

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' ROLES IN TEACHER
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

As the key leader at the school level, the principal plays a central role in the implementation of professional development programs and measurement of the outcomes of these activities (Elmore, 2000). This investigation explored high school principals' roles in and principals' perceptions of teacher professional development as a mechanism for improving teacher instructional practices. The 15 high school principals interviewed for this study were from one region in a southeastern state.

Using the professional development standards developed by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) (2001) to frame this study, a non-experimental descriptive research design was employed. Specifically, data collection methods included focus group interviews and document analysis. Three focus group interviews were conducted, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. Data sources were the transcripts from the focus group interviews with principals and information from each principal's school improvement plan. Data from both the transcripts and document review were sorted and categorized using the long-table approach (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Data were organized into the NSDC domains of context, process, and content.

The findings indicated that principals assumed the responsibility for providing professional development at their school and reported that as part of that responsibility they performed the following eight roles: (a) connected the professional development to school and/or division goals, (b) allowed teachers to play a part in their professional development, (c) provided the resources of funding and time for professional development, (d) provided support and encouragement for implementation of the professional development, (e) held a variety of professional development activities at their school, (f) collected student achievement data to determine the professional development needs, (g) determined the effectiveness of the professional development in classrooms, and (h) allowed teachers to choose the professional development activity to attend. The two roles, supported in the literature, which only a few principals discussed were: implementing PLCs and providing on-going, continuous professional development with follow-up. One area of concern reported by the principals was the reality that all teachers do not implement the professional development in their classrooms.

Five major conclusions were drawn from the findings in this study. Principals value teacher professional development as a mechanism to change teachers' instructional practices and accept the responsibility for implementing professional development at their schools. The majority of the professional development activities reported by the principals were generic type professional development activities that related to all teachers. However, principals do not expect that all teachers will implement the innovations in their classrooms. PLCs, in which teachers are working collaboratively to improve student achievement, are not being implemented in all reporting participants' high schools. Time is an important factor in determining the implementation of the professional development in the classroom.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper in memory of my parents, Roby and Roberta Wagner.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Professional development has always been one way to “improve professional practices, beliefs, and understanding of school persons towards an articulated end” (Griffin, 1999, p. 2). Principals are held accountable for student achievement according to both state and federal plans. The federal guidelines of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) demand that by 2014, 100% of students pass grade level tests. To ensure that every child learns, educators need to incorporate well-taught curricula and use a variety of teaching strategies in their classrooms to reach every type of student. “In this age of accountability and standardized testing, student achievement is everyone’s focus. Professional development geared to expanding theories of learning equips teachers with tools for direct instruction that result in student improvement” (Bolton, 2007, p. 154).

In order to meet the demands of accountability, administrators need to implement quality professional development in their schools to help teachers gain the strategies and teaching techniques needed to meet the learning needs of all students. Administrators must work cooperatively with teachers in a meaningful way in order for schools to see improved instruction in the classroom (Schmoker, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

Because schools are being asked to educate a diverse student population, teachers need to “learn new methods for engaging diverse students in mastering challenging content and skills” (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 31). Teachers need to be able to think about all types of learning, have skills to accomplish various goals, and know how to evaluate the students’ knowledge. “Since teachers have the most direct, sustained contact with students and considerable control over what is taught and the climate for learning, improving teachers’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions through professional development is a critical step in improving student achievement” (King & Newman, 2000, p. 576). Principals play a key role in organizing and enabling the occurrence of teacher learning and improving teachers’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Elmore, 2000). The purpose of this study is to explore high school principals’ roles

in and their perceptions of teacher professional development as a mechanism for improving teacher instructional practices.

Research Questions

Specifically, the following questions guided the research study:

1. According to high school principals, what is the role of the principal in the selection, organization, and implementation of teacher professional development?
2. According to high school principals, what teacher professional development activities did they implement in 2009-2010 and why?
3. According to high school principals did teacher professional development activities improved teacher's instructional practices?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this study was based on the professional development standards developed by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) (2001). "These standards clarify the kind of professional development all teachers should experience based on evidence/research based practices and articulate what it takes to be sure staff development produces its intended results" (Hirsch, 2001, p. 10). These standards were used to examine and assess the teacher professional development that principals have implemented.

The NSDC standards are organized into three categories: context, process, and content. The context standards address the organizational support for professional learning – the organization, system or culture. The process standards focus on how the system organizes learning opportunities to ensure adults acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions to affect student learning. The content standards identify what educators must understand and be able to apply to ensure students learn successfully. (Hirsch, 2001, p. 13)

These categories each require a principal's active involvement in professional development.

The three research questions in this study are aligned with the NSDC's three areas of context, process, and content. The first question, on the role of the principal in the selection, organization, and implementation of teacher professional development, aligns to the context standards. The second question, identifying the nature of and rationale for the teacher professional development activities implemented in 2009-2010 is part of the content standards.

The process standards relate to the third question and ask the principals to explain if and how teacher professional development activities improved teacher's instructional practices.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and related definitions are used in this study.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – Measures school, division, and state progress in reading, math, graduation rates, and attendance rates. Starting pass rate percentages were set in January 2003 and are to increase each year until they reach 100% in the year 2013-2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

No Child Left Behind Act – Legislation signed into law on January 8, 2002 which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Act and includes increased accountability for states, school districts, and schools; greater choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low-performing schools; more flexibility for states and local educational agencies in the use of federal education dollars; and a stronger emphasis on reading, especially for the youngest children (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Staff Development/Professional Development – “Staff development programs are a systematic attempt to bring about change - change in the classroom practices of teachers, change in their beliefs and attitudes and change in the learning outcomes of students” (Guskey, 1986, p. 5). “The term professional development means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (NSDC – retrieved from <http://www.nsd.org/standfor/definition.cfm> on June 7, 2010). These two terms, though not believed to be interchangeable by some researchers, have been used interchangeably in the research, therefore for this study, both staff development and professional development will be used without distinction.

Overview of Methodology

This research is a non-experimental descriptive study using the qualitative methodologies of focus group interviews and document analysis. Qualitative methodology is appropriate for this study inasmuch as the researcher wanted to examine the participants’ perspectives of what is currently taking place (Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998). The focus group interview method allowed the researcher to hear principals tell of “their experiences and what they have felt and

undergone” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Three focus group interviews with 15 high school principals from a specified region in a southeastern state were held. The data were extracted from transcripts of the focus group interviews with principals and information from school improvement plan documents provided by those same principals for the 2009-2010 school year.

The information from the focus group interviews and the documents were analyzed using the “long-table approach by cutting, pasting, sorting, arranging, and rearranging the data by comparing and contrasting relevant information” (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 128). The data were sorted and coded using the conceptual framework of the National Staff Development Council’s (NSDC) standards for teacher professional development. No other categories originated from the data. Triangulation of the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) was attained by using data from four main sources: transcripts from the three focus group interviews, allowing members to check their statements; documents provided by the participants; debriefings between the researcher and assistant moderator; and notes from the researcher’s journal.

Delimitations of the Study

This study specifically asked principals to focus on teacher professional development activities that improve teacher instructional practices, the types of activities the principals chose to implement, and the outcomes of those experiences related to teacher instructional strategies. Only high school principals from one region in a southeastern state were asked to be participants in the focus group interviews. This was largely a convenience sample. High school principals in this region were specifically chosen because these divisions are connected with a university through a partnership. Being connected with a university has accustomed the superintendents and the people in their divisions to participate in research frequently, which has led them to be open to the idea of participating in and learning from research. The chosen region is a diverse region in that it includes rural counties, towns, and small cities.

The researcher limited this research to high school principals in particular in order for the focus group interviews to have “a reasonable amount of homogeneity within groups in order to foster discussion” (Morgan, 1988, p. 46). The high school principals from this state are thought to have the same basic understanding of the required curriculum and testing expectations, thus allowing the discussion to be focused on the principals’ roles in teacher professional development, quality teacher professional development, and their perceptions of improving

teacher instructional practices. High school principals have been specifically chosen to participate in this study because the high school principal must not only meet state accreditation and AYP, but must also meet the requirements of the on-time graduation rate (meaning students must graduate in four years after entering high school). It is important for high school teachers to continuously improve their instruction to meet the needs of all their students in order for the students to pass classes and earn verified credits to graduate.

With these delimitations, the generalizability of the results of this study will be limited. The reader of these results will need to determine if there is transferability of findings to their particular situation based on the facts that only high school principals were chosen to participate in this study and that it is only one group of principals from a specific region in one state.

Chapter Summary and Organization of the Study

The purpose of this first chapter has been to introduce the study by stating the study's purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, definition of terms, overview of the methodology, and delimitations. In Chapter 2, the review of literature explores the responsibilities of the principal both historically and currently, including what it means to be a leader of change, and the research on quality effective teacher professional development and the principals' roles in implementing the teacher professional development. In Chapter 3, a description of the methodology has been specified, including the research design, the data collection procedures, the selection of participants, the gaining of access and entry, the focus group interview procedures, the researcher's role, the data analysis procedures, and the triangulation of the data. Chapter 4 is a report of the findings of the transcripts of the focus group interviews and document review that first provides a general overview of the findings followed by a detailed description of each finding. Conclusions, implications, and suggestions for further research are described in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Over the last several decades, researchers (e.g., Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; DuFour, 2004; Hawley & Valli, 1999; National Staff Development Council, 2001) have outlined specific criteria for high quality professional development activities with the intent of improving teacher instructional practices to ultimately improve student achievement. One role of the principal is to implement teacher professional development in order to improve teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions (Fullan, 2001).

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature concerning the principal's role in teacher professional development. Specifically, the first section contains a discussion of the responsibilities of the principal historically and currently. The second section of the literature review includes the research on quality, effective teacher professional development, with specific attention to the principal's role in teacher professional development. In the second section the conceptual framework for the study is also described.

To complete the literature review, a computerized database search was conducted of World Cat, ERIC, Wilson Web, and dissertations on the Internet. Search terms included, but were not limited to: school staff development, teacher professional development, No Child Left Behind Act, leadership, principal, administrators, change leadership, quality professional development, and student achievement. Additionally, the researcher found books, articles, and studies from reading the reference lists of articles and research studies. Once reference material was found, the researcher determined if it applied to the topic. Those that applied were used to craft the research questions, literature review, and research methodology.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal

The roles and responsibilities of the school principal have evolved throughout the years, but as history tells, it is obvious that the responsibilities have continued to vacillate between managerial duties and instructional duties (Hessel & Holloway, 2002). The first principals were appointed in 1839 in Cincinnati and were responsible for attendance, enrollment, school cleanliness, and repairs. By 1870, along with their management duties, principals were working

with teachers who had been poorly prepared to teach because most had not been taught how to teach children. After 1885 when the views and practices of William Torrey Harris (an autocrat, who believed the first prerequisite of school is order) became popular, principals main focus once again became management issues (Hessel & Holloway, 2002).

From the 1950s through the 1970s American schools were challenged because of the escalation of both “hot” and “cold” wars, apparent superiority of the Russian school system manifested by their advanced space technology program (e.g. Sputnik), engagement in the unpopular Vietnam War in Southeast Asia, and political unrest related to the war and civil rights here in America. These challenges led to political leaders pressuring the schools to improve. The political pressure led to the principals not only needing to keep order but also to improve learning especially in the areas of science and math. At the same time, the country was becoming more attuned with the needs of students with disabilities since Public Law 94-142 was passed guaranteeing a free, appropriate public education to each child with a disability in every state and locality across the country (www.2ed.gov/policy/leg/idea/history.pdf). As a result, principals needed to focus on the management of this new initiative along with teachers’ abilities to teach these students. Yet, still through much of the 1950s to 1970s, principals focused mainly on managerial and administrative duties with the main responsibilities being: maintaining the building, controlling student and staff behavior, complying with district level edicts, assessing personnel issues, ordering supplies, balancing program budgets, keeping hallways and playgrounds safe, putting out fires and making sure that busing and meal services were operating smoothly. (Hessel & Holloway, 2002, p. 13)

In the 1980s the principal still had many administrative duties, but the importance of student learning was gaining ground. The idea of the principal being an instructional leader led to new responsibilities:

- 1) defining the mission of the school and setting goals; 2) coordinating the curriculum, promoting quality instruction, conducting clinical supervision and teacher evaluation/appraisal, aligning instructional materials with curriculum goals, allocating and protecting instructional time, and monitoring student progress; 3) promoting an academic learning climate by establishing positive high expectations for student behavior and academic achievement; and 4) developing a strong school culture promoting a safe and orderly environment (Marsh, 2000, pp. 126- 27).

In the 1990's, state policy makers became aware of research evidence that supported the linkage between setting high academic content and performance standards common to all students and then testing those students through state assessments to impel change to happen at the school level and in classroom practices which would lead to narrowing the achievement gap among students (McDonnell, 2005). By the mid- 1990's most states chose to pursue state assessments for all students. Principals had to focus on student achievement at all levels, so they had to show they could not only manage the building, but that they could also be an instructional leader (Hessel & Holloway, 2002).

Today, principals are still expected to do the organizational and managerial tasks, but they are also expected to set directions for student learning, coach teachers, and be the instructional leader in the school (Berube, Gaston, & Stepan, 2004). Even though management is still necessary for a school building to run efficiently, the “principal now is expected to have leadership and relationship-building capabilities that allow him/her to influence others to achieve mutually agreed upon purposes for the organization” (p. 2).

Leading Educational Change

Educational administrators are being asked to change how they define and approach their work in fundamental ways. One expectation of the principal as leader in the school is that he/she will lead change or school reform (Fullan, 2001). As such, administrators are finding the need to shift from a management mentality to a teaching and learning mentality (Prawat & Peterson, 1999). Principals need to be part of the planning in how teachers learn and develop; they play a key role in organizing and enabling the occurrence of teacher learning.

Elmore (2000) believes principals may have a difficult time with this new role of instructional leadership, because previously schools ran on a model of *loose-coupling*, meaning teachers made decisions about what should be taught and how it was taught, judged how students were learning, grouped students how they wanted, and decided when and how they assessed learning. The principal was the manager of the structures and processes around the instruction. Elmore explains that this *loose-coupling* has been in place a long time and that is why it is difficult for principals and teachers to understand this new role of instructional leadership for the principal. Elmore states that the principal today needs to “lead by guiding and directing instructional improvement” (p. 13).

It means that the job of the administrative leader is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result (p.15).

When principals ask teachers to change, it is typically to encourage them to make a “change in their practice” (Fullan, 2002, p. 38). When a new program or policy is implemented there are at least three areas where a teacher will “need to change: 1) the possible use of new or revised instructional materials; 2) the possible use of new teaching approaches – strategies or activities; and 3) the possible alteration of beliefs – pedagogical assumptions and theories” (p. 39). “Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared objectives” (Yukl, 2002, p. 7).

In 1996, Kotter wrote about leading change from a business perspective. He stated that there were eight fundamental steps to implementing effective change in any organization. Those eight steps are: “1) establish a sense of urgency, 2) create the guiding coalition, 3) develop a vision and strategy, 4) communicate the change vision, 5) empower broad-based action, 6) generate short-term wins, 7) consolidate gains and produce more change, and 8) anchor new approaches in the culture” (p. 21). The first four steps are meant to help people see why the change is needed. The next three steps, five through seven, introduce the new practices. The last stage works to ground the changes in the culture in order to see the change become part of the practice.

In 2002, Fullan concluded after many years of research that in order for a principal to lead lasting change in a school, the principal must be looking at the big picture and change the organization through changing people and teams. Similar to Kotter’s (1996) eight fundamental steps to effective change, Fullan, Cuttress and Kilcher’s (2005) research concluded that the eight drivers in education led to effective and lasting change. The first driver is engaging people’s moral purposes. This means explaining the why of change in order to engage the educators to want to act. This engagement is critical so a commitment for improvement will be made. The second driver is building capacity in which the principal needs to increase people’s collective power to move the system forward through developing new knowledge, skills, and

competencies. “Building capacity is difficult because it involves working together in new ways” (p. 55). The third driver, understanding the change process, helps everyone understand the difficulty of change and to work through the possible barriers. The principal must help people take ownership of the changes so that it becomes part of the school culture. The fourth driver, cultures for learning, speaks to building a school community that continuously wants to learn new ideas with educators willing to collaborate with their colleagues. The fifth driver, developing cultures of evaluation, must be in place with the cultures of learning in order to assess how well the learning is taking place. Developing cultures of evaluation is making sure assessments are in place to monitor student learning and is willing to face the facts the assessment data is showing. The sixth driver in change leadership is focusing on leadership for change with the principal having the ability to “develop leadership in others on an ongoing basis” (p. 57). The seventh driver, fostering coherence making, is necessary for all constituents to see the big picture in this change process. The principal needs to create clear understanding and make sure everyone is on the same page. The eighth driver is the most difficult of all in that the principal is not just working to change individuals, but also to change the system so that there is lasting change. These eight drivers go beyond superficial change practices to a deep knowledge of, and a deeper commitment to, the change. Principals can not only know these eight drivers but must implement them, reflect upon them, and perform them again if necessary until the change has occurred (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005).

In the research that resulted in the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), Hall and Hord (2001) have identified and confirmed seven concerns teachers experience in a change process. Hall and Hord have labeled these the seven “Stages of Concern” which are typical stages teachers experience while a new innovation is being implemented. These stages are:

0. Awareness – Little concern about or involvement with the innovation is indicated.
1. Informational – A general awareness of the innovation and interest in learning more detail about it is indicated.
2. Personal – Individual is uncertain about the demands of the innovation, his/her inadequacy to meet those demands, and his/her role with the innovation.
3. Management – Attention is focused on the processes and tasks of using the innovation and the best use of information and resources.

4. Consequence – Attention focuses on impact of the innovation on clients in his or her immediate sphere of influence.
5. Collaboration – The focus is on coordination and cooperation with others regarding use of the innovation.
6. Refocusing – The focus is on the exploration of more universal benefits from the innovation, including the possibility of major changes or replacement with a more powerful alternative. (p. 63)

Individual teachers may have concerns at more than one stage at a time and of course teachers in a building may be at different stages in a change process. It is important for the principal to understand the *Stages of Concern* and also understand his/her role as the leader of this change. Hall and Hord identify six roles of the change leader (pp. 108-113): developing, articulating, and communicating a shared vision of the intended change; planning and providing resources; investing in professional learning; checking on progress; providing continuous assistance; and creating a context supportive of change.

