for the following dependent variables: adequacy of the learning environment, adequacy of time for learning, quality of the planning for staff development, level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development, adequacy of materials and equipment, quality of staff development techniques, adequacy of funding for staff development, relevance of the content of staff development, rewards for participation in staff development, use of adult learning principles in staff development, transfer of learning from staff development to the job, quality of center leadership, attitude toward staff development, and overall quality of staff development.

One-way analysis (ANOVA) and Scheffé's (1959) post-hoc comparisons were used to assess differences in quality ratings among positions and locations. Scheffé's post-hoc comparisons provided greater control over Type I error and are used often with one-way analysis of variance (Huck & Cormier, 1996). Differences in quality ratings by grade levels served and gender were assessed with t-tests. Multiple regression analysis was used to identify the independent variables that account for the variance in the dependent variables. The independent variables were – the personal characteristics of the participants—age, gender, position, attitude toward staff development, and total years of experience—and the center characteristics—location, age of center, grade levels served, number of staff employed, number of students served, number of special education students served, budget for staff development, quality of center leadership, pooling of resources, number of certified general education teachers, and number of certified special education teachers.

Phase II: The Focus Group

The second phase of this study was three focus group interviews. The focus group protocol was structured to gather recommendations for the improvement of staff development at Virginia's regional alternative education centers. The focus group process was used to stimulate participants' thoughts on making improvements. During the discussion, the participants examined the recommendations for improvement openly with the researcher. By allowing the participants' feelings to be expressed, the researcher minimized the influence of one or more very dominant group member(s) (Bader & Rossi, 1999; Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafen, 1975). The locations for the three focus groups were Eastern Virginia (urban), Northern Virginia (suburban), and Southwest Virginia (rural). To allow for every center to have an equal probability of being included, the names of the regional centers were randomly selected.

Instrument Development

A protocol for the focus groups was developed using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) by Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafen (1975). The researcher chose the NGT because it is considered an effective method of facilitating the focus group experience, identifying issues, and collecting data. To improve the clarity of the guiding questions and effectiveness of the process, the 50-minute protocol was discussed with three administrative coordinators in regional alternative education centers. No changes were made in the protocol (see Appendix I).

Administration

The researcher received permission to conduct three focus group meetings from the center administrative coordinators. The researcher, as moderator for each group, explained to the participants in each group session the purpose of the qualitative study and the ultimate goal of improving staff development practices in the regional centers. Each focus group was composed of one administrative coordinator, two teachers, and one counselor. Participants were provided the summary data of the Phase I quantitative analysis (see Appendix H). They reviewed and discussed the data, which included the eleven dependent variables, noting the lowest scored items in the eleven quality domains. Participants were asked to write down their list of strategies to improve the quality of staff development based on the eleven domains and items within domains with the lowest scored items (see Appendix H). A clockwise round-robin sequence occurred with each participant giving one strategy from his or her list at a time.

The participants had the opportunity to make additional comments for improvements during the round table discussion period.

To facilitate the focus group's efforts in analyzing the data, a flip chart was used. If a strategy was on the flip chart and the same strategy was on a participant's personal sheet, the strategy was marked off the individual's sheet. This procedure helped to minimize the problem of duplication. As is the practice in the Nominal Group Technique (NGT), a participant who did not have any more strategies to be presented passed to the next participant in the round-robin sequence.

As a group, the participants edited the list by asking for clarification, grouping similar strategies, and collapsing similar strategies into single brief statements. Each participant was asked to select the top five strategies using adhesive dots. The number of dots determined the ranking of the strategies as 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 with the number 1 being the top strategy. Upon completion of each focus group, the participants were asked to discuss the ranked items and to share their thoughts on how to make staff development in the regional centers more effective.

To safeguard privacy in the final report, no centers and names of participants were mentioned directly or indirectly through identifiers. The group recorder (the counselor) operated the recorder and wrote down information presented during the focus group activity. Tape recordings of the activity were destroyed one year after the focus group meetings were completed.

Data Analysis

The focus groups provided detailed information about specific topics relative to staff development improvements. By using the NGT process, the researcher empowered the members of the focus group to select topics, thereby assisting the researcher to analyze and prioritize the strategies for staff development. The researcher analyzed all of the three focus groups' data as follows:

- (1) Each prioritized strategy was reviewed and compared to all other strategies for its meaning.
- (2) The strategies were coded and categorized with similar strategies (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).
- (3) By simultaneously comparing the strategies for their meaning across categories, the researcher was able to change, merge, or omit categories (Wolcott, 1990).
- (4) The categories of strategies were summarized and implications for practice were drawn.

CHAPTER III THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationships between the quality of staff development in Virginia's regional alternative education centers and the characteristics of participants and their center. The analysis of the data and findings are in this chapter. The chapter has three sections: descriptive statistics for the personal characteristics of respondents and center variables, inferential statistics for relationships between the quality of staff development programs and respondent and center characteristics, and a summary of the data and findings from the focus groups.

Descriptive Statistics for the Respondents and Center Characteristics

The descriptive statistics for respondent demographic and center variables are in this section. The variables are age, gender, position, attitude toward staff development, total years of experience, location, age of center, grade levels served, number of staff employed, number of students served, number of special education students served, staff development budget per staff member, quality of center leadership, pooling of resources, and certificates held by teachers (see Table 6).

The ninety-nine participants identified various personal characteristics. The average age of the respondents was about 44 years with a minimum of 25 years and a maximum of 62 years. A little more than half of the participants were male. On a 4.0 Likert-type scale, the participants rated attitude toward staff development as 2.91. The average experience in education was about 15 years with a minimum of one year to a maximum of 41 years.

Twenty-six regional centers participated in the study from across the state of Virginia. About thirty-one percent of the centers were in urban areas, about 27 percent were in suburban areas, and 42 percent were in rural areas (see Appendix G). The mean age of the centers was about 6 years with a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 8 years. The majority of the centers included grades 4-12. The rest had grades 7-12. On average, there were one administrative coordinator, 9.35 teachers, 1.42 counselors and an average of 11.77 staff at the centers. The staffs varied in size from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 45 employees. Based on a total population of 2,871 students for the 2001-2002 school year, there was a mean of 110 students per center with a minimum of 13 students and a maximum of 350 students. Of the 460 identified special education students, there was a mean of 16 students per center with a minimum of zero students to a maximum of 81 students. With thirteen of 26 centers responding, the average staff development budget

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Respondent and Center Characteristics, N = 99

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i> (<i>Min/Max</i>)	<i>N</i>	%
<u>Respondent demographic variables</u>					
Age	99	44.40	9.24 (25/62)		
Gender					
Male				54	54.55
Female				45	45.45
Total				99	100.00
Position					
Administrative coordinator				26	26.26
Teacher				47	47.48
Counselor				26	26.26
Total				99	100.00
Attitude toward staff development	99	2.91	.58 (1/4)		
Total years experience	99	14.55	9.45 (1/41)		
<u>Center variables</u>					
Location					
Urban				8	30.77
Suburban				7	26.92
Rural				11	42.31
Total centers				26	100.00
Age of center	26	6.00	1.39 (1/8)		
Grade levels served					
4-12				17	65.39
7-12				9	34.62
Total				26	100.01

(table continues)

Table 6 (continued)

Variables	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i> (<i>Min/Max</i>)	<i>N</i>	%
Number of staff employed					
Administrative coordinators	26	1.00	.00 (1/1)		
Teachers	26	9.35	9.58 (1/38)		
Counselors	26	1.42	1.03 (1/6)		
Total	26	11.77	10.34 (3/45)		
Number of students served	26	110.42	83.64 (13/350)		
Number of special education students served	26	16.31	20.46 (0/81)		
Staff development budget per staff member	13 ^a	\$483.16	512.62 (22.22/ 1977-78)		
Quality of center leadership	99	3.09	.65 (1/4)		
Pooling of resources of school divisions					
No				9	34.62
Yes				17	65.39
Total				26	100.01
Certificates held by teachers in all centers					
General education	26	7.92	8.65 (0/31)		
Special education	26	1.42	1.77 (0/7)		
Total	26	4.67	4.79 (.50/19)		

Note. The scale was 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, and 4= Strongly agree.

^a Thirteen of 26 centers did not report the amount for staff development.

per staff member was \$483.16. The minimum budget per staff member was \$22.22 and the maximum was \$1,777.78. On a 4.0 Likert-type scale, the participants rated the quality of center leadership as 3.09. In the pooling of resources for the cost of center operations, 65.39% of the center administrators reported that they received funding from regional school divisions.¹ The average number of teachers with some form of general education certificate was 7.92 with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 31. On an average, there were 1.42 special education teachers at the centers with a minimum of zero and a maximum of seven.

*Relationships Between the Quality of Staff Development Programs
and Respondent and Center Characteristics*

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Scheffé's post-hoc comparisons were used to assess differences in quality ratings among positions and locations (see Tables 7, 8 and 9). No differences were found among the three positions—administrative coordinator, teacher, and counselor—for any of the eleven dimensions of quality or for overall quality (see Table 7). Differences were found among the three locations—urban, suburban, and rural—for four of the dimensions of quality: (1) adequacy of the learning environment ($p \leq .01$), (2) adequacy of time for learning ($p \leq .01$), (3) rewards for participation in staff development ($p \leq .05$), and (4) transfer of learning from staff development to the job ($p \leq .05$). There were no differences among the three locations for the remaining seven dimensions of quality or for overall quality (see Table 8).

Scheffé's post-hoc comparisons were run for those dimensions of quality for which differences were found among locations. Respondents in urban centers rated the adequacy of learning environment, the adequacy of the time for learning, and the rewards for participation in staff development higher than those in rural areas. Respondents in urban centers rated the transfer of learning higher than those in suburban areas (see Table 9).

Differences in the quality of staff development for grade levels served and gender were assessed with t-tests. Respondents in centers serving grade levels 4-12 perceived their staff development to be of higher quality than respondents in centers that served grade levels 7-12 on the following dimensions: (1) adequacy of the learning environment ($p \leq .05$), (2) quality of the planning for staff

¹ All school divisions that participate in a center are required to contribute to the cost of operations, but only 50% of the administrative coordinators reported their costs.

Table 7

Differences in the Quality of Staff Development Ratings by Current Position, One-Way ANOVAs

Quality of staff development scales	Administrative coordinator			Teacher			Counselor			<i>F</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
1. Adequacy of the learning environment	26	3.37	.72	47	3.05	.72	26	3.25	.75	1.73
2. Adequacy of time for learning	26	3.06	.72	47	2.81	.70	26	2.93	.73	1.04
3. Quality of the planning for staff development	26	2.98	.72	47	2.83	.75	26	2.88	.72	.36
4. Level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development	26	2.95	.76	47	2.64	.67	26	2.85	.71	1.79
5. Adequacy of materials and equipment	26	3.24	.68	47	2.96	.71	26	3.05	.63	1.43
6. Quality of staff development techniques	26	3.02	.67	47	2.78	.65	26	2.89	.59	1.16
7. Adequacy of funding for staff development	26	3.10	.63	47	2.69	.76	26	2.90	.59	3.08
8. Relevance of the content of staff development	26	3.12	.58	47	2.83	.68	26	2.90	.64	1.69
9. Rewards for participation in staff development	26	3.11	.65	47	2.81	.67	26	2.95	.61	1.81
10. Use of adult learning principles in staff development	26	3.00	.55	47	2.72	.67	26	2.85	.69	1.61
11. Transfer of learning from staff development to the job	26	3.22	.64	47	3.03	.67	26	3.05	.68	.78
Overall quality of staff development	26	3.11	.59	47	2.83	.60	26	2.95	.59	1.81

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Table 8

Differences in the Quality of Staff Development Ratings by Location, One-Way ANOVAs

Quality of staff development scales	Urban			Suburban			Rural			<i>F</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
1. Adequacy of the learning environment	30	3.52	.55	26	3.15	.75	43	2.98	.77	5.36**
2. Adequacy of time for learning	30	3.23	.58	26	2.84	.67	43	2.73	.76	5.03**
3. Quality of the planning for staff development	30	3.12	.44	26	2.89	.75	43	2.72	.84	2.76
4. Level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development	30	2.93	.63	26	2.83	.70	43	2.64	.76	1.53
5. Adequacy of materials and equipment	30	3.21	.64	26	3.05	.67	43	2.96	.72	1.18
6. Quality of staff development techniques	30	2.99	.51	26	2.94	.62	43	2.74	.72	1.54
7. Adequacy of funding for staff development	30	2.95	.65	26	2.85	.69	43	2.78	.75	.53
8. Relevance of the content of staff development	30	3.16	.53	26	2.84	.70	43	2.80	.67	3.03
9. Rewards for participation in staff development	30	3.17	.50	26	2.91	.63	43	2.76	.72	3.69*
10. Use of adult learning principles in staff development	30	2.97	.59	26	2.71	.68	43	2.80	.67	1.26
11. Transfer of learning from staff development to the job	30	3.33	.53	26	2.87	.70	43	3.04	.68	3.80*
Overall quality of staff development	30	3.15	.45	26	2.90	.60	43	2.81	.66	2.88

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Table 9

Differences in the Quality of Staff Development Ratings by Location, Scheffé's Post-Hoc Comparisons

Location and quality criterion	<i>M</i>	Urban	Suburban	Rural
1. Adequacy of the learning environment				
Urban	3.52			**
Suburban	3.15			
Rural	2.98			
2. Adequacy of time for learning				
Urban	3.23			**
Suburban	2.84			
Rural	2.73			
9. Rewards for participation in staff development				
Urban	3.17			*
Suburban	2.91			
Rural	2.76			
11. Transfer of learning from staff development to the job				
Urban	3.33		*	
Suburban	2.87			
Rural	3.04			

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

development ($p \leq .05$), (3) level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development ($p \leq .01$), (4) quality of staff development techniques ($p \leq .05$), (5) rewards for participation in staff development ($p \leq .01$), and overall quality of staff development ($p \leq .05$). No differences between 4-12 and 7-12 grade levels were found on the dimensions of adequacy of time for learning, adequacy of materials and equipment, adequacy of funding for staff development, relevance of content of staff development, use of adult learning principles in staff development, and transfer of learning from staff development to the job (see Table 10). No differences were found between males and females on any of the quality dimensions in the regional centers (see Table 11).

