Cultivating and Sustaining Theater Education Programs in Public Schools: Curricula, Teachers, Community, and Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as the indicators of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. The researcher's hypothesis was that the primary components include: 1) theater learning standards and curricular resources that impact the delivery of meaningful instruction and student assessment (Bennett, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); 2) qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices (Catterall, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); 3) Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and professional development opportunities specific to theater education (Catterall, 2009); and 4) district leadership, representation, and advocacy specific to theater education and teachers (Project Zero, 2001). The research was implemented through a case study in a selected school district that exhibited all components. It was conducted in three phases and included district theater teachers and arts leaders. The essential findings, from the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders, confirmed the importance of the four components the researcher identified as necessary to cultivate and sustain theater education programs. The identified components also emerged as the primary indicators of success and quality of district and school theater education programs in public schools. However, the research also showed that indicators of the success of theater education programs do not always lead to quality, and quality does not always lead to success.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as the indicators of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. The researcher's hypothesis was that the primary components include 1) curriculum and instruction (Bennett, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); 2) qualified teachers (Catterall, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); 3) teacher learning communities and professional development opportunities specific to theater education (Catterall, 2009); and 4) leadership specific to theater education (Project Zero, 2001). The research was implemented through a case study in a selected school district that exhibited all components. It was conducted in three phases and included district theater teachers and arts leaders. The essential findings, from the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders, confirmed the importance of the four components the researcher identified as necessary to cultivate and sustain theater education programs. The identified components also emerged as the primary indicators of success and quality of district and school theater education programs in public schools.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Sally and Kenneth Taylor Sr.

To my mother and father, you have always appreciated theater and the arts but most definitely did not want it to be your child's professional path. This wasn't because you didn't support the dream, but because you wanted to better ensure stability and protection. Despite all the odds and your better judgment, you supported me through every "next thing," whether it meant driving across the country to see countless shows, helping to build props and costumes for student productions, or supporting "just one more" degree. The most important lesson I have learned from you is that through hard work, dedication, and God, all things are possible. I owe everything I am and have accomplished to your love and support. I love you both and am grateful and honored to be your daughter.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

High school student Sophia Willard-Van Sistine said, “Theater allows you to feel things with the heart. I love theater because it has the power to tell important stories, to move an audience, to connect people, and to make change” (The Educational Theater Association [EdTA], 2018). Theater students and teachers worldwide identify with and reverberate with Sophia’s sentiments. If this is the case, why are there limited opportunities for students to access theater education in public schools? Additionally, the quality and future of existing public school theater education programs are of grave concern including limited certified teachers, declining enrollment, and lack of necessary program funding and resources (National Endowment of the Arts [NEA], 2009: Seidel et al, 2009). Theater is a dynamic discipline both on the stage and screen as an art form and as one of the highest grossing forms of entertainment (Americans for the Arts, 2017). It also has a meaningful influence in a child’s educational experience through PreK-12 theater education programs.

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as the indicators of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. To cultivate a district theater education program, there must be successful school programs. To distinguish the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theatre education program, there must be an examination of how success and quality are identified and differentiated in both district and school theater education programs in public schools. The findings of this research and its implications may be shared with educational leaders to propagate district and school theater education programs to provide greater and more equitable access in the public school setting.

Arts education consists of all arts disciplines, including but not limited to dance, music, visual arts, and theater. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the 2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, and now replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), focused on testing student knowledge in core subjects through standardized assessments. Critics of the NCLB felt that the federal law forced schools to diminish curricula and spend less time on content areas that were not explicitly tested, such as social studies, foreign languages, and the arts (Klein, 2015; McMurrer et al., 2008).

The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) prescribed that content areas be taught by teachers who were "highly qualified," but left it to states to determine state requirements. A highly qualified teacher, as defined by NCLB (2002), was an educator who 1) holds a bachelor's degree; 2) holds a state certification or licensure; and 3) demonstrates subject matter competency. The ESSA (2015) included the arts in the definition of a "well-rounded education" and lessened the implementation and messaging of standardized testing while emphasizing preparing students for the workforce and 21st-century skills including communication, collaboration, creativity, and resilience (Klein, 2015; Robinson & Aronica, 2016). However, also under the ESSA, the highly qualified teacher specification was eliminated allowing states to establish teacher qualifications as they determined appropriate on a state-by-state basis often leading to inequitable access and opportunities to quality arts education in public schools due to teacher preparation, certification, and licensure requirements (DOE, 1995; McMurrer et al., 2008; Seidel et al., 2009).

In addition to endorsing the arts as part of a well-rounded education, Title IV, Section 4642, Assistance for Arts Education, of the ESSA also allocated funding to advance arts education (ESSA, 2015). State and local educational agencies may use this funding to provide professional development, expand partnerships with arts organizations, and/or develop instructional programs and resources (Wan et al., 2018). The inclusion of arts education in ESSA demonstrated that policymakers, arts leaders, and advocacy groups view the arts as an essential component in a student's public school education (Wan et al., 2018).

Although education policy and legislation have evolved to become more inclusive of arts education since the implementation of the ESSA, federal messaging, state testing, and teacher accountability measures do not appear to have evolved to include arts education and programs in the same manner as "core" (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) and STEM areas. This oversight seems particularly true in theater education (McMurrer et al., 2008). Theater courses and programming are often not included, or even an available option, for students in public schools (Bennett, 2001). While there may be an opportunity for students to participate in an elementary grade-level play, after school drama club, a theater elective course, or even a district performing arts high school, it is rare to find theater offered as a district-wide, sequential, and standards-based program of studies taught by a qualified teacher in public schools across the United States (Fowler, 1988; NEA, 1988; Omasta, 2012). Findings from this research will demonstrate the benefits of theater education in public schools and offer

implications for educational leaders to provide greater student access to theater education and view it as a valuable, skill building practice and content area.

Problem of Practice

Equitable access to quality arts education, regardless of location, demographics, or socioeconomic status, is a common concern in arts education research (NEA, 2009; Wan et al., 2018). Public school students experience limited access to theater and dance education compared to other arts areas, including music and the visual arts (Seidel et al., 2009).

The research has emphasized the advantages of student participation in theater courses and extracurricular programs. Theater education supports human development, including gains in self-conceptualization, motivation, and higher empathy levels for others (Catterall, 2009). Theater education also supports 21st-century skills, such as the ability to make global and historical connections, build empathy, resilience, and language acquisition (American Alliance for Theater Education [AATE], 2020).

The research demonstrates a positive correlation between theater education and academic achievement. In addition to often achieving higher standardized test scores than their peers, students who participate in theater consistently experience improved reading comprehension and stay more engaged in school than their non-arts peers (AATE, 2020). Theater education has also shown causal effects on the acquisition and development of language, including but not limited to verbal areas, reading readiness and achievement, writing, vocabulary, and transfer to new materials and cross-discipline areas (Project Zero, 2001). Schools with arts-integrated programs, including in lower socio-economic communities, report higher academic achievement (AATE, 2020).

Student involvement in theater also encourages consistent attendance, as student drop-out rates correlate with student participation levels in the arts (AATE, 2020). Students considered to be at high risk for dropping out of high school often cite theater and other arts classes as their motivations for staying in school (AATE, 2020). Teachers and scholars agree that the essential outcomes of theater education include enabling students to grow self-confidence and improving students' interpersonal (communication and collaboration) skills and creativity (Omasta, 2012). The inclusion of theater education supports students' academic, social, and emotional success (AATE, 2020). However, despite the positive outcomes of theater education and study, theater is

often an extracurricular or privatized hobby available to a finite and often privileged minority due to limited and inequitable offerings in public schools (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 2009).