The change process usually involves several interrelated general phases of diagnosis, planning, initiation, implementation, and institutionalization (Zins & Illback, 1995). “The involvement of the principal in this process has always been recognized as important, but more emphasis has been placed on the active participation of the teachers, parents, and even the community” (p. 110). This means that all parties involved must work together and have a clear vision of the plan. Flaspohler (2007) has written on what has happened in the decade since Zins and Illback’s writing. He sees that the “impetus for change in schools has increased and the scope of change has narrowed due to the federal and state legislative requirements increasing accountability for educational programs.” (p. 120).

Roy (2005) states that principals need to have knowledge about the change process in order to get people to implement the new practices. She says there are three steps for principals to have in place in order to create effective change. The “three steps are: 1) The principal needs to believe that part of his/her goal is to build capacity of the school-based staff to apply information about individual change processes; 2) The principal needs to build capacity of the school-based staff to apply information about organizational change processes; and 3) The principal coaches internal facilitators to support individuals as they move through changes in

school and classroom practices” (p. 3). In using these three steps, principals can help faculty by removing concerns, eliminating barriers, and being a support to the teachers.

In summary, the role of the principal has changed throughout the years in order to meet the demands of the changing expectations of schools due to historical events. The role has expanded from being solely the organizer and manager, as the needs and foci of education have changed, to also being an instructional leader, which often requires being a leader of change.

ISLLC Standards

An example of how this change has truly impacted the role of the principal in schools today is the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) which was formed in 1994 in order to “develop a framework for redefining school leadership and to connect that framework to strategies for improving educational leadership throughout the nation” (Hessel & Holloway, 2002, p. 4). The consortium rooted the leadership standards in research based on educational leadership and on productive schools centered on matters of teaching and learning. Originally, in writing the six standards for school leadership, the committee included with each standard a list of knowledge (understanding the standard), dispositions (beliefs, values and commitment), and performances (facilitate, process, and engage) that communicate the meaning of the standard (see Appendix A for the ISLLC standards with the knowledge, dispositions, and performances). But, in 2007, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium adopted updated standards (see Appendix B for the ISLLC standards and the functions). The updated standards are very similar to the original ones, but instead of knowledge, dispositions, and performances listed for each standard, there are now functions principals should implement. The six standards for school leadership have been adopted by 40 states including Virginia and several professional organizations – NASSP, NAESP, and AASA (p. 4). The six standards are: “An educational leader promotes the success of every student by:

- Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders;
- Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;
- Ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe efficient, and effective learning environment;

- Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interest and needs, and mobilizing community resources;
- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and
- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context” (Educational Leadership Policy Standards, 2008).

One role of the principal has always been to ensure management of the organization and provide a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment, but that is now only one of the six standards for a school leader. There are three standards that are specific to the principal being an instructional leader – facilitating a vision of learning in standard 1, sustaining a school culture conducive to student learning and teacher professional growth in standard 2, and collaborating with faculty to meet diverse needs in standard 4. As that instructional leader, the principal is “assisting teachers in learning how to work successfully with colleagues and modeling the use of effective collaboration skills when working with faculty” (Roy & Hord, 2003, p. 95). The school leader must advocate and nurture the school culture where the students are learning and the staff is growing professionally.

Quality Teacher Professional Development and Principals’ Roles

Professional development has always been one way to “improve professional practices, beliefs, and understanding of school persons towards an articulated end” (Griffin, 1999, p. 2). Principals are held accountable for student achievement according to both state and federal plans. The federal guidelines of the NCLB policy (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) demands that by 2014, 100% of students pass grade level tests. To ensure every child learns educators need to incorporate well-taught curriculum and use a variety of teaching strategies in their classrooms to reach every type of student. “In this age of accountability and standardized testing, student achievement is everyone’s focus. Professional development geared to expanding theories of learning equips teachers with tools for direct instruction that result in student improvement” (Bolton, 2007, p. 154).

In order to meet the demands of accountability, administrators need to implement quality professional development in their schools to help teachers gain the strategies and teaching techniques needed to meet the learning needs of all students. Administrators must work cooperatively with teachers in a meaningful way in order for schools to see improved instruction

in the classroom (Schmoker, 2006). The next section synthesizes the relevant literature and research studies to describe the characteristics of quality professional development and the role of principals in teacher professional development.

Quality Teacher Professional Development

The review of research on quality professional development for teachers is organized chronologically from 1996-2007 to allow the reader to see the emphasis placed through the years on improving teachers' instructional practices to ultimately improve student achievement. The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) (2001) standards for staff development are used to frame this investigation of the principal's role in teacher professional development. A description of the National Staff Development Council's standards of quality professional development is listed first to explain the conceptual framework, followed by the discussion of research studies.

The National Staff Development Council was established in 1969. From the beginning, the organization's purpose has been to improve teacher professional development in order to improve student achievement. In 1994, a task force "examined the research and used its empirical knowledge to design standards that each organization (school) could support as critical high-quality staff development" (Hirsch 2001, p. 10). The NSDC published the NSDC's Standards for Staff Development: Middle Level in 1994 and in 1995 published the NSDC's Standards for Staff Development Elementary and High School Level. The elementary level had 24 standards and the middle and high school level had 27 standards. The standards were organized into the areas of context, process, and content (see Appendix C).

During the next six years, more research was reported which led to a new task force in 2000. This task force included more than 25 educators and policy makers, representing more than 15 educational organizations, to contribute their knowledge and clarify new goals (Hirsch, 2001). The task force used both research studies (all studies listed on the NSDC website – www.nsdc.org/standards) and the results of a survey of NSDC members to develop the recommendations for the revised standards. In 2001, the revised standards were published which required that staff development be results-driven, standards-based, and job-embedded. "The revised standards clarified the kind of professional development all teachers should experience" (p. 10).

The NSDC standards of 2001 are organized into three parts: context, process, and content. All of the standards are focused on teaching in order to improve student achievement. The context standards address the organizational support for professional learning – the organization, system, or culture. The process standards address how the system organizes learning opportunities to ensure adults acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to affect student learning. The content standards address what educators must understand and be able to apply to ensure students learn successfully (Hirsch, 2001). The National Staff Development Council’s (2001) twelve standards recommend that quality staff development include:

1. Context Standards

- Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.
- Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.
- Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

2. Process Standards

- Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.
- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.
- Prepares educators to apply research to decision making.
- Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.
- Applies knowledge about human learning and change.
- Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.

3. Content Standards

- Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.
- Deepens educators’ content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist student in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.

- Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately. (<http://www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm>)

The following seven research studies were chosen to be part of the literature review because these research studies were specifically looking at professional development activities that changed teachers' instructional practices in order to improve student learning. In these studies the researchers describe a variety of professional development activities ranging from a traditional speaker telling about implementing a teaching strategy to the involvement of coaches to discussions among teachers. In order to organize the content of this section, a table has been constructed to compare the characteristics of teacher professional development found in each research study to the NSDC standards (see Figure 1).

In 1996 Elmore's study of the professional development in the Community School District 2 in New York City focused on how to "organize successful professional development so as to influence practice in large numbers of classrooms" (p. 2). This descriptive study focused on one school district with a student population of 22,000 students that serves students in grades kindergarten through ninth grade (high schools are a city-wide responsibility). "The district has 24 elementary schools, 7 junior high schools, and 17 Option Schools, which are alternative schools organized around themes with a variety of different grade configurations" (p. 11). This qualitative study used interviews, observations, and document review to document, describe, and analyze the professional development in this school district describing the organizing principles that were in place in order to impact a systemic change to improve instruction.

Elmore (1996) offered seven major ideas and actions to implement district wide: "1) talk only about instructional issues; 2) expect instructional change to be a long, multi-stage process; 3) share expertise to drive instructional change; 4) work together to focus on improvement for a system-wide change; 5) hire the right, talented people; 6) set clear expectations at the top and then decentralize; and 7) develop collegiality, caring, and respect" (pp. 8-13). From these seven ideas and actions, professional development in this school district grew to be a main focus to all concerned. As a result of this focused approach, the school division saw improved student achievement in both literacy and math.

National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development	Elmore (1996)	Hawley & Valli (1999)	Garet & et. al (2001)	Spencer & Login (2003)	Strahan (2003)	Kubitsky, Fishman, & Marx (2003)	Bolton (2007)
Context Standards							
Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.	√	√	√		√		
Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.	√		√	√	√	√	√
Process Standards							
Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement	√	√			√		√
Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.		√	√	√	√		
Prepares educators to apply research to decision making.	√	√				√	√
Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.		√		√		√	√
Applies knowledge about human learning and change.		√	√				√
Provides educators with the Knowledge and skills to collaborate.		√	√	√	√	√	√
Content Standards							
Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.	√				√		√
Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist student in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.		√	√	√		√	√
Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.					√		

Figure 1. Comparison matrix of research studies of quality professional development and NSDC standards.

Hawley's and Valli's 1999 meta-analysis of 24 research studies focused on student learning published between 1983-1996 and demonstrated that successful professional development had to be focused, collaborative, and school centered. The framework of their study was based on four converging developments:

- 1) research on school improvement that linked change to professional development;
- 2) growing agreement that students should be expected to achieve much higher standards of performance;
- 3) research on learning and teaching that reached substantially different conclusions about how people learn; and
- 4) research that confirmed the widespread belief among educators that conventional strategies for professional development were ineffective and wasteful and that provided support for the adoption of different ways to facilitate professional learning. (p. 128)

Hawley and Valli (1999) recognized the “gap between the goals of student achievement and actual student learning” (p. 127). They found eight design principles which focus attention on professional development strategies that appear to be essential to improving students' learning over time:

1. Professional development is driven, fundamentally, by analyses of the differences between (1) goals and standards for student learning and (2) student performance.
2. Professional development involves learners (such as teachers) in the identification of their learning needs and, when possible, the development of the learning opportunity and/or the process to be used.
3. Professional development is primarily school-based and integral to school operations.
4. Professional development provides learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but, for the most part, are organized around collaborative problem solving.
5. Professional development is continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to school.
6. Professional development incorporates evaluation of multiple sources of information on outcomes for student and processes involved in implementing the lessons learned through professional development.

7. Professional development provides opportunities to develop a theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills to be learned.
8. Professional development is integrated with a comprehensive change process that deals with the full range of impediments to and facilitators of student learning. (p. 137)

Hawley and Valli (1999), based on their meta-analysis, found that students were being asked to learn more complex content and to develop stronger problem solving skills than in the past. Teachers needed to design lessons in which the teaching was focused on teaching for understanding (i.e., students thinking critically, constructing and solving problems, synthesizing information, inventing, creating, and expressing them proficiently) and not relying exclusively on teaching by telling (lecture). Teaching for understanding is a more difficult practice for teachers because it is more difficult to plan a lesson where students are thinking critically or solving problems than it is to just lecture the students, but much more effective for student achievement. These eight principles for professional development show the importance of teachers continuously learning to improve their skills in order to improve their students' ability to master the learning standards.

Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon's (2001) research also focused on improving professional development in order to change teaching practices to help students achieve. In their research, they used data from a national evaluation of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, using a sample of 1027 teachers to complete an empirical comparison study of effects of different characteristics of professional development on teachers' learning. In Garet et al.'s study, the researchers examined the relationship between features of professional development as documented in the literature and self-reported change in teacher's knowledge, skills, and classroom teaching practices.

For the study, Garet et al. (2001) surveyed teachers asking questions based on their participation in the Eisenhower Professional Development Programs (i.e., workshops, conferences, study groups, task force work, and peer coaching) and asked them to rate how the program enhanced their knowledge and skills in the areas of: curriculum, instructional methods, approaches to diverse student populations, use of technology in instruction, strategies for teaching diverse student populations, and deepening knowledge of mathematics. The teachers filled out a survey using the following scale: 0 = no change, 1 = minor change, 2 = moderate

change, and 3 = significant change. The results were statistically significant at the .05 level (Garet et al., 2001).

The results of Garet et al.'s study indicated three core features that lead to positive effects on teachers' content knowledge, skills, and changes in classroom practice were: "(1) focus on content knowledge, (2) opportunities for active learning, and (3) coherence with other learning activities" (Garet et al., 2001, p. 915). Garet et al. concluded that if teachers understand their own content knowledge and how students learn that content, teachers are able to use that information as they teach and derived five implications for making professional development effective:

1. Sustained and intensive professional development is more likely to have an impact than shorter professional development.
2. Professional development that focuses on academic subject matter, gives teachers opportunities for hands-on work, and is integrated into the daily life of the school, is more likely to produce enhanced knowledge and skills.
3. In implementing professional development, it is more important to focus on the duration of, the collective participation in, and the core features of the professional development activity rather than the type of activity.
4. Professional development activities should be linked to previous activities and there should be encouragement of professional communication among teachers to support change in teaching practice.
5. Subject matter focus is important in professional development (p. 932-934).

Spencer and Logan's (2003) study on the impact of the Research Lead Teacher (RLT) shows the amount of coaching and collaboration that needs to be in place in order for professional development to have an impact in the classroom. Their study focused on a school implementing the "15-Step Benchmark Strategy Instruction Process" which is:

- 1) Tell or write the content objective (information to be learned),
- 2) Tell or write student expectations in reading the intended objective for this lesson (amount of information to be learned),
- 3) State or elicit why the information is important,
- 4) State or elicit when the information is important,
- 5) State or elicit where the information can be obtained,
- 6) State or elicit background information and tie it to the content objective,

- 7) Introduce new vocabulary,
- 8) Summarize the proceeding steps,
- 9) Tell or write the cognitive strategies that will be used to learn the content information,
- 10) State or elicit why the strategy is important,
- 11) State or elicit when the strategy is important,
- 12) State or elicit background information on when student have previously used the selected strategy,
- 13) State or elicit how to implement the strategy,
- 14) Teacher models use of the strategy (think aloud or written), and
- 15) Summarize the proceeding steps (p. 62).

The researchers designed a timed-series experiment with an intervention and control group. The control group received a traditional half-day in-service and the intervention group received both the half-day in-service and the RLT model. In the study, 42 general education teachers received a one-half day of training on the “15-Step Benchmark Strategy Instruction Process”. The training provided the teachers with the knowledge of the 15 steps and with knowledge concerning the importance of combining cognitive and metacognitive knowledge as a means of improving student achievement. At the end of the training, the RLT model was explained.

The teachers in the Spencer and Logan (2003) study learned that the RLT model of implementation included trained data collectors who would: observe teaching lessons, model lessons, coach teachers, provide weekly 60-minute teacher study groups, and give immediate feedback after observations. The teachers would also receive 10 hours of staff development credit. Nine teachers volunteered to participate in the RLT model which designated them the intervention group. Nine other teachers volunteered to allow researchers to observe in their classroom but would not participate in the RLT model designating them to be the control group. A 100% implementation of the 15 steps of the process on three out of four consecutive observations was set as the criterion for effective implementation.

Two independent data collectors were trained to collect data on the Benchmark Process by Spencer and Logan (2003). The data collectors observed the nine teachers in the intervention group and, after the observation, the teachers were told exactly how well the Benchmark process strategies were being implemented. The intervention group had a 60-minute meeting each week,

was coached, and saw the data collected each week. The data collectors observed the nine control group teachers, but did not give them any feedback about their implementation of the Benchmark Process strategies.

At the end of seven weeks of implementation of the Benchmark Process strategies, Spencer and Logan (2003) found that seven of the nine intervention teachers reached and maintained all 15 of the steps as listed above. The other two teachers in the intervention showed they had maintained 13 of the steps but did not reach the formal criterion of 15 steps at the end of the implementation time period. In contrast, at the end of the seven weeks of implementation for the control group only three of the 15 Benchmark strategies were being implemented by any of the nine teachers. Spencer and Logan concluded that the RLT model (i.e., study groups, coaching, observation, and data collection) was effective in training teachers to implement the “15-Step Benchmark Process.” The researchers also showed that the teachers needed three to six weeks of the RLT model before they were able to master the 15 steps and implement those steps into their teaching.

In a different model of professional development, Strahan, Carlone, Horn, Dalla, and Ware’s (2003) case study described how teachers and administrators created a more supportive school climate that resulted in raising student achievement. In Strahan et al.’s study, the site-based professional development featured discussions on students’ progress on formal and informal assessments of achievement. Teachers and administrators assessed their own success based on student learning.

Strahan et al. (2003) began collecting data by interviewing 17 administrators, teachers, parents, and support personnel asking their views on how their school became more successful on state-mandated tests. The next phase of the study included interviews, classroom observations, observations of grade-level meetings, and discussions with focus groups over a two-year period. The researchers also had the principal recommend four exemplary teachers and those four teachers were interviewed, observed while teaching in their classrooms, and observed working in meetings with colleagues. To analyze the data, the researchers used the constant comparative method, coding transcripts from the interviews, notes from the classrooms, and meeting observations to identify principle themes. The researchers identified three major changes in school culture:

1. Teachers and administrators had developed a shared stance toward learning – shared responsibility. Teachers were responsible for promoting all students’ learning; students were taught to be responsible for their own learning and for helping their classmates; and the principal was responsible for securing much needed resources.
2. Teachers and administrators emphasized more active student engagement that strengthened instructional norms.
3. Teachers and administrators assessed their success according to student learning, thereby promoting data-directed dialogue regarding school reform.

Strahan et al. found that the teachers and administrators created a culture characterized by values that define “good” teaching as: meeting the needs of their students; believing that all students can learn and students share responsibility for their learning; and implementing instructional norms that featured active, collaborative lessons. The researchers found that student achievement gradually increased from 1997 until 2002 and that, as measured by state assessments in 1997, 49.9 % of the students in grades 3 and 5 were proficient in reading and math. In 2002, 74.6 % of 3rd and 5th graders were proficient in reading and math (Strahan et al., 2003).

Kubitskey, Fishman and Marx (2003) examined professional development and student learning results. Their research study began by attending and analyzing five professional development workshops along with the teachers. The workshops were part of the Center for Learning Technologies in Urban Schools (LeTUS). The specific workshops the researchers attended were workshops to help teachers teach the unit on Communicable Disease. Five different strategies were utilized during the five workshops: direct instruction, peer exchange, model teaching, curriculum review, and planning.