Regression of Quality Dimensions of Staff Development in the Regional Alternative Education Centers on Personal and Environmental Characteristics

Multiple regression was used to identify the predictor variables that account for the variance in the criterion variables (see Tables 12-23). The predictor variables were the quality of center leadership, attitude toward staff development, location urban, location suburban, age of center, grade levels served by the center, number of staff employed, budget for staff development, and total years of experience of respondents.

1. For adequacy of the learning environment, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership and attitude toward staff development resulted in increases of .44 ($p = .02$) and .45 ($p = .03$), respectively, in adequacy of the learning environment. The amount of the budget for staff development was found to be significantly related ($p = .01$) to the quality of the learning environment; however, the unstandardized regression coefficient was .00. Thus, the effect of budget on quality of the learning environment was trivial (see Table 12).

2. For adequacy of time for learning, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership and attitude toward staff development resulted in increases of .38 ($p = .04$) and .45 ($p = .04$), respectively, in adequacy of the time for learning (see Table 13).

3. For quality of the planning for staff development, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership resulted in an increase of .66 ($p = .00$) in the quality of planning. If a center served grades 7-12 rather than grades 4-12, then the quality of planning declined by $-.38$ ($p = .05$) of a point (see Table 14).

4. For the level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership resulted in an increase of .53 ($p = .01$) in the level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation. If a center served grades 7-12 rather than grades 4-12, then the level of

Table 10

Differences in Quality of Staff Development Ratings by Grade Level Served, t-Tests

Quality of staff development scales	4-12			7-12			df	t
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD		
1. Adequacy of the learning environment	69	3.29	.64	30	2.95	.88	97	2.19*
2. Adequacy of time for learning	69	3.01	.61	30	2.68	.88	41.71	1.87
3. Quality of the planning for staff development	69	3.03	.62	30	2.57	.85	43.12	2.67*
4. Level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development	69	2.91	.68	30	2.47	.70	97	2.98**
5. Adequacy of materials and equipment	69	3.11	.65	30	2.94	.74	97	1.12
6. Quality of staff development techniques	69	2.97	.60	30	2.65	.70	97	2.27*
7. Adequacy of funding for staff development	69	2.94	.65	30	2.65	.79	97	1.96
8. Relevance of the content of staff development	69	3.00	.59	30	2.75	.75	97	1.79
9. Rewards for participation in staff development	69	3.05	.59	30	2.65	.72	97	2.89**
10. Use of adult learning principles in staff development	69	2.90	.65	30	2.65	.63	97	1.77
11. Transfer of learning from staff development to the job	69	3.16	.64	30	2.92	.68	97	1.65
Overall quality of staff development	69	3.03	.55	30	2.72	.66	97	2.49*

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Table 11

Differences in Quality of Staff Development Ratings by Gender, t-Tests

Quality of staff development scales	4-12			7-12			<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
1. Adequacy of the learning environment	54	3.14	.80	45	3.24	.64	97	-.67
2. Adequacy of time for learning	54	2.89	.80	45	2.94	.60	96.18	-.37
3. Quality of the planning for staff development	54	2.93	.78	45	2.84	.66	97	.64
4. Level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development	54	2.79	.78	45	2.76	.63	97	.17
5. Adequacy of materials and equipment	54	3.02	.77	45	3.10	.57	97	-.55
6. Quality of staff development techniques	54	2.80	.74	45	2.96	.50	93.09	-1.31
7. Adequacy of funding for staff development	54	2.84	.71	45	2.87	.69	97	-.18
8. Relevance of the content of staff development	54	2.88	.75	45	2.98	.51	93.32	-.77
9. Rewards for participation in staff development	54	2.93	.74	45	2.92	.55	95.68	.01
10. Use of adult learning principles in staff development	54	2.79	.78	45	2.88	.45	87.36	-.72
11. Transfer of learning from staff development to the job	54	3.10	.79	45	3.07	.46	87.59	.26
Overall quality of staff development	54	2.92	.70	45	2.96	.46	92.22	-.35

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$

Table 12

Regression of the Adequacy of the Learning Environment on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	.75	.64		1.18	.25
Quality of center leadership	.44	.17	.39	2.56	.02
Attitude toward staff development	.45	.20	.35	2.19	.03
Urban location	.08	.21	.05	.39	.70
Suburban location	.11	.19	.07	.59	.56
Age of center	.05	.06	.09	.73	.47
Grade levels served by the center	-.31	.18	-.20	-1.69	.10
Number of staff employed	.01	.01	.08	.70	.49
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	-.33	-2.63	.01
Total years of experience	.00	.01	-.06	-.56	.58

Table 13

Regression of the Adequacy of the Time for Learning on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	.84	.66		1.28	.21
Quality of center leadership	.38	.18	.35	2.13	.04
Attitude toward staff development	.45	.21	.37	2.15	.04
Urban location	.14	.22	.09	.65	.52
Suburban location	.05	.20	.03	.25	.81
Age of center	.01	.07	.02	.15	.88
Grade levels served by the center	-.26	.19	-.17	-1.37	.18
Number of staff employed	.00	.01	.02	.15	.88
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	-.16	-1.18	.24
Total years of experience	-.01	.01	-.13	-1.20	.24

Table 14

Regression of the Quality of the Planning for Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	1.21	.65		1.85	.07
Quality of center leadership	.66	.18	.60	3.77	.00
Attitude toward staff development	.14	.21	.11	.67	.51
Urban location	.20	.21	.13	.93	.36
Suburban location	.12	.20	.07	.61	.55
Age of center	-.06	.07	-.12	-.95	.35
Grade levels served by the center	-.38	.19	-.24	-2.02	.05
Number of staff employed	.00	.01	-.02	-.18	.86
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	.03	.24	.81
Total years of experience	.00	.01	.00	.01	1.00

participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development declined by $-.43$ ($p = .03$) of a point (see Table 15).

5. For the adequacy of materials and equipment, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership resulted in an increase of $.53$ ($p = .00$) in the adequacy of materials and equipment (see Table 16).

6. For the quality of staff development techniques, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership resulted in an increase of $.54$ ($p = .00$) in the quality of the staff development techniques (see Table 17).

7. For the adequacy of funding of staff development, there were no significant findings (see Table 18).

8. For the relevance of the content of the staff development, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership and attitude toward staff development resulted in an increase of $.47$ ($p = .00$) and $.37$ ($p = .05$), respectively, in the relevance of the content of staff development (see Table 19).

9. For the quality of the rewards for participation in staff development, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership resulted in an increase of $.40$ ($p = .02$) in the quality of rewards for participation in staff development (see Table 20).

10. For the use of adult learning principles in staff development, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership showed an increase of $.57$ ($p = .00$) in the use of adult learning principles in staff development (see Table 21).

11. For the transfer of learning from the staff development to the job, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership and attitude toward staff development resulted in increases of $.50$ ($p = .00$) and $.40$ ($p = .02$), respectively, in the transfer of learning from staff development (see Table 22).

12. For overall total quality of staff development, every point of increase in the quality of center leadership and attitude towards staff development resulted in increases of $.49$ ($p = .00$) and $.33$ ($p = .03$), respectively, in the overall quality of staff development (see Table 23).

The best predictors of the criterion variables were: (1) quality of center leadership, (2) attitude toward staff development, and (3) grade levels served. Of the three predictors, the quality of center leadership and attitude toward staff development were most consistently related to the criterion variables.

Table 15

Regression of the Level of Participation by Center Personnel in the Evaluation of Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	.85	.65		1.31	.20
Quality of center leadership	.53	.18	.48	2.99	.01
Attitude toward staff development	.32	.21	.26	1.52	.14
Urban location	-.06	.21	-.04	-.29	.78
Suburban location	.11	.20	.07	.55	.58
Age of center	.00	.07	-.01	-.09	.93
Grade levels served by the center	-.43	.19	-.28	-2.29	.03
Number of staff employed	.00	.01	-.01	-.08	.94
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	-.19	-1.44	.16
Total years of experience	.00	.01	.05	.49	.63

Table 16

Regression of the Adequacy of the Materials and Equipment on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	.64	.63		1.02	.31
Quality of center leadership	.53	.17	.51	3.13	.00
Attitude toward staff development	.27	.20	.23	1.36	.18
Urban location	.14	.21	.09	.67	.51
Suburban location	.15	.19	.10	.81	.42
Age of center	-.03	.06	-.07	-.53	.60
Grade levels served by the center	.02	.18	.02	.16	.88
Number of staff employed	.00	.01	-.02	-.17	.86
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	.21	1.63	.11
Total years of experience	.00	.01	.00	-.04	.97

Table 17

Regression of the Quality of Staff Development Techniques on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	.67	.55		1.24	.22
Quality of center leadership	.54	.15	.55	3.64	.00
Attitude toward staff development	.22	.17	.20	1.25	.22
Urban location	.12	.18	.08	.65	.52
Suburban location	.22	.17	.15	1.33	.19
Age of center	-.02	.05	-.04	-.35	.73
Grade levels served by the center	-.14	.16	-.10	-.87	.39
Number of staff employed	-.01	.01	-.08	-.78	.44
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	.22	1.78	.08
Total years of experience	.01	.01	.07	.71	.48

Table 18

Regression of the Adequacy of Funding for Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	.78	.71		1.10	.28
Quality of center leadership	.37	.19	.35	1.94	.06
Attitude toward staff development	.42	.23	.35	1.87	.07
Urban location	-.06	.23	-.04	-.26	.80
Suburban location	.04	.21	.03	.20	.85
Age of center	-.02	.07	-.03	-.24	.82
Grade levels served by the center	-.20	.20	-.13	-.98	.34
Number of staff employed	.00	.01	-.05	-.38	.71
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	-.01	-.07	.95
Total years of experience	.01	.01	.09	.73	.47

Table 19

Regression of the Relevance of Content of Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	.34	.55		.62	.54
Quality of center leadership	.47	.15	.47	3.12	.00
Attitude toward staff development	.37	.18	.33	2.13	.04
Urban location	.04	.18	.03	.25	.80
Suburban location	.04	.17	.03	.27	.79
Age of center	.03	.06	.07	.60	.56
Grade levels served by the center	-.18	.16	-.13	-1.14	.26
Number of staff employed	.00	.01	.01	.07	.95
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	-.15	-1.25	.22
Total years of experience	.01	.01	.13	1.28	.21

Table 20

Regression of the Quality of the Rewards for Participation in Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	1.23	.61		2.01	.05
Quality of center leadership	.40	.17	.40	2.40	.02
Attitude toward staff development	.29	.20	.26	1.50	.14
Urban location	.30	.20	.21	1.49	.14
Suburban location	.12	.18	.08	.64	.53
Age of center	-.06	.06	-.13	-.98	.34
Grade levels served by the center	-.21	.18	-.15	-1.21	.24
Number of staff employed	.00	.01	-.02	-.18	.86
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	.17	1.25	.22
Total years of experience	.01	.01	.08	.67	.51

Table 21

Regression of the Use of Adult Learning Principles in Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	.95	.56		1.70	.10
Quality of center leadership	.57	.15	.57	3.73	.00
Attitude toward staff development	.25	.18	.22	1.40	.17
Urban location	-.16	.18	-.11	-.84	.41
Suburban location	-.13	.17	-.09	-.79	.44
Age of center	.00	.06	.01	.07	.95
Grade levels served by the center	-.30	.16	-.22	-1.87	.07
Number of staff employed	.00	.01	-.03	-.25	.80
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	-.18	-1.43	.16
Total years of experience	.00	.01	-.06	-.62	.54

Table 22

Regression of the Quality of the Transfer of Learning from Staff Development to the Job on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	.76	.51		1.48	.15
Quality of center leadership	.50	.14	.49	3.56	.00
Attitude toward staff development	.40	.16	.35	2.46	.02
Urban location	-.03	.17	-.02	-.19	.85
Suburban location	-.20	.16	-.13	-1.27	.21
Age of center	.00	.05	-.01	-.05	.96
Grade levels served by the center	-.23	.15	-.16	-1.55	.13
Number of staff employed	.00	.01	.02	.19	.85
Budget for staff development	.00	.00	-.18	-1.59	.12
Total years of experience	.00	.01	.06	.61	.55

Table 23

Regression of the Overall Quality of Staff Development on the Characteristics of Participants and Regional Alternative Education Centers

Predictor(s)	<i>B</i>	Std. error	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	.82	.46		1.80	.08
Quality of center leadership	.49	.12	.53	3.96	.00
Attitude toward staff development	.33	.15	.32	2.24	.03
Urban location	.07	.15	.05	.44	.66
Suburban location	.06	.14	.04	.42	.67
Age of center	-.01	.05	-.02	-.22	.82
Grade levels served by the center	-.24	.13	-.18	-1.80	.08
Number of staff employed	-.00	.01	-.01	-.12	.91
Budget for staff development	-.00	.00	-.06	-.53	.60
Total years of experience	.00	.01	.02	.23	.82

A Family of Theories

An original theory was revised following the regression of the components of the quality of staff development of the predictor variables. A family of three theories explaining the quality of staff development is proposed. The theories were derived from the relationships between the predictor variables and the components of quality. The dominant predictor variable across all dependent variables except funding was the quality of center leadership. Attitude toward staff development was the second most consistent predictor. It had a positive effect on five domains. Grade levels served was the third predictor. It had an effect on two domains. The quality of center leadership and attitude toward staff development were the only predictors of overall quality of staff development (see Table 24).

Recommendations for Improvement of Staff Development:

Focus Group Summary

Administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors in three regional locations (urban, suburban, rural) were asked to meet with the researcher in their regional center after school hours to discuss their thoughts on making improvements in the quality of staff development. Since most of the teachers and counselors in the three focus groups did not remember participating in the Staff Development Program Assessment survey, the researcher spent a few minutes discussing the process. At each site, the participants were provided a summary of data from Phase I, the quantitative study (see Appendix H). They were permitted to ask any preliminary questions about the data. Each focus group consisted of one administrative coordinator, one counselor, and two teachers, except for the urban group which had one additional teacher. At the start of the meeting, the agenda was discussed and the purpose of the focus group was explained as the process to solicit strategies for the improvement of staff development in Virginia's regional alternative education centers. Using the protocol of the Nominal Group Technique (see Appendix I), the participants interacted with the researcher to generate a list of strategies to improve staff development in the regional centers.