While there are examples of successful school theater programs, there are fewer models of successful district theater education programs. However, considering the outlined ESSA expectations, including the allocations of program funding and professional development, in conjunction with the benefits of student participation in theater education, why are there not more? This study aims to provide needed research on the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as the indicators of success and quality to promote greater and more equitable access to theater education for all students in public schools.

In research and practice, standard components have been proposed that seemingly support educational organizations and programs. These components are often absent from district theater education programs (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001). The lack of these components may diminish opportunities for the success and quality of district and school theater education programs and limit equitable access for students to learning opportunities. The components are:

- theater learning standards and curricular resources that impact the delivery of meaningful instruction and student assessment (Bennett, 2001; NEA, 1988);
- qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices (Catterall, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988);
- Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and professional development opportunities specific to theater education (Catterall, 2009);
- district and school leadership, representation, and advocacy specific to theater education and teachers (Project Zero, 2001).

Understanding each component is fundamental to this study's purpose and provides the framework for investigating a district and school theater education programs in public schools. To discern how to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, the present study examines a selected school district that maintains a district-wide theater education program. The study includes survey and open-ended interviews of theater teachers and arts leaders, which offer perspectives on the components necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program and indicators of success and quality of theater education in public schools.

Rationale and Significance

To increase equitable access to quality theater education in public schools, it is essential to have a better understanding of the components needed to cultivate and sustain a district and school theater programs. Research and the academic literature demonstrate that curricula and instruction, qualified teachers, PLCs and professional development, and leadership may be necessary to create and maintain successful theater education programs, support district goals, and enable more equitable access and positive outcomes for students (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001).

To propagate district and school theater education programs, it is paramount to have a shared understanding of the indicators that identify and differentiate success and quality. As with many elective areas in public schools, a primary factor that often classifies program and teacher success or determines teacher employment and status is student enrollment, not necessarily the quality of teacher instruction and practices (NEA, 2009; Omasta, 2012). It would be valuable to identify teachers who currently lead school theater education programs that demonstrate high student enrollment to evaluate teacher qualifications, practices, and program offerings. It would also be enlightening to identify the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the components needed to cultivate and sustain a theater education program at the district and school level, as well as their perceptions of the indicators of success and quality in both district and school theater education programs. The data gathered in this study reveals whether the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders reflect the identified components and how the components impact the success and quality of district and school theater education programs.

By evaluating academic research, such as The Educational Theater Association's (EdTA) survey, *Theater Education in the United States High Schools*; *A Survey of School Theater* (Omasta, 2012) and Project Zero's, *The Qualities of Quality Understanding Excellence in Arts Education* (Seidel et al, 2009), as well as district data, survey, and open-ended interviews, the research identified the components that cultivate and sustain a district and school theater education programs as well as indicators of success and quality of both district and school theater education programs in public schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as the indicators of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. To better understand the problem of practice, this study examines a single school district where theater education is a standard and sequential offering with a certified theater teacher in all traditional middle and high schools and an extracurricular presence in most elementary schools. Arts leader participants were selected due to their professional roles and knowledge of the selected district and its theater education program.

Teacher participants were selected based on employment. Further examination included selected teacher participants based on enrollment data where theater curricular programs have maintained the highest student enrollment for the 2019-20 school year (SY) through 2021-22 school years (SYs). Selected theater teachers and arts leaders were interviewed to obtain their perceptions of the components needed to cultivate and sustain a theater education program at the district and school level, as well as their perceptions of success and quality in theater education programs.

The research questions that guided this study include:

1. What do theater teachers and arts leaders perceive to be the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program?
2. How do theater teachers and arts leaders identify success in:
    a. district theater education programs?
    b. school theater education programs?
3. How do theater teachers and arts leaders identify quality in:
    a. district theater education programs?
    b. school theater education programs?

Operational Definitions

Access: The ability for all students to have contact with content areas or learning opportunities (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], n.d.).

Accountability: Systems that support teaching and student learning expectations by setting learning standards and ongoing assessments (VDOE, n.d.).

Aesthetics: A group of concepts for understanding the nature of art. Aesthetic concepts address virtually all aspects of art, from process to product to response, and embrace both individual experiences and social phenomena (Lankford, 1992).

Arts courses: Academic offerings in dance, music, theater, and visual arts (Wan et al., 2018).

Arts education: Courses or curricula that may be offered in pre-kindergarten through grade 12, depending on state licensure and district offerings, through a designated arts curricula in dance, music, theater, and visual arts (Wan et al., 2018).

Arts leaders: Educational leaders who currently or have possessed a professional role or knowledge of arts education programs in this school district.

Assessment: Methods used to evaluate student learning, including but not limited to tests, quizzes, projects, performances, portfolios, presentations, student writing, and essay (Great School Partnership, 2015).

Curricula: Units, lessons, curriculum, or academic plans taught in a school, course, or program to educate and assess students (Great School Partnership, 2015).

Elective course: A course a student may select, which is not required for graduation or promotion, among the available district and school offerings (VDOE, n.d.).

English-Language Learners (ELLs): Students whose first language is not English and who are in a particular program for learning English (VDOE, n.d.).

Ensemble: A group of individuals dedicated to working together to develop and produce a theatrical work, practice, or reach a shared goal (Network of Ensemble Theaters [NET], 2021).

Equity: Fair and impartial access for all students to content areas or learning opportunities.

Learning environment: The physical space and resources available in the classroom and time allotted to engage in learning activities (Seidel et al., 2009).

Learning standards: The knowledge and skills students are expected to learn and are taught through the curricula (Great School Partnership, 2015).

Pedagogy: Instructional planning, practices, and teaching strategies (Seidel et al., 2009, p. IV).

Professional development: Training for teachers and educational staff designed to enhance teacher knowledge and skillsets to support student achievement (VDOE, n.d.).

Professional Learning Community (PLC): Educators who collaboratively participate in ongoing collective inquiry and action research to achieve optimal results for the students (DuFour et al., 2008).

Qualified teacher: A teacher who holds a bachelor's degree, a state certification or licensure, and demonstrates subject matter competency (NCLB, 2002).

Quality theater program: Sequential and standards-based curricula taught by content-certified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices in theater education (Wan et al., 2018).

Sequential learning: Learning standards and courses developed to be sequential, allowing student knowledge and skills to scaffold as they progress through content levels and courses (Wan et al., 2018).

Successful theater program: Student enrollment and participation that justify the need for theater courses, programming, and full-time theater teachers (Bennett, 2001; NEA, 1988; NEA, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001).

Theater education: Courses or curricula offered in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 through a designated curricula in theater (Wan et al., 2018).

Twenty-first-century skills: Skills including but not limited to communication, collaboration, creative and critical thinking, goal-focused, resilience, and ethical and global citizenship (Eastern School District, 2014).

Limitations

Due to a range of contributing factors, including fewer district and school offerings comparatively to other arts or content areas, there is limited academic research, literature, and academic scholarship in the implementation of district theater education programs, learning standards and assessment, curricula, and extracurricular programming (NEA, 1988; Project Zero, 2001). Therefore, studies in education, arts education, and theater education were included in the literature review. Some information contained in this dissertation may have been influenced by the researcher’s experiences as an arts student, professional performer, teaching artist, public school theater teacher, and district curriculum specialist who supports PreK-12 theater and dance education programs in public schools.

This study includes self-reported data where participants responded to survey and interview questions without interference, sometimes evoking personal feelings, attitudes, or

biases. The collection and comparison of data was done through multiple sources, including enrollment data, teacher surveys, and teacher and arts leader open-ended interviews, which promoted credibility in the research findings (Stake, 1995).