Kubitskey, Fishman and Marx (2003) took notes on the workshops and the engagement of the teachers. The workshop notes were then separated into discrete units of analysis and coded for types of strategies and content. Within a week after the teachers attended the workshop, the researchers analyzed teacher learning through self-reporting telephone interviews. After the telephone interviews, the researchers observed in the teachers’ classroom while the teachers taught content learned in the workshop. In their research they suggested four characteristics to quality professional development:

1. Planning – well defined goals incorporated in an interactive design process;
2. Structure – consistent and contextualized around the needs of the teacher;
3. Community – participants are colleagues with a common denominator such as teaching the same grade, teaching at the same school, or teaching the same subject; and
4. Activities – active learning of such content. (p. 2)

From the analysis of the workshops and the teachers' post-workshop interviews, Kubitskey, Fishman and Marx (2003) identified five characteristics to inform the design of future professional development:

1. Teachers recast different types of “content” to “knowledge of learners”;
2. Teachers acknowledge learning content knowledge through model teaching and hands-on activities more frequently than through direct instruction;
3. Teachers value peer exchange as a strategy for professional development both as a means of learning new content and reflecting on their own teaching;
4. Peer exchange contributes to the conception of community amongst the teachers and allowed for the emergence of lead teachers; and
5. Experienced teachers do not have the same needs as inexperienced teachers and thus the workshop must be adapted to fit the needs of both. (p. 13)

Kubitskey, Fishman and Marx (2003) were not able to conclusively link the teacher professional development experience to student learning because they could not conclude that the student learning was the result of only the workshops. But, the researchers were able to evaluate the professional development and use the information to identify five characteristics to improve future professional development activities listed above.

In Bolton's research (2007), reading coaches were used to improve student achievement through improving teaching practices. Bolton studied one school of 350 students in Virginia that used coaches to help teachers implement a uniform set of literacy strategies for all students. In this school, there were five reading specialists; of those five, three received additional training in coaching. These three reading specialists worked with the teachers in their classrooms “modeling effective reading instruction, providing constructive feedback and offering instructional support, and team-teaching to provide a flexible scaffold that assisted the teachers in mastering new instructional competencies” (p. 157). Data were collected by testing students each six weeks

using running records to monitor students' progress in reading. Interviews with teachers and reading coaches were also part of the data.

The professional development allowed the teachers to reflect on their own teaching and change that teaching to improve student achievement. From interviews with both the teachers and coaches, Bolton (2007) found that “professional development must 1) be directed in the classroom; 2) offer teachers practical ways to improve their instructional practice for increased student achievement; 3) incorporate the views of other teachers, students, and administrators; and 4) increase teachers' sense of professionalism” (p. 156). Bolton concluded with evidence of improvement on students' reading test scores: students improved reading achievement by 12 months in just a two-month period. Teachers reported to the coaches that they “could now offer the kind of instruction their students needed, right when the students most needed the intervention” (p. 164). Bolton concluded that teachers saw this professional development, coaches in their classroom, as a positive experience because the teachers saw the impact of improved student achievement.

Summary

To summarize, the researchers in the studies described above were specifically looking to use a professional development experience to change teachers' instructional practices in order to improve student learning. Using the professional development standards developed by NSDC (2001) and comparing the professional development experiences of these studies, it is interesting to note that all seven studies met the context standard of organizing adults into learning communities whose goals aligned with those of the school and district. Six of the seven studies also met the context standard of requiring resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

Only one study, Hawley and Valli (1999) matched all six of NSDC's process standards; Bolton's (2007) study met five of the process standards; four studies, Garet et al. (2001), Spencer and Login (2003), Strahan (2003), and Kubitsky, Fishman, and Marx (2003) met three of the process standards; and one study, Elmore (1996) only met two of the process standards. Six of the studies, Hawley and Valli (1999), Garet et. al (2001), Spencer and Login (2003), Strahan (2003), Kubitsky, Fishman, and Marx (2003), and Bolton (2007) met the process standard - provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.

One content standard – deepens educators’ content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately – was part of five of the seven studies Hawley and Valli (1999), Garet et al. (2001), Spencer and Login (2003), Kubitsky, Fishman, and Marx (2003), and Bolton (2007). Only two studies met two of the three content standards. The other five studies only met one content standard (see Figure 1).

From the seven research studies described above there were several common themes concerning teacher professional development. In order for the professional development to impact change in the teachers’ behaviors in the classrooms, the following needed to be in place: professional development needs to be a continuous process, sustained over time; a collaborative process among teachers to support each other in implementing the professional development; data should be monitored in order to determine what professional development should be implemented and to show its effectiveness; and the professional development should be directly related to the classroom.

Principals’ Roles in Teacher Professional Development

In understanding the characteristics of effective professional development, it is important to also look at how that teacher professional development is implemented and how the role of the principal affects that implementation. “High quality teaching in every classroom depends on principals who make the success of all students their highest priority, nurture continuous improvement in teaching, and create energizing, interdependent relationships among all members of the school community” (Sparks, 2004, p. 1).

Effective principals engage with teachers often through routine visits to their classrooms, participating in team-level meetings, and paying close attention to student achievement (Elmore, 2000). In order to foster positive change in a school, principals must communicate well and often with teachers. Murphy (1990) found that effective principals utilized several monitoring strategies including (a) using assessment to inform instruction, (b) communicating information on student data to all stakeholders, and (c) constantly evaluating the instructional quality and academic progress of the school.

Many staff development activities fail due to the lack of participation and overt support from school administrators (Guskey, 2003). Guskey and Sparks (2002) explained that one reason

professional development may be insufficient in impacting student learning is because the professional development activity happened off school grounds without the administrators present, or the administrators did not attend the professional development on school grounds. Since the administrators were not part of the activity, there was no follow-up for the teachers and no effort was made to ensure appropriate and sustained implementation of the recommended practices. From their research, Guskey and Sparks concluded that administrators indirectly influence student learning in two ways. The first is their “interactions with teachers, professional support, coaching, and evaluation procedures” and the second “through their leadership in forming school policies and in establishing elements of the school’s community and culture” (p. 4). Holloway (2006) states that it is important that a teacher see a principal attending the professional development activity, because it sets the tone that professional development is an important part of school life.

“Leadership is the guidance and direction of instructional improvement” (Elmore, 2000, p. 13). Often principals are judged according to how they manage the teachers, staff, students, parents, and district administrators. But, Elmore emphasizes that principals should be focused on instructional improvement and the management function of the job should be instrumental to instructional improvement. “The skills and knowledge that matter in leadership, under this definition, are those that can be connected to, or lead directly to, the improvement of instruction and student performance; this makes leadership instrumental to improvement” (p. 14). The job of the administrative leader is to enhance the skills and knowledge of the people in the school organization and then to hold them accountable for using these skills and knowledge to contribute to student learning (Elmore, 2000).

The following research studies (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Blasé & Blasé, 2000; Cranston, 2009; Hipp, Huffman, Pankake & Oliver, 2008, and Thompson, Gregg & Niska, 2004) describe how the principal impacts teacher professional development. In the first two studies, teachers were asked about their principals’ role in professional development, in the third study, principals were asked directly about what types of professional development they wanted to provide, and the last three studies specifically emphasize the implementation of professional learning communities in schools.

Bamburg and Andrews (1991) surveyed the staff members of 10 achieving schools and 10 failing schools (as determined by test scores). The teachers answered questions about “two

different school factors, 1) the presence of a clear and focused mission and 2) the role of the principal as an instructional leader to the academic achievement of students” (p. 176). There were 18 questions on the survey related to the role of the principal as an instructional leader. In the results, the teachers from the high achieving schools stated that four specific activities of their principals were important. Those four activities were:

1. Principal as a resource provider – recognized importance of activities that provided the resources teachers needed to promote, teach and learn;
2. Principal as instructional resource – knowledgeable about instruction and had the ability to discuss instructional concerns or problems constructively;
3. Principal as communicator – communicated clearly and effectively about issues related to instruction; and
4. Principal as a visible presence – utilized their time attending to activities related to teaching and learning – they found ways to both be a manager of the school and an instructional leader. (p. 187)

Bamburg and Andrews (1991) concluded that the teachers of the low achieving schools did not see their principals doing the four types of activities listed above. Therefore, while the teachers at the high achieving schools recognized the crucial role the principals held in helping student achievement, the teachers at the low achieving schools did not recognize the principal’s role as important. The researchers concluded that “principals need to accept responsibility for:

1. Conceptualizing a vision for the organization that is clearly focused upon desired outcomes;
2. Engaging in activities which center around communicating that vision to everyone connected with the organization in such a way as to obtain their support;
3. Providing and/or obtaining the resources needed by the organization to accomplish the vision; and
4. Managing one’s self so that one, two, and three can be accomplished. (p. 189)

According to Bamburg and Andrew, it is important for a principal to ensure he or she is “doing” positive instructional leadership activities and not just talking about them.

In Blasé and Blasé’s (2000) study, nine years later, the findings are similar to Bamburg and Andrew’s (1991) conclusions. In Blasé and Blasé’s (2000) study over 800 American teachers were asked in an open-ended questionnaire “what characteristics of school principals

positively influence classroom teaching, and what effects do such characteristics have on classroom instruction?” (p. 131). Their results produced two major themes: “1) effective instructional leadership consisted of talking with teachers to promote reflection and 2) promoting professional growth” (p. 132). For the first theme of talking with teachers, the teachers reported that in order for conversations between principals and teachers to influence their classroom teaching and student learning, they had to include one of the five following strategies:

1. Making suggestions - The suggestions were purposeful, appropriate, and non-threatening, and were characterized by: listening, sharing their experiences, using examples and demonstrations, giving teachers choice, contradicting outdated or destructive policies, encouraging risk taking, offering professional literature, recognizing teachers’ strengths, and maintaining a focus on improving instruction.
2. Giving feedback – The feedback focused on observed classroom behavior, was specific, expressed caring and interest, provided praise, established a problem-solving orientation, responded to concerns about students, and stressed the principal’s availability for follow-up talk.
3. Modeling – The principal demonstrated teaching techniques in classrooms and during conferences. They also modeled positive interactions with students.
4. Using inquiry and soliciting advice and opinions – Principals often asked questions and frequently solicited teachers’ advice about instructional matters.
5. Giving praise – Principals gave praise that focused on specific and concrete teaching. (p. 133 - 134)

For the second theme of promoting professional development, the teachers reported that principals were effective when they promoted professional growth using the following six strategies:

- (1) emphasizing the study of teaching and learning;
- (2) supporting collaboration efforts among educators;
- (3) developing coaching relationships among educators;
- (4) encouraging and supporting the redesign of programs;
- (5) applying the principles of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development; and
- (6) implementing action research to inform instructional decision making. (p. 135)

Blasé and Blasé found that “effective instructional leadership integrates collaboration, peer coaching, inquiry, collegial study groups, and reflective discussion into a holistic approach to promote professional dialog among educators” (p. 137).

In the studies by Blasé and Blasé (2000) and Bamburg and Andrew’s (1991), teachers were asked what they needed from their principals in relation to professional development, but Zimmerman and May (2003) asked principals what inhibitors affected implementation of professional development in schools. Zimmerman and May used quantitative methodology to collect data from Ohio administrators. A survey was distributed using a stratified random sample of administrators of schools drawn from 613 school districts. Thirty-five percent of the administrators returned the survey. Those responding represented elementary (36%), middle (31%), and high school (30%) administrators. Zimmerman and May focused on the results of one open-ended question – “What are the factors that inhibit you from providing professional development activities?” (p. 40). The researchers cross-matched the findings and organized the data for cross-case analysis. The inhibitors identified from the survey, in order from most inhibiting to least inhibiting, were: (a) time, (b) money, (c) teacher resistance/attitude, (d) substitute teachers, (e) teacher contracts, (f) human resources, (g) other expectations, lack of presenters, and (h) others. Of this list, time and money were the top two inhibitors for all levels. Four others on the list-substitute teachers, teacher contracts, human resources, and lack of presenters-all relate to time or money. The third inhibitor on the list is teacher resistance/attitude.

Time is an enormous challenge, and administrators must be very creative to find it. Finding time for teachers to pursue professional development on “company time” could include banking time, buying time, utilizing common planning times, or adding professional days to the school year (Zimmerman & May, 2003). An important role for the principal is to work to control and to remove those barriers in order to provide time for quality professional development in each school.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional Learning Communities, is another model of professional development for school improvement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). DuFour and Eaker based their list of characteristics of professional learning communities on research work completed by “Linda Darling-Hammond, Michael Fullan, Andy Hargreaves, Milbrey McLaughlin, Fred Newman,

Seymour Sarason, Phil Schlechty, Ted Sizer and Dennis Sparks” (p. xiii). They also relied on typical practices and standards in education from their own observations. DuFour and Eaker’s list of the characteristics of Professional Learning Communities are:

- 1) Shared mission, vision and values of the community;
- 2) Collective inquiry – questioning the status quo, seeking new methods, and reflecting on results;
- 3) Collaborative teams – learning from one another for a common purpose;
- 4) Action Orientation and Experimentation – turn aspirations into action and visions into reality;
- 5) Continuous Improvement – constant search for a better way; and
- 6) Results Oriented – all must be assessed on the results not the intentions. (p. 25-29)

DuFour (2001) believes that the most “significant contribution a principal can make to teacher professional development is creating an appropriate context (meaning the programs, procedures, beliefs, expectations and habits that constitute the norm for a given school) for adult learning” (p. 14). His belief is that the principal should create a context that promotes job-embedded professional development. In order to do this a collaborative culture must be created.

To create a true collaborative culture, DuFour states that five things need to be in place:

- 1) Provide time for collaboration in the school day and school year;
- 2) Identify critical questions to guide the work of collaborative teams;
- 3) Ask teams to create products as a result of their collaboration;
- 4) Insist that teams identify and pursue specific student achievement goals; and
- 5) Provide teams with relevant data and information. (pp. 15-16)

Through a true collaborative culture, principals are implementing conditions in which professional learning communities can grow.

In a school using the Professional Learning Communities model, the principal’s role is to create the environment in which “teachers can continually collaborate and learn how to become more effective” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 184). Principals of professional learning communities: a) lead through a shared vision and values rather than through rules and procedures; b) involve faculty members in the school’s decision-making processes and empower individuals to act; and c) provide staff with the information, training, and parameter; they need to make good decisions. Along with these three responsibilities, DuFour and Eaker also have ten

guidelines principals should follow in being the leader of a school that is a professional learning community. The 10 guidelines range from teachers being collaborative to building a school culture that supports a professional learning community to focusing on learning and not teaching. One of the 10 guidelines asks the principal to recognize that continuous improvement requires continuous learning, and, therefore, the importance of being committed to the professional development of each staff member. In working with professional development in his or her school, the principal should be attentive to the content, process, and context of the professional development practices. The principal should help establish external resources and networks that support and stimulate innovation in the school. The principal should work to make sure the professional development is embedded in the daily work routine. The principal should always remember that “the purpose of any professional development activity is to improve the ability of educators to help all students achieve the intended results of the school” (p. 261).

Thompson, Gregg, and Niska (2004) addressed the issue of whether teachers and principals believed their schools were professional learning communities. In this mixed methodology study, the researchers interviewed principals of six middle schools in different districts, surveyed all the middle school teachers, and talked with focus groups of teachers. From this research, Thompson et al. found that in all of the six schools, teachers and principals believed their school was a learning organization. From the findings, they identified seven items to be in place in order for the teachers and principals to believe they were a professional learning community: a) systems thinking – seeing the underlying patterns in the system and having input on what needs to be changed; b) personal mastery – everyone being responsible for their own learning and everyone participating in learning; c) shared vision – teachers and principals had input on the vision and understood their vision; d) team learning – group interaction to solve issues and problems; e) data informed decision making – collecting the data and sharing it with the staff in order to make decisions; f) relationships – creating trust among the staff; and g) risk-taking behavior – willing to implement new ideas or programs. “The teachers in the focus groups also confirmed their belief that to have a school that was a learning organization required strong leadership that focused on professional development that is job-embedded and that is determined by the staff” (p. 12).

Cranston’s (2009) research examining 12 principals’ conceptions of professional learning communities determined that all principals do not have the same understandings of professional

learning communities. In this naturalistic inquiry approach, two focus groups and twelve individual interviews were held over a six-month period to investigate the general research question of “What characteristics are identified by principals in their conceptions of schools as professional learning communities?” (p. 5). Transcripts from the focus groups and interviews were read and re-read to carefully identify emerging codes and potential categories that ultimately lead to themes. From Cranston’s research, eight dominant themes emerged. The themes are:

- 1) professional learning communities are about process;
- 2) structural supports enable the development of professional learning communities;
- 3) trust as the foundation for adult relationships;
- 4) congenial relationships dominate conceptions of community;
- 5) learning is an individual activity;
- 6) professional teaching is derived from attitudinal attributes;
- 7) teacher evaluation shapes how principals think about learning in professional communities; and
- 8) teacher evaluation impacts principal and teacher relationships in professional learning communities. (p. 1)

Cranston concluded that even though professional learning communities are believed to be a great way to sustain school improvement efforts, the school must have a principal who truly understands what makes a school a professional learning community and what is required to sustain it.

In Hipp, Huffman, Pankake and Oliver’s (2008) study of how a school becomes a sustainable professional learning community, they conducted 50 interviews of teachers, principals, assistant principals, support staff, and parents (62 total participants) from two schools who from a previous research study stood above all the other schools for making more progress. From this research they found that the leaders of the schools “provided exceptional facilitation and organizational skills that sustained the energy of the school communities” (p. 193). These leaders established a relationship with the teachers that was built on mutual trust and shared directionality, and allowed individual expression. The principals were also respected by the teachers for their expectations, accountability, and drive. The principals were strong in direction

and support, but empowering in ideas and implementation. *Team* was used often in both schools in relation to structures and people.

Summary

In summary, it can be seen in Figure 2 that the research studies all showed the principal implementing the context standards of aligning goals, guiding continuous improvement, and providing the resources needed for adult learning. In the process standards two studies, Blasé and Blasé (2000) and Thompson, Greg, and Niska (2004), meet four of the six standards, and one study, Hipp et.al (2008), did not meet any of the process standards. The two process standards that principals specifically implemented were: a) using multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact; and b) providing educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate. In three of the five studies, the principals met only one content standard - deepens educators' content knowledge, providing them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards.