The researcher conducted the three focus groups. Participants were asked to identify and write down their list of strategies related to the lowest scored items in the eleven quality domains. A clockwise round-robin sequence occurred with the participants giving one strategy at a time from their list to be placed on the flip chart. The participants had several opportunities to make additional comments for improvements during the round-table discussion period. The participants edited the list by asking for clarification, grouping similar strategies, and collapsing similar strategies into single brief statements. Participants were asked to select their top five strategies using colored adhesive dots. Then, the participants were

Table 24

A Family of Theories Explaining the Quality of Staff Development in Regional Alternative Education Centers

Variables	Quality domains											
	Learning environment	Time for learning	Planning	Evaluation	Materials	Staff development techniques	Funding	Content	Rewards	Adult learning principles	Transfer of learning	Total quality
The quality of center leadership	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Attitude toward staff development	X	X						X			X	X
Grade levels served by the center			X	X								

Note. X indicates that the variable was a significant predictor of the quality domain in a regression analysis.

asked to discuss the prioritized items and to share their thoughts on making staff development in the regional centers more effective. The number after each strategy in Tables 25-27 denotes the rank of that strategy by nominal group participants. They ranked them as 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 with number 1 being the top strategy. Items with a rank of ** U ** were suggested strategies, but they were not among the priority choices. The participants in each focus group seemed appreciative of the opportunity to have input into seeking possible solutions. They appeared to be grateful to have their say on the subject of improved staff development.

To improve the quality of staff development, the most important improvement strategies for the urban focus group were: (1) funding for travel to inservice training, (2) providing training during the workday, and (3) using team building techniques to support the transfer of learning to the job. The suburban focus group expressed the following as their most important strategies: (1) working together with stakeholders in identifying courses for professional development, and (2) working with colleagues in transferring lessons learned to the job. The rural focus group identified these top strategies: (1) increasing the number of staff employed to reduce the teacher-student ratio from 1:12 to 1:8, and (2) having all stakeholders provide a timely delivery of educational and social services in their center. Even though the rural focus group supported the concept of improving the quality of staff development, their comments were irrelevant to this discussion on the quality of staff development.

Summary of Strategies for Improvement of Staff Development by Location

The administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors in every focus group were responsive to the request for suggesting strategies. They voiced an understanding of the importance of identifying, prioritizing, discussing, practicing, and suggesting ways to improve the quality of staff development in Virginia's regional alternative education centers. The participants expressed a desire to address the quality of professional staff development as a prerequisite in making improvements. The researcher analyzed their findings (see Table 28).

In Domain 1, participation in evaluation of staff development, there were no recommendations made by the three locations.

In Domain 2, the use of adult learning, the urban and suburban locations recommended that individual interests (Item #51) needed to be addressed with open discussion by the participants. The suburban location stated that the desire to learn at their own pace (Item #55) was necessary and needed to be discussed between the instructor and the participants during inservice training.

Table 25

Strategies to Improve the Quality of Staff Development in the Regional Alternative Education Centers: Urban Focus Group

Improvement strategy	Rank
Provide adequate funding for all staff members to travel to professional inservice training.	**2**
Include professional development during the workday.	**2**
Use team building techniques to support each other in the transfer of learning to the job.	**2**
Allow staff members to express their feelings during inservice training.	**5**
Have better access to information from software, teacher editions, instructional supplies, and teacher materials.	**5**
Ensure the timely transfer of learning to the job.	**5**
Provide a variety of inservice techniques for audio-visual and tactile learners.	**U**
Assess all staff members' needs.	**U**
Provide computer-assisted instruction for all staff members.	**U**
Praise colleagues for small and big achievements.	**U**

Note. The rank by nominal group participants were 1=highest rank, 5=lowest rank. A **U** refers to an item that was suggested as a strategy but was not among the ranked items.

Table 26

Strategies to Improve the Quality of Staff Development in the Regional Alternative Education Centers: Suburban Focus Group

Improvement strategy	Rank
Work together with stakeholders in identifying courses for professional development.	**1.5**
Work together with colleagues in transferring lessons learned to the job.	**1.5**
Finance all staff members for inservice training instead of the “train-the-trainer” method.	**4**
Have the staff be accountable on the job for improving student achievement.	**4**
Include staff interests in developing professional inservice training.	**4**
Have participants work at their own pace during inservice training.	**U**
Provide access to “user-friendly” web sites on the internet in alternative education.	**U**
Have a variety of classroom environments to improve student achievements.	**U**

Note. The rank by nominal group participants were 1=highest rank, 5=lowest rank. A **U** refers to an item that was suggested as a strategy but was not among the ranked items.

Table 27

Strategies to Improve the Quality of Staff Development in the Regional Alternative Education Centers: Rural Focus Group

Improvement strategy	Rank
Increase number of staff employed to reduce the teacher-student ratio from 1:12 to 1:8.	**1.5**
Have all stakeholders provide a timely delivery of educational and social services.	**1.5**
Create learning environments to improve teacher-student performance.	**3.5**
Provide access to web sites on alternative education and student job placement.	**3.5**
Provide instructional software with reading levels for grades 4-12.	**U**
Provide additional counseling services to help students in crisis.	**U**

Note. The rank by nominal group participants were 1=highest rank, 5=lowest rank. A **U** refers to an item that was suggested as a strategy but was not among the ranked items.

Table 28

Summary of Strategies for Improvement of Staff Development by Location

Strategies for improvement of staff development	Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
<u>Domain 2</u>			
Use of adult learning principles in staff development			
My interests (Item #51)	X ₅	X ₄	
The desire to learn at my own pace (Item #55)		X _U	
<u>Domain 3</u>			
Adequacy of staff development funding			
Allow me to travel to staff development activities (Item #31)	X ₂		
Help me pay the registration for professional workshops (Item #32)		X ₄	
<u>Domain 4</u>			
The quality of staff development techniques			
Review the quality of various training methods (Item #26)	X _U		
<u>Domain 5</u>			
The quality of the planning for staff development			
Cooperatively with all participants (Item #11)		X _{1.5}	X _{1.5}
With an assessment of participants' needs (Item #12)	X _U		X _{1.5}
<u>Domain 6</u>			
Adequacy of the time for learning			
Includes time to reflect on my professional development (Item #10)	X ₂		
<u>Domain 7</u>			
The relevance of staff development content			
Best practices in computer assisted instruction (Item #42)	X _U		X _U
Valid research in alternative education (Item #43)		X _U	X _{3.5}

(table continues)

Table 28 (continued)

Strategies for improvement of staff development	Location		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
<u>Domain 8</u> Rewards for participants in staff development			
I receive praise for helping my colleagues (Item #47)	X _U		
<u>Domain 9</u> Adequacy of the materials and equipment			
I have access to all necessary information (Item #22)	X ₅		X _{3.5}
<u>Domain 10</u> The transfer of learning from staff development to the job.			
Convey higher expectations for accountability in my job (Item #65)	X ₅	X ₄	
Work more effectively with colleagues in my job (Item #64)	X ₂	X _{1.5}	
<u>Domain 11</u> Adequacy of the learning environment			
Helps me to develop new ways of teaching students to be successful (Item #3)		X _U	X _U

Note: The numbers in the columns refer to the ranks of the strategies. The “U” indicates that the item received no votes when participants were asked to place colored dots on five items that they perceived as being important strategies. The item number refers to the number of the item in the Staff Development Program Assessment (SDPA) (see Appendix B).

In Domain 3, adequacy of staff development funding, the urban location recommended that allowing individuals to travel to staff development activities (Item #31) must have increased funding. This would allow the participants as well as the train-the-trainer person to travel to the training site. In helping them to pay registration for professional workshops (Item #32), the suburban location maintained that increased funding in the center's budget was necessary.

In Domain 4, the quality of staff development techniques, the urban location recommended that a review of various training methods (Item #26) was needed. With an increased usage of training methods, participants would be empowered in their learning process.

In Domain 5, the quality of the planning for staff development, the suburban and rural locations in cooperation with all participants (Item #11) must work together to improve the quality of inservice training. By assessing the participants' needs (Item #12) prior to inservice training, it would help them to understand what could be accomplished, what procedures could be used and how success could be attained.

In Domain 6, the adequacy of the time for learning, the urban location maintained that time to reflect on professional development (Item #10) needs to be included as an integral part of the participants' workday. This was in response to the requirement for after school inservice training.

In Domain 7, the relevance of staff development content, the urban and rural locations stated that best practices in computer assisted instruction (Item #42) must be included with maximum usage. Valid research in alternative education (Item #43) was recommended by the suburban and rural locations so that the participants could have increased access on the internet websites.

In Domain 8, the quality of rewards for participants in staff development, the urban location recommended that individuals receive praise for helping colleagues (Item #47). They stated that an increase in the opportunity to praise colleagues must include rewards for major and minor achievements during staff development training.

In Domain 9, the adequacy of materials and equipment, the urban and rural locations recommended that access to all necessary information (Item #22) was required. They maintained that computer software and instructional information were instrumental for a successful staff development program.

In Domain 10, the quality of the transfer of learning from staff development to the job, the urban and suburban locations supported the highest expectations for accountability in the job (Item #65). They recommended that participants must work more efficiently with colleagues on the job (Item #64). They maintained that

team-building techniques and individual-group accountability were necessary during and after inservice training.

In Domain 11, adequacy of the learning environment, the suburban and rural locations recommended helping participants develop new ways of teaching students to be successful (Item #3). By providing a variety of learning environments, this would help stimulate students to learn, explore, apply and achieve.

In Domain 1-11, 15 strategies were recommended by the urban, suburban, and rural locations for the improvement of staff development. The following rates revealed for improvement: urban – 67 percent, suburban – 53 percent, and rural – 40 percent. The three locations recommended that these 15 strategies be supported by the centers' participants and the stakeholders at the local, regional, and state levels.

When asked by the researcher, what did the participants consider to be the major factors that would influence the improvement of staff development, they responded that leadership in the regional centers and a positive attitude by the participants were required for a quality staff development program.

The administrative coordinators, counselors, and teachers in every focus group appeared to feel empowered in recommending strategies to improve the quality of staff development. Many of the participants expressed that staff development is very important in improving the ultimate quality of their regional center's program. Some felt inadequate in their ability to achieve a quality staff development program because they lacked the skills. In the next chapter, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for practice and future research are discussed.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was designed to determine the extent to which participants' personal characteristics and center characteristics related to the quality of staff development in Virginia's regional alternative education centers. In this section of the study, the researcher offers a summary of findings, discusses the findings, draws implications, and makes recommendations for practice and further study.

Summary of Findings

This summary of findings was derived from both the multiple regression and nominal group data. In the case of the multiple regression data, each of the 11 measures of quality and the overall quality measure were regressed on the characteristics of the respondents and the centers in which they worked. One personal characteristic and two center characteristics accounted for significant ($p \leq .05$) amounts of variance in the dependent variables: the attitude toward staff development, the quality of leadership in providing staff development at a center, and the grade levels served by a center.

Leadership for staff development was the primary predictor of the quality of staff development at the regional alternative education centers. The quality of leadership was related to 10 components and overall quality of staff development in the centers. When leaders were viewed as continually striving to improve staff development for center personnel, inspiring center personnel to participate in staff development activities, praising center personnel for participating in staff development, participating in staff development themselves, and giving center personnel choices in staff development, center personnel rated their staff development higher in adequacy of the learning environment, time for learning, and equipment and materials; quality of planning; level of participation of center personnel in planning staff development; quality of instructional techniques; relevance of the content to the work of center personnel; use of adult learning principals; transfer of learning to the job of center personnel; and overall quality.

General attitude toward staff development was a significant predictor of four components and overall quality of staff development in the centers. When respondents had a positive attitude toward staff development, they believed that staff development, generally, improved their skills, contributed much to their professional growth, stimulated their thinking, was of value to them, and allowed them to reflect critically on their educational beliefs. Respondents who held these beliefs at a higher level rated staff development at their centers higher on

adequacy of the learning environment and time for learning, relevance of the content of the staff development for their work, transfer of learning from the staff development to their work, and overall quality of staff development than those who held these attitudes as lower levels.

Grade levels served was the third significant predictor for quality of staff development in regional centers. Respondents in centers that served a broader range of grades (4-12) rated their staff development higher in participation of center personnel in planning and evaluating their staff development than did respondents in centers that served a narrower range of grades (7-12). The differences in ratings may be associated with the inclusion of elementary school personnel in the respondent pool. Elementary school personnel have a more favorable attitude toward staff development generally as shown by the correlation between grade level and general attitude.

The focus groups identified strategies for improving staff development at the regional centers. These strategies differed by location (urban, suburban, and rural). The urban focus group members were concerned with funding of their travel to the activities, the time of day when the activities were offered (preference for during the work day), expression of feelings during the staff development activities, access to information about resources available to them, assessment of staff members' needs, computer-assisted instruction, and rewards for their achievements. The suburban members wanted everyone to participate directly in the staff development rather than relying on a "train-the-trainer" model, self-paced programs, and information on user-friendly websites and classroom environments that improve student achievement. Both the urban and suburban members wanted to participate in identifying the content (courses, activities) of the staff development and assistance with transfer of learning from the staff development activities to the job. Rural members supported improving staff development but they took a different tack of discussing other local issues. They were concerned with human and financial resources since they had recently moved to a new location in the county's vocational center. They suggested employing more staff, getting providers to deliver services to the centers in a more timely fashion, increasing the number of computers for instruction, providing more access to alternative education and job-placement websites, and providing more counselors to aid students in crisis.

Conclusions

It is clear that the quality of the leadership at regional alternative education centers and the attitudes of the participants toward staff development make a significant difference in the ratings of the quality of staff development. Further,

when the grade levels served by a center include teachers in lower grades 4-12) the ratings of staff development are higher than when the grades served are 7-12 only.

The three focus groups expressed different views on what would improve the quality of staff development at their centers. Members of urban centers tended to focus on the convenience and support provided for staff development. Those in suburban centers tended to focus on the content and environment of the staff development; those elements that facilitate their development. Members of rural centers tended to report conditions within their work environment that may help to facilitate the learning of their students.

Discussion

This study opens the door wider for the study of variables that relate to the quality of staff development in Virginia's regional alternative education centers. It is not unusual to hear educators in the regional centers discuss the importance of or just gripe about the quality of staff development. Studies such as this one can provide assistance to administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors faced with the many daily challenges of introducing and maintaining the quality of staff development. It is hoped that this study will help the stakeholders in regional alternative education identify the critical factors of quality staff development programs and provide a basis upon which educators in regional alternative education centers with less successful quality staff development programs can proceed to improve their staff development programs.