Another limitation of the study was that several participants requested that the researcher provide examples of success and quality during Phase Two and Phase Three interviews, which may have impacted the participants' responses. It was evident from the open-ended responses in Phase One regarding success and quality that some participants did not understand the questions as they were intended, which limited the data collection in these areas. Thorough and scrupulous attention was paid throughout data analysis in these areas to mitigate limitations.

Lastly, the second and third year of the study were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Distance learning practices and the circumstances of the pandemic may have contributed to lower enrollment rates, skewed participant feedback, and altered program design and offerings.

Delimitations

This study explores the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the components needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as the indicators of success and quality in district and school theater education programs. The selected district of study was a large, PreK-12 public school district that included diverse community and student populations and that was in a metropolitan area with long arts traditions and established support for arts and theater education. Therefore, the findings are unique to this school district and may not be relevant to districts located in areas that lack similar resources, priorities, or local opportunities for professional or educational arts experiences. Study participants were selected based on identified criteria, availability, and those who agreed to contribute to this research.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 has defined theater education and the need for this study, posed the research questions, provided the shared language and understanding for the terms used, and disclosed the study's limitations and delimitations. Chapter 2 reviews research and literature regarding theater education and identified education components and examines the employed conceptual framework. Chapter 3 presents the methodology used to implement this study and answer the research questions, including the methods of data collection and review, participant selection,

instrumentation, and analysis. Chapter 4 describes the participant demographics and investigates enrollment, survey, and interview data, both within and across participant groups. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and implications, both in terms of the research questions and participant group, and then provides conclusions, recommendations for further studies, and personal reflections.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Curricula and instruction, qualified teachers, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and professional development, and leadership may be necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, support school programs, and provide greater opportunities for equitable student access to quality learning experiences (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001). To better understand these areas and the current state of theater education, the researcher conducted a review of the relevant research and literature. This literature review focuses on the specified components as well as the indicators of success and quality in theater education, arts education, and core content areas. The researcher considered all these areas individually and comprehensively to develop the research questions that guided this study.

Curricular and Instructional Models in Theater Education

For content areas to flourish in public school education, there must be learning standards to guide the instructional planning, practices, and the assessment of knowledge and skills appropriate to the students and grade level (Bennett, 2001; State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education [SEADAE], 2019). There must also be ample opportunities for students to equitably access courses across a district, and at various grade levels and schools, in order to develop and sustain comprehensive programming and expectations (Project Zero, 2001; SEADAE, 2019). Unfortunately, many of these aspects are often missing from theater education programs in public schools, contributing to limited district-wide theater education programs (NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001).

Having identified that quality learning standards and effective instruction is essential in academic programs, including arts education, the researcher explored the relevant topics to better understand the curricular and instructional models in arts and theater education, and compared theater education to other content areas to examine the benefits of arts and theater education. The researcher also examined the available learning standards and curricular resources in theater education, along with the literature regarding theater instructional practices and program offerings in the United States and abroad. The literature topics included but were not limited to:

enrollment, participation, demographics, teacher and student perceptions, and access to arts education for minority groups.

A Comparison of Education and Theater Education

Education consists of three main elements: teaching, curricula, and assessment, often with the desire to standardize these elements as much as possible (Robinson & Aronica, 2016). Most educational systems, both within the United States and abroad, place a hierarchy on subject areas, with literacy, mathematics, and STEM disciplines at the top, followed by history, geography, and social studies, encompassing practical subjects like physical education, career, and technical education programs, and the arts at the bottom (Robinson & Aronica, 2016). The standards movement, including standardized curricula and testing, favored the direct instruction and assessment of information, skills, and teacher demonstrations rather than group activities and was skeptical about creativity, personal expression, and learning through imaginative play (Robinson & Aronica, 2016). Before theater education programs or course offerings existed, students were most likely to be engaged in theater activities and techniques through English coursework (Deasy, 2002).

Over the past century, there has also been a demand to examine and improve academic literature and research in arts education to improve instructional programs and practices (Wan et al., 2018). The history of arts education in schools reflects advances in discipline knowledge, political dynamics, and cultural changes, as well as the evolution in the understanding of how children learn. Some arts education practices demonstrated in educational advancement include (Wan et al., 2018):

- emphasis on education as a path to economic security;
- changing expectations for student outcomes among policymakers and the public;
- less formulaic approaches to curricula and instruction;
- shifting the focus from the adult as an artist to the value of the student as an artist;
- the importance of studying aesthetics and criticism;
- investigation into relationships between art forms and other academic subject areas.

There are multiple markers for quality arts education, including learning, pedagogy, community dynamics, and environment (Seidel et al., 2009, p. IV). Learning focuses on what students are doing in the classroom, which includes activities and projects. Pedagogy focuses on instructional planning, practices, and teaching strategies. Community dynamics refers to

classroom relationships, whether these be student-to-student, student-to-teacher, or teacher-to-colleague. The environment focuses on the physical space and resources available in the classroom and time allotted to engage in learning activities (Seidel et al., 2009).

Data and academic research around public school arts education vary considerably in their terminology, language, access, and the instructional practices through which students learn content and skills (Wan et al., 2018). Arts education refers to courses or curricula offered in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 that are standards-based and taught by a qualified teacher in a designated arts curricula that emphasizes the dance, music, theater, and visual arts (Wan et al., 2018). Some school districts or specialized schools offer arts integration programs, particularly at the elementary school level. Arts integration is instruction that incorporates arts education and strategies into academic content areas and courses (Wan et al., 2018). Arts education also implies that offerings and courses are developed to be sequential, allowing student knowledge and skills to scaffold as they progress through content- and skills-specific levels and courses (Wan et al., 2018).

This research indicates that although the educational hierarchy favors core content areas, quality educational markers are universal and include student learning, pedagogy, relationships, and classroom environment (Seidel et al., 2009, p. IV). Arts education has evolved alongside other content areas with educational needs, instructional practices, and student learning and have many parallels and similarities in program goals and student outcomes (Wan et al., 2018). This research also suggests that theater education programs should have sequential course offerings accompanied by standards-based curricula taught by qualified teachers to support effective instruction and practice that may lead to positive student outcomes (Wan et al., 2018).

Learning Standards and Curricula in Theater Education

National and state learning standards are often available to school districts but with various levels of teacher access, knowledge, and engagement, which often depend on the strategies and support of the district leadership. There are few examples of PreK-12 curricular models in theater education (Bennett, 2001). The Consortium of National Arts Education Associations (1994) stated that learning standards are essential for quality and accountability in arts education. In 1994, arts education was included as required learning with the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Seidel et al., 2009).

The State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE), composed of educators in dance, music, theater, and visual arts, developed and published the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS, 2014) outlining what every student needs to know in arts education (Mahlmann et al, 1994; SEADAE, 2019). These standards outline a conceptual framework for arts learning for PreK-12 students in arts disciplines with a focus on cumulative and sequential learning in arts education (Arts Education Partnership, 2018; SEADAE, 2019). The NCAS establish achievement standards and outline student skills and learning expectations in the arts at each grade level (SEADAE, 2019; Seidel et al., 2009). Since its release in 2014, 27 states and the Department of Defense have adopted the NCAS in one or more arts discipline areas (SEADAE, 2019). According to the NCAS, at the end of high school, students should know the basic terminology, techniques, and skills of all art forms and be proficient in one art form (SEADAE, 2019; Seidel et al., 2009). Across art forms, students should interpret, analyze, critique, and understand exemplary works from various historical periods and cultures (SEADAE, 2019; Seidel et al., 2009).