From the five studies of the role of the principal in teacher professional development, there were several common ideas as to what the principal's role should include. The principal should: organize the teachers into learning communities; match professional development to school/division goals; communicate with teachers about the professional development; and support the professional development by providing time, money and support in order for the teachers to implement the professional development. Both the communication and support of the professional development must be based on a relationship of trust between the administrator and teacher.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 2, the researcher has summarized the principal's role through history showing that teacher professional development has become one of the responsibilities of the principal. Also in this chapter, the literature and the research on quality professional development for teachers that specifically looked at professional development activities that changed teacher's instructional practices to improve student learning was presented. In order for the professional development to impact change in the teachers' behaviors in the classrooms, the following needed to be in place: professional development needs to be a continuous process, sustained over time; a

collaborative process among teachers to support each other in implementing the professional development; data should be monitored in order to determine what professional development should be implemented and to show its effectiveness; and the professional development should be directly related to the classroom.

Along with quality professional development research, literature and research on the principals' roles in professional development were presented choosing studies that described how the principal impacts teacher professional development. The principal should: organize the teachers into learning communities; match professional development to school/division goals; communicate with teachers about the professional development; and support the professional development by providing time, money and support in order for the teachers to implement the professional development. Both the communication and support of the professional development must be based on a relationship of trust between the administrator and teacher.

The NSDC's standards for quality professional development were used as the conceptual framework, comparing the results of the research studies to NSDC's twelve standards (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development	Bamburg & Andrews (1991)	Blasé & Blasé (2000)	Thompson, Gregg & Niska (2004)	Hipp, Huffman, Pankake & Oliver (2008)	Cranston (2009)
Context Standards					
Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.	√	√	√	√	√
Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.	√	√	√	√	√
Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.	√	√	√	√	√
Process Standards					
Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement			√		
Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.	√	√	√		√
Prepares educators to apply Research to decision making.		√	√		
Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.					√
Applies knowledge about human Learning and change.		√			
Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.	√	√	√		√
Content Standards					
Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.					
Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist student in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.	√	√	√		
Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.					

Figure 2. Comparison matrix of research studies of principals' role in teacher professional development to NSDC standards.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Study

As the key leader at the school level, the principal plays a central role in the implementation of teacher professional development programs and measurement of the outcomes of these activities (Elmore, 2000). The purpose of this study is to explore high school principals' roles in teacher professional development. The specific research questions that guide this study are:

1. According to high school principals, what is the role of the principal in the selection, organization, and implementation of teacher professional development?
2. According to high school principals, what teacher professional development activities did they implement in 2009-2010 and why?
3. According to high school principals did teacher professional development activities improve teacher's instructional practices?

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to investigate the research questions. Specifically, the researcher describes the research design, the data sources and collection procedures, the selection of participants, the gaining of access and entry, the interview procedures, the researcher's role, the data analysis procedures, observations from the focus group interviews, and the triangulation of the data.

Research Design

This study was a non-experimental descriptive research study to describe the current behavior of high school principals in a specific region in a southeastern state regarding professional development for teachers without identifying causes (Heiman, 2001). The intent is to explore high school principals' roles in and perceptions of teacher professional development as a mechanism for improving teacher instructional practices.

The qualitative methodologies of focus group interviews and document analysis were used for this study. Qualitative methodology is appropriate for this study inasmuch as the researcher wanted to examine the participants' perspectives of what is currently taking place (Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998). Using focus group interviews allowed the researcher to hear

principals tell of “their experiences and what they have felt and undergone” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6).

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

The first type of data collected for this research study was extracted from the transcripts from the focus group interviews. The use of focus group interviews allowed the researcher to gather insights, perceptions, and reality on the topic capturing real-life data in a social environment allowing flexibility to probe unanticipated issues (Krueger, 1994). The strength of the focus group interview comes from the opportunity to collect data from group interaction concentrated on a specific topic. This concentration “brings forth material that would not come out in either the participants’ own casual conversation or in response to the researcher’s preconceived questions” (Morgan, 1988, p. 21). The technique of focus group interviews assumes that people do not form their attitudes and beliefs in a vacuum, but that people listen to others and in doing so clarify their own beliefs (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Three focus group interviews consisting of a total of 15 high school principals from one region in a southeastern state were held. Morgan (1988) states that “the more homogenous your groups are in both background and role-based perspectives, the fewer groups you need” (p. 42). Having five principals in each group takes into consideration that “the group should not be too small, which puts a greater demand of contribution on each participant; nor should the focus group be too large allowing individual members to participate less because the group as a whole can carry the discussion” (p. 43). The focus group interview sessions lasted between 80 – 95 minutes. The interviews were held in conference rooms or classrooms at three different high schools. One was held first thing in the morning at 8:30 a.m. and the other two groups were held at 12:00 p.m.

The second type of data collected was school improvement plans from each of the focus group participants. Each school in this state is required by code to prepare and implement a biennial school plan. A part of this plan usually contains instructional improvements which often includes teacher professional development. One advantage of document review is its stability; it is an objective source of data furnishing descriptive information (Merriam, 1998). Each principal was asked to bring to the focus group interview or email his or her 2009-2010 school improvement plan to the researcher.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to select the high school principals from a specific region in a southeastern state to be participants in the focus groups. High school principals in this region specifically were chosen, not only for easier accessibility for the researcher, but more so because the divisions in this region are connected with a university through a partnership. Being connected with a university has accustomed the superintendents and the professionals in their division to participate in research frequently and has led them to be open to the idea of participating in and learning from research. This group of high school principals comes from a diverse region which includes urban, suburban, and rural high schools.

The researcher also purposefully selected this group of high school principals in order for the focus group interviews to have “a reasonable amount of homogeneity within groups in order to foster discussion” (Morgan, 1988, p. 46). These principals have the same basic understanding of the state curriculum and testing requirements, thus allowing the discussion to be focused on the principals’ role in teacher professional development, quality teacher professional development, and their perceptions of improving teacher instructional practices. These principals’ schools must not only meet state accreditation and AYP, but must also meet the requirements of the on-time graduation rate (meaning students must graduate in four years after entering high school). Therefore, it is important for high school teachers to continuously improve their instruction to meet the needs of all their students in order for the students to pass classes and earn verified credits to graduate.

Pilot Focus Group

The researcher attended the state’s annual middle and high school principals’ conference in order to hold a pilot study with high school principals from regions other than the chosen region for this research. The researcher explained the purpose of the research, the focus group interview process, the information concerning confidentiality and potential risks, and the focus groups were scheduled to take place in the afternoon following conference meetings. Four principals agreed to participate in the focus group interview, none of them were from the chosen region, but all were from the same state. They all understood that this was a pilot study. The focus group interview was held in a side lobby at the hotel. It was not feasible for recording, but

the assistant moderator took excellent notes. The focus group interview protocol was followed (see Appendix D).

As expected in a focus group, the participants all participated and were willing to talk and engage in discussion. The participants would add to their original answers after they heard someone else answer. The researcher found it easy to make sure that each principal participated; all participants seem to understand each person was expected to answer the questions. The list of questions was asked (see Appendix E), but not all of the prompt questions were asked because doing so would have been redundant. The three primary questions most closely tied to the research questions were asked.

After the questions were asked, the researcher found it appropriate to close the interview with the participants by asking them “Is there anything else you would like to add about your role in teacher professional development that we have not covered?” It was an effective way to end the session, two people added something else and two responded that they didn’t have anything else to add. That final question was added to the list of questions for the focus group interviews.

Once the interview was completed, the researcher asked the participants how they felt about the questions asked of them. They all said that they thought they were good questions and they felt they could answer them well. They were asked if there were any other questions they thought should be asked. The participants offered the following two questions as possible questions to ask: How much professional development do teachers actually participate in? and What is the structure of your process for teacher professional development? The researcher decided not to add either of these specific questions, because it was believed that some aspects of both of these questions would be answered with the original questions, once those questions were put into a different order.

Each participant was thanked by the researcher for participating in this pilot study and once again they were assured of their anonymity. Each received a follow up thank you note and with a gift card for their participation in the pilot focus group interview.

With the completion of the pilot study, a discussion between the researcher and the moderator made it clear that some questions were out of sequence and others were not needed at all. In order to have the questions flow more smoothly, the order was changed. The second question was deleted because it seemed to be repeating what they had previously answered. So,

the second question became, “What type of teacher professional development activities did you implement? and Why?”. This move would hopefully make the interview flow better. The question, “Tell me how follow-up is provided after the teacher professional development activity has been completed”, was difficult for the participants to answer because they thought they had already answered it. That question was removed from the list. So, following the pilot study, there were three primary questions, all specifically related to the research questions, and only four prompt questions if needed. The final question of whether they have anything else to add was also added to the list. The questions are in Appendix F.

Gaining Access and Assurance of Confidentiality

Permission was first requested from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the proposed study. Permission was granted on June 28, 2010 (see Appendix G). In July, the researcher’s superintendent emailed all of the superintendents in the chosen region explaining that the researcher would be contacting their high school principals to participate in a focus group interview explaining the topic and giving them the researcher’s name if they had any questions (see Appendix H).

In July, 30 high school principals in the chosen region were contacted through email explaining the purpose of the research, the focus group interview process, the information concerning confidentiality and potential risks, and the date and times of the planned focus groups. With the email, the letter approved by the IRB was attached (see Appendix I). The letter informed each participant of the informed consent and confidentiality agreements that all were required to sign and that they would sign the confidentiality agreement at the actual focus group interview. Assurance was also given that all names, school names, and school division names would be kept in the strictest confidence and would not be used in this research. Participants were told that the information obtained from the focus group interviews would be destroyed once the research had been completed and written. The researcher must retain a copy of the consent form for each participant for three years. Also, information on obtaining a copy of the research findings was given to each participant.

The selected region includes 20 school divisions, but only 19 have high schools. In those 19 divisions, there are 34 high schools. Thirty of the 34 high school principals were invited to participate in the focus group interviews. Three high school principals were excluded because

their high schools were combined high schools of 6th – 12th grades, and in order for homogenous groups, it was decided to not include them. One other high school principal was not invited, because it was a brand new high school that just opened in 2010-2011.

Of the 30 high school principals invited, 15 principals from 12 different divisions participated in the focus group interviews. Of the 15 who did not participate, 4 principals never responded to emails or phone calls, even though messages were left. The other 11 all responded to either an email or phone call but could not participate for one of the following reasons: already had a scheduled meeting on the day of the focus group, out of town on the day of the focus group, unable to be out of my building at this time, too much on my plate, attending a leadership team meeting that day, or cannot attend giving no definitive reason.

All 15 principals who participated in the focus group interviews received reminder emails the day before their meeting. All signed the permission form, granting permission for the focus group interviews to be recorded and they understood their involvement in this research.

Interview Procedures and Protocols

Systematic steps are critical in gathering data from focus groups (Krueger, 1994). The researcher acted as moderator in each of the focus group interviews and followed the focus group interview protocol found in Appendix D. The moderator began with introductions, having the assistant moderator collect all documents, and reminded the participants of the procedures of the focus group interviews. The reminders given were: the conversation will be tape recorded; their name, their school name, and their school division name would not be used in the research; the recorded conversation would be transcribed into a written document; and that each participant would receive a copy of their part of the written document to verify the accuracy of the document. During the interview process, the moderator “directed the discussion keeping the conversation flowing and taking a few notes. The assistant moderator took comprehensive notes, operated the tape recorder, handled the environmental conditions and logistics, and responded to any unexpected interruptions” (Krueger, 1994, p. 103-104). The moderator used the interview questions found in Appendix F. The primary questions are the research questions, with the prompt questions reflecting part of NSDC’s twelve standards.

Once the participants completed the interview and left, the moderator and assistant moderator debriefed. This time allowed them to “capture first impressions, and highlights, and contrast findings from the earlier groups” (Krueger, p. 128).

Researcher’s Role

In this qualitative design, the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing the data (Merriam, 1998). The researcher selects the questions for the focus group discussion, moderates the focus group interviews, collects the data, analyzes the data, and writes the findings. Knowing that all of the information was filtered through the researcher, it is important to understand the background of the researcher.

The researcher is currently a sixth-year assistant superintendent for instruction in a rural county in a southeastern state. Previous positions held by the researcher have been teacher for nine years, assistant principal for eight years at the elementary level, and principal for six years also at the elementary level. As a former principal, the researcher was responsible for implementing teacher professional development at the school level. The current role of the researcher includes implementing and evaluating professional development for administrators, principals, teachers, and support staff. The researcher currently works closely with principals to implement professional development for their teachers. All of these roles has led the researcher to have a keen interest in the principal’s role in teacher professional development and has given the researcher knowledge and understanding of the topic.

The researcher enlisted a colleague who is currently an assistant superintendent for instruction in a neighboring division as the assistant moderator and critical friend. She has been a former teacher, assistant principal, and principal. This person acted as assistant moderator to “handle the environment and conditions, operate the tape recorder, take comprehensive notes, and identify key points of the sessions during the focus groups” (Krueger, 1994, p. 104). She took notes during the sessions and debriefed with the researcher after each of the session. She also was the researcher’s critical friend during the data analysis piece to be the “watchdog as the researcher develops possible analytic categories” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 69); this helped to limit bias of the researcher to some degree. The assistant moderator has a thorough understanding of the NSDC’s standards and works with teacher professional development in her own division.

Data Analysis Procedures

Two types of qualitative analysis were used to bring order, structure, and meaning to the information gathered during the focus group interviews and the document review. Bringing order to and meaning to the transcripts of the focus group interviews involved the process of the researcher: “organizing the data, familiarizing self with the data, generating categories and themes, coding the data, and interpreting the data,” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 279). The analysis of the documents focused on teacher professional development referenced in the school improvement plans. A detailed explanation of both processes follows.

Focus Group Data Analysis

Data analysis began after each focus group interview was held. The first step was a debriefing of the focus group interview with the assistant moderator. In these debriefings thoughts about the interview sessions were noted and main ideas were reviewed. The second step was immersion into the transcripts of the focus group interviews by the researcher. The transcripts of the focus group interviews were completed by a company called Transcription Hub which uses a computer program to write the transcription. The researcher then read each transcript of the interviews several times while listening to the audio of each session. Those transcripts were then sorted into an individual document of each participant’s comments. Sending an electronic version of this document to each principal completed the member check, allowing the participants to validate the transcript and provide any changes or comments.

Once the transcripts were deemed accurate, the information from the transcripts was sorted and categorized using the long-table approach (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The researcher, using a computer, cut and pasted the comments into the three areas of context, process, and content as described by the National Staff Development Council’s (NSDC) (2001) standards for professional development.

The context standards address the organizational support for professional learning – the organization, system or culture. The process standards address how the system organizes learning opportunities to ensure adults acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions to affect student learning. The content standards address what educators must understand and be able to apply to ensure students learn successfully. (Hirsch, 2001, p. 13)

The three research questions in this study connect well to the NSDC's three areas of context, process, and content. The first question about the principal's role in planning, selecting, and organizing teacher professional development aligns with the context standards which address the support for professional learning within the organization, system and culture. The second question about what actual teacher professional development activities were implemented aligns with the content standards which address what educators must understand and be able to apply to ensure students learn successfully. The process standards align to the third question concerning the improvement of teachers' instructional practices because the standards address how the system organizes learning opportunities to ensure adults require the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to affect student learning.

Once the data had been categorized into those three areas, the data were reviewed once again retrieving the main ideas from the transcripts and organizing those ideas into NSDC's (2001) 12 professional development standards. Charts were constructed for each standard allowing the researcher to determine frequency and type of statement made connecting to each standard (see Appendix J).

Once the charts were completed, the critical friend, also known as a "peer debriefer," reviewed the charts. The researcher and critical friend met first to review and discuss the NSDC's 12 standards of professional development. The next step was reviewing the charts (see Appendix J) in which the researcher organized the data. The critical friend analyzed the decisions of the researcher as to the sorting, categorizing, and grouping of the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In this discussion, it was determined that three items were not categorized appropriately and the items were moved to the appropriate category.

Document Analysis

A document analysis was completed using the school improvement plan from each participating principal's high school for the 2009-2010 school year. The high school principals were asked to provide their 2009-2010 Biennial School Plan or sometimes referred to as a School Improvement Plan, which each school is required to complete by the code of the state. Twelve of the 15 participants either brought the plan to the focus group interview or emailed their plan. Of the three who did not provide a plan, one said he did not have one, and the other

two, even though they said they would send it, never did although they were contacted on three separate occasions.

The plans sent to the researcher had a variety of names: Five-Year Plan, School Goals, Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, Annual School Plan Goals, School Improvement Plan, Continuous Improvement Goals, and Comprehensive Plan. Also, each plan was constructed differently. Ten of the 12 plans contained goals related specifically to teacher professional development while two plans did not mention teacher professional development at all. Four plans listed only goals; the other six plans listed goals and strategies to achieve those goals.

The documents were analyzed using the Document Review Form (see Appendix K). Each plan was examined to see if professional development was part of the plan. If it was part of the plan, then the question was asked if the professional development related to a school goal or a specific content area. Then, the professional development stated in the plan was sorted and categorized (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) using the conceptual framework of the NSDC (2001) content standards into a chart (see Appendix L).

Triangulation

“Triangulation will be established using multiple sources of data in order to build the picture of what the researcher is investigating” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 69). In this research, triangulation of the data was accomplished by using data from four main sources: transcripts from the three focus group interviews, allowing members to check their statements; a review of the documents provided by the participants; the debriefings between the researcher and assistant moderator; and the notes from the researchers’ journal.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher has described the type of research that took place in order to examine high school principals’ roles in teacher professional development, the types of teacher professional development activities principals implemented and why, and the extent to which principals perceive teacher professional development has improved teacher instructional practices. The qualitative methodology of focus group interviews and document analysis was used to collect the data. In this chapter, the researcher has explained how the data were collected,

how the participants were chosen, and how the data were analyzed. In Chapter 4, the findings from the data are described.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The research in this study provides a descriptive account of 15 high school principals' experiences and views of their roles in teacher professional development. This chapter summarizes the overall findings from the transcripts of three focus group interviews with the principals, the review of each of the participants' School Improvement Plan, the debriefings between the researcher and assistant moderator; and the notes from the researchers' journal.