Implications for Theory – A Family of Theories

One theory was established at the beginning of this research under the assumption that all predictor variables would be related to all of the quality variables in the same way. This was not the case. Some of the predictor variables related to some of the quality variables and others related to none of the variables. Thus, the concept of a family of theories was developed to explain the relationships. The family consists of three separate theories, with each theory identified by the predictor variables that were found to be associated with specific quality variables. One theory is that the rating of quality of staff development at regional alternative centers depends on the quality of center leadership and the attitude of participants toward staff development generally. Four of the eleven components of quality of staff development—adequacy of the learning environment, adequacy of time for learning, relevance of the content of staff development, and transfer of learning from staff development to the job, in addition to overall quality of staff development in the regional center, were found to be associated with these two predictor variables. A second theory is that the

rating of quality of staff development at regional centers depends on the quality of leadership and the grade levels served by the center. In this case, two of the components of quality of staff development--quality of planning and level of participation of center personnel in the evaluation of staff development were found to be associated with these two predictor variables. In the third theory, four of the components of quality of staff development--adequacy of materials and equipment, quality of staff development techniques, rewards for participation in staff development, and use of learning principles in staff development, in addition to overall quality, were associated with the quality of center leadership alone. The implication here is that ratings of the quality of staff development depends on the perceptions of leadership, the attitudes of participants toward staff development, and the grade levels served by the center. All three of these variables should be incorporated into any theory developed to evaluate the quality of staff development in regional alternative education centers and possibly in evaluating any programs.

Recommendations for Research

A field trial based on scientific research guidelines (Newman, 2004) should be conducted with the same populations of administrators, teachers, and counselors engaged in staff development in the regional centers to determine if trained leadership can produce high-quality staff development programs. The intervention in this field trial would be training leaders in designing quality staff development programs at regional alternative education centers. Two groups would be identified in the field trial. Leaders of each group would be randomly assigned. The experimental group would be exposed to leaders specifically trained in developing high-quality staff development programs for regional alternative education centers. The control group would have leaders who received no training in designing staff development programs. The criteria for judging the effects of the training would be the same eleven criteria and the overall quality measure used in this study.

It may be beneficial to do some case studies of centers that have more effective and less effective staff development programs. These cases would help identify the specific leadership behaviors that contribute to the effectiveness of staff development. Questions such as the following could guide this research and provide useful information for other centers:

“Who provides the leadership for staff development at the center?”

“What does this person or these people do that contributes to the quality of staff development at the center?”

“What practices can be transferred to other settings and what practices can not be transferred?”

Information of this sort would be useful to others who are interested in the transfer of leadership and other practices across environment settings. These cases would help to confirm or disconfirm the family of theories proposed here.

More work needs to be completed on the measurement of the quality of staff development. A question that remains following this work is whether or not quality of staff development is a unitary concept and, hence, can be measured with a unitary scale. The evidence in this study leans in that direction; however, that may be due to the inadequacy of the measure used. It may not be sensitive enough to capture the differences among the various components of quality that exist in the minds of respondents. It may be gathering nothing more than an overall perception of the leadership provided at the center in the area of staff development.

Recommendations for Practice

An avenue for practice is to create a web site for dissemination of effective staff development programs and practices for alternative education. The state department could link this new site to their web page. To encourage regional center leaders and staffs to use the site, center leaders could be trained using “train-the-trainer” method. They could return to their centers and train their staffs in how to effectively use the site. Those leaders at centers with effective programs could share what they do and what they have learned about staff development. The site could have asynchronous interaction, and anyone could add questions, comments, activities and suggestions to the discussion.

Some materials that could be used referenced on the site include: (1) *Evaluating Professional Development* (Guskey, 2000), (2) *Leader’s Companion* (Wren, 1995), (3) *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner, 2002), (4) *Journal of Staff Development*, (5) *Annual Report of Virginia’s Regional Alternative Education Projects* (Gerges & Hrabe, 2002), (6) *Teacher Quality, Teaching Quality, and School Improvement* (Kaplan & Owings, 2002), and (7) *Leadership 101: What Every Leader Needs to Know* (Maxwell, 2002).

Because center leadership was so prominent in the findings of this study, training leaders to develop high-quality staff development programs would seem to be a prudent use of resources by regional centers. Such training, when based on a study of the leadership in centers that have effective staff development programs, could produce much better results for participants and their students. Some topics may be (1) current issues in public school alternative education, (2) adult growth development, (3) adult learning theory, (4) motivating people, (5) art

and skills of leadership, (6) moral leadership, (7) leadership and vision, (8) characteristics of a public school leader, (9) process of leadership change, growth, and improvement, (10) team building and performance, and (11) celebration of excellence in education.

To adequately prepare regional center leaders, principal preparation could be an important pre-requisite for better quality professional development. This leadership preparation program could meet the needs of the participants by using adult learning theory and techniques, applying best practices in alternative education, and assessing participants' use of knowledge and skills. Ultimately, the use of quality leadership skills and a positive attitude by center leaders could directly influence how they relate to their staffs in the improvement of quality of staff development.

Reflections

The most exasperating part of this study was the review of the literature. The researcher sought data about the factors related to the quality of staff development in public school alternative education. Data in this field of education were limited.

The most rewarding experience the researcher had during the study was the interaction with the three focus groups. He traveled to the on-site locations of three randomly selected regional centers, presented summary data from the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey to the participants, and prioritized strategies using the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) process by Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafen (1975). Like most qualitative studies, the researcher made observations of and actively listened to the participants at each site. Through personal contact, he was able to connect the faces and personalities to each participant's name and respond to the questions.

In his search for the underlying principles of how alternative education regional centers can be transformed by quality staff development, this researcher observed during the quantitative and qualitative phases that leaders must focus on quality as their ultimate goal. As revealed by the results of the Staff Development Program Assessment survey and discussions with three focus groups, the researcher thoughtfully concludes: (1) the pursuit of quality is an on-going process; (2) the quality of staff development requires a positive attitude for improvement; (3) quality requires adequate leadership by all the stakeholders in alternative education center programs; (4) professional inservice training must be an essential element for improving the quality of staff development; and (5) quality of staff development requires an adequate investment in regional center personnel.

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APPENDIX A

Description of the Twenty-nine Virginia Regional Alternative Education Centers,
2001-2002

**Virginia Regional Alternative Education Centers
(2001-2002)¹**

1. Albemarle County Public Schools, Nelson County and Charlottesville City

Program Name: Renewing Education Through Use of Regional Network II (RETURN II)

Implemented: 1993-94

Focus: The program is based on the original project designed by Fluvanna County and a consortium of nine rural counties. RETURN II uses microcomputers and modems to create a long-distance learning network for students who require an alternative educational program due to educational, social, and emotional needs. It provides individualized instruction as well as intensive counseling for the student and the family, mentoring, and strong home/school interaction. This method of alternative intervention is more cost effective, provides evidence of growth in student achievement, and documents the successful transition back into the regular school environment. The program accommodates 12 students in Grades K-12.

Regional Study Group: #5

2. Bristol City Public Schools, Washington County

Program Name: Crossroads Alternative Program

Implemented: 1994-95

Focus: The program, located at two sites, serves 24 high-risk students in grades 9-12. Academic instruction, individual and group counseling, and a transition component are key elements. The program helps students become self-directed learners, abstract thinkers, collaborative workers, and become aware of contributions to the community. The students are provided instruction in technology.

Regional Study Group: #7

3. Brunswick County Public Schools, Greenville County and Mecklenburg County

Program Name: Southside L.I.N.K. Project

Implemented: 1995-96

Focus: The day program serves 60 expelled students in grades 8-12. Four teachers provide a non-traditional academic program offering English, mathematics, social studies and vocational education. Technology is integrated into the curriculum. Individual and group counseling services are available on a regular basis.

Regional Study Group: #8

¹ Jay, D. (2000). A profile for effective alternative education programs in Virginia. Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Education.

- 4. Carroll County Public Schools, Galax City**
Program Name: Carroll-Galax Regional Alternative Education Program—RAE Center
Implemented: 1996-97
Focus: Two school systems joined in a partnership to establish an off-campus regional alternative education program for 45-50 students in grades 7-12. Innovated features include integrated hands-on academic and vocational curriculum, cooperative learning, applied computer technology, mentoring, and career/self-esteem counseling.
Regional Study Group: #7

- 5. Fairfax County Public Schools, Alexandria City Public Schools**
Program Name: Transition Support Resource Center
Implemented: 1994-95
Focus: Middle and high students are provided individualized and small group instruction with support services. The year-round program is located at Bryant Alternative High School in Alexandria. It has a trained staff and community volunteers to monitor the progress of 40 students.
Regional Study Group: #4

- 6. Fauquier County Public Schools, Rappahannock County**
Program Name: The Regional Community Alternative Education Continuum
Implemented: 1996-97
Focus: The program’s objective is to reduce the number of youth who are at risk of expulsion, dropout or academic failure. It offers a supportive learning environment for 90 students, grades 6-12 and promotes social-emotional skill development. A school-within-a-school model serves the Rappahannock community and the Fauquier community maintains a separate alternative school program. In conjunction with law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, community-service agencies and service learning partnerships, the program seeks to include key stakeholders in student’s lives both at school and home.
Regional Study Group: #4

- 7. Fluvanna County Public Schools, Alleghany Highlands, Bath County, Botetourt County, Charles City County, Clarke County, Craig County, Culpeper County, Floyd County, Franklin County, Giles County, Grayson County, Greene County, Halifax County, Highland County, Lancaster County, Madison County, Orange County, Smyth County, Shenandoah County, and Radford City.**
Program Name: Project RETURN, Renewing Education Through Use of Regional Network
Implemented: 1994-95
Focus: Project RETURN is a research project designed to develop data on the impact of computer-based instruction, mentoring, counseling and strong home/school

interaction. Students excluded from the regular school setting receive computer-based instruction and work twice weekly with a mentor/teacher. In addition, students receive either individual or group counseling on a bi-weekly basis. Collected data shows that this form of instruction is cost-effective, provides evidence of growth in student achievement, and documents the successful students' transition back to the regular school setting. The program includes 75 students in grades K-12.

Regional Study Group: #5

8. Henry County Public Schools, Martinsville City, Patrick County

Program Name: Breaking Barriers – A Regional Alternative School

Implemented: 1996-97

Focus: The project focuses on educating students and addressing family problems, lack of motivation, peer pressures, academic and legal troubles. It is designed to provide strong emphasis on behavior modification, teamwork, enhanced decision-making abilities, and work/study habits. Comprehensive counseling, job training, parent and community involvement are key elements of the program. Twenty-five high-risk youths, grades 6-12, are served in the program.

Regional Study Group: #6

9. King William County Public Schools, Gloucester County, Mathews County, Middlesex County, Essex County, King & Queen County, New Kent County, Town of West Point

Program Name: Regional Alternative Education Program

Implemented: 1995-96

Focus: The program serves 100 expelled or long-term suspended students with chronic behavior problems in grades 6-12. An after school, four days per week program has been established at two sites. It includes an accelerated individualized academic program and an extensive partnership between the school division, local businesses, and community-based organizations.

Regional Study Group: #3

10. Lynchburg City Public Schools, Appomattox County, Amherst County, Bedford County

Program Name: Lynchburg City Secondary Alternative Program

Implemented: 1993-94

Focus: The program provides an alternative setting for 54 students in grades 6-12 at three locations. The key to the program consists of intervention strategies to change student academic and social behavior. The schools, public agencies, and the juvenile judicial system provide collaborative services. Staff uses individualized and small group instruction and technology in the program.

Regional Study Group: #5

11. Montgomery County Public Schools, Pulaski County

Program Name: Alternative Education Program for Behaviorally Disordered Youth

Implemented: 1994-95

Focus: The program provides a comprehensive therapeutic, educational, and vocational program for 60 behaviorally disordered youths between the ages of 14 and 18. The program is intensely personalized and built around the needs of families and students through individual group, and family counseling. In-home services are provided to families. Students help design individual development plans that include educational, vocational, and personal goals.

Regional Study Group: #6

12. Newport News City Public Schools, Hampton City

Program Name: Enterprise Academy

Implemented: 1993-94

Focus: The program is a school for long-term suspended and expelled students in grades 4-12. It offers a rigorous academic and intensive behavior modification program in a business setting for 160 students. The program is based on a projects-oriented curriculum with computers as an integral part of the instructional program. Students work in study teams to facilitate inquiry-based academic work. Conduct rules require students to conform to a strict dress code.

Regional Study Group: #2

13. Norfolk City, Chesapeake City, Franklin City, Portsmouth City, Suffolk City, Virginia Beach City, Isle of Wight County, Southampton County

Program Name: Tidewater Regional Alternative Education Project

Implemented: 1993-94

Focus: The project is a consortium of six school divisions for 203 targeted students in grades 6-12. The program employs licensed staff who provide instruction in English, Math, Science and Social Studies. This instruction adheres to the Standards of Learning (SOL) as established by the Virginia Department of Education. It is augmented by an emphasis on social skills and behavioral counseling. Special education services for identified students are provided. The program works in a collaborative effort with parents, community services boards, juvenile and domestic relations courts, social services and police department.

Regional Study Group: #2

14. Northampton County Public Schools, Accomack County

Program Name: Project RENEW (Restoring Educational Needs and Experiences that Work)

Implemented: 1996-97

Focus: Located at two sites, the program accommodates 20 students in grades 6-12. It includes goal setting, conflict and peer mediation, parental involvement, decision-

making, counseling, and violence and safety education. The program enhances the students' employability and give them the opportunity to participate in business partnerships and job training. The goals are to transition students for re-entry into the school and entry into the world of work.

Regional Study Group: #2

15. Nottoway County Public Schools, Amelia County, Buckingham County, Charlotte County, Cumberland County, Lunenburg County, and Prince Edward County

Program Name: On the Right Track Regional Alternative Education Program

Implemented: 1996-97

Focus: The program, located at the Southside Skills Center in Nottoway, provides an alternative setting for 77 students ages 15 or older. Main objectives of the program are to increase opportunities for each student for academic success. It includes educational interventions, a variety of teaching methods, vocational training, conflict resolution, and team building.