Some states that have developed and adopted their own theater learning standards include but are not limited to California, Colorado, Georgia, New York, Texas, and Virginia. A national survey indicated that theater teachers are generally optimistic about state and district standards. When surveyed, 22% responded that they were "very useful," 53% found them "somewhat useful," and 25% stated they were "not very" or "not at all" useful (Omasta, 2012). However, in recent years some arts educators have raised concerns about the nature of curricula and advocated that learning standards become more representative and inclusive of non-Western, folk, and indigenous art forms as well as queer and non-binary stories and artists (Bowman, 2006; Hamer, 2000). Taylor (1996) argued that curricula rooted in Anglo-European tradition is limiting and leads to an ignorance of contemporary issues. Though often needed, it may be challenging for district leadership to justify the development of theater learning standards and/or curricular resources with minimal programs or course offerings which may further limit the success and quality of district and school theater education programs in public schools (Bennett, 2001; Omasta, 2012).

An established and internationally recognized curricular framework in theater and arts education is the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP) (Seidel et al., 2009). The IB World Schools selected a few elective offerings for the Career-Related Programme, and

theater is one of the arts options. IB programming includes a Primary Years Program (ages 3-11), a Middle Years Program (ages 12-16), and a two-year Diploma Program (ages 16-19). Students are taught to continuously make connections between the arts and other disciplines and to document their learning and progress through portfolios, journals, and self-assessments (Seidel et al., 2009). Across all levels and disciplines, the IB program strives to help students develop skills to communicate in multiple modalities, synthesize knowledge and skills across curricula, and broaden historical and multicultural understanding (IBO, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2005). The Advanced Placement (AP) program, another advanced academic program, includes two courses in the visual arts and one in music but does not currently have available options for theater or dance again demonstrating the limited nature of theater education in public schools and higher education as compared to other arts and content areas.

Theater Education Programs in the United States

There have been three major research studies that have examined theater education across the United States. The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare commissioned *A Survey of the Status of Theater in United States High Schools* (Peluso, 1970). The Educational Theater Association (EdTA) implemented a similar survey, *Theater Education in the United States High Schools*, using the earlier study as a baseline of comparison (Seidel, 1991). The third study, *A Survey of School Theater* (2012), was implemented as a partnership between the EdTA and Utah State University (UTU), to conduct an updated survey that assessed the state of theater education in high schools across the United States (Omasta, 2012). The latest survey built on the foundation created by the previous two studies. It surveyed over 1,200 theater educators and secondary school administrators nationwide and provided an overview of the status of theater education in publics schools on a broad range of theater topics, including teacher qualifications, participation, theater instruction, programming, and perceptions of theater education.

Omasta's (2012) study presented an overview of theater programs across the United States. Theater programs exist in various forms in public schools: some through elementary arts integration programs, some through extracurricular performance and production offerings, and a select few with full-time teachers and course offerings throughout the school day (Omasta, 2012). Course offerings in theater education also vary drastically, most offering only one theater class, wherein students may elect to take courses in directing, scene study, technical arts, or audition preparation (Omasta, 2012). Theater curricula often include a survey approach,

providing students with exposure to a range of topics, not focusing solely on performance skills (Bennett, 2001; Omasta, 2012). Theater survey courses often consist of performance, production, playwriting, technical theater, theater history, critique and response, styles and modes of theater, and musical theater. Theater course offerings are often broad in which students can select an emphasis that speak to their own interests and skills.

Omasta (2012) found that approximately 70% of the surveyed schools required students to take at least one fine arts credit during their high school experience. School administrators estimated that an average of 76% of students from these schools took at least one arts course during their four years in high school (Omasta, 2012). In the 2011-12SY, 79% of the schools polled offered at least one theater course and an estimated 23% of the students took at least one theater course during their high school experience (Omasta, 2012). Research demonstrates that a lower percentage of students elect to take theater as their fine arts requirement.

Theater courses and programs are often made available because of student enrollment and participation. Mediocre federal and state expectations, which often include little to no opportunity for theater education at the elementary level, make it challenging to build enrollment and participation in theater education programs at the secondary levels, particularly if students have already been enrolled in mandated elementary school specials, including general music, instrumental music, and the visual arts (McMurrer et al., 2008).

This research reiterates that although there are benefits of theater education, district and school programs vary significantly across the United States (Omasta, 2012). Most schools host a single or few curricular offerings if theater is available. Compared to other arts and elective areas, student enrollment and participation are generally lower at the state, district, and school levels (McMurrer et al., 2008; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001).

Instruction in Theater Education

To cultivate a district or school theater education program, leaders and practitioners must identify the purpose of arts education within their organization. In 2009, Project Zero of the Harvard Graduate School of Education launched a 2-year research study, *The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education* (Seidel et al, 2009). The study sought out arts administrators, teachers, teaching artists, researchers, and theorists from all arts areas to examine what constitutes quality arts education. Through interviews and research, there emerged seven purposes for arts education, though these outcomes were meant to clarify indicators of

quality in arts education, not be comprehensive. Project Zero (Seidel et al, 2009) defined the goals of arts education to be to:

- foster broad dispositions and skills, particularly for students to think creatively and make connections;
- teach artistic skills and techniques without making this the primary focus;
- develop aesthetic awareness;
- provide ways of pursuing and understanding the world;
- engage with community, civic, and social issues;
- provide opportunities for students to express themselves;
- support student development as individuals.

In public schools, general perceptions are that theater instruction is different or alternative to "regular" instruction (Gonzalez, 2006). Theater pedagogy and practices can be traced back to Dewey's creativity and expression theories utilized by Winifred Ward, who founded the Creative Dramatics movement in 1930. Ward applied educational theory to artistic and personal development and used theater strategies, including improvisation and dramatic play, to support individual growth (Nicholson, 2009). Theater education included all kinds of theater in various settings, including children's theater, youth theater, touring children's shows, and theater in higher education.

In theater instruction and practices, teachers work directly and collaboratively with their students who participate actively in curricula that support individual expression, artistic voice, and creativity (Gonzalez, 2006). Sizer (1984) remarked that the learning opportunities offered by theater education are among the few activities where teachers and students get to know each other and have conversations that connect to thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to the theater arts. Bolton (1998) argued that the methods and approaches to learning in theater education are inherently theatrical, requiring students and actors to adopt "acting behaviors" (Boton, 1998, p. 249). Therefore, theater teachers must be able to create a safe classroom environment which supports positive and appropriate relationships, collaboration, and communication for quality learning experiences.

Although arts education programs vary in their goals and practices, a sign of quality arts instruction and learning is that activities are robust and complex for learners, actively engaging them in various strategies to support comprehensive learning and growth (Seidel et al., 2009).

The best practices in theater education are considered active, engaging, and focused on artistic discipline, communication, collaboration, creativity, and resilience (Bennett, 2001).

Theater educators often question the purpose of theater education, the social role of theater, and its impact on the lives of young people (Nicholson, 2009). Therefore, instruction can be complex and synthesizes contemporary dramatic and educational innovations, often referencing current culture and society (Nicholson, 2009). Theater instruction and practices often seek to engage students in the future they want to create, including social change and aspirations (Nicholson, 2009), thus fueling conversations and experimentation with political discussions and controversial topics (Nicholson, 2009). Therefore, a theater teacher must be prepared with appropriate content and facilitate conversations and learning opportunities to meet identified learning standards while promoting individual artistry, creative expression, and student efficacy.

This research demonstrates that theater instruction and practices look different than a typical classroom often with more physical, communicative, and collaborative activities that enhance direct teacher engagement and participation (Gonzalez, 2006). Due to the nature of theater education, instruction and content are often impacted by social, political, and cultural dynamics, and ideally develop students to become independent thinkers and theater-makers who creatively engage in their local and global communities (Nicholson, 2009).