Chapter 4 begins with a general description of the focus groups' participants, omitting specific information about each member in order to protect anonymity. The second part of the chapter describes the documents gathered from the principals. The main part of the chapter is organized around the three questions which are the focus of this research study. For each question, the data from the focus group interviews, documents, and researcher's journal have been organized in the following manner: a general overview of the findings showing the connection to the NSDC standards and connecting the findings to research from the literature review and then a description of "each separate finding supported by quotes from the participants or references from the field notes" (Merriam, p. 229).

General Description of the Participants

Fifteen high school principals from one region in a southeastern state participated in this study. This is a diverse region which includes 20 school divisions in 12 counties, 6 cities, and 1 combined city/county. On the state's department of education's website, 12 of the 20 divisions are described as being rural; the others are characterized as a town or a small city. The smallest division has a student enrollment of approximately 300 students, and the largest division has a student enrollment of 12,000. Thirteen divisions have only one high school, and the other seven divisions vary between two to five high schools.

During the focus group interviews, all 15 principals were quite open and willing to share information about the teacher professional development in their schools or divisions, were proud of what they offered at their schools, and were happy to answer clarifying questions from other principals. Participants in two of the focus group interviews specifically commented on how they liked getting together to share these ideas and learn from each other in the area of teacher

professional development. The researcher noted that when someone would nod in agreement with what another was saying, it seemed that the principals felt supported and there was definitely a spirit of collegiality in all three of the focus group interviews.

In order to identify sources of quotes, the researcher used a participant coding system throughout the process of this research. Each participant was assigned a random number from 1 to 15. Following any participant quotes, there is a number which is attributed to a participant followed by a corresponding page number from the transcripts.

Document Review

The 15 high school principals were asked to provide their 2009-2010 Biennial School Plan or sometimes referred to as a School Improvement Plan, which each school is required to complete by the code of the state. Twelve of the 15 participants either brought the plan to the focus group interview or emailed their plan. Of the three who did not provide a plan, one reported not having one, and the other two said they would send it, but never did even though they were contacted on three separate occasions.

The plans sent to the researcher had a variety of names: Five-Year Plan, School Goals, Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, Annual School Plan Goals, School Improvement Plan, Continuous Improvement Goals, and Comprehensive Plan. Also, each plan was constructed differently. Four plans listed only goals; the other eight plans listed goals and strategies to achieve them. For this review, the only goals or strategies examined were ones relating to teacher professional development. Ten of the 12 plans contained goals related specifically to teacher professional development, and two plans did not mention teacher professional development at all. The information about teacher professional development found in the documents was succinct without elaboration or numerous details related to the teacher professional development. The material in the documents matched three of the 12 NSDC standards as summarized later in this chapter.

Description of the Findings

Principals' Roles in the Selection, Organization and Implementation of Teacher Professional Development

The NSDC's (2001) context standards address the organizational support for professional learning – the organization, system, or culture. The principals made 101 comments that connected to the three context standards. From the results of the interviews and document review, it was evident that the majority of the principals felt responsible to provide teacher professional development. They reported that they typically had to plan for, organize, and carry out professional development for their teachers with occasional help from others. The majority of the principals reported that they definitely had the lead role in planning the professional development for their schools. This role consisted of all of the logistics: scheduling the speakers, organizing the time and place, and providing food. This effort took time in order to make it work well in their buildings for their teachers. As one principal put it, “We (administrative team) do everything from ‘soup to nuts’, we take all of that on, and we do not do much delegation because we do not want the teachers to have to do anything but be at the professional development” (Participant 8, p. 16). Another participant said, “I am working every logistical piece as well as the behind the scenes organization side, but even the in-the-moment logistics. I am typically responsible for that as well, and it is not something I delegate” (Participant 12, p. 13). As part of the planning and organizing process, the principals focused on four main roles that they executed in teacher professional development.

First Role

The principals reported that one essential element was to align teacher professional development activities, workshops, or classes to the schools' and/or divisions' goals. This element was found not only during the focus group interviews but also in the document review. Research in the literature review concurs that professional development should be driven by an analysis of goals and standards and should be integrated in a comprehensive change process (Elmore, 1996; Hawley & Valli, 1999). Bamburg and Andrews (1991) also found that the principal should conceptualize a vision that is focused on desired outcomes. It is interesting to note that there was not a specific question asked about if or how teacher professional

development was related to division and/or school goals; it was just part of the answer regarding the principal's role in organizing and planning teacher professional development. The majority of principals in the three focus groups concentrated on relating professional development to the division and/or school goals.

Ten of the 15 principals reported that teacher professional development was aligned with the division and/or school goals; it was evident that the majority of principals believed that professional development should be held for a specific reason and should support a specific purpose whether it is at the division level and/or school level. They seemed to want the connection to show the teachers the importance of the professional development. When principals talked about teacher professional development linking to their school or division goals, they showed pride in that fact. One principal said,

Our school's professional development is to connect with the division goals, so I get a lot of help from central office people. I come with an idea of what the professional development should look like at my school to meet our needs, and the central office person helps think through my ideas and helps coordinate the professional development with me. We may plan for two years at a time. (Participant 15, p. 10)

Another principal commented, "Knowing where the division is going gives me a clear picture of what professional development I need to put in place for my school while also meeting division goals and our school goals" (Participant 12, p. 13).

Another principal believed, "My professional development ties into the school improvement plan that was made by my school improvement team which takes into account the division goals. My professional development is teacher-driven and teacher-led" (Participant 6, p. 9-10).

Another participant described it as, "We create a professional development plan based on survey results from teachers, input from the school improvement team, division input, our school data, and our school goals" (Participant 4, p. 19).

Two principals were emphatic about the fact that they relied on their school improvement teams to decide teacher professional development (Participants 2 and 5).

In the document review, 9 of the 10 plans connected the teacher professional development to either a school-wide goal or a specific subject area goal. In seven plans under one or more objectives of the school, teacher professional development was listed as a specific

goal or was included as one of the strategies to help meet a specific goal. For example, in one plan under the goal “Will improve teaching and learning through the appropriate use of technology” was listed the strategy “Have technology committee members deliver staff development opportunities for faculty” (Participant 9). Another example in a different school improvement plan was the school goal to “provide a program of professional development for instructional personnel centered on Marzano’s strategies for increasing student achievement and reading across the disciplines” with the objective saying “holds one in-service before the school year begins and others will take place during the school year” (Participant 5). Two of the plans named teacher professional development for individual subject areas. An example was found in one document from the social studies department; it said, “Members of the department will engage in three observations of their colleagues in other departments. Observations will focus on how teachers utilize effective content reading strategies” (Participant 14).

Second Role

A second element the principals reported to be important was to allow their teachers to play a part in their own professional development. The principals gathered data in various ways to decide what professional development the teachers wanted and/or needed. Hawley and Valli’s (1999) research supports the idea of teachers identifying their learning needs. Schmoker (2006) agrees that it is important for administrators to work cooperatively with teachers in order for schools to see improved instruction in the classroom. The participants also reported that they often asked the teachers to participate in professional development by making presentations to their colleagues. The administrators believed it was important for other teachers to hear their colleagues describe how they implemented the idea/strategy in their classroom. The research did not specifically address teacher presenters, but the principals believed this was an effective way to get *buy-in* from their staff. The two main areas discussed were how they received input about what professional development should be offered and who presented the professional development in their buildings.

Thirteen of the 15 principals reported that they received input from their teachers indicating the types of professional development wanted or needed. Principals received the information through a variety of ways: teacher surveys, discussion in teacher meetings, discussions as part of the school improvement plan, informal conversations with teachers,

discussions with department chairs, and/or having teachers do the majority of the planning. One principal said,

Once I look at the student achievement data and see some areas where we need to improve, then I talk with the teachers because I think it is so important to get their input on their needs and what the professional development should look like. Once I've talked to the teachers, then, with my administrative team, we decide what the professional development will be (Participant 10, p. 2).

Several principals said they survey their faculties to acquire information concerning the needs and wants for professional development. One participant allows a committee of three teachers to be in charge of the school's professional development for teachers (Participant 6, p. 10). Another talked about why it was important to get the teachers input saying,

I talk in the faculty meeting and have a discussion with the teachers about what they think they need in professional development. The most important thing is for teachers to leave professional development sessions with something they can take back and apply to their classrooms (Participant 1, p. 11).

Other participants related that they discuss their professional development with their teachers in order to get the "buy in" from the teachers. One principal said, "I rely heavily on my school improvement team as to what kind of staff development needs they feel they want and need" (Participant 5, p. 20).

Principals also reported that two other groups of people that help them decide on the professional development for their school: their administrative team and central office. Five administrators talked about how they heavily use their school administrative team (mostly their assistant principals) to talk about what they saw as the needs in their school by looking at both student achievement data and classroom instruction. One principal's remark describes what the others also said, "I find it very effective to bounce ideas off of my assistant principal, and we have great conversations about what we see in the building, so it allows us to plan the professional development together" (Participant 9, p. 12). Six others also talked about the central office either helping them plan for professional development at the school level or asking them for their input for professional development at the division level.

The principals also discussed who presented professional development at their school. At the school level, the majority of the principals reported that they had their teachers, assistant

principals, or themselves present at their schools. A few had central office personnel present and some had division help to bring in outside presenters. Nine of the 15 principals said teachers led workshops at their schools sometime during the year. As the principals talked about their teachers leading workshops, they spoke about the experience and knowledge in their buildings among their teachers and wanted them to share those with their colleagues, knowing that teachers often buy in to using a new strategy or idea when their colleague tells them how well it is working in their classroom. One principal said, “Lots of times teachers are presenting, but they also want to see me (principal) present. The teachers’ presentations are extremely valuable because they are helping their colleagues” (Participant 2, p. 15).

Third Role

A third role the principals reported doing for teacher professional development is to provide resources. The third context standard states: requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration (NSCD, 2001). In the discussions with the principals, they talked about two resources – time and money.

The principals reported that they either provided the funding from either their own school budget or asked the division to provide the funds. The principals said they were responsible for paying for trainers, speakers, books, materials, conference fees, and any other costs associated with teacher professional development. The principals did not complain of having too little funding nor did they ever say they had excessive monies for teacher professional development. Bamburg and Andrews’ (1991) said one specific responsibility of the principal is to provide the resources that teachers need to promote, teach, and learn. Hawley and Valli (1999) also found that there must be financial support in order to provide the opportunities for teachers to participate in professional development. Only two of the fifteen principals had less money in 2009-2010 compared to the year before to implement professional development and only two stated they had a little more money. The other eleven never mentioned whether there was more or less money; it seemed they had about their normal amount to spend. Overall in the discussions, even though money was mentioned, the discussion was matter of fact and they used what money was allotted to them in the budget.

Finding the time to do professional development was considered difficult by the principals. Every participant had a couple professional development days in the calendar, usually

at the beginning of the year. A professional development day planned in the calendar was the preference for all the principals, but there were few of these days and they did not always have control over them. Therefore, they all found other times to provide professional development throughout the year. The principals reported that the majority of teacher professional development during the school year was held at one of the following times: before the school day began for students (4 principals), after the school day ended for students (9 principals), or during the teachers' planning time (5 principals).

Fourth Role

The fourth role of the principals was to act as an encourager. The majority of the principals reported that they believed they must provide support and encouragement for teachers in the implementation of teacher professional development (Hall & Hord, 2001). The principals reported that one way to provide that encouragement was to discuss with the teachers' ideas for implementing a new strategy and to offer praise for improving their instructional practices. The principals reported encouraging the teachers to go ahead and implement their new ideas or strategies; if the first implementation did not work as well as the teacher hoped, then it was accepted as an attempt and they were encouraged to try again. Blasé and Blasé's (2000) study found that teaching methods were positively influenced by principals who gave praise to their teachers for specific and concrete practices. Garet et al.'s (2001) research findings indicated that teachers needed encouragement in order for them to change their teaching practices. Spencer and Logan (2003) also found that teachers need time and support from their principal to actually change practices in the classroom.

The majority of the participants reported that they were an encourager to the teachers as teachers implement new ideas. Principals wanted the professional development to stimulate teachers' interests, to generate excitement, and to inspire them to try. In describing this role, one principal stated "I just think it is my job to try to make professional development flexible, inviting, and exciting. If the professional development is exciting, teachers will want to be part of it" (Participant 9, p. 12). Another administrator expressed, "I think we have to be the encouragers to the teachers to help them want to continue to get better at what they do" (Participant 10, p. 2). A third principal said, "We need to be supporters of what are teachers are doing in the

classrooms and see what they are doing and reinforce it. Sometimes, we might need to think outside the box and give the teachers flexibility to try things” (Participant 5, p. 21).

Areas Discussed by a Few Principals

There were two significant areas of the literature review that were mentioned by only a few of the principals. One area, professional learning communities (PLC), was addressed by five principals. Even though the other principals mentioned meetings that their teachers attended – department meetings, correlate meetings, school improvement meetings – the principals typically did not consider these meetings to be professional development. Just five principals spoke specifically about the role of PLCs in their schools. These administrators described the PLCs as having designated weekly meetings during which data were discussed and instructional strategies and practices were shared. Usually an administrator would attend the meeting; if not, a summary report was generated and given to him or her. The research of Cranston (2009), DuFour (2001), Thompson, Gregg, and Niska (2004) support the idea that the PLC should have a framework in place which allows a group to solve issues and problems by collecting and sharing data with colleagues.

The five principals who specifically said they have PLCs made sure the PLC groups met by subject area at a specified weekly time to discuss student achievement data and instructional strategies. The principals reported that they viewed the PLCs as a time for teachers to share data and to be honest about how their students were achieving in that subject area. One principal stated, “During the PLCs they are talking about assessment, benchmarking, common questions, common issues, and asking – ‘Your kids got it, my kids didn’t, why, how did you teach them?’” (Participant 9, p. 34). This principal also added, “The PLC groups have a scripted agenda where they are looking at the last unit assessment, and pinpointing individual student needs, and deciding what the remediation should be” (Participant 9, p. 35). Another principal expressed, “I think a lot of unplanned professional learning takes place naturally in PLC meetings which every teacher attends once a week to discuss student data” (Participant 2, p. 35). Only one of the five principals referring specifically to PLCs said the school’s PLCs would not only collaborate about student learning but would also collaborate about “how to make the school better” (Participant 14, p. 18). Two of the five principals utilizing PLCs had the teachers provide written documentation to an administrator listing what was discussed in the meeting. Another principal

had an assistant principal sit in on the PLC meetings. For these three principals, it was important to know exactly how the time was being used.

The second area discussed in the literature that was not specifically addressed by the principals is the idea that professional development should be a continuous, on-going process (Elmore, 1996; Garet et al., 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999). Granted, the principals planned professional development every year for their teachers, so there would be on-going professional development. However, they did not specifically report that they connected one year's professional development to another. Only one principal reported mentioning over several years the ideas learned in a class that all teachers had been required to take. From these interviews, it was not clear that the principals consciously thought about their teachers' professional development being continuous and on-going.

Summary of the Principals' Roles in the Selection, Organization and Implementation of Teacher Professional Development

In the discussions with the principals, it was evident that the majority of the principals reported feeling responsible to provide teacher professional development. They reported that they typically had to plan for, organize, and carry out professional development for their teachers with occasional help from others. The principals discussed four main areas they felt were their responsibilities: to align teacher professional development activities, workshops, or classes to the schools' and/or divisions' goals; to allow their teachers to play a part in their own professional development; to provide the resources of time and money; and to act as an encourager to the teachers as they implement ideas learned from professional development. There were two areas that only a few principals mentioned that were an important part of the literature: PLCs and professional learning being continuous and on-going.

Teacher Professional Development Implemented

NSDC's (2001) content standards specify that educators must have a deep understanding of their content knowledge and be able to provide a supportive learning environment for their students. In all three focus groups, each principal was asked to name specific professional development activities implemented in his or her school/division during the 2009-2010 school year. The majority of the professional development activities that the principals implemented in

the 2009-2010 school year focused on two main areas: (a) understanding students and how they learn, and (b) developing instructional strategies to help meet academic standards. The overall majority of these activities related directly to what was or should be happening in the classroom. The research on quality professional development supports the need for the professional development to be directly related to the classroom. Elmore (1996) found that clear expectations need to be identified regarding how teachers are to use the professional development they receive. Hawley and Valli (1999) reported that quality professional development deepens the theoretical understanding of knowledge and skills of the teacher. Garet et al. (2001) expressed the need for the professional development to be tied to subject or content matter in order for it to be meaningful to the teacher while Bolton's (2007) research focused on coaches working on reading strategies in teachers' classrooms.

The principals at the 15 different high schools reported that they conducted 56 teacher professional development activities in the 2009-2010 school year. Based on comments made in the focus group interviews, the professional development activities focused on the following: understanding students and how they learn; studying safety concerns for students; learning instructional strategies to meet students' needs; and using assessments to inform instruction.

Understanding Students and How They Learn

During the focus group interviews, the principals reported conducting 22 professional development sessions at 12 different schools regarding understanding students and how they learn. Of those 22 sessions, there were 18 sessions that dealt with the idea of understanding and appreciating all students. Table 1 lists the types of sessions that were reported by the principals and the number of high schools that held those sessions.

As the principals talked about the sessions on understanding students and how they learn, they stated that they believed the sessions to be valuable to their teachers in working with different types of students. In the debriefing after the focus group interviews, the assistant moderator and researcher noted that the schools reported holding similar types of professional development activities for understanding how to work with students. Also, noted was that the activities were one-time sessions in which a speaker came in and talked with the teachers.

Table 1

Sessions on Understanding Students and How They Learn

Types of Sessions	Number of High Schools
Build Relationships with Students	2
Student Diversity and How to Relate to Students	4
Implementing Differentiation to Meet the Needs of Students	2
Working with Special Education Students	2
Using Brain Research to Enhance Student Learning	2
Students as Active Learners	2
Working with the 21 st Century Learners	3
Setting High Expectations for Students	1

Safety Concerns for Students

Four high schools reported holding teacher professional development on safety issues for students. The list of the type of session and the number of high schools that held those activities is listed in Table 2. These were also just onetime meetings for the teachers.