Regional Study Group: #8

16. Petersburg City Public Schools, Dinwiddie County, Prince George County, Sussex County, Colonial Heights City, Hopewell City

Program Name: Bermuda Run Education Center Regional Alternative Program

Implemented: 1994-95

Focus: These school systems contracted with a private-sector company—Specialized Youth Services of Virginia, Inc.—to establish a regional alternative education program which provides opportunities for academic success and development of interaction skills. A “whole person” approach addresses behavioral, cognitive, emotional, physical, familial and social functioning of each pupil. Employment skills training is integrated into the program and job placement assistance is available for students of appropriate age and readiness level. The program accommodates 28 pupils, grades 6-12.

Regional Study Group: #1

17. Pittsylvania County Public Schools, Danville City

Program Name: Regional Alternative School

Implemented: 1994-95

Focus: This program accommodates 36 students and is located at Pittsylvania County Vocational School in Chattham, Virginia. Grades of the students range from 8-12. The program includes instruction in the following areas: academics, vocational training, pre-employment/work maturity skills, and social life skills. Students learn citizenship skills and how to be responsible. Community and parental involvement plays a strong role in the program.

Regional Study Group: #6

18. Powhatan County Public Schools, Goochland County, Louisa County

Program Name: PROJECT RETURN

Implemented: 1994-95

Focus: Existing alternative programs in the three school divisions have been expanded to teach expelled and suspended students. These programs serve 50 high-risk students in grades K-12. Each program offers a different instructional approach. One program offers intense differentiated instruction and evening trade program; the second offers an after-school program; and the third program provides home instruction or Saturday school. The outcome for all three programs is for students to re-enter the regular school program, obtain a GED, or certificate of completion from the Alternative Education Program.

Regional Study Group: #1

19. Prince William County Public Schools, Manassas City and Manassas Park City

Program Name: New Dominion Alternative School

Implemented: 1995-96

Focus: A community-based program serves 120 students in grades 6-12. It provides innovative instruction in an alternative format. Students receive individually prescribed instruction based on a needs assessment. In addition to addressing academic needs, the program also focuses on social skill development. The school encourages participation in community service through the Learn and Serve program. The middle school student's classes are modeled after the self-contained classroom with the emphasis on the core classes. The high school has three programs for the students as follows: (1) Carnegie credit program; (2) GED program for 16 year old students based on the state ISAEP guidelines; and (3) high school preparation program designed to bring students up to grade level. The involvement of family and community members continues to be an integral part of the program.

Regional Study Group: #4

20. Richmond City Public Schools, Hanover County, Henrico County

Program Name: Metro-Richmond Alternative Education Program

Implemented: 1994-95

Focus: The participating school divisions have established a regional alternative education program for 38 students in grades 6-12. The instructional staff and facility is located at St. Joseph's Villa, a local private educational agency in Richmond. The goals of the program are to remediate deficient academic skills, improve students' decision-making and social skills, improve progress in their education, and positively engage the student with the community.

Regional Study Group: #1

21. Roanoke City, Salem City

Program Name: Regional Alternative Plus Self Project

Implemented: 1993-94

Focus: The project focuses on the total student and includes the following components: curriculum content, teaching techniques, computer integration, counseling programs, parental participation, staff development, and evaluation. The major goal of the program is to reduce or eliminate new acts of misconduct following a 36-week program. Fifty high-risk youths, ages 13-18, are served in the program.

Regional Study Group: #6

22. Roanoke, Bedford Counties

Program Name: R.E. Cook Regional Alternative School

Implemented: 2000-01

Focus: The school considers the uniqueness of every student and provides an alternative setting for 40 students in grades 3-7 and 8-12. The regional program allows students who have difficulty maintaining appropriate behavior in a regular school setting to continue to earn credits for a high school diploma, to complete the GED testing program, or to gain work place skills. Staff utilizes individualized and small group instruction, technology, and community service projects to help students develop their skills. The program offers the services of a guidance counselor/student assistance program counselor to help the students with any school or home conflict. Staff is committed to helping the whole individual become the best that they can possibly be while in the program.

Regional Study Group: #6

23. Russell County Public Schools, Tazewell County

Program Name: Project Bridge

Implemented: 1995-96

Focus: The program serves 150 high-risk students in grades 6-12. The program provides a variety of teaching and learning methods to meet the needs of students. Students can earn credits toward a high school diploma or a GED certificate. School facilities are used except in instances when it is necessary to instruct them at home. The center offers three types of programs—day program, after-school program and Saturday school.

Regional Study Group: #7

24. Scott County Public Schools, Lee County

Program Name: Renaissance

Implemented: 1996-97

Focus: Located at two sites, the program accommodates 53 students in an-after school program in Lee County and 30 students in the day program in Scott County. Serving high-risk pupils in grades 7-12, students are offered a combination of

academic activities and vocational training. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed for each student upon his or her entrance into the program. Computer-assisted instruction augments both the academic and vocational components of the program. The program involves parents and community agencies.

Regional Study Group: #7

25. Stafford County Public Schools, Caroline County, King George County, Spotsylvania County, Fredericksburg City

Program Name: Regional Alternative Education Program

Implemented: 1994-95

Focus: The school divisions in Planning District 16 have created a regional program at an off-school site. Suspended and expelled students are offered educational services during the school day. A counseling component is an important part of the program which includes community outreach and involvement. The program serves 150 students in grades 8-12.

Regional Study Group: #3

26. Staunton City Public Schools, Harrisonburg and Waynesboro Cities, and Augusta County

Program Name: Shenandoah Valley Regional Program Alternative Education Project—Genesis Alternative School

Implemented: 1996-97

Focus: The project offers a regional off-site alternative program for 93 students in grades 6-12. The program helps students develop positive attitudes for academic and work success, to improve achievement and attendance, to reduce the incidence of school board policy violations, and to empower students with skills to manage conflict in acceptable ways.

Regional Study Group: #5

27. Westmoreland County Public Schools, Northumberland County, Richmond County, Town of Colonial Beach

Program Name: Northern Neck Regional Alternative Education Program

Implemented: 1996-97

Focus: The program is designed for 36 students in grades 6-12 and establishes options for students who no longer have access to school. An accelerated, individualized instructional program, offering a small pupil teacher ratio, is a key element of the program which is housed at the Northern Neck Regional Vocational Center. Goals include preparing students to return to the traditional schools setting; promoting the development of self-esteem; and involving family in the life of the student.

Regional Study Group: #3

28. Wise County Public Schools, Dickenson County, Norton City

Program Name: Regional Learning Academy

Implemented: 1996-97

Focus: The program provides effective intervention for violent and disruptive youth. It is a personalized education program that is responsive to the needs of students. Students participate in one or more of the following: indoor/outdoor skills adventure program; electronic/interactive program; a self-contained highly structured learning environment; an enriched education option for students demonstrating personal, social, and academic growth; and a GED program. Approximately 70 students in grades 7-12 participate in the program.

Regional Study Group: #7

29. Wythe County Public Schools, Bland County

Program Name: Regional Alternative Program

Implemented: 1995-96

Focus: An off campus alternative education program was established in partnership with the Virginia Highlands Children's Home. A low teacher pupil ratio, diploma alternatives, and a high expectation academic program with a strong vocational component characterize the non-traditional school setting. The program accommodates 20 students in grades 8-12.

Regional Study Group: #7

APPENDIX B

The Survey Instrument:
Staff Development Program Assessment Survey

Variables Associated With the Quality of Staff Development in Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Centers
(Response time: About 15 minutes)

Please read each sentence carefully and circle your response.

SD = Strongly Disagree
D = Disagree
A = Agree
SA = Strongly Agree

PLEASE DO NOT OMIT ANY ITEM

My center's inservice training . . .

1. Supports the idea that all students can learn.	SD D A SA
2. Helps me to be creative in my work.	SD D A SA
3. Helps me to develop new ways of teaching students to be successful.	SD D A SA
4. Keeps me engaged in learning.	SD D A SA
5. Allows me to maintain my interest in professional growth.	SD D A SA
6. Is generally offered during the workday.	SD D A SA
7. Includes time to exchange ideas with my fellow educators.	SD D A SA
8. Includes time to engage in the learning process with colleagues.	SD D A SA
9. Includes time to acquire new skills.	SD D A SA
10. Includes time to reflect on my professional development.	SD D A SA

My center's inservice training is designed . . .

11. Cooperatively with all participants.	SD D A SA
12. With an assessment of participants' needs.	SD D A SA
13. With clear goals.	SD D A SA
14. With strategies for achieving the goals.	SD D A SA
15. With strategies for reviewing the achieved goals.	SD D A SA

During the evaluation of my center's inservice training

16. I am asked to assess the quality of inservice training.	SD D A SA
17. I am able to assess the data collected from participants.	SD D A SA

18. I am able to make decisions about improving my center's programs.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

19. I am asked to rate information on the strategies of staff development.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

20. I am asked to rate information on the outcomes of the staff development.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

During the inservice training at my center . . .

21. I am provided needed supporting documents.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

22. I have access to all necessary information.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

23. I have the opportunity to use current computer equipment.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

24. I have the opportunity to use current software information.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

25. I have the opportunity to effectively use audio-visual equipment.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

During inservice training at my center, I am able to . . .

26. Review the quality of various training methods.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

27. Choose quality methods of training.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

28. Observe the professional excellence of other educators.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

29. Model a high degree of technical skills.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

30. Simulate the special characteristics of best practices.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

My center's financial resources . . .

31. Allow me to travel to staff development activities.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

32. Help me to pay the registration costs for professional workshops.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

33. Reimburse me for tuition costs.	SD D A SA
-------------------------------------	-----------

34. Help me to pay for the copier costs for staff development.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

35. Allow me to purchase instructional materials.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

The subject matter of staff development at my center is related to . . .

36. My professional responsibilities in assisting all students.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

37. Best practices in individualized instruction.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

38. Best practices in hands-on instruction.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

39. Best practices in flexible scheduling	SD D ASA
---	----------

40. Best practices in small class size.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

41. Best practices in conflict resolution.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

42. Best practices in computer assisted instruction.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

43. Valid research in alternative education.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

44. Issues in my job.	SD D A SA
-----------------------	-----------

45. My professional interests in assisting all students in alternative settings.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

Because of the inservice training at my center . . .

46. I am able to renew my educational license.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

47. I receive praise for helping my colleagues.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

48. I have a sense of accomplishment.	SD D A SA
---------------------------------------	-----------

49. I receive a certificate of completion at the end of course work.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

50. I receive praise for doing my job well.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

The inservice training at my center is based on . . .

51. My interests.	SD D A SA
-------------------	-----------

52. Realistic life situations.	SD D A SA
--------------------------------	-----------

53. The use of personal experiences of participants in solving problems.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

54. Communication with my colleagues	SD D A SA
--------------------------------------	-----------

55. The desire to learn at my own pace.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

My center's leadership . . .

56. Continually strives to improve staff development for center personnel.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

57. Inspires me to participate in staff development activities.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

58. Praises me for my participation in staff development.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

59. Participates in the staff development activities.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

60. Permits me to select staff development activities that meet my needs.	SD D A SA
---	-----------

As a result of the inservice training at my center, I am able to . . .

61. Use my acquired knowledge in my job.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

62. Solve job-related problems.	SD D A SA
---------------------------------	-----------

63. Use the acquired skills in my job.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

64. Work more effectively with colleagues in my job.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

65. Convey higher expectations for accountability in my job.	SD D A SA
--	-----------

Staff development activities generally . . .

- 66. Improve my skills. SD D A SA
- 67. Contribute little to my professional growth. SD D A SA
- 68. Stimulate my thinking. SD D A SA
- 69. Have little value for me. SD D A SA
- 70. Allow me to critically reflect on my educational beliefs. SD D A SA

Demographic Data

The following questions about yourself will help interpret the results.

- 71. My age at my last birthday was _____ years.
- 72. My gender is ____ male, ____ female.
- 73. My current position at the regional center is _____ teacher, _____ counselor, _____ administrative coordinator.
- 74. My total years of educational experience at the end of the 2001-02 school year _____.

My regional center . . .

- 75. Is located in Superintendent’s Regional Study Group number (circle one):
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
- 76. Has participated in the state’s regional alternative education program for the following number of years (circle one):
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 77. Serves the following grades (circle all that apply)
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
- 78. Employs the following number of employees:
_____ administrative coordinator
_____ teachers
_____ counselors
- 79. Employs the following number of certified teachers:
_____ general education, _____ special education
- 80. Served a total number of _____ students for the school year 2001-02.
- 81. Served a total number of _____ special education students for the school year 2001-02.

- 82. Had a total budget for staff development in the school year 2001-02 of: \$ _____
 - 83. Is supported by school divisions who pool their financial resources for staff development (circle one): Yes No
 - 84. Has a mission to address these goals (check all that apply): _____ academic standards
_____ parent involvement
_____ quality of staff development
_____ discipline
 - 85. Focuses on the quality of staff development in these areas: _____ technology
_____ conflict resolution
_____ classroom management
_____ violence prevention
_____ special education services
_____ other: _____
 - 86. Focuses on academic standards to improve student achievement by (check all that apply):
_____ returning students to sending school to graduate.
_____ having students earn a high school diploma from sending school without returning to sending school.
_____ having students earn a GED.
_____ preparing students to take the GED test.
_____ having students earn an alternative education diploma.
_____ receiving remedial instruction.
_____ reducing student drop-out rate.
_____ securing student employment or work-study before graduating.
- Thank you for responding. Please return to . . .
James Parker
664 Broadway Lane
Hillsville, VA 24343
- Phone (h) (276) 728-3823
Phone (w) (276) 728-2382/4211
(fax) (276) 728-4089
(e-mail) jparker@ccpsd.k12.va.us

**Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and
State University
Blacksburg, Virginia**

Dear Colleague:

All of us participate in staff development, and we are often unhappy with what we receive. Much improvement is needed. This survey provides you with an opportunity to share your views on making staff development in Regional Alternative Education Centers in Virginia more effective.

All information you share is confidential. The number that appears on the survey is for monitoring returns.

A stamped envelope is enclosed for returning your responses. Your participation is vital to the study. It would be helpful if you would return the survey within a week of receiving it.

Thank you in advance for sharing your time and perceptions with us.