Assessment in Theater Education

Assessment in education often prioritizes the content and skills that are valued and impacts curricular design; therefore, it is essential that the arts are also formally assessed (Boughton, 2004; Remer, 1982). There are debates and dialogue among arts policymakers, arts leaders, and educators regarding the ways to measure student achievement in arts education (Wan et al., 2018). The demand for arts assessment has often come from policymakers and arts advocates to validate arts education in line with core content areas where academic learning occurs and where student growth is measured. Assessment also provides teachers with beneficial information on when practices or materials may need to be adjusted for improved student outcomes (Seidel et al., 2009).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Arts Assessment was developed to quantify what was being learned in arts education in the United States (Persky et al., 1998). The assessment included written and performance tasks to evaluate students' ability to create original works, perform existing works, and respond to artistic works (Woodworth et al.,

2007). Persky (2004) expressed frustrations around developing and scoring NAEP assessments, which reflected general challenges in greater arts assessment to:

- create practical assessments for administration in ways that are authentic to arts education and the NAEP framework;
- encourage thoughtful student responses with limited directions and constraints;
- enable students from various arts backgrounds to participate in the assessment without the burdens of unneeded reading or testing constraints;
- enable student responses to be quantifiable without limiting the task.

Arts research has shifted focus from assessing products to the artistic process and experience, avoiding proxy indicators such as academic achievement and placing more value on studying the artistic discipline and developing student artistic identity and voice (Fleming, 2012; Winner & Hetland, 2000). Arts assessment must also consider the impact of arts education on English Language Learners (ELLs), students with learning disabilities, at-risk youth, and diverse communities including but not limited to Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color (BIPOC) (Wan et al., 2018).

Scholars have acknowledged that many arts educators are ambivalent about learning standards and/or assessments (Seidel et al., 2009). Standards can be interpreted as uniform, sterile, and product-oriented, where arts teachers often view their disciplines as personal, individual, complex, and process-oriented (Seidel et al., 2009). Standardized testing favors multiple choice assessments where student answers can be more efficiently coded than the performance-based assessments, teacher evaluations, or peer assessments typically used in arts education, which are not as easily quantifiable (Robinson & Aronica, 2016). This research suggest that arts educators must be thoroughly trained and prepared in student assessment which should be guided by identified learning standards.

Eisner (1999) deemed that arts assessment should not be considered unless the goal is to improve the quality of arts education in public schools. Eisner (1996) believed that testing aspires to correct responses, whereas arts education prefers idiosyncratic responses, and that testing traditionally focuses on selected information, while artistic works emphasize the whole and its impact on student dispositions. Testing emphasizes the acquisition of products produced by others, while the arts value works created from an individual's personal experiences, ideas,

and feelings. Eisner (1996) deduced that these emphases and fundamentals were so contradictory that testing and the arts resided in different spheres.

Limited learning standards and curricular resources make it challenging for district and school leaders to identify and define what quality instruction and programming looks like in theater education (Omasta, 2012). Further, without information from standardized testing or reliance on subjective assessment practices, theater teachers and school administrators struggle to quantify student and program success (Seidel et al., 2009). It can also be challenging to justify how teacher-created assessments quantify student knowledge and growth (Omasta, 2012). Due to limited background knowledge and understanding of arts curricula and practices by supervising school administrators, there is often little oversight in the alignment of curricula and assessment with identified theater learning standards (Omasta, 2012).

The most employed method for student assessment in theater education is performance or practical demonstrations (Omasta, 2012). Theater educators also utilize student self-assessment and peer assessment (Omasta, 2012). However, the primary person responsible for assessing students' coursework is the theater teacher (Omasta, 2012). Many teachers do not believe that students should be formally assessed early in their theater coursework due to their anxiety when performing in front of their peers. Instead, teachers feel that the evaluation process should encourage growth and risk-taking and instill trust and safety in theater spaces and activities (Bennett, 2001). Students may also be sensitive to teacher and peer feedback, as the target of discussion is their skills, voices, bodies, and ultimately imagination and creativity (Bennett, 2001). Despite the significant role the theater teacher plays in student assessment, only 28% of teachers indicated that they received assessment training specific to theater education as a part of their teacher preparation coursework (Omasta, 2012). About 67% stated that they did not receive any training, while 4% were unsure (Omasta, 2012).

This indicates a disparity in teachers' purpose of, utilization of, and training in meaningful student assessment in theater education (Omasta, 2012). Data collected from student assessment are necessary to validate instructional strategies and articulate student outcomes (Boughton, 2004; Remer, 1982). Without quantifiable data from theater assessments, which are not always authentic to the discipline or nature of theater, it is challenging to identify success or quality in district or school theater education programs (Omasta, 2012; Seidel et al., 2009).

Programming in Theater Education

There is nothing more essential to creating a successful theater education program than effective curricula, instruction, and ultimately the production of dynamic theater performances (Bennett, 2001). Many theater education programs offer various co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities, including musicals, plays, drama clubs, improvisation troupes and competitions, cabarets, children's plays, student-directed work, student written work, and one-act productions (Bennett, 2001; Omasta, 2012).

Many theater teachers implement theater performances and productions wholly as an extracurricular program to allow greater student participation, acquire needed talent, and have more casting options. Approximately 95% of schools polled indicated that they offered extracurricular theater programs, such as production opportunities, drama clubs, or similar activities (Omasta, 2012). Extracurricular annual program offerings range from one to six productions during a school year, depending on the school and community, while some programs also elect to offer a summer theater program. Many teachers believe that theater programs must embrace and have a place for every student (Bennett, 2001). Being a theater teacher or student is often associated with a certain personality, including the eccentric, artsy, and temperamental types (Bennett, 2001).

Theater teachers face many challenges when creating and implementing extracurricular programs and theater education productions and performances in public schools (Bennett, 2001). Some include:

- having the participation and representation of diverse gender, ethnic, and cultural groups;
- the casting process in dealing with the disappointment of students and parents;
- parent demands and communication;
- adequate rehearsal, performance, and storage spaces;
- additional time, planning, and energy to implement extracurricular offerings on top of instructional duties;
- the high cost of theater production, which may include hiring additional staff for artistic needs (tech director, choreographer, music director), set materials and equipment needs, costumes and makeup, marketing, and other production needs.

One of the more common challenges teachers face when producing student works in theater education programs is content selection (Bennett, 2001). More and more schools present contemporary works that contain progressive and mature themes and messages (Gonzalez, 2006). Concerns may include language, violence, drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, sexual content, sexism, religion, and sexual orientation. Often, the teacher is responsible for script selection and the district or school grants approval for performance (Bennett, 2001).

Many theater teachers, who once were or still are theater artists, choose to work in theater education to use, or to teach others to use, theater as a learning medium and vehicle for social justice and change, and this becomes most apparent in content selection and production (Nicholson, 2009). Teachers are often committed to raising serious and controversial questions through theater programming and to encourage students to become independent theater-makers and practitioners (Nicholson, 2009). These practices align with the aforementioned focus of theater education on developing student dispositions, including attitudes and beliefs, rather than theater-specific content and skills.