Table 2

Sessions on Safety Concerns for Students

Type of Sessions	Number of High Schools
Classroom Management	1
New Types of Drinks and Their Harm to Students	1
Gangs	1
Teen Suicide	1

In the document review there was only one topic of professional development concerning safety issues of students. The one topic was: professional development for a school-wide discipline program. Even though this was in the document it was not stated by the principal in the focus group interview. The principal may have forgotten it or it may not have been held as the plan described.

Learning Instructional Strategies to Meet Students' Needs

The principals also reported during the focus group interviews that 24 specific sessions/workshops/courses were held at their high schools on the topic of instructional strategies. These teacher professional development activities on instructional strategies were ideas/concepts that teachers could implement in their classrooms in order to meet students' academic needs. Ten of the fifteen high schools held instructional strategy sessions on using technology in the classroom to enhance learning. These sessions on technology were not just about teachers learning how to use the technology but also how to incorporate the technology into a lesson to help meet students academic needs. Some of the technology sessions were on the following topics: Smart Boards, Google Applications, Twitter, Promethean Boards, iPods, using cell phones, researching, response clickers, You Tube, social networking, web quests, photo-story, and student data systems. During the technology sessions, the majority of the time the teachers were taught how to use the technology in a hands-on manner.

Thirteen of the 15 high schools reported holding sessions concerning instructional strategies to implement into their daily lessons in order to meet the needs of the students. Table 3 below lists the types of sessions and how many high schools held those sessions.

The researcher and assistant moderator noted that even though the names of the sessions are different, the overall topics are similar. A large majority of the principals reported concentrating on improving teaching in the classroom providing instructional strategies to improve lessons in order to meet students' learning needs.

Table 3

Sessions on Instructional Strategies

Types of Sessions on Instructional Strategies	Number of High Schools
Understand Lesson Design	3
Class - CReating Independence through Student-owned Strategies	2
Book Clubs to Discuss Strategies and their Implementation	2
Instructional Coaches Working in the Classroom	1
Strategies to Improve Math Concepts and Skills	2
Using Marzano Strategies in the Classroom	1
Peer Observations of Strategies in the Classroom	1
Teachers Wrote Goals on Strategies Implemented in their Classroom	1

Once again the document review did not match exactly what the principals said, but in the documents the professional development activities listed are similar to the types of trainings and sessions the principals reported holding. In the documents reviewed, four schools listed technology trainings to be held at their school, four schools also listed training sessions to be held about understanding and implementing differentiation in the classroom, and three schools specifically listed teaching sessions on implementing specific instructional strategies such as Marzano’s strategies or active learning strategies. There were eight professional development activities listed in the documents that were implemented by individual schools. These eight activities were as follows: provide opportunities for Career and Tech teachers to attend conferences; train teachers on understanding and writing lesson objectives; involve teachers in workshops on lesson design; allocate time for teachers to meet in groups to chart benchmark scores; support peer observations in social studies department; participate in PLC groups; participate in book clubs; and provide sessions on the topic “understanding by design”. In one plan, teacher professional development was mentioned in the following way: “math teachers would encourage teachers to take the data course, and social studies teachers would like to have

a differentiation course to take” (Participant 3); this plan did not state whether the professional development would actually happen or not.

Using Assessments to Inform Instruction

Five principals reported holding professional development activities about assessment. Sessions about benchmark assessments and how these assessments should inform instruction in the classroom were held at two high schools. Other principals held workshops on grading and its impact for students and one high school held a session on test-taking skills so teachers could teach those skills to the students.

Other Professional Development Sessions

Four other types of professional development activities reported by principals were implemented on the following topics: graduation rates, new school schedule, using the new data system, and describing and explaining the concept of Professional Learning Communities. One high school had a workshop on the types of graduation rates and the impact on their school. Another held sessions on adjusting to a new schedule for the following year, and they focused on how their pacing would need to be different as well as strategies for teaching in the new type of schedule. Two high schools held professional development sessions for teachers to learn how to use the new student data system being implemented in their schools, which was documented in their School Improvement Plans, and one school studied the concepts of describing and explaining Professional Learning Communities.

Summary of Teacher Professional Development Implemented

The principals at these 15 high schools reported holding professional development workshops, sessions, and courses on topics that were important to their schools. The majority of the professional development activities that the principals implemented in the 2009-2010 school year focused on two main areas: (a) understanding students and how they learn, and (b) developing instructional strategies to help meet academic standards. All of the sessions listed above were to improve student achievement through building relationships with students to improving lessons that would meet the students’ learning needs.

By analyzing what the documents stated in regard to teacher professional development compared to what the principals named as their teacher professional development in the 2009-

2010 school year it is not an exact match for all the principals. Of the 12 schools who supplied their School Improvement Plans, two plans did not have written documentation of teacher professional development at all, and four plans had written documentation of teacher professional development, but the plan did not entirely match what the principal said in the focus group interview. There were six schools whose written teacher professional development in the school improvement plan matched what the principal said in the focus group interviews.

The Impact of Professional Development on Teachers' Instructional Practices

The NSDC's (2001) process standards focus on how the system organizes learning opportunities to ensure adults acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions to affect student learning. The principals made 140 comments that linked to five of the six process standards. From those comments the principals discussed five main topics. One topic was the use of student achievement data, which were utilized in two ways: to determine what professional development should be held and to monitor the effects of the professional development. The second topic discussed by the principals was how they determined the professional development's effectiveness. There were three ways the principals determined the effectiveness of the professional development: teachers evaluating the professional development activity; principals completing formal and informal observation in the classrooms; and conversations with the teachers on a formal and informal level. The third focus was the discussion of when the professional development was held at their schools. There was agreement by all the principals that designated professional development days are the best time to implement professional development but find that there are too few of them. Consequently, professional development was also held before, during, or after school on regular teaching days. Another topic for the participants was the fact that they believed that it was important for teachers to have choices as to what professional development they attended. The overall belief was that if the teachers were able to choose a subject matter in which they were interested, they were more likely to use the information in their classrooms. The final area of focus for the principals was the discussion that not all teachers believed that they needed to learn from the professional development and therefore, basically ignored it and did not implement the professional development in their classrooms. The principals speculated that the teachers felt they had validation not to implement any new ideas or strategies because of their high SOL or benchmark scores.

Use of Student Achievement Data

The principals reported utilizing data in two ways: student achievement data were used to determine what professional development should be held and student achievement data were also used to monitor the effects of the professional development.

The majority of participants reported that they used student data as part of the decision making process to determine what type of professional development to provide their teachers. The data the principals reported using included results from SOL tests and benchmark tests, results of sub-group achievement, discipline data, and retention rates. Both Elmore (1996) and Hawley and Valli (1999) supports using these types of data to show the nature of the professional development needed. Twelve principals discussed how important it was to apply student data to determine the type of professional development to implement at their schools. The majority of the participants used student achievement data, such as SOL tests or benchmark tests. One principal said, “First of all, I look at student data in terms of student achievement. I use that as a guide to determine how I want to move forward with professional development” (Participant 10, p. 2). Another principal said, “Our biggest piece of student data we looked at was our sub-group achievement data, but we also looked at the discipline data of our students” (Participant, 11, p. 8). Another administrator added, “We look at our student achievement data, and we look for the achievement gaps in each area and that leads to professional development and what programs we want to bring to our school” (Participant 1, p. 11).

Only six principals reported looking at student achievement data to monitor the impact of the professional development. The majority of the data they were monitoring came from SOL tests, additionally benchmark tests, student grades, and trend data over a period of time. The principals recognized that they had to monitor data over time to see if professional development impacted student achievement. One participant said, “I can see improvement in our student achievement in the common unit assessment, bottom line, and I can see it over time and start to see growth using a year-to-year comparison between with the treatment or without the treatment” (Participant 12, p. 53).

Determining the Effectiveness of Professional Development

The majority of principals reported determining the effectiveness of the professional development in three ways – teachers evaluating the professional development activity, using

data from their classroom observations to see if it was being implemented in the classroom, and discussing the implementation of the professional development with teachers on an individual basis. The research from both Bamburg and Andrews (1991) and Blasé and Blasé (2000) found that the principals' role as communicator – making suggestions and giving feedback to the teachers – was paramount in the teachers' implementation of the professional development. Research studies on quality professional development (Bolton, 2007; Elmore, 1996; Garet et al., 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999; & Spencer & Logan, 2003) support the fact that when ideas, concepts, or strategies are implemented in the classroom with the students, only then has the professional development been effective.

Eleven of the 15 principals reported using a variety of methods to evaluate the professional development in their schools. This evaluation typically was completed at the end of the professional development activity, and the most frequently asked questions of the teachers were: what was useful, how will you use this in your classroom, what will you not use, what did you find valuable about the session, did you like the choices, etc. Principals collected this information in a variety of ways from exit slips when leaving the activity, having teachers posting on a blog about the activity, completing two surveys a year about professional development, or having department chairs discuss the professional development activity and report any feedback to the principal. The principals used this information to judge whether the professional development activity was accepted as a positive, meaningful activity. For the most part, all of the principals received overwhelming positive information about the activities. However, it must be noted that most of these teacher evaluations were not mandated, so the principals only received information from those teachers who chose to provide it. One principal said that after each professional development activity, the teacher is required to blog and it is monitored. He stated, “Any type of professional development we do, we put it out there to get feedback. We tell them we want honest feedback, I mean, you are not going to hurt our feelings, and we really want to know what you think” (Participant 9, p. 13).

The other two ways the principals reported knowing if the information from the professional development activity is being implemented in classrooms is through classroom observations or discussions with teachers about the professional development. All 15 principals reported they either see the professional development implemented in classrooms through their own observations in both formal and informal settings and/or they have discussions with teachers in

which they specifically ask about professional development activities. It was noted by the assistant moderator and the researcher that when the question was asked as to how they evaluate if the professional development was effective, the first response from one of the participants in each focus group was classroom observation and every other participant also said through classroom observation. The comments of the participants include the following:

When I am in the classroom, I am looking to see if any of those things from the professional development are being incorporated in the lesson during both formal and informal observations (Participant 10, p. 46);

In the post-observation conference, I ask teachers to show me lesson plans where they have incorporated the professional development because it may not be in the lesson that I just observed. This discussion gives me feedback then about the professional development, and we can talk about it (Participant 7, p. 46);

I see it in the classrooms; I have seen change in the teachers over the last four years. I think the professional development is effective because in my school it is teacher directed (Participant 6, p. 50);

The best way to see the effects of professional development is by walking into classrooms and seeing what people had just learned being implemented. I also get the chance to ask a teacher how is this working, what do we need to go back and do over again? (Participant 2, p. 54); and

I think my visibility is so important. There are so many things that I see informally as to what is happening in the classroom. Then there are great informal conversations that happen which show me what teachers are doing with the professional development (Participant 5, p. 61).

A couple of principals used two types of coaches, an Instructional Technology Resource Teacher (ITRT) and an Academic Instructional Coach, to determine the degree to which professional development was being implemented in the classroom. The ITRT discussed with the principal the types of technology being implemented in the lessons, and an instructional coach was able to describe to the principal the type of instructional activities being implemented in the classroom. Of course, each principal relied on his/her assistant principal to complete both formal and informal observations in which information was shared concerning implementation of professional development in classroom observations.

Time for Professional Development

The principals reported that finding time to hold professional development was one of the biggest challenges they faced. This challenge is supported by Zimmerman and May's (2003) findings. The principals all struggled with providing enough time for quality training. The principals preferred their teachers attend designated professional development days instead of using their planning times or attending before or after school training. However, they felt they had little choice in the matter.

At these 15 different high schools, professional development was presented for teachers during the following times with the numbers in parentheses indicating the number of principals responding: designated professional development days in the school calendar (6), during teachers' planning periods (5), after school (9), before school (4), on a Friday and Saturday (1), during "remediation/extension" time (2), during the summer (1), during teaching days with teacher having a substitute (1), and providing it on-line whenever the teacher chose (2). In the focus group interviews, the principals agreed that the designated professional development days are the best because teachers know they are specifically slated for professional development. But there are only a few of those days scheduled in the school calendar and sometimes principals do not have any control over what happens on those days. Principals understand that after school is not the best time but feel they do not have much choice. One principal described his thoughts about when professional development could be held,

Unfortunately, we do not have many days in the calendar for professional development, so I look at the time we have. We have time before school during the work week, and I have to think about how much of that time I want to use. It usually turns out there is only two or three days during the school year for the teachers to have unencumbered professional development. We also use faculty meetings to do professional development (Participant 1, p. 55).

Another principal said,

Our faculty meetings are used for professional development in the morning. We do division wide staff development on the days scheduled in the calendar (Participant 15, p. 11).

Another participant who works to accommodate teachers' schedules said,

We try to offer the sessions multiple times during the day, during planning time, and then after school and in the morning just to accommodate as much as we could with schedules. It is hard to get them after school and get everyone there that we need to be there (Participant 9, p. 12).

Giving Teachers a Choice in Professional Development

The principals reported that allowing teachers to choose the professional development they participated in was important. The principals believed that if the teachers self-selected then they were more likely to implement the professional development idea or strategy in their classroom. Research (Hawley & Valli, 1999) supports the ideas that professional should relate to individual needs.

Nine principals reported that teachers had choices as to what types of professional activities they attended. As the participants talked about giving their teachers choices regarding professional development activities, they mostly related it to setting up professional development days or activities and allowing the teachers to choose which sessions they wanted to attend. The principals felt that when the teachers had a choice, it showed their interest in the session and they were more likely to implement what they learned. These activities were referred to as “mini-conferences” or “buffet style.” Only one principal talked about having teachers choose a session that matched their skill or ability level on a specific subject. One principal said, “Once we decide on the professional development we need in our building, then we bring in specialists to help present, and it is offered in a buffet style” (Participant 6, p. 10). Participants talked about setting up a mini-conference where people chose the sessions they wanted to attend. Another added, “They were able to choose from 8-10 different sessions, and they went to two sessions each day” (Participant 1, p. 32). One principal said, “I broke the faculty up into eight different groups, and they rotated through stations. At the end, each teacher chose what he or she wanted to learn more about” (Participant 11, p. 29). One administrator said, “The teachers self-selected their level of competency and attended the session that was geared specifically towards their level – beginner, intermediate, or advanced” (Participant 12, p. 13).

Not All Teachers Implement Professional Development

The other area addressed by the building administrators was that their teachers do not take the professional development seriously – meaning they do not feel they must make a change in their teaching practices and implement it in their classrooms. In the focus group interviews, seven principals stated a rough percentage of teachers they believed had implemented the professional development they had received while other principals used the words most, a majority, half, or many. Using percentages, seven principals stated that implementation of the professional development received by their teachers varied from approximately 50 – 85%. Of course during these interviews, the participants did not have any documentation in front of them; therefore their percentages were based on their observations and over-all sense of what was happening in their buildings. One principal said, “I would say 50% of the teachers left their professional development session and went back to their classrooms and did something with the information they received” (Participant 1, p. 52). However, the principals also stipulated that the percentage would change depending on the specific type of professional development being considered. For example, one administrator stated:

If it is something they have to implement, because it is required, such as the student data system, then they go to the trainings, learn from them, and implement them immediately, but most of the professional development is not like that. So for other professional development, such as strategies to implement in the classroom, I see teachers using it effectively, but not a 100%. If you wanted 100% of teachers to use them, there would have to be a lot more following up, and you would have to be very specific with teachers about saying I am coming to see lessons on how you have incorporated the professional development into your classroom (Participant 7, p. 2).

It is also important to note, that according to the principals’ percentages, between 15 to 50% of teachers do not implement the professional development they receive. One participant summed it up, “I find some teachers, no matter what they hear, are going to go back in the classroom and do what they have always done because they have found success. They do not recognize that success is never final” (Participant 3, p. 42). Another principal said,

I see my teachers in thirds. One third is master teachers who just gobble up the information and implement it appropriately. Then there is the third in the middle that you can sway to work towards becoming a master teacher with encouragement and help with

implementation. Then there is the last third. You do your best to help make them better, and they choose not to do things (Participant 4, p. 15).

There were 12 comments from 7 different principals related to change. Several participants made similar comments concerning the fact that teachers do not believe they need to change because they are getting high SOL scores. One principal said, “Not every teacher buys in to the professional development. Some folks believe I do not need this, so they don’t intend to implement it” (Participant 13, p. 45). Another principal added, “I have some teachers who say, I have been teaching 20 years, and I have good test scores so who are you to tell me I need to do something different” (Participant 11, p. 50). Another principal said, “I realize I have to articulate and sell the professional development in a way that my people will buy into to it” (Participant 6, p. 51), and another principal agreed, “Unless you have buy-in from the teachers about the professional development, you will get nowhere. I am a big data guy, so I put data out there to help my teachers see where they need improvements to get the buy-in from the teachers” (Participant 9, p. 55).

In discussing change, two principals reported about “the less friendly side of professional development” which is trying to get people to change behaviors. One said, “I am trying to change peoples’ behaviors through targeted, focused professional development, and there are a lot of positive and negative sides to that” (Participant 12, p. 53). Another principal put it like this, “Being the change agent is very difficult. At the end of the year, I do not think we got to where I wanted to get with the professional development. With all that we did in professional development, I think we raised awareness, we didn’t get a lot of change” (Participant 11, p. 29).

Modeling and Follow-up

There were two areas cited in the literature as being influential to the likelihood of implementing teacher professional development – modeling and follow-up. These two areas were not as prevalent in the comments made during the focus group interviews. One of the roles of the principal according to Blasé and Blasé (2000) is for principals’ to model techniques and strategies for teachers. Only five principals reported ever modeling or demonstrating the professional development idea or strategy. Two principals reported that they modeled the ideas in faculty meetings. The other three principals reported that the modeling was done by other teachers through lesson plans or demonstrations.

Two principals talked about how they modeled the professional development activity in the faculty meeting by using the lesson design they expected the teachers to use as they presented. Another principal elaborated on teachers creating new lessons when he said, “They create lessons with a new power point or other technology. They take old lessons and update them with new information they have learned so that it fits our kids today” (Participant 6, p. 30). He went on to relate that the teacher then posted the lessons to share with the entire faculty.

One principal always had one or two teachers demonstrate a strategy or activity in each faculty meeting. One principal had his teachers observing their peers. Each teacher had to teach two lessons and invite colleagues to visit his/her classroom. The principal said, “This is a great strategy, the teachers demonstrating the strategy with their class in front of other teachers watching. I think it is very effective” (Participant 9, p. 33).