Appreciatively,

James L. Parker
Doctoral Candidate

David J. Parks
Professor

APPENDIX C

Statistics for the Principal Components Analysis of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey

Table C1

Correlation Coefficients Among the Measures of Quality of Staff Development

Scale	LEARNENV	TIMELRN	PLAN	EVAL	MATS	STDEVTEC	FUNDING	CONTENT	REWARDS	ADLRNPR	TRANSFER
LEARNENV	1.00	.81	.84	.72	.76	.63	.71	.72	.61	.66	.74
TIMELRN		1.00	.82	.72	.69	.69	.68	.74	.67	.70	.73
PLAN			1.00	.79	.75	.77	.72	.74	.67	.72	.74
EVAL				1.00	.73	.77	.77	.71	.70	.72	.72
MATS					1.00	.80	.83	.74	.74	.75	.71
STDEVTEC						1.00	.75	.85	.81	.79	.74
FUNDING							1.00	.77	.76	.73	.65
CONTENT								1.00	.80	.86	.83
REWARDS									1.00	.76	.76
ADLRNPR										1.00	.82
TRANSFER											1.00

Note:

LEARNENV = Adequacy of the learning environment

TIMELRN = Adequacy of the time for learning

PLAN = Quality of the planning for staff development

EVAL = Level of the participation in the evaluation of staff development

MATS = Adequacy of materials and equipment

STDEVTEC = Quality of staff development techniques

FUNDING = Adequacy of funding

CONTENT = Relevance of the content

REWARDS = Rewards for participation

ADLRNPR = Use of adult learning principles

TRANSFER = Transfer of learning from staff development to the job.

Table C2

Total Variance in the Scales Explained by the Components

Component	Initial eigenvalues			Extraction sums of squared loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.43	76.67	76.67	8.43	76.67	76.67
2	.63	5.74	82.40			
3	.46	4.15	86.56			
4	.31	2.81	89.37			
5	.25	2.30	91.67			
6	.24	2.16	93.82			
7	.22	1.97	95.80			
8	.16	1.49	97.28			
9	.14	1.23	98.51			
10	.10	.95	99.46			
11	.06	.55	100.00			

Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis.

Table C3

Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
LEARNENV	1.00	.72
TIMELRN	1.00	.73
PLAN	1.00	.79
EVAL	1.00	.75
MATS	1.00	.78
STDEVTEC	1.00	.80
FUNDING	1.00	.75
CONTENT	1.00	.83
REWARDS	1.00	.74
ADLRNPR	1.00	.78
TRANSFER	1.00	.76

Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis.

Table C4

Component Matrix^a

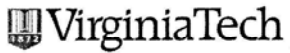
	Component
	1
LEARNENV	.85
TIMELRN	.85
PLAN	.89
EVAL	.87
MATS	.88
STDEVTEC	.89
FUNDING	.87
CONTENT	.91
REWARDS	.86
ADLRNPR	.88
TRANSFER	.87

Extraction Method: Principal Components Analysis.

^a1 component extracted.

APPENDIX D

Approval of Research



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
1880 Pratt Drive (0497)
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-4991 Fax: 540/231-0959
E-mail: moored@vt.edu
www.irb.vt.edu
FWA00000572 (expires 7/20/07)
IRB # is IRB00000667.

DATE: February 14, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: David J. Parks
James Parker

FROM: David Moore

SUBJECT: **IRB Exempt Approval:** "Factors Related to the Quality of Staff Development in Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Centers - - Phase I Survey & Phase II Focus Group", IRB # 06-081

I have reviewed your request to the IRB for exemption for the above referenced project. I concur that the research falls within the exempt status. Approval is granted effective as of February 14, 2006.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

cc: File
Department Reviewer: Jan K. Nespor

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VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2120
RICHMOND 23216-2120

July 19, 2000

To Whom It May Concern:

James Parker, Coordinator of School Services and Attendance in the Carroll County Public Schools, plans to conduct a survey of the administrative coordinators, teachers, and counselors at the 30 regional alternative education centers in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The measurement tool to be used is called the Staff Development Self-Assessment Survey. In addition, a focus group is to be organized in one or more regional locations to discuss strategies for improving the quality of staff development in the centers.

I have spoken to Mr. Parker about this endeavor and shared with him that he needs to contact the center coordinators to conduct the survey and focus groups. This study will be beneficial for the participants and for his doctoral study.

Sincerely,

Diane L. Jay
Education Specialist, Alternative Education
Office of Compensatory Programs

APPENDIX E

Third Content Validity Questionnaire:
Staff Development Program Assessment Survey

FACTORS RELATED TO THE QUALITY OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN VIRGINIA'S REGIONAL ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CENTERS



Content Validation for Survey Instrument (James Parker)

This content validation instrument is designed to assist the researcher with the development of a survey instrument. This instrument will be used in a study that will investigate the variables affecting the quality of staff development in Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Centers. There are three main parts to this validation instrument.

- Part 1: Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development
- Part 2: Personal Characteristics of the Participants Affecting the Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development
- Part 3: Center Characteristics Affecting the Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development

Each part has different components, but the directions for each survey item are the same for all three parts of this instrument.

Part 1
Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development
(Directions and Definitions)

- I. Domains:** Using the definitions of the domains below, categorize each statement by circling the appropriate number in the column labeled “Domain.” There are eleven domains in Part I.

Domain 1: The Adequacy of the Learning Environment

The adequacy of the learning environment's climate in facilitating teacher creativity, the development of new ways of teaching and learning, and the interest in professional growth of participants.

Domain 2: The Adequacy of Time for Learning

The adequacy of time provided for participants to engage in the learning process, to exchange ideas, to acquire new skills, and to reflect on professional development.

Domain 3: The Quality of the Planning for Staff Development

The quality of the planning for the professional staff development in the regional center in setting clear goals, collaborating with participants, assessing participants' needs, developing strategies for achieving the goals, and developing strategies for reviewing the achievement of goals.

Domain 4: The Participation in the Evaluation of Staff Development Program

The quality of participation of center personnel in assessing the quality of inservice training and the data collected, rating information on outcomes and strategies, and making decisions about improving the center's programs.

Domain 5: The Adequacy of Materials and Equipment

The adequacy of information, documents and audiovisual materials, and computer equipment in the staff development training.

Domain 6: The Quality of the Staff Development Techniques

The quality of observational, modeling, and simulation methods used in the staff development training.

Domain 7: The Adequacy of Funding of Staff Development

The adequacy of financial resources used to plan and implement the staff development of the regional center.

Domain 8: The Relevance of the Content of the Staff Development

The relevance of the subject matter of the staff development to professional responsibilities, best practices, valid research, job issues, and professional interests.

Domain 9: The Rewards for Participation in Staff Development

The extent to which participants are able to renew their licenses, receive praise for helping colleagues, receive certificates of completion, receive praise for job well done, and feel a sense of accomplishment.

Domain 10: The Use of Adult Learning Principles in Staff Development

The extent that the staff development is based on the interests of participants, real-life situations, use of personal experiences in solving problems, communication with colleagues, and self-pacing of learning.

Domain 11: The Transfer of Learning from Staff Development to Work

The extent to which participants are able to use acquired skills and knowledge on the job for the solution of job-related problems, accountability, and working with colleagues.

II. Association Rating: Indicate how strongly you feel each item is associated with the domain in which you categorized it. Circle the appropriate number in the column labeled "Association" using the following scale:

1=Very Weak 2=Weak 3=Strong 4=Very Strong

III. Clarity Rating: In the column labeled "Clarity," indicate how clear you think each item is by circling the appropriate number using the following scale:

1=Not Clear 2=Somewhat Clear 3=Clear

Part 2
Personal Characteristics of the Participants affecting
the Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development
(Directions and Definitions)

I. Domains: Using the definitions of the domains below, categorize each statement by circling the appropriate number in the column labeled "Domain."

Domain 1: Age

Age at last birthday

Domain 2: Gender

Respondent was male or female

Domain 3: Current Position

Current position of the respondent at the regional center (teacher, counselor, administrative coordinator).

Domain 4: Attitude Toward Staff Development

Respondents' feelings about staff development generally.

II. Association Rating: Indicate how strongly you feel each item is associated with the domain in which you categorized it. Circle the appropriate number in the column labeled "Association" using the following scale:

1=Very Weak

2=Weak

3=Strong

4=Very Strong

III. Clarity Rating: In the column labeled "Clarity," indicate how clear you think each item is by circling the appropriate number using the following scale:

1=Not Clear

2=Somewhat Clear

3=Clear

Part 3
Center Characteristics affecting
the Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development
(Directions and Definitions)

- I. Domains:** Using the definitions of the domains below, categorize each statement by circling the appropriate number in the column labeled "Domain."

Domain 1: Location

Geographic location of the regional center as indicated by the Superintendent's Regional Study Group. There are eight in Virginia.

Domain 2: Age of Center

The number of years the center has participated in the state's regional alternative education program.

Domain 3: Grades Served

The grades served in the regional center.

Domain 4: Size of Staff Employed

The number of staff employed at the regional center--teachers, counselors, and administrative coordinators.

Domain 5: Size of Population Served

Total student head count for the year 2000-2001.

Domain 6: Budget for Staff Development

Total staff development budget for the year 2000-2001

Domain 7: Leadership

The perception of participants of the quality of leadership in the regional centers in searching for opportunities, inspiring shared ideas, collaborating, setting the example, and exhibiting skills.

- II. Association Rating:** Indicate how strongly you feel each item is associated with the domain in which you categorized it. Circle the appropriate number in the column labeled "Association" using the following scale:

1=Very Weak 2=Weak 3=Strong 4=Very Strong

- III. Clarity Rating:** In the column labeled "Clarity," indicate how clear you think each item is by circling the appropriate number using the following scale:

1=Not Clear 2=Somewhat Clear 3=Clear

Part 1: Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development in the Regional Centers

Domains: 1 = Learning Environment, 2 = Time for Learning, 3 = Planning for Staff Development, 4 = Evaluation of Staff Development, 5 = Materials, 6 = Techniques, 7 = Funding, 8 = Content, 9 = Rewards for Participation, 10 = Application of Adult Learning Principles, 11 = Transfer of Learning

Association Ratings: 1 = Very Weak, 2 = Weak, 3 = Strong, 4 = Very Strong

Clarity Ratings: 1 = Not Clear, 2 = Somewhat Clear, 3 = Clear

Item	Domain	Association	Clarity
On the survey, participants will be asked to think about how they will rate the quality of staff development at their regional centers. Circle your response.			
1. As a result of the inservice training at the center, I am able to use my acquired knowledge in my job.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
2. During inservice training, I have the opportunity to model learned skills.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
3. My center's inservice training climate reflects the idea that all participants can learn.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
4. The subject matter of staff development is related to my professional interests.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
5. My center's inservice training includes time to exchange ideas with my fellow educators.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
6. My center's inservice training is designed cooperatively with all participants.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
7. My center's financial resources allow me to travel to staff development activities.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
8. During inservice training, I am able to observe the professional excellence of other educators.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
9. Because of the inservice training at the center, I am able to renew my educational license.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
10. During the evaluation of my center's inservice training, I am asked to assess the quality of inservice training.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
11. The inservice training at my center is based on my interests.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
12. During the inservice training at my center, I am provided needed supporting documents.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
13. During the evaluation of my center's inservice training, I am asked to rate information on the outcomes of the staff development.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3

Part 1: Continued

Domains: 1 = Learning Environment, 2 = Time for Learning, 3 = Planning for Staff Development, 4 = Evaluation of Staff Development, 5 = Materials, 6 = Techniques, 7 = Funding, 8 = Content, 9 = Rewards for Participation, 10 = Application of Adult Learning Principles, 11 = Transfer of Learning

Association Ratings: 1 = Very Weak, 2 = Weak, 3 = Strong, 4 = Very Strong

Clarity Ratings: 1 = Not Clear, 2 = Somewhat Clear, 3 = Clear

Item	Domain	Association	Clarity
On the actual survey, participants will be asked to think about how they will rate the quality of staff development at their regional centers. Circle your response.			
14. My center's inservice training climate helps me to be creative in my work.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
15. As a result of the inservice training at the center, I am able to convey higher expectations for accountability in my job.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
16. My center's financial resources help me to pay the registration costs for professional workshops.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
17. My center's inservice training is generally offered during the workday.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
18. The subject matter of staff development is related to my professional responsibilities.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
19. During the inservice training at my center, I have access to all necessary information.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
20. Because of the inservice training at the center, I receive praise for helping my colleagues.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
21. My center's financial resources allow me to purchase instructional materials.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
22. My center's inservice training is designed with an assessment of participants' needs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
23. The inservice training at the center is based on realistic life situations.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
24. My center's inservice training climate helps me to develop new ways of teaching.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
25. Because of the inservice training at the center, I have a sense of accomplishment.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
26. As a result of the inservice training at the center, I am able to solve job-related problems.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3

Part 1: Continued

Domains: 1 = Learning Environment, 2 = Time for Learning, 3 = Planning for Staff Development, 4 = Evaluation of Staff Development, 5 = Materials, 6 = Techniques, 7 = Funding, 8 = Content, 9 = Rewards for Participation, 10 = Application of Adult Learning Principles, 11 = Transfer of Learning

Association Ratings: 1 = Very Weak, 2 = Weak, 3 = Strong, 4 = Very Strong

Clarity Ratings: 1 = Not Clear, 2 = Somewhat Clear, 3 = Clear

Item	Domain	Association	Clarity
On the actual survey, participants will be asked to think about how they will rate the quality of staff development at their regional centers. Circle your response.			
27. During inservice training, I am able to choose quality methods of training.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
28. The subject matter of staff development is related to best practices.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
29. My center's inservice training includes time to engage in the learning process with my colleagues.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
30. The inservice training at the center is based on the use of personal experiences of participants in solving problems.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
31. My center's inservice training is designed with clear goals.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
32. During the evaluation of my center's inservice training, I am able to assess the data collected from participants.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
33. During the inservice at my center, I have the opportunity to use current computer equipment.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
34. As a result of the inservice training at the center, I am able to use the acquired skills in my job.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
35. During inservice training, I am able to simulate the special characteristics of best practices.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
36. My center's financial resources reimburse me for tuition costs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
37. My center's inservice training climate keeps me engaged in learning.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
38. The subject matter of staff development is related to valid research.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
39. My center's inservice training includes time to acquire new skills.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3