In his book, *Arguments for Theater* (1997), playwright Howard Barker made the case that theater should be free from function, serve no practical purpose, and not be obligated to entertain or educate. Alternatively, theater should relish in creativity and seek to challenge concepts and ideas of certainty by exploring the more troubling qualities of the imagination. Similarly, in his article, "Where's the Challenge?" David Edgar (2004) attacked government policies in theater education for identifying predetermined targets and giving checklists of morally approved messages. Theater can be utilized to convey particular messages, information, impart moral beliefs, or elucidate specific issues, thus leaving little space for the creative involvement, imagination, and the artistic voice of students (Edgar, 2004). In a similar vein, Edward Bond (Takkaç & Biçer, 2009) argued that theater education must challenge the imagination by asking radical questions and encouraging students to imagine a future without social injustice:

> Bad drama flourishes in an unjust society. Our future always depends on the state of our imaginations. Drama becomes more important as the world changes. Theater is just or corrupt in the urgency of the times when there is nothing in between. That is because theater is the place where reality is made real. The plays young people write, act, and watch are blueprints of the world they will have to live in. (p. 58)

Contemporary theater education and programs continue to evolve both artistically and politically (Nicholson, 2009). A new generation of theater teachers has inspired theater methodologies with approaches and practices used by professional theater organizations, thus changing the works and performances taking the stage in public schools (Bennett, 2001; Nicholson, 2009; Omasta, 2012).

Equitable Access and Representation to Theater Education

Access to arts education in public schools is generally inequitable (Catterall, 2009; McMurrer et al., 2008; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012: Project Zero, 2001). Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and less educated families are drastically more likely to have low participation in the arts than students from affluent communities and households (Catterall, 2009). Many parents seek opportunities for their children to study the arts outside of school but cannot afford to do so or lack convenient access to arts opportunities (NEA, 2009). An analysis of the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (NEA, 1992) demonstrated that socioeconomic status is the strongest indicator of the ability to obtain an arts education. The research also demonstrates that students involved in the arts perform better in school than those who are not, but without clear conclusions as to why this is the case (Catterall, 2009).

A multi-year survey in 1998 of more than 25,000 students found substantial differences in the achievements, attitudes, and behaviors between students highly involved in the arts and those with little or no arts engagement, with substantively significant differences for lower socio-economic or disadvantaged students (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 2009). The probability of student participation in arts education remains twice as high for students from advantaged families, with half the rates of participation for economically disadvantaged families (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 2009). Another survey, conducted by the Center of Education Policy. included 349 school districts and indicated that 16% had reduced instructional time for arts classes in the past 5 years and that arts specialists were less likely to be found in poorer districts (Seidel et al., 2009). Inequitable access to theater education, which correlates with language acquisition, cognitive growth, social and emotional well-being, and personal and academic motivation for students, contributes to social inequities and broadens the achievement gap between student groups (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 2009; Seidel et al., 2009).

The demographics of theater teachers across the United States also lack diversity and are similar to those of 20 years ago. Most teachers are White women in their 30s or 40s, married or

in domestic partnerships (Omasta, 2012). There is a noticeable gender gap, with 51% of participating students being female and only 37% of theater teachers being male (Omasta, 2012). Contrarily, student demographics have changed significantly. The 1991 study indicated a "21-point gap between the percentage of White, non-Hispanic theater teachers (97%) and white, non-Hispanic students (76%)" (Omasta, 2012, p. 16). In the most recent study, when comparing the percentage of White teachers (93-96%) to White students (61%) enrolled at their schools, an even more significant gap of over 32% emerged (Omasta, 2012). Research also indicates that theater students are friendlier with other racial groups and less likely to make racist remarks (Catterall, 2009).

The literature indicates that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have limited and inequitable access to arts and theater education and benefits (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 2009; Seidel et al., 2009). It also suggests that although student representation in theater education has become more diverse in recent years, theater teachers are primarily White and female (Omasta, 2012). Though there is less representation of BIPOC students and teachers, participating in theater education and experiences encourages empathy and anti-racist behaviors (Catterall, 2009). There are similar characteristics between curricula and instruction in theater education compared to arts education and core content areas (Robinson & Aronica, 2016; Seidel et al., 2009). There are also differences. Research demonstrates a vast and inequitable range of expectations and inclusion, course offerings, and programming in theater education across the United States (Bennett, 2001; Omasta, 2012). Both instructional and extracurricular theater programs are primarily driven by the individual theater teachers' objectives, personalities, and capabilities (Gonzalez, 2006; Nicholson, 2009; Omasta, 2012).

The external face of a theater program, both to the community and school leaders, is often the extracurricular theater program and productions, which are often not tied to instructional courses or students (Bennett, 2001; Nicholson, 2009; Omasta, 2012). Theater instruction and extracurricular programming usually function as two separate jobs, which teachers struggle to effectively implement with little administrative support, funding, or needed resources (Bennett, 2001; Nicholson, 2009; Omasta, 2012). These challenges may inhibit theater teachers from giving their full attention to curricula and instruction, which is their primary purpose. This often leads to priority and value being placed on the extracurricular theater

program and productions, as that is what is seen by community members and can quickly take priority over classroom instruction (Bennett, 2001; Nicholson, 2009; Omasta, 2012).

The scarcity of state and district theater learning standards, curricular resources, and quantifiable student assessments may be a limiting factor in the cultivation of district theater education programs in public schools (Bennett, 2001; Seidel et al., 2009). The absence of these critical components becomes more detrimental when there are limited certified teachers who can effectively plan and implement theater education programs without essential learning standards, resources, and support (Bennett, 2001). This research indicates that curricula and instruction, particularly theater learning standards, in conjunction with student assessment, might support the success and quality of district and school theater education programs in public schools.

Qualified Teachers in Theater Education

Having identified that qualified teachers may be an essential component in fostering and sustaining district and school theater education programs, the researcher explored the relevant literature to better understand teacher preparation, qualifications, and career pathways in theater education, arts education, and PreK-12 education generally. The researcher also investigated the impact of teacher preparation and qualifications on student outcomes to better understand how these may impact the success and quality of district and school theater education programs.

Expectations and Qualifications in Theater Education

For school districts to recruit and hire qualified teachers, the content area must be an available option in a student's PreK-12 educational experience. The larger the demand for a course or program, often due to higher student enrollment, the more opportunities there are to create and sustain teacher positions in that discipline (Bennett, 2001; Omasta, 2012). Limited program and curricular expectations impact the number of available course offerings, which often influence the number of, or status of (full-time or part-time), teacher employment in theater education (Bennett, 2001; Omasta, 2012). Without available full-time positions, it is difficult to recruit and retain qualified theater teachers, and this affects the curricula and instruction, student experience and participation, and overall program success (Bennett, 2001; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001).

The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) prescribed that content areas be taught by teachers who were "highly qualified". A highly qualified teacher, as defined by NCLB (2002), was an

educator who 1) holds a bachelor's degree; 2) holds a state certification or licensure; and 3) demonstrates subject matter competency. However, in 2016 under the ESSA (2015) the highly qualified teacher specification was eliminated allowing states to establish teacher qualifications as they determined appropriate on a state-by-state basis often leading to inequitable access and opportunities to quality arts education in public schools due to teacher preparation, certification, and licensure requirements. Some states specify teacher licensure requirements that stipulate course content and distribution for teacher licenses and certification. Some states also mandate a year of instruction by a certified specialist before graduation (California Department of Education [DOE], 2007).

Many schools do not have full-time arts teachers, or even one specialist arts teacher (Seidel et al., 2009). Studies indicated that 97% of public elementary schools in the United States offer music, and that 70% of those courses are taught by certified music teachers (DOE, 1995; McMurrer et al., 2008). Visual arts are offered in 85% of public elementary schools, where 43% are taught by certified visual arts teachers (DOE, 1995; McMurrer et al., 2008). Forty-three percent of public elementary schools offer dance instruction, with only 7% by certified dance teachers (DOE, 1995; McMurrer et al., 2008). Only 8% of public elementary schools offer theater as a separate subject. The DOE analysis did not mention certifications or specialists in the summary (DOE, 1995).