The second area reported in the research that was not prevalent in the principals’ interviews was the idea of follow-up. Quality professional development must be continuous and on-going with follow-up (Elmore, 1996; Hawley & Valli, 1999). There were many professional development sessions that were one time sessions. The only evidence from the administrators’ statements concerning follow-up of professional development were as follows: five principals speaking of their PLCs meeting weekly throughout the year, two principals referring to book discussions that continued through the school year, and one principal reporting that he talked about aspects of a class that all of his teachers had taken at every professional development activity. The principals did say they looked for the implementation of the professional development the teachers had received as they were observing in the classroom and discussing it in individual conversations with the teachers.

Only three principals of the 15 made specific comments about following up on the professional development. Of course, PLC groups met throughout the year and principals did hold conversations with their teachers about the professional development activities. However, the three who specifically talked about follow up said:

All teachers in my division are to take a specific course on the skills of teaching. We have been doing this for four years. So, in every professional development day or workshop, the skills of teaching are brought up and discussed and reviewed. We all have the same common language (Participant 13, p. 22).

I have instructional coaches that go in classrooms and help teachers implement the new strategy or activity. They check on teachers and continuously talk to them about it (Participant 15, p. 11)

My teachers have read books, so we discuss a section of the book in the faculty meeting, and then two weeks later we follow up on that discussion in the department meetings to make it content specific (Participant 12, p. 13).

Summary of Teacher Professional Developments' Impact on Teachers' Instructional Practices

The principals reported using data to determine what professional development was needed for their school and also to determine if the professional development was effective in improving student achievement. They also reported using data from teachers to evaluate the professional development the teachers had experienced. The administrators also discussed: determining the effectiveness of the professional development by observing in classrooms and discussing it with the teachers; by providing the time to provide the professional development; and by allowing teachers to choose the professional development they wanted to attend. Principals reported that all teachers are not implementing the ideas or skills from the professional development in their classrooms. Two areas that only a few principals discussed were modeling and follow-up.

Summary of the Findings

All of the ideas expressed by the principals in the focus group interviews were part of the NSDC's (2001) twelve standards. The principals agreed that it was their responsibility to organize and implement teacher professional development at their school. It was also their responsibility to see its implementation in the classrooms. They took their role seriously with help from their administrative teams. The majority of the principals reported that they performed the following eight roles when implementing teacher professional development: (a) connected the professional development to school and/or division goals, (b) allowed teachers to play a part in their professional development, (c) provided the resources of funding and time for professional development, (d) provided support and encouragement for implementation of the professional development, (e) held a variety of professional development activities at their school, (f) collected student achievement data to determine the professional development needs,

(g) determined the effectiveness of the professional development in classrooms, and (h) allowed teachers to choose the professional development activities to attend. The two roles, supported in the literature, which only a few principals discussed were: implementing PLCs and providing on-going, continuous professional development with follow-up. One area of concern reported by the principals was the reality that all teachers do not implement the professional development in their classrooms.

Principals reported implementing a number of professional development activities at the school and division level related to school or division goals. Even though many of the activities were different for each school, there were common threads: how to teach different types of students, technology, and instructional strategies. The professional development implemented at schools was not only to help teachers improve specific teaching strategies in the classroom, but also were for teachers to support and work with all types of students.

The document review revealed that six principals' remarks concerning the actual professional development activities implemented at their schools matched the information regarding professional development in their school improvement plans. The document review also revealed that two of the school improvement plans did not mention teacher professional development at all. Finally, the documents from the other four schools did not have an exact match of the professional development held at their school compared to what the principal stated during the focus group interviews, but did have some information concerning teacher professional development.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher has described the findings from the transcripts of three focus group interviews involving 15 principals from a specific region in a southeastern state. The thoughts and beliefs expressed by the principals about their roles in teacher professional development were organized using the three research questions for this study. For each question, the data from the focus group interviews, documents and researcher's journal gave a general overview of the findings followed by a descriptive detail of the findings with quotes from the participants.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study has been to explore the high school principals' roles in and perceptions of teacher professional development as a mechanism for improving teacher instructional practices. This study examined data gathered from a purposeful sampling of principals located in one region in a southeastern state. Data were gathered through analysis of transcripts of focus group interviews and through document reviews. The focus group interview questions were developed based on the literature review and the conceptual framework of this study, the National Staff Development Council's 12 standards of quality professional development (2001). The specific questions for this research are: (1) What is the role of the principal in the selection, organization, and implementation of teacher professional development? (2) What teacher professional development activities did you implement in 2009-2010, and why? (3) Did teacher professional development activities improve teachers' instructional practices?

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the conclusions found in the research, implications and recommendations for action, recommendations for further research, personal reflections on the research process, and concluding statements.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Using focus group interviews and document review, this study has explored the self-reported perceptions of high school principals concerning their roles in teacher professional development. All of the principals' comments were aligned with at least one of the National Staff Development Council's 12 standards for quality professional development. The following lists the conclusions drawn from the findings in chapter 4 and the implications and recommendations from those conclusions. Each conclusion is listed under the research question it pertains to.

Principals' Role in the Selection, Organization and Implementation of Teacher Professional Development

1. *Conclusion:* Principals value teacher professional development as a mechanism to change teachers' instructional practices and accept the responsibility for implementing professional development at their schools.

Evidence: All 15 principals stated that they were responsible for the planning of, organizing of, and carrying out teacher professional development at their school. Some of them had help from their assistant principals and central office, yet they perceived themselves as the ones that held the overall responsibility. In order to organize, plan, and carry out the teacher professional development, the principals discussed four specific roles they executed. One role the majority of the principals executed was to connect the teacher professional development to the goals of their school and/or division. Research (Elmore, 1996; Hawley & Valli, 1999; NSDC, 2001) concurs that professional development should be driven by an analysis of goals and standards. The second role the principals executed was to allow the teachers to play a part in their professional development by asking teachers what professional development they needed or wanted and by asking teachers to present some of the professional development to their colleagues. Research and literature by both Hawley & Valli (1999) and Schmoker (2006) support this concept. The research did not address teachers as presenters, but the principals believed this was an effective way to get *buy-in* from their staff. The third role the principals executed was to provide the resources of funding and time. Research (Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Hawley & Valli, 1999) supports the responsibility of the principal is to provide the resources that teachers need to promote, teach, and learn. The fourth role the majority of the principals reported executing was to provide support and encouragement for teachers in the implementation of teacher professional development which is supported in the research by Hall and Hord (2001). The administrators reported encouraging the teachers through conversations and discussions concerning the professional development.

Implication: Principals believe professional development is one important way for teachers to learn new ideas to impact classroom instructional practices to ultimately help meet students' learning needs.

Recommendation: Principals must continue to offer quality professional development for their teachers. They must continue to take responsibility for implementing professional development that will ultimately improve student learning. Principals must be supportive of teachers, encouraging them to implement the professional development in their classroom.

Teacher Professional Development Implemented

2. *Conclusion:* The majority of the professional development activities reported by the principals were generic type professional development activities that related to all teachers.

Evidence: The principals reported that the majority of the professional development activities related to two main areas: (a) understanding students and how they learn, and (b) developing instructional strategies to help meet academic standards. The overall majority of these activities related directly to what was or what should be happening in the classroom. It is evident that the principals are looking at how teachers can meet students' learning needs.

Implications: With the pressures of meeting rising AYP standards and the on-time graduation rate, principals are finding it important to continuously look at improving instruction in the classroom. To improve that instruction, teachers from specific disciplines may also need professional development that impacts their specific pedagogical content knowledge.

Recommendations: Principals need to plan not only professional development that fits all teachers, but also to plan differentiated professional development to meet the individual needs of teachers.

3. *Conclusion:* Principals do not expect all teachers to implement the innovations in their classrooms.

Evidence: The principals in this study reported that they had between 15 to 50% of their teachers who did not use the information learned in a professional development activity and implement or apply it in their classroom. They struggled with how to help some teachers change their instructional practices especially when they were very reluctant to do so.

Implication: The administrators in the building can hold teachers accountable for implementing professional development in his/her classroom.

Recommendation: The administrators must first be knowledgeable about the professional development and they must set the expectation for implementation of the professional development by the teacher. Principals can hold teachers accountable through the evaluation process or as part of the teachers' professional goals. Principals should expect to see the implementation of the professional development during formal and informal observations. Principals should expect teachers to be able to discuss the implementation of the professional development during formal and informal conversations.

4. *Conclusion:* PLCs, in which teachers are working collaboratively to improve student achievement, are not being implemented in all reporting participants' high schools.

Evidence: Only one third of the principals talked about having professional learning communities at their school. All the principals reported having various weekly or monthly meetings in which all teachers were expected to participate, but these meetings were not set up in a PLC-style which would have allowed them to discuss issues in a professional development setting. The research and the NSDC standards support the need for PLCs (Cranston, 2009; DuFour, 2001; NSDC, 2001; Thompson, Gregg, & Niska, 2004).

Implications: Principals may not be aware of the research on PLCs and therefore do not know the impact a PLC could have on improving teacher instructional practices which ultimately affects student achievement. Principals may not have the knowledge or skills to enact PLCs at their school.

Recommendations: Principals may need professional development to learn how to organize and implement PLCs at their school. Principals need to create PLCs at their schools so the teachers would have a specified time for professional development focused on improving student learning throughout the school year.

Teacher Professional Developments' Impact on Teachers' Instructional Practices

5. *Conclusion:* Time is an important factor in determining the implementation of the professional development in the classroom.

Evidence: The principals reported that finding time to hold professional development was one of the biggest challenges they faced. This challenge is supported by Zimmerman and May's (2003) findings. Also, the principals did not report that the professional development activities in their buildings were continuous or on-going, with follow-up which is supported in the research (Elmore, 1996, Hawley & Valli, 1999; Garet et al., 2001). Many of the professional development sessions reported by the principals were one-time sessions with no follow-up activities connected with them. In order for a teacher to implement a new idea, concept, or strategy in his/her classroom, the teacher must have enough experiences with that topic to fully understand it (Hall & Hord, 2001).

Implication: There is limited time allotted for professional development. With this limited amount of time, principals find it difficult to plan follow-up sessions so that teachers fully understand the idea, concept, or strategy being introduced to them.

Recommendations: Principals need to revisit how they schedule professional development in order to provide quality professional development. They must use the time allotted to them wisely. This may mean they need to focus on just one or two professional development topics in a year to concentrate on those topics. The principal could also request to have more scheduled professional development days in the school calendar. Another recommendation would be to implement PLCs in each school in order to use the already required meeting times as professional development focused on improving student achievement.

Limitations of the Study

The data gathered for this study resulted from focus group interviews and document analysis. Using focus group interviews is limiting in that participants may be influenced by other respondents' answers during the interview. Also, at times the moderator may not be able to follow up on a response to gather more detail given the concern about embarrassment or "shutting down" by the participant. This type of methodology relies on the participants to give accurate and complete answers, and the researcher may not be aware when the answer is not accurate or complete. The researcher used a purposeful sampling of high school principals, therefore limiting the generalizability of these findings.

Recommendations for Further Research

The conclusions in this study are limited in generalizability in that the data were gathered from a small number of participants in a localized area who were asked to self-report. There are several areas where further research would be beneficial. Those areas include research using a broader sampling of principals, research comparing principals and teachers' ideas of the roles, research specifically about teachers' implementation of professional development, and research about principals' preparation in implementing teacher professional development.

First, researchers could replicate this study using a broader, more diverse group to see if similar results are found. This could be completed using this same methodology with broader samplings of high school principals or using different types of methodology to see if results are the same. Also, researchers could replicate this study using a different level of participant such as elementary or middle school principals to conclude if similar results would be found.

Further research could compare the beliefs of principals and teachers as to the role of the principal in teacher professional development. This type of study could concentrate on comparing what the principal and teachers believe are the important roles of the principal. Also, this research could compare principals and teachers and how they see the impact of professional development on instructional practices in the classroom.

Two areas that the principals found to be important in teacher professional development were teachers choosing the professional development they wanted to attend and colleagues presenting professional development. Research could determine if there is a higher quality of implementation of professional development when teachers choose the type of professional development they attend or when their colleagues present the information. This research would primarily involve teachers.

Finally, further research could focus on leadership preparation for principals. This research could determine how much time is devoted to preparing principals to plan, organize, and implement professional development in their school to improve teachers' instructional practices.

Personal Reflections on the Research Process

Reflecting on the process used to conduct this study, I can say that it was a positive experience being able to meet with high school principals and hearing the discussions as

principals described their roles in teacher professional development in their schools. It was very enlightening to note what principals talked about and also what they did not talk about. The principals seemed willing to share their professional development and were proud of the things their schools were doing. One thing I would do differently the next time in the focus group interview would be to push a little harder in trying to obtain follow-up to my questions. At times, the conversation moved on to someone else speaking and it was hard to ask a follow-up question.

A positive aspect of this process of using focus group interviews was the fact that high school principals were able to spend approximately 90 minutes talking about professional development and learning from their colleagues. Two sets of focus group members told me the time spent discussing had been a great professional development for them.

One difficult aspect was how hard it was to get high school principals together with their extremely busy schedules. I started trying to organize focus groups in late July and planning them for August and early September. If I did it again, I think it would be better once school had been in session for a month or so, or possibly right after school closes in June. In August, principals are organizing for the beginning of the school year and struggle to get away because they feel they have a lot to do. I did my pilot study at a secondary education principals' conference in June. That timing and location could have been a better time to conduct the focus group interviews because the principals were all in one place. However, scheduling a number of focus groups during the competing conference schedule might have been complicated. The bottom line is that timing and scheduling must be carefully considered in future research.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 5, the researcher identified conclusions and implications from the research, and provided recommendations for improvement. Five major conclusions were drawn from the findings in this study. Principals value teacher professional development as a mechanism to change teachers' instructional practices and accept the responsibility for implementing professional development at their schools. The majority of the professional development activities reported by the principals were generic type professional development activities that related to all teachers. However, principals do not expect that all teachers will implement the innovations in their classrooms. PLCs, in which teachers are working collaboratively to improve student achievement, are not being implemented in all reporting participants' high schools. Time

is an important factor in determining the implementation of the professional development in the classroom.

Concluding Remarks

Faced with demands to meet high standards in the areas of AYP and graduation rates, high school principals are expecting teachers to work with a variety of students to ensure that students pass the high-stakes tests (Darling-Hammond, 1999). The principals I interviewed see the need for improved instructional practices in the classroom in order to reach all students. They are trying to use quality professional development to help meet that need, and they are performing many of the roles that research and literature have determined important. They stated that they want professional development to be meaningful to their teachers. They reported they planned professional development activities that they believed their teachers needed and/or wanted. The challenge that they all noted was their struggle to ensure that all teachers learned from the professional development experience and implemented the new idea or strategy in their own classrooms with their own students.

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APPENDIX A

NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (NSDC) STANDARDS – ADOPTED IN 1995

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has established national standards aimed at giving schools, districts, and states direction in what constitutes quality staff development for all educators. The bottom line is that staff development must shift from counting how many staff members participate and whether they enjoyed the session, to determining whether the system is improving student achievement. The standards address the often-asked question, “What are the best approaches for successful staff development?”

CONTEXT

Effective high school, middle level, and elementary school staff development:

- Requires and fosters a norm of continuous improvement.
- Requires strong leadership in order to obtain continuing support and to motivate all staff, school board members, parents, and the community to be advocates for continuous improvement.
- Is aligned with the school’s and the district’s strategic plan and is funded by a line item in the budget.
- Provides adequate time during the work day for staff members to learn and work together to accomplish the school’s mission and goals.
- Is an innovation in itself that requires study of the change process.

PROCESS

Effective high school, middle level, and elementary school staff development:

- Provides knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding organization development and systems thinking.
- Is based on knowledge about human learning and development.
- Provides for the three phases of the change process: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization.
- Bases priorities on a careful analysis of disaggregated student data regarding goals for student learning.
- Uses content that has proven value in increasing student learning and development.
- Provides a framework for integrating innovations and relating those innovations to the mission of the organization.
- Requires an evaluation process that is ongoing, includes multiple sources of information, and focuses on all levels of the organization.
- Uses a variety of staff development approaches to accomplish the goals of improving instruction and student success.
- Provides the follow-up necessary to ensure improvement.
- Requires staff members to learn and apply collaborative skills to conduct meetings, make shared decisions, solve problems, and work collegially.

- Requires knowledge and use of the stages of group development to build effective, productive, collegial teams.

CONTENT

Effective high school, middle level, and elementary school staff development:

- Increases administrators' and teachers' understanding of how to provide school environments and instruction that are responsive to the developmental needs of students.
- Facilitates the development and implementation of school- and classroom-based management which maximizes student learning.
- Addresses diversity by providing awareness and training related to the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to ensure that an equitable and quality education is provided to all students.
- Enables educators to provide challenging, developmentally appropriate curricula that engage students in integrative ways of thinking and learning.
- Prepares teachers to use research-based teaching strategies appropriate to their instructional objectives and their students.
- Prepares educators to demonstrate high expectations for student learning.
- Facilitates staff collaboration with and support of families for improving student performance.
- Prepares teachers to use various types of performance assessment in their classrooms.

Effective high school and middle level school staff development:

- Prepares educators to combine academic student learning goals with service to the community.
- Increases administrators' and teachers' ability to provide guidance and advisement to adolescents.

Effective middle level staff development:

- Increases staff knowledge and practice of interdisciplinary team organization and instruction.

More Information:

- The complete list of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) standards is available on the NSDC web site at www.nsd.org/standards.html.
- The monthly "Results" column on using the standards is also available on the web.
- NSDC has published three study guides for the elementary, middle, and high school level. Each standard is accompanied by a two-page discussion that includes a rationale, examples, outcomes, discussion questions, and references. Each also includes an assessment instrument and suggestions for use.
- In addition, NSDC has published a trainer's kit to assist the staff developer in implementing the standards.

APPENDIX B
ISLLC STANDARDS

Adopted in 1996 by the Council of Chief State School Officers
State Education Assessment Center
www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/isllcstd.pdf

Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- learning goals in a pluralistic society,
- the principles of developing and implementing strategic plans, systems theory,
- information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies,
- effective communication,
- effective consensus-building and negotiation skills.