Part 1: Continued

Domains: 1 = Learning Environment, 2 = Time for Learning, 3 = Planning for Staff Development, 4 = Evaluation of Staff Development, 5 = Materials, 6 = Techniques, 7 = Funding, 8 = Content, 9 = Rewards for Participation, 10 = Application of Adult Learning Principles, 11 = Transfer of Learning

Association Ratings: 1 = Very Weak, 2 = Weak, 3 = Strong, 4 = Very Strong

Clarity Ratings: 1 = Not Clear, 2 = Somewhat Clear, 3 = Clear

Item	Domain	Association	Clarity
On the actual survey, participants will be asked to think about how they will rate the quality of staff development at their regional centers. Circle your response.			
40. During the evaluation of my center's inservice training, I am able to make decisions about improving my center's programs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
41. Because of the inservice training at the center, I receive a certificate of completion at the end of course work.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
42. My center's inservice training is designed with strategies for achieving the goals.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
43. The inservice training at the center is based on communication with my colleagues.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
44. During the inservice training at my center, I have the opportunity to use current software information.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
45. My center's financial resources help me to pay the copier costs for staff development.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
46. My center's inservice training climate allows me to maintain my interest in professional growth.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
47. During the inservice training at my center, I have the opportunity to effectively use audio-visual equipment.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
48. Because of the inservice training at the center, I receive praise for doing my job well.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
49. My center's inservice training includes time to reflect on my professional development.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
50. The inservice training at the center is based on the desire to learn at my own pace.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
51. During the inservice training, I am able to review the quality of various training methods based on research.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3

Part 1: Continued

Domains: 1 = Learning Environment, 2 = Time for Learning, 3 = Planning for Staff Development, 4 = Evaluation of Staff Development, 5 = Materials, 6 = Techniques, 7 = Funding, 8 = Content, 9 = Rewards for Participation, 10 = Application of Adult Learning Principles, 11 = Transfer of Learning

Association Ratings: 1 = Very Weak, 2 = Weak, 3 = Strong, 4 = Very Strong

Clarity Ratings: 1 = Not Clear, 2 = Somewhat Clear, 3 = Clear

Item	Domain	Association	Clarity
On the actual survey, participants will be asked to think about how they will rate the quality of staff development at their regional centers. Circle your response.			
52. As a result of the inservice training at the center, I am able to work more effectively with colleagues in my job.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
53. The subject matter of staff development is related to issues in my job.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
54. My center's inservice training is designed with strategies for reviewing the achieved goals.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
55. During the evaluation of my center's inservice training, I am asked to rate information on the strategies of staff development.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	1 2 3 4	1 2 3

Part 2: Personal Characteristics of the Participants Affecting the Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development

Domain s: 1 =Age, 2 = Gender, 3 = Position, 4 = Attitudes toward staff development

Association Ratings: 1 = Very Weak, 2 = Weak, 3 = Strong, 4 = Very Strong

Clarity Ratings: 1 = Not Clear, 2 = Somewhat Clear, 3 = Clear

Item	Domain	Association	Clarity
On the actual survey, participants will be asked to respond to the following personal variables: Circle your response.			
1. My current position at the regional center is <u> </u> teacher, <u> </u> counselor, <u> </u> administrative coordinator.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
2. Staff development activities generally contribute little to my professional growth.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
3. My age at my last birthday was <u> </u> years.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
4. Staff development activities generally improve my skills.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
5. My gender is <u> </u> male, <u> </u> female.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
6. Staff development activities generally stimulate my thinking.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
7. Staff development activities generally have little value for me.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
8. Staff development activities generally allow me to critically reflect about my educational beliefs.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3

Part 3: Center Characteristics Affecting the Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development

Domain s: 1 = Location, 2 = Age of center, 3 = Grades served, 4 = Size of staff employed, 5 = Population served, 6 = Budget for staff development,
7 = Leadership

Association Ratings: 1 = Very Weak, 2 = Weak, 3 = Strong, 4 = Very Strong

Clarity Ratings: 1 = Not Clear, 2 = Somewhat Clear, 3 = Clear

Item	Association	Clarity
On the survey, participants will be asked to think about how they will rate the personal factors at their regional centers. Circle your response. My center's leadership . . .		
1.* Challenges me to search for opportunities.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
2.* Inspires me to share ideas in my job.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
3.* Allows me to collaborate with my colleagues.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
4.* Helps me to set the example.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
5.* Encourages me to exhibit my skills in my job.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3

Note: (*) These are items in the leadership domain.

Part 3: Center Characteristics Affecting the Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development

Domains: 1 = Location, 2 = Age of center, 3 = Grades served, 4 = Size of staff employed , 5 = Population served, 6 = Budget for staff development
7 = Leadership

Association Ratings: 1 = Very Weak, 2 = Weak, 3 = Strong, 4 = Very Strong

Clarity Ratings: 1 = Not Clear, 2 = Somewhat Clear, 3 = Clear

Item	Domain	Association	Clarity
On the actual survey, participants will be asked to think about how they will respond to the environmental factors at their regional centers. Circle your response.			
1. My regional center is located in Superintendent's Regional Study Group number. (circle one) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
2. My regional center served _____ students for the year 2000-01.	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
3. My regional center serves the following grades (circle all that apply): 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
4. My regional center had a total budget for staff development in 2000-01 of: _____	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
5. My regional center employs the following number of employees: _____ administrative coordinator, _____ counselors, _____ teachers.	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4	1 2 3
6. My regional center has participated in the state's regional alternative education program for the following number of years (circle one): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4	1 2 3

APPENDIX F

Data from the Third Content Validation of the
Staff Development Program Assessment Survey

Table F1

Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey: Classification of Items into Quality of Staff Development Domains by Experts (N=18)

Item	Expected domain	Domains											Total
		1 Learning environment	2 Time for learning	3 Planning	4 Evaluation	5 Materials	6 Techniques	7 Funding	8 Content	9 Rewards for participation	10 Use of Adult learning	11 Transfer of learning	
		n %	n %	n %	n %	n %	n %	n %	n %	n %	n %	n %	n
51	11											18 100.0	18
29	6						18 100.0						18
1	1	17 94.4									1 5.6		18
40	8								18 100.0				18
7	2		16 88.9	2 11.1									18
11	3			16 88.9							2 11.1		18
31	7							18 100.0					18
28	6		1 5.6				17 94.4						18
41	9									17 94.4		1 5.6	18
16	4			1 5.6	17 94.4								18
46	10								2 11.1		16 88.9		18
21	5					16 88.9					1 5.6	1 5.6	18
20	4				15 83.3				1 5.6			2 11.1	18
2	1	18 100.0											18
55	11			1 5.6				1 5.6				16 88.9	18
32	7							18 100.0					18
6	2		15 83.3	3 16.7									18
36	8								18 100.0				18
22	5				1 5.6	16 88.9	1 5.6						18
42	9									18 100.0			18
35	7							18 100.0					18
12	3			18 100.0									18
47	10										18 100.0		18
3	1	16 88.9									1 5.6	1 5.6	18
43	9			1 5.6						16 88.9	1 5.6		18
52	11										3 16.7	15 83.3	18
27	6			2 11.1	1 5.6		15 83.3						18
37	8								18 100.0				18
8	2		16 88.9								2 11.1		18
48	10										18 100.0		18

(table continues)

Table F1 (continued)

Domains																								
Item	Expected domain	1 Learning environment		2 Time for learning		3 Planning		4 Evaluation		5 Materials		6 Techniques		7 Funding		8 Content		9 Rewards for participation		10 Use of Adult learning		11 Transfer of learning		Total <i>n</i>
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%			
13	3					18	100.0																18	
17	4							18	100.0														18	
23	5									18	100												18	
53	11																	1	5.6	17	94.4		18	
30	6	1	5.6									15	83.3					1	5.6	1	5.6		18	
33	7													17	94.4			1	5.6				18	
4	1	16	88.9													1	5.6			1	5.6		18	
38	8															18	100.0						18	
9	2			18	100.0																		18	
18	4							18	100.0														18	
44	9																	18	100.0				18	
14	3					18	100.0																18	
49	10																			18	100.0		18	
24	5									18	100												18	
34	7													18	100.0								18	
5	1	16	88.9																	2	11.1		18	
25	5									18	100												18	
45	9																	18	100.0				18	
10	2	1	5.6	16	88.9													1	5.6				18	
50	10																	18	100.0				18	
26	6					2	11.1	1	5.6			15	83.3										18	
54	11					1	5.6					1	5.6							1	5.6	15	83.3	18
39	8															18	100.0						18	
15	3					18	100.0																18	
19	4							16	88.9							2	11.1						18	

Note: Items are in the content validation instrument in Appendix E.

Table F2
 Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey: Classification of
 Personal Demographic Items Within Domains (*N*=18)

Domains										
Item	Expected domain	1 Age		2 Gender		3 Position		4 Attitudes toward staff development		Total <i>n</i>
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
63	3					17	94.4	1	5.6	18
57	4							18	100.0	18
61	1	18	100.0							18
56	4					1	5.6	17	94.4	18
62	2			17	94.4	1	5.6			18
58	4					1	5.6	17	94.4	18
59	4							18	100.0	18
60	4					1	5.6	17	94.4	18

Note. Items are in the content validation instrument in Appendix E.

Table F3

Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey: Classification of Alternative Regional Education Center Demographic Items Within Domains (N=18)

Domains														
Item	Expected domain	1 Location		2 Age of center		3 Grades served		4 Size of staff employed		5 Size of student population served		6 Budget		Total <i>n</i>
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
64	1	18	100.0											18
68	5									18	100.0			18
66	3					16	88.9			1	5.6		1	5.6
69	6							1	5.6				17	94.1
67	4							18	100.0					18
65	2			18	100.0									18

Note. Items are in the content validation instrument in Appendix E.

Table F4

Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey: The Strength of Association of Items Within Domains (N=18)

Domains													
Item	Expected domain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total N
		Learning environment <i>n m sd</i>	Time for learning <i>n m sd</i>	Planning <i>n m sd</i>	Evaluation <i>n m sd</i>	Materials <i>n m sd</i>	Techniques <i>n m sd</i>	Funding <i>n m sd</i>	Content <i>n m sd</i>	Rewards for participation <i>n m sd</i>	Use of adult learning <i>n m sd</i>	Transfer of learning <i>n m sd</i>	
51	11											18 4.00 .00	18
29	6						18 3.94 .24						18
1	1	17 3.41 .58											18
40	8								18 3.89 .32				18
7	2		16 3.36 .38										18
11	3			16 3.43 .35									18
31	7							18 3.83 .38					18
28	6						17 3.36 .48						18
41	9									17 3.47 .56			18
16	4				17 3.57 .51								18
46	10										16 3.54 .21		18
21	5					16 3.36 .39							18
20	4				15 2.87 .56								18
2	1	18 3.89 .32											18
55	11											16 3.27 .45	18
32	7							18 3.94 .24					18
6	2		15 2.97 .52										18
36	8								18 3.89 .32				18
22	5					16 3.32 .42							18
42	9									18 3.61 .61			18
35	7							18 4.00 .00					18
12	3			18 3.94 .24									18
47	10										18 3.94 .24		18
3	1	16 3.41 .34											18
43	9									16 3.16 .45			18
52	11											15 3.01 .51	18
27	6						15 2.96 .42						18
37	8								18 3.89 .32				18
8	2		16 3.32 .42										18
48	10										18 3.94 .24		18

(table continues)

Table F4 (continued)

Domains													
Item	Expected domain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total
		Learning environment	Time for learning	Planning	Evaluation	Materials	Techniques	Funding	Content	Rewards for participation	Use of adult learning	Transfer of learning	
		<i>n m sd</i>	<i>n m sd</i>	<i>n m sd</i>	<i>n m sd</i>	<i>n m sd</i>	<i>n m sd</i>	<i>n m sd</i>	<i>n m sd</i>	<i>n m sd</i>	<i>n m sd</i>	<i>n m sd</i>	<i>N</i>
13	3			18 3.94 .24									18
17	4				18 3.56 .62								18
23	5					18 3.94 .24							18
53	11											17 3.67 .30	18
30	6						15 2.93 .53						18
33	7							17 3.67 .30					18
4	1	16 3.32 .51											18
38	8								18 3.94 .24				18
9	2		18 3.83 .38										18
18	4				18 3.44 .70								18
44	9									18 3.89 .32			18
14	3			18 3.89 .32									18
49	10										18 3.94 .24		18
24	5					18 3.67 .59							18
34	7							18 3.94 .24					18
5	1	16 3.40 .34											18
25	5					18 4.00 .00							18
45	9									18 3.89 .32			18
10	2		16 3.41 .34										18
50	10										18 3.94 .24		18
26	6						15 3.10 .37						18
54	11											15 2.96 .53	18
39	8								18 3.94 .24				18
15	3			18 3.94 .24									18
19	4				16 3.31 .42								18

Note. The scale was 1=very weak, 2=weak, 3=strong, 4=very strong. Items are in the content validation instrument in Appendix E.

Table F5
 Third Content Validation of the Staff Development Program Assessment
 Survey: The Clarity of Items ($N=18$)

Item ^a	Clarity		
	<i>n</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
51	18	3.00	.00
29	18	2.94	.24
1	18	2.78	.43
40	18	3.00	.00
7	18	2.94	.24
11	18	3.00	.00
31	18	3.00	.00
28	18	2.78	.43
41	18	2.78	.55
16	18	2.89	.32
46	18	3.00	.00
21	18	2.89	.32
20	18	2.72	.46
2	18	2.89	.32
55	18	2.72	.46
32	18	3.00	.00
6	18	2.83	.38
36	18	3.00	.00
22	18	2.78	.43
42	18	2.89	.32
35	18	3.00	.00
12	18	3.00	.00
47	18	3.00	.00
3	18	3.00	.00
43	18	2.89	.32
52	18	2.94	.24
27	18	2.83	.38
37	18	3.00	.00
8	18	2.83	.38
48	18	3.00	.00
13	18	3.00	.00
17	18	2.89	.32
23	18	3.00	.00
53	18	2.94	.24
30	18	2.83	.38
33	18	2.94	.24
4	18	2.83	.38
38	18	3.00	.00
9	18	3.00	.00
18	18	2.78	.43
44	18	3.00	.00
14	18	3.00	.00
49	18	3.00	.00
24	18	3.00	.00
34	18	3.00	.00

(table continues)

Table F5 (continued)

Item ^a	Clarity		
	<i>n</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
5	18	2.94	.24
25	18	3.00	.00
45	18	3.00	.00
10	18	3.00	.00
50	18	3.00	.00
26	18	2.72	.46
54	18	2.78	.43
39	18	3.00	.00
15	18	3.00	.00
19	18	2.89	.32
63	18	3.00	.00
57	18	2.89	.32
61	18	3.00	.00
56	18	2.94	.24
62	18	3.00	.00
58	18	2.83	.51
59	18	2.89	.32
60	18	2.89	.47
*1	18	3.00	.00
*2	18	3.00	.00
*3	18	3.00	.00
*4	18	2.98	.32
*5	18	3.00	.00
64	18	2.83	.51
68	18	2.94	.24
66	18	2.89	.47
69	18	2.88	.49
67	18	2.94	.24
65	18	2.61	.70

Note. The scale was 1=not clear, 2=somewhat clear, 3=clear.