National accrediting arts organizations have provided feedback on arts teachers' criteria. Some arts academics and educators believe the arts should be taught by specialists who implement sequential, standards-based curricula. Others believe that teaching artists have more significant expertise, while others argue that general teachers should teach the arts to integrate them into their general classroom instruction (Seidel et al., 2009). A UNESCO report asserts that quality arts education is characterized by collaborative partnerships between arts organizations, teaching artists, and schools (Bamford, 2006).

When polled on the minimum qualifications to be considered for hire as a theater teacher, only three criteria were unanimously selected by most school-based administrators (Omasta, 2012). The requirements were:

- a strong interest or desire to teach theater;
- effective teaching abilities;
- experience teaching theater.

More rigorous and traditional education qualifications, such as having a Master's degree in theater, theater education, or professional theater experience, were the least selected minimum requirements (Omasta, 2012). Most surprising, many considered a teacher certification in another subject other than theater to be a minimum requirement for teaching theater (Omasta, 2012). Several teachers indicated they were initially hired primarily to teach theater courses, though a notable number of teachers were not (Omasta, 2012).

The literature indicates that many schools do not have certified or full-time theater teachers (NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001). It also demonstrates that, within the arts community, there is no consensus on who should teach the arts in public schools (Bennett, 2001; Omasta, 2012; Seidel et al., 2009). Lastly, there is a discrepancy at the school level, contrary to the expectations of core content area teachers, qualifications, and expectations of theater teachers in PreK-12 public schools (Omasta, 2012).

Teacher Quality, Effectiveness, and Preparation

Teacher effectiveness is both an individual and organizational resource that varies between classrooms and schools. Teacher quality may include teacher preparation, expertise, and pedagogy, which impact academic variables such as instructional planning and practices, learning environments, and curricula, and these in turn impact the organization where student learning takes place (Heck, 2000).

The lack of theater education programs and available teaching positions diminishes the incentives for colleges and universities to offer theater education, theater, or technical theater as a degree pathway (Bennett, 2001). A popular theater industry website currently lists only 30 higher education institutions that offer an undergraduate or Master's degree in theater education (Broadway World, 2022). Limited teacher preparation programs in theater education result in a smaller pool of qualified theater teachers, often making it difficult to find certified teachers for available positions. When districts or schools feel they possess few hiring options, they may hire any available or certified candidate that they can find, even when the candidate might not be a preferred candidate. They might also hire a candidate who is not a certified teacher or qualified in the content area but who is able to be hired and willing to teach the available courses (Omasta, 2012).

The lack of public school theater positions also means that undergraduate theater education preparation programs are regularly taught by theater professionals and teaching artists

who may have professional or private industry experiences but who have spent minimal or no time in public school classrooms as teachers. The lack of public school experience may not prepare teacher candidates for instructional planning and assessment using identified learning standards, student accommodations, or instructional strategies for heterogeneous elective classrooms, which contain learners of various cognitive and emotional capabilities. Training may also not prepare teachers to manage and support students who were "placed" in the course and who are not necessarily interested in participating in theater activities, which are often different than private arts opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Fetler, 1999; Fuller, 1999; Omasta, 2012). Meaning, a public school theater teacher must possess the pedagogy and skills to engage students in content in which they may not like or have interest and demands they collaborate with and are vulnerable in front of their peers.

Recent studies on student achievement found strong correlations between teacher qualifications and student outcomes at both the district and school levels. Ferguson's (1991) study of school districts in Texas found that teacher expertise, degrees, and experience accounted for more variation in student learning than socioeconomic status. Fuller (1999) found that students in districts with more substantial proportions of fully licensed teachers were more likely to pass the state achievement tests after controlling for socioeconomic status, teacher experience, and school status. Fetler (1999) controlled for socioeconomic status and found a negative relationship between student scores and the percentage of teachers who had emergency teacher certificates. A California study indicated that elementary students' achievement was significantly impacted by the proportion of thoroughly trained and certified teachers (Los Angeles County Office of Education, 1999). Fully prepared and certified teachers are generally more successful and have better outcomes than teachers without this preparation (Ashton & Corocker, 1986; Evertson et al., 1985).

Teachers with a greater knowledge of pedagogy, instructional practices, and student learning are more highly rated and effective with students, particularly in learning activities that require creative and higher-order thinking and problem-solving such as theater education (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Additionally, pedagogical knowledge, including an understanding of curricula, instructional practices, and student learning, is more impactful on teacher performance than subject-matter knowledge (Ashton & Crocker, 1986; Begle & Geeslin, 1972; Byrne, 1983; Evertson et al., 1985; Ferguson & Womack, 1993; Guyton & Farokhi, 1987; Monk, 1994). Byrne

(1983) suggested that content knowledge provides the basis for teacher effectiveness. However, the most relevant knowledge are the pedagogical strategies employed for students in the classroom which allow them to access and engage in the content area.

Some research suggests that teacher characteristics, including but not limited to gender, race, or ethnicity, and student test scores correlate to student outcomes (Wayne & Youngs, 2003). An important aspect of teacher preparation programs is the development of teachers' abilities to examine the perspectives of diverse learners, who bring various experiences and reference points to the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2000). This literature demonstrates that it is favorable for theater teachers to complete a teacher preparation program in theater education and to hold a teaching licensure in Theater to have optimal outcomes for all students (Ashton & Crocker, 1986; Begle & Geeslin, 1972; Byrne, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Evertson, 1985; Ferguson & Womack, 1993; Fetler, 1999; Fuller, 1999; Guyton & Farokhi, 1987; Monk, 1994; Omasta, 2012).

Alternative Pathways to Becoming a Theater Teacher in Public Schools

In many states, policymakers have enacted alternative routes to certification other than those provided by traditional teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Among these available pathways, including traditional and often alternative routes, teachers receive vastly different preparation, experiences, and opportunities (Boyd et al., 2008). An alternative route taken by many theater teachers is to attend college and major in theater performance or production, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts or a Bachelor of Arts or Master's degree in theater. After college, many pursue careers in theater or work as teaching artists in private arts organizations before seeking employment in public schools and obtaining a theater license (Heck, 2000; Omasta, 2012).

Preparation for arts teaching requires training, a foundation of general knowledge, and content expertise (Seidel et al., 2009). Alternatively, theater teachers are frequently hired on a provisional teaching license, take needed education coursework while teaching, and do not complete traditional student teaching requirements. Alternative and short-term teacher preparation programs regularly focus on generic teaching skills rather than discipline-specific pedagogy and seldomly offer candidates' multiple methods that engage educational research or theory with the content area, thus often providing inadequate teacher preparation and training (Bliss, 1992; Stoddart, 1992; Zumwalt, 1990). Therefore, many theater teachers may possess

theater content knowledge and experiences but have not thoroughly examined theater educational theory, methodology, and pedagogy to best prepare them for heterogeneous classrooms filled with learners with various needs.