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- the educability of all,
- a school vision of high standards of learning,
- continuous school improvement,
- the inclusion of all members of the school community,
- ensuring that students have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults,
- a willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices,
- doing the work required for high levels of personal and organization performance.

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- the vision and mission of the school are effectively communicated to staff, parents, students, and community members,
- the vision and mission are communicated through the use of symbols, ceremonies, stories, and similar activities,
- the core beliefs of the school vision are modeled for all stakeholders,
- the vision is developed with and among stakeholders,
- the contributions of school community members to the realization of the vision are recognized and celebrated,
- progress toward the vision and mission is communicated to all stakeholders,
- the school community is involved in school improvement efforts,
- the vision shapes the educational programs, plans, and actions,
- an implementation plan is developed in which objectives and strategies to achieve the vision and goals are clearly articulated,
- assessment data related to student learning are used to develop the school vision and goals,

- relevant demographic data pertaining to students and their families are used in developing the school mission and goals,
- barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed,
- needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the school mission and goals,
- existing resources are used in support of the school vision and goals,
- the vision, mission, and implementation plans are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised.

Standard 2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- student growth and development,
- applied learning theories,
- applied motivational theories,
- curriculum design, implementation, evaluation, and refinement,
- principles of effective instruction,
- measurement, evaluation, and assessment strategies,
- diversity and its meaning for educational programs,
- adult learning and professional development models,
- the change process for systems, organizations, and individuals,
- the role of technology in promoting student learning and professional growth,
- school cultures.

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- student learning as the fundamental purpose of schooling,
- the proposition that all students can learn,
- the variety of ways in which students can learn,
- lifelong learning for self and others,
- professional development as an integral part of school improvement,
- the benefits that diversity brings to the school community,
- a safe and supportive learning environment,
- preparing students to be contributing members of society.

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- all individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect,
- professional development promotes a focus on student learning consistent with the school vision and goals,
- students and staff feel valued and important,
- the responsibilities and contributions of each individual are acknowledged,
- barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed,
- diversity is considered in developing learning experiences,
- life-long learning is encouraged and modeled,

- there is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff performance,
- technologies are used in teaching and learning,
- student and staff accomplishments are recognized and celebrated,
- multiple opportunities to learn are available to all students,
- the school is organized and aligned for success,
- curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programs are designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined,
- curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the
- recommendations of learned societies
- the school culture and climate are assessed on a regular basis,
- a variety of sources of information is used to make decisions,
- student learning is assessed using a variety of techniques,
- multiple sources of information regarding performance are used by staff and students,
- a variety of supervisory and evaluation models is employed,
- pupil personnel programs are developed to meet the needs of students and their families.

Standard 3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- theories and models of organizations and the principles of organizational development,
- operational procedures at the school and district level,
- principles and issues relating to school safety and security,
- human resources management and development,
- principles and issues relating to fiscal operations of school management,
- principles and issues relating to school facilities and use of space,
- legal issues impacting school operations,
- current technologies that support management functions.

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- making management decisions to enhance learning and teaching,
- taking risks to improve schools,
- trusting people and their judgments,
- accepting responsibility,
- high-quality standards, expectations, and performances,
- involving stakeholders in management processes,
- a safe environment.

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- knowledge of learning, teaching, and student development is used to inform management decisions,
- operational procedures are designed and managed to maximize opportunities for successful learning,
- emerging trends are recognized, studied, and applied as appropriate,

- operational plans and procedures to achieve the vision and goals of the school are in place,
- collective bargaining and other contractual agreements related to the school are effectively managed,
- the school plant, equipment, and support systems operate safely, efficiently, and effectively,
- time is managed to maximize attainment of organizational goals,
- potential problems and opportunities are identified,
- problems are confronted and resolved in a timely manner,
- financial, human, and material resources are aligned to the goals of schools,
- the school acts entrepreneurially to support continuous improvement,
- organizational systems are regularly monitored and modified as needed,
- stakeholders are involved in decisions affecting schools,
- responsibility is shared to maximize ownership and accountability,
- effective problem-framing and problem-solving skills are used,
- effective conflict resolution skills are used,
- effective group-process and consensus-building skills are used,
- effective communication skills are used,
- a safe, clean, and aesthetically pleasing school environment is created and maintained,
- human resource functions support the attainment of school goals,
- confidentiality and privacy of school records are maintained.

Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- emerging issues and trends that potentially impact the school community,
- the conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community,
- community resources,
- community relations and marketing strategies and processes,
- successful models of school, family, business, community, government and higher education partnerships.

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- schools operating as an integral part of the larger community,
- collaboration and communication with families,
- involvement of families and other stakeholders in school decision-making processes,
- the proposition that diversity enriches the school
- families as partners in the education of their children,
- the proposition that families have the best interests of their children in mind,
- resources of the family and community needing to be brought to bear on the education of students,
- an informed public.

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that

- high visibility, active involvement, and communication with the larger community are priorities,
- relationships with community leaders are identified and nurtured,
- information about family and community concerns, expectations, and needs is used regularly,
- there is outreach to different business, religious, political, and service agencies and organizations,
- credence is given to individuals and groups whose values and opinions may conflict,
- the school and community serve one another as resources,
- available community resources are secured to help the school solve problems and achieve goals,
- partnerships are established with area businesses, institutions of higher education, and community groups to strengthen programs and support school goals,
- community youth family services are integrated with school programs,
- community stakeholders are treated equitably,
- diversity is recognized and valued,
- effective media relations are developed and maintained,
- a comprehensive program of community relations is established,
- public resources and funds are used appropriately and wisely,
- community collaboration is modeled for staff,
- opportunities for staff to develop collaborative skills are provided.

Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- the purpose of education and the role of leadership in modern society,
- various ethical frameworks and perspectives on ethics,
- the values of the diverse school community,
- professional codes of ethics,
- the philosophy and history of education.

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- the ideal of the common good,
- the principles in the Bill of Rights,
- the right of every student to a free, quality education,
- bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process,
- subordinating one's own interest to the good of the school community,
- accepting the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions,
- using the influence of one's office constructively and productively in the service of all students and their families,
- development of a caring school community.

Performances

The administrator:

- examines personal and professional values,
- demonstrates a personal and professional code of ethics,

- demonstrates values, beliefs, and attitudes that inspire others to higher levels of performance,
- serves as a role model,
- accepts responsibility for school operations,
- considers the impact of one's administrative practices on others,
- uses the influence of the office to enhance the educational program rather than for personal gain,
- treats people fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect,
- protects the rights and confidentiality of students and staff,
- demonstrates appreciation for and sensitivity to the diversity in the school community,
- recognizes and respects the legitimate authority of others,
- examines and considers the prevailing values of the diverse school community,
- expects that others in the school community will demonstrate integrity and exercise ethical behavior,
- opens the school to public scrutiny,
- fulfills legal and contractual obligations,
- applies laws and procedures fairly, wisely, and considerately.

Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Knowledge

The administrator has knowledge and understanding of:

- principles of representative governance that undergird the system of American schools,
- the role of public education in developing and renewing a democratic society and an economically productive nation,
- the law as related to education and schooling,
- the political, social, cultural and economic systems and processes that impact schools,
- models and strategies of change and conflict resolution as applied to the larger political, social, cultural and economic contexts of schooling,
- global issues and forces affecting teaching and learning,
- the dynamics of policy development and advocacy under our democratic political system,
- the importance of diversity and equity in a democratic society.

Dispositions

The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to:

- education as a key to opportunity and social mobility,
- recognizing a variety of ideas, values, and cultures,
- importance of a continuing dialogue with other decision makers affecting education,
- actively participating in the political and policy-making context in the service of education,
- using legal systems to protect student rights and improve student opportunities.

Performances

The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that:

- the environment in which schools operate is influenced on behalf of students and their families,
- communication occurs among the school community concerning trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which schools operate,
- there is ongoing dialogue with representatives of diverse community groups,

- the school community works within the framework of policies, laws, and regulations enacted by local, state, and federal authorities,
- public policy is shaped to provide quality education for students.

APPENDIX C

ISLLC STANDARDS ADOPTED IN 2007

Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC¹2008

as adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration on December 12, 2007

Standard 1: *An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.*

Functions

- A. Collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission
 - B. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning
 - C. Create and implement plans to achieve goals
 - D. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement
 - E. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans
-

Standard 2: *An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.*

Functions

- A. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations
- B. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program
- C. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students
- D. Supervise instruction
- E. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress
- F. Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff
- G. Maximize time spent on quality instruction

¹ Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

- H. Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning
- I. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program

Standard 3: *An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.*

Functions

- A. Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems
 - B. Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources
 - C. Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff
 - D. Develop the capacity for distributed leadership
 - E. Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction and student learning
-

Standard 4: *An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.*

Functions

- A. Collect and analyze data and information pertinent to the educational environment
 - B. Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources
 - C. Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers
 - D. Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners
-

Standard 5: *An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.*

Functions

- A. Ensure a system of accountability for every student's academic and social success
- B. Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior
- C. Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity

- D. Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision- making
 - E. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling
-

Standard 6: *An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.*

Functions

- A. Advocate for children, families, and caregivers
- B. Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning
- C. Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies

APPENDIX D
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Title of the Project: High School Principals' Roles in Teacher Professional Development

Investigator: Jo Ann Wagner

1. Recruit participants at the 83rd Annual Middle and High School Principals Conference & Exposition.
2. Follow-up email acknowledging participants and stating the purpose of the research, the focus group interview process, the information concerning assurance of confidentiality and potential risks, the need for informed consent, and the date and times of the focus groups.
3. A reminder phone call to the participants three days prior to the focus group interview answering any questions.
4. Focus groups will be conducted in a place agreed upon by the participant.
5. Introductions will be made at the beginning of the focus group. Name tags will be given to each participant.
6. Collection of documents will be done by the assistant moderator.
7. Informed consents will be signed by all participants and collected by assistant moderator.
8. Procedures of the focus group interviews will be reviewed:
 - a) Assurance of confidentiality
 - b) The role of the moderator and assistant moderator will be explained.
 1. The moderator will direct the discussion keeping the conversation flowing and taking a few notes.
 2. The assistant moderator takes comprehensive notes, operates the tape recorder, handles the environmental conditions and logistics, and responds to unexpected interruptions.
 - c) Explain that the session will be audio-taped.
 - d) Remind them to remain focused on the topic of the discussion.
 - e) Remind them to be respectful of others opinions and that all opinions are welcomed.
 - f) Tell them participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time.
 - g) Explain that a transcript will be made from the audio-tape, but that their names will not be used.
 - h) Ask if they have any clarifying questions.

9. The interview will begin using the introduction and questions listed in Appendix E.
10. Following the interview, the moderator will thank each of the participants.
11. After the participants leave, the moderator and assistant moderator will debrief in order to capture the first impressions and the highlights from the session.

APPENDIX E
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS USED WITH PILOT GROUP

Title of the Project: High School Principals' Roles in Teacher Professional Development

Primary Question # 1:

As principal, tell me how you plan, select, and organize teacher professional development in your school.

Prompt questions:

- a) Tell me how you evaluate the teacher professional development activities.
- b) Tell me how follow-up is provided after the teacher professional development activity has been completed.
- c) Tell me about your discussions of the teacher professional development activities with teachers.

Primary Question # 2:

What type of teacher professional development activities did you implement and why?

Prompt questions:

- a) Tell me how you decided to bring a specific teacher professional development to your school.
- b) Tell me how you use student achievement data to decide about teacher professional development.

Primary Question # 3:

How do you know your teacher professional development activities are effective?

Prompt questions:

- a) Tell me about observing in teachers' classrooms and what you have seen of teachers' implementation of what they have learned in their classroom.

APPENDIX F
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Title of the Project: High School Principals' Roles in Teacher Professional Development

Investigator: Jo Ann Wagner

Introduction:

Good morning, I want to thank you for taking the time to join our discussion about the role of high school principals' in teacher professional development. Understanding your perceptions and opinions about teacher professional development and the part you play in it is important.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to share your point of view. Please speak up because we are tape recording the session and do not want to miss anyone's comments. Please speak one at a time. We will be on a first name basis, but in our later reports no names will be attached to comments.

I am the moderator of this discussion, so I will ask questions, but I will not take part in the discussion. To begin, let's go around and introduce ourselves, please state what high school and division where you are the principal. (After the introductions, then the tape recorder will be turned on.)

Primary Question # 1:

As principal, how do you plan, select, and organize teacher professional development for your school?

Primary Question #2:

What type of professional development activities did you implement during the 2009-2010 school year? Why did you choose that activity? When did you hold the professional development activities at your school?

Prompt Questions- Only asked if they have not mentioned this in their previous answers:

a.) Do you use student achievement data to decide about teacher professional development?

If yes, what types of data and do you use it to decide about teacher professional development?

b.) Do your teachers evaluate the professional development activities?

Primary Question # 3:

How do you evaluate that the teacher professional development activities are effective?

Final Question:

Tell me about any other roles you may have in teacher professional development.

APPENDIX G
IRB APPROVAL MEMO



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060
540/231-4806 Fax 540/231-0959
e-mail irb@vt.edu
Website: www.irb.vt.edu

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 28, 2010

TO: Wayne Tripp, Susan G. Magliaro

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires June 13, 2011)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Virginia High School Principals' Role in Teacher Professional Development

IRB NUMBER: 10-557

Effective June 28, 2010, the Virginia Tech IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore, approved the new protocol for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm> (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved as: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5, 6, 7**

Protocol Approval Date: **6/28/2010**

Protocol Expiration Date: **6/27/2011**

Continuing Review Due Date*: **6/13/2011**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

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APPENDIX H
EMAIL TO SUPERINTENDENTS

Title of the Project: High School Principals' Roles in Teacher Professional Development

Investigator: Jo Ann Wagner

Document - Email to Superintendents

Good afternoon,

FYI as a professional courtesy, I am attaching a letter that will be sent to all region high school principals by the end of this week. The letter will be sent from my assistant supt. Ms. Jo Ann Wagner. Jo Ann is working hard to complete her doctoral dissertation and will be inviting your high school principals to participate in a study focusing on:

Title of the Project: High School Principals' Roles in Teacher Professional Development

As a former high school principal I can honestly say this is a critical area to study. Thanks in advance for encouraging your administrators to take an active part in this important study. Her goal is 100% participation across our region.

Should you have any specific questions, do not hesitate to contact Jo Ann directly. Thanks again!

APPENDIX I

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS OF INVESTIGATIVE PROJECTS

High School Principals Participation Form

Title of the Project – High School Principals’ Roles in Teacher Professional Development

Investigators – Jo Ann Wagner; Dr. Sue Magliaro and Dr. Wayne Tripp (Faculty Advisors)

I. Purpose of the Research Project

The purpose of this research is to explore Virginia High School Principals’ role in teacher professional development, the types of teacher professional development activities they implemented, and the extent to which they perceive teacher professional development improves teacher instructional practices.

II. Procedures

In order to complete this study, principals in Region V of Virginia will be asked to voluntarily participate in one of three focus group interviews. The focus group interviews will have between 6-8 participants. The focus group interviews will last approximately 90 minutes. The focus group interviews will be audio-taped. The moderator of the focus group will ask the principals questions regarding teacher professional development. The audio-taping will be transcribed into a written document. No identifying information will be on the audio tape, a coding system will be used for the researcher to know which participant is speaking. Once the transcript has been made, then the researcher will electronically send the participants their transcribed part of the focus group interview and the participant will verify the accuracy of the transcript. The participants are also asked to bring or email a copy of their School Improvement plan.

III. Risks

There are no identified risks for participants who agree to be part of this study.

IV. Benefits

There are no benefits other than the furthering of research.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

During the focus group interview, there will be no identifying information on the audiotape. The researcher will give each participant a code number. All audio-tapes, transcripts and documents will be kept under lock and key. The identifying codes will be kept in a separate place under lock and key. The moderator and assistant moderator who will be part of the focus group interviews will sign an agreement of confidentiality. The transcriber will sign an agreement of confidentiality and never be given access as to the coded system of the participants.

VI. Compensation

Participants will not be monetarily compensated for their participation in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

All participants are voluntary. Any participant may withdraw at any time. Participants will not be required to answer any of the focus group interview questions.

VIII. Approval of Research

This research study has been approved by both the Institute Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

IX. Subject’s Responsibilities

As a participant, I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:

- To participate in a 90 minute focus group
- To check my part of the transcript for accuracy
- To bring or email my school improvement plan to the researcher

X. Subject’s Permission

I have read the Informed Consent of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent.

_____ I agree of the use of audio-recording.

_____ I do not approve the use of audio-recording.

Printed name of the participant	Signature of participant	Date
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Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, or research subjects’ rights, I may contact:

Jo Ann Wagner, Investigator jwagner@nelson.k12.va.us 540-894-1231
 Dr. Sue Magliaro, Faculty Advisor sumags@vt.edu 540-231-1802
 Dr. Wayne Tripp, Faculty Advisor wtripp@vt.edu 540-231-9728

Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board: Project No. 10-557
Approved June 28, 2010 to June 27, 2011

APPENDIX J

CHARTS

Context Standards - The context standards address the organizational support for professional learning – the organization, system or culture.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.															
Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.															
Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.															

Process Standards - The process standards focus on how the system organizes learning opportunities to ensure adults acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions to affect student learning.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.															
Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.															
Prepares educators to apply research to decision making.															
Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal															

Applies knowledge about human learning and change.																
Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.																

Content Standards - The content standards identify what educators must understand and be able to apply to ensure students learn successfully.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.															

Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist student in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.																
Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.																

APPENDIX K
DOCUMENT REVIEW FORM

Title of the Project: High School Principals' Roles in Teacher Professional Development

Investigator: Jo Ann Wagner

Participant's Name: _____

Did participant provide a document: Yes or No

Document Title: _____

Answer the following questions concerning the document:

1. Did the school improvement plan mention professional development? _____
2. If yes, does the professional development relate to a school goal? _____
3. If yes, does the professional development relate to a specific content area only? _____

List the professional development activities stated in the plan:

APPENDIX L

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN CHART

Content Standards - The content standards identify what educators must understand and be able to apply to ensure students learn successfully

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.															
Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist student in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.															
Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.															