^a Items are in the content validation instrument in Appendix E.

* These are the items in the leadership domain.

APPENDIX G

Location of Regional Alternative Education Centers by
State Superintendent's Regional Study Group and by
Designation—Urban, Suburban, and Rural

Table G1

Location of Regional Alternative Education Centers by State Superintendent's Regional Study Group and by Designation—Urban, Suburban, and Rural

Regional study group	Regional centers	Location		
		Urban	Suburban	Rural
1	Petersburg City	X		
	Powhatan County			X
	Richmond City	X		
2	Newport News City	X		
	Norfolk City	X		
	Northhampton County			X
3	King William County			X
	Stafford County		X	
	Westmoreland County			X
4	Fauquier County		X	
	Prince William County		X	
5	Fluvanna County			X
	Lynchburg City	X		
	Staunton City	X		
6	Henry County		X	
	Montgomery County		X	
	Pittsylvania County		X	
	Roanoke City	X		
	Roanoke County		X	
7	Bristol City	X		
	Carroll County			X
	Russell County			X
	Wise County			X
	Wythe County			X
8	Brunswick County			X
	Nottoway County			X

Note: The researcher classified the location of every regional center based on the regional centers' student demographic data where greater than 50 percent of the students reside.

APPENDIX H

Descriptive Statistics for the Ratings of the Quality of Staff Development by Domain and Item

Table H1

Means, Standard Deviations, Minimums, and Maximums for Domains and Items on the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey (**Domains and items within domains are ordered from lowest to highest quality**)

Quality domains and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Domain Ranked 1: Level of participation by center personnel in the evaluation of staff development During the evaluation of my center's inservice training . . .	2.78	.85	2.65	2.94
17. I am able to assess the data collected from participants.	2.65	.84	2.65	2.94
20. I am asked to rate information on the outcomes of the staff development.	2.73	.86	2.65	2.94
16. I am asked to assess the quality of inservice training.	2.79	.85	2.65	2.94
19. I am asked to rate information on the strategies of staff development.	2.79	.85	2.65	2.94
18. I am able to make decisions about improving my center's programs.	2.94	.87	2.65	2.94
Domain Ranked 2: Use of adult learning principles in staff development The inservice training at my center is based on . . .	2.83	.74	2.64	3.00
51. My interests.	2.64	.77	2.64	3.00
55. The desire to learn at my own pace.	2.73	.75	2.64	3.00
52. Realistic life situations.	2.83	.76	2.64	3.00
53. The use of personal experiences of participants in solving problems.	2.94	.73	2.64	3.00
54. Communication with my colleagues.	3.00	.71	2.64	3.00
Domain Ranked 3: Adequacy of funding for staff development My center's financial resources . . .	2.85	.86	2.76	2.95
31. Allow me to travel to staff development activities.	2.76	.88	2.76	2.95
32. Help me to pay the registration costs for professional workshops.	2.81	.88	2.76	2.95
33. Reimburse me for tuition costs.	2.83	.85	2.76	2.95
34. Help me to pay for the copier costs for staff development.	2.92	.84	2.76	2.95
35. Allow me to purchase instructional materials.	2.95	.83	2.76	2.95

(table continues)

Table H1 (continued)

Quality domains and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Domain Ranked 4: Quality of staff development techniques	2.87	.74	2.77	2.97
During inservice training at my center, I am able to				
...				
29. Model a high degree of technical skills.	2.77	.78	2.77	2.97
26. Review the quality of various training methods.	2.83	.74	2.77	2.97
27. Choose quality methods of training.	2.85	.75	2.77	2.97
28. Observe the professional excellence of other educators.	2.94	.70	2.77	2.97
30. Simulate the special characteristics of best practices.	2.97	.71	2.77	2.97
Domain Ranked 5: Quality of the planning for staff development	2.89	.83	2.75	3.02
My center's inservice training is designed ...				
11. Cooperatively with all participants.	2.75	.87	2.75	3.02
12. With an assessment of participants' needs.	2.78	.80	2.75	3.02
15. With strategies for reviewing the achieved goals.	2.90	.80	2.75	3.02
13. With clear goals.	2.99	.85	2.75	3.02
14. With strategies for achieving the goals.	3.02	.81	2.75	3.02
Domain Ranked 6: Adequacy of time for learning	2.91	.83	2.83	2.94
My center's inservice training ...				
10. Includes time to reflect on my professional development.	2.83	.82	2.83	2.94
6. Is generally offered during the workday.	2.92	.90	2.83	2.94
9. Includes time to acquire new skills.	2.93	.79	2.83	2.94
8. Includes time to engage in the learning process with colleagues.	2.93	.80	2.83	2.94
7. Includes time to exchange ideas with my fellow educators.	2.94	.84	2.83	2.94

(table continues)

Table H1 (continued)

Quality domains and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Domain Ranked 7: Relevance of the content of staff development	2.92	.80	2.78	3.14
The subject matter of staff development at my center is related to ...				
42. Best practices in computer assisted instruction.	2.78	.88	2.78	3.14
43. Valid research in alternative education.	2.79	.88	2.78	3.14
39. Best practices in flexible scheduling.	2.83	.83	2.78	3.14
38. Best practices in hands-on instruction.	2.85	.84	2.78	3.14
44. Issues in my job.	2.91	.80	2.78	3.14
41. Best practices in conflict resolution.	2.93	.84	2.78	3.14
45. My professional interests in assisting all students in alternative settings.	2.96	.79	2.78	3.14
37. Best practices in individualized instruction.	3.01	.71	2.78	3.14
40. Best practices in small class size.	3.03	.78	2.78	3.14
36. My professional responsibilities in assisting all students.	3.14	.67	2.78	3.14
Domain Ranked 8: Rewards for participation in staff development	2.93	.79	2.86	3.05
Because of the inservice training at my center ...				
49. I receive a certificate of completion at the end of course work.	2.86	.78	2.86	3.05
47. I receive praise for helping my colleagues.	2.87	.76	2.86	3.05
46. I am able to renew my educational license.	2.91	.81	2.86	3.05
50. I receive praise for doing my job well.	2.94	.79	2.86	3.05
48. I have a sense of accomplishment.	3.05	.79	2.86	3.05

(table continues)

Table H1 (continued)

Quality domains and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Domain Ranked 9: Adequacy of materials and equipment	3.06	.80	3.00	3.14
During the inservice training at my center...				
21. I am provided needed supporting documents.	3.00	.77	3.00	3.14
22. I have access to all necessary information.	3.00	.80	3.00	3.14
24. I have the opportunity to use current software information.	3.06	.81	3.00	3.14
25. I have the opportunity to effectively use audio-visual equipment.	3.08	.82	3.00	3.14
23. I have the opportunity to use current computer equipment.	3.14	.81	3.00	3.14
Domain Ranked 10: Transfer of learning from staff development to the job.	3.08	.70	3.01	3.13
As a result of the inservice training at my center, I am able to ...				
65. Convey higher expectations for accountability in my job.	3.01	.74	3.01	3.13
64. Work more effectively with colleagues in my job.	3.07	.69	3.01	3.13
63. Use the acquired skills in my job.	3.10	.68	3.01	3.13
62. Solve job-related problems.	3.11	.71	3.01	3.13
61. Use my acquired knowledge in my job.	3.13	.69	3.01	3.13
Domain Ranked 11: Adequacy of the learning environment	3.19	.81	3.07	3.44
My center's inservice training...				
3. Helps me to develop new ways of teaching students to be successful.	3.07	.80	3.07	3.44
5. Allows me to maintain my interest in professional growth.	3.08	.83	3.07	3.44
4. Keeps me engaged in learning.	3.16	.77	3.07	3.44
2. Helps me to be creative in my work.	3.18	.81	3.07	3.44
1. Supports the idea that all students can learn.	3.44	.84	3.07	3.44

Note. The scale was 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree. Highlighted items were selected for use in the focus groups. Lowest rank = 1.

APPENDIX I

Agenda for Focus Group Meetings

Focus Group Procedures

I. Introduction

Purpose: To identify and prioritize strategies to improve the quality of staff development in Virginia's Regional Alternative Education Centers.

II. Selection of Regional Centers for the Focus Groups

A. Number of centers and focus groups: Three centers, one focus group at each center

B. Selection of focus group locations:

1. Selection process: One urban, one rural, and one suburban center were selected for participation in the focus groups. These provided the potential for a range of ideas for improvement of staff development to emerge. Once the regional centers were classified as urban, rural, and suburban, the names of the regional centers were randomly selected so that every center in each group had an equal probability of being included.
2. Sites: The three locations: Urban—Richmond City; Suburban—Prince William County; and Rural—Russell County.

III. Contacting the Center to Solicit Participation

A. Contact with the administrative coordinator: After the selection of the centers, the administrators were contacted by the researcher to request their initial approval to conduct a focus group.

B. Arrangement for the focus group: The administrative coordinator selected four members from the center who responded to the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey to participate in the center's focus group.

IV. Selection of Participants at Each Center

Participants: One administrative coordinator, one counselor, and two teachers were selected at the three centers.

V. Preparation of Participants for the Focus Group

Protocol explanation: Focus group procedures and summary data were handed to each participant at the regional centers. Participants were asked to review the data from the Staff Development Program Assessment Survey. They were asked to identify one or two strategies related to the items in each domain that received the lowest scores that they believe had the potential to improve staff development at the centers. During the focus group, they were asked to review and prioritize the strategies of all four participants. To safeguard privacy in the final report, no centers and names of participants were mentioned directly or indirectly through identifiers. The group recorder (the counselor) operated the tape recorder and wrote down information presented during the activity. Tape recordings of the activity were destroyed one year after the focus group meetings were completed. The moderator practiced the focus group procedure prior to the scheduled meetings. Thank you notes were sent to each participant after the focus group session.

VI. Timeline

During the spring of 2004 (date and time to be determined by the administrative coordinator at each center), three focus group sessions were conducted. The researcher coordinated dates and times with the three administrative coordinators. The sessions were held after work hours in April. The length of each focus group was 50 minutes.

VII. Conducting the Focus Group Sessions

- A. Letter to administrative coordinator and participants: The researcher mailed a cover letter to each administrative coordinator and a letter of introduction to each focus group participant.
- B. Leader of focus group: The researcher led the focus group sessions and welcomed all participants.
- C. Recorder of focus group: The counselor from the center's staff recorded the proceedings of the focus group.
- D. Room set up: The administrative coordinator located and set up the room for the focus group session. The room had a table encircled with five chairs, adequate lighting, and comfortable room temperature. The leader visited the room prior to the group meeting to make any necessary changes.
- E. Materials: The leader brought to the focus group the following items: flip chart, magic markers, copies of Staff Development Program Assessment Survey data, adhesive dots to mark individual priorities, tape recorder, and snacks to be served during the focus group session.
- F. Procedures: (30 to 50 minutes)
 - 1. Preliminary: (5 Minutes)
 - a. The leader reviewed the summary data of the eleven dependent variables with the participants and their lists of strategies from the lowest scored items in the eleven quality domains.
 - b. The participants sat quietly around the table with their lists of strategies until the clockwise round-robin sequence began.

2. Roundtable Gathering of Data: (10 to 15 Minutes)
 - a. In a clockwise round-robin fashion, each participant presented one strategy from his or her list. The leader wrote each strategy on the flip chart. Participants made additional comments for improvements as needed.
 - b. If a strategy was on the flip chart and the same strategy was on a participant's personal sheet, the strategy was marked off the individual's sheet. This procedure minimized the problem of duplication.
 - c. This roundtable continued until all strategies had been listed on the flip chart.
3. Roundtable Discussion of Data: (5 to 10 Minutes)
 - a. Participants were asked if any strategy needed to be clarified by the originator.
 - b. Additional strategies were solicited from the group.
 - c. All participants were free to expand or condense the strategies.
4. Prioritizing Strategies (5 to 10 Minutes)
 - a. Once the list of strategies had been collapsed as much as possible, participants were asked to pick their top five choices.
 - b. Each participant's selections were noted on the flip chart by the placement of adhesive dots next to the selected strategies.
 - c. The strategy with the greatest number of dots was first, the strategy with second greatest number of dots was second, etc. The number of dots determined the ranking

of the strategies as 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, with number 1 being the top strategy.

5. Discussing Strategies (5 to 10 Minutes)

The participants were asked to discuss the prioritized items and to share their thoughts on making staff development in the regional centers more effective.

6. Closing: The leader thanked the participants for their time and effort in participating in the focus group.

7. Data Analysis:

a. The notes and charts from the three focus groups were typed, and the three hours of tape recordings were transcribed.

b. The researcher used the Maykut and Morehouse (1994) process to classify the strategies. The procedure follows:

(1) Each prioritized strategy was compared to all other strategies for meaning.

(2) The strategies were categorized with similar strategies.

(3) If there were no similar categories, then a new category was established.

(4) Relationships among the final strategies were analyzed carefully to form reasonably constructed strategies.

VITA

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

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Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies—Educational Specialist
- 1975 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
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Master of Arts, Education in Administration and Supervision
- 1971 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
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PROFESSIONAL AND RELATED EXPERIENCES

Professional Experiences

- Social Studies Teacher (Virginia, Geography, World History I and II) 14 years
Administrative Staff (Coordinator of Student Attendance and Social Services
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Assistant Principal and Director of Sports 4 years

Related Experiences

- Phi Delta Kappa International Honor Society, 2003
Paul Harris Fellow Award, Rotary Club, 2000
Award of Excellence in Alternative Education, VPI&SU, 1996
Boy Scouts of America Leader, 1983-1997
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