Due to limited theater education programs and available qualified teachers, theater courses may also be taught by non-discipline teachers, often with a background in English (Bennett, 2001; Deasy, 2002; Omasta, 2012). These teachers may have attended a teacher preparation program and have obtained a licensure endorsement in theater but often do not possess content knowledge or theater experience (Bennett, 2001). In addition, theater offerings may also be conducted by an uncertified teaching artist who has been hired on a provisional teaching license and who may have a theater degree, theater knowledge, and experience but who lacks teacher preparation and pedagogy. Both scenarios may lead to poor outcomes for students of various academic and social-emotional needs and with a range of interests and theater abilities (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Teachers with less confidence or satisfaction in their training have greater difficulties with instructional planning, classroom management, and supporting students with various learning needs (Darling-Hammond, 2000). These teachers are also less likely to adopt or develop curricula to support student needs, blaming students if their instruction and learning activities are not successful (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Despite federal legislation, the research reveals that many public school theater teachers do not have a degree and/or state licensure in their content area at the time of hire (Bennett, 2001; Deasy, 2002; Omasta, 2012). This lack of degree and licensure seems to correlate with low expectations for theater programs and the limited supply of certified and available teachers in theater education. The literature has established that certified and prepared teachers are more effective in instructional planning and assessment, instructional delivery, and at engaging with heterogeneous and diverse student populations (Ashton & Crocker, 1986; Begle & Geeslin, 1972; Byrne, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 1999; Evertson, 1985; Ferguson & Womack, 1993; Fetler, 1999; Fuller, 1999; Guyton & Farokhi, 1987; Monk, 1994; Omasta, 2012). The literature affirms that to cultivate and sustain quality district and school theater education programs in public schools, particularly if there are limited curricular resources and support, it would be ideal to hire certified and prepared theater teachers.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Professional Development in Theater Education

Discipline-specific Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and professional development are necessary to cultivate and sustain district and school programs in theater education. The researcher explored the relevant literature to identify PLCs and best practices, social and emotional dynamics within PLCs, and professional development events within theater education, arts education, and education broadly.

PLCs and Practices

PLCs are professional development initiatives that derive from data collection, teacher reflection, and shared communication regarding pedagogy and practices (Dunne et al., 2000). In PLCs, content area teachers collaborate using student data to identify and develop instructional strategies that meet student learning needs and to create effective curricula, instructional practices, assessment, and programming (Thessin & Star, 2011). PLCs are defined as educators who work collaboratively in ongoing collective inquiry and action research to achieve optimal results for the students (DuFour et al., 2008). PLCs are derived and sustained by teachers' continuous and collaborative efforts, which is the fundamental principle of a PLC (DuFour, 2004).

Teacher collaborations entail activities and professional practices where educators share knowledge and work together to reach common goals. Effective cooperation and communication between teachers are essential to professional development, supporting student achievement, and student and program success (Lieberman 1990; Little, 1982). Research indicates that effective PLCs would help the proliferation of quality district and school theater education programs (Dunne et al., 2000; Lieberman, 1990; Little, 1982; Thessin & Star, 2011).

PLCs are often rare in theater education due to the limited number of existing programs and teachers (McMurrer et al., 2008; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001). Theater teachers tend to be solitary, also known as singletons, in their school buildings and generally one of a handful of theater teachers in a school district (NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001). In their schools, theater teachers are regularly placed on heterogeneous collaborative learning teams with various content areas, sometimes elective or arts content areas, but they are often unable to share instructional strategies specifically for theater

education or to utilize student data with a discipline-specific team to reflect and develop instructional strategies and assessments that support theater student growth and achievement. This segregation often leaves theater teachers feeling isolated, overwhelmed by program responsibilities, and disenfranchised (Bennett, 2001; Elmore, 2004; Omasta, 2012; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Teachers have learned to find ways to innovate and succeed independently, but this often leads to teacher burnout or disengagement from the district or school communities and goals (Elmore, 2004; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Theater teachers often find themselves working in their buildings in isolation, often duplicating curricular and program resources across the district, instead of collaborating to share and refine needed resources as occurs within a PLC (Bennett, 2001; Elmore, 2004; Omasta, 2012; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Developing Effective PLCs

In creating PLCs district-wide, leadership teams have realized that they must provide intentional and deliberate strategies and professional development to teach team members how to collaborate successfully within a PLC. When implementing PLCs across a school system, districts play four key roles (Thessin & Star, 2011) through the following aspects:

- ownership and support: involving administrators and teachers in developing and leading the PLC process;
- Professional Development (PD): teaching administrators and teachers how to work together effectively in PLCs;
- Clear improvement process: demonstrating how PLCs fit into the district's improvement process, so each PLCs aligns with the district plan and goals;
- differentiate support: supporting schools according to their unique needs to help them move to the next step in their PLC growth.

Hord (1997) identified teacher collaboration in PLCs by two core dimensions: collective learning and application including shared personal practice. In collective learning and application, teachers prioritize professional achievement and progress as a collective group and create strategies to optimize student learning and outcomes (Anderson & Herr, 2011; DuFour et al., 2010; Hargreaves, 2003; Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Toole & Louis, 2002). When teachers engage in peer observation and feedback, they learn communication and collaboration strategies to ask questions pragmatically and evaluate instructional practices (Bryk et al., 1999). Additionally, when teachers cultivate a shared language and understanding by identifying

personal practices and expertise with colleagues through questioning and reflective dialogue, collective advancement is achieved (Brownell et al., 1997). Collective advancement may support the propagation of district and school theater education programs in public schools.

Effective PLCs and ongoing collaboration allow teachers to develop a sense of community, provide professional support within an organization, and support teacher engagement and growth (Louis, 1992). The positive results of effective PLCs include improvements in instructional practices, more generous social-emotional support, and improved team dynamics and cultures (Dunne et al., 2000; Louis & Marks, 1998; Strahan, 2003).

Social and Emotional Dynamics in PLCs

A PLC requires the participation of several individuals who are willing and able to communicate and collaborate with the shared goal of advancing professional learning as a community. The literature emphasizes two value orientations that concern team relations, interactions, and collaboration: collectivism and power distance (Basabe & Ros, 2005; Gibson & Zelmmer-Bruhn, 2001). The concept of collectivism was advanced by Hofstede (2001) as the priority of community-interests over self-interest, in contrast to power distance or individualism, which refers to the focus on self-interest over group interest. Past studies have shown that collectivists have a higher regard for team harmony (Oyserman et al., 2002) and lower resistance to teamwork (Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001).

Chen and Tjosvold (2008) examined collectivist values for cooperation and found that a collectivist team environment can enhance collegial relationships and collaboration. Ford and Chan (2003) found that collaboration can be more challenging in low collectivist environments as individuals within the community view knowledge as a power source that can benefit self-interests. In highly collectivist cultures, knowledge sharing is seen as beneficial to the community and to common practice. Given the meager curricular resources available in theater education and the varied degrees of teacher preparation and certification, a collectivist professional learning community would support teacher and student outcomes in theater education, ultimately putting the theater education of students as priority (Bennett, 2001; NEA, 1988; Omasta, 2012; Seidel et al., 2009).

Teachers should be involved in policy and decision-making and be given the freedom to function autonomously in their professional judgment and practices to minimize power differentials and support collegial relationships and collaboration (Pang, 2003; Project Zero,

2001). It is also imperative that the developmental and energy levels of individual teachers are considered when striving to achieve collective growth. While some team members may see the need for the continual improvement of practices, all teachers may not share this goal or may reach the outcomes at varied rates (Seidel et al., 2009). This research indicates that any excessive time and energy demanded to implement theater education programs in public schools be considered when achieving collective growth in district PLCs (Omasta, 2012; Pang, 2003; Seidel et al., 2009).

Several factors influence PLC dynamics, including work environment and assigned tasks, but Kwakman (2003) found that personal characteristics (e.g., values, beliefs, attitudes, demographics) are most impactful in predicting professional participation in learning activities and the social dynamics of a team. Teachers interpret new initiatives according to their values (Stoll et al., 2006). For many arts educators, ideas about what constitutes quality in arts education are tied to personal values and fundamental identity- and meaning-making, or to issues rooted in their personal artistic values, as educators, and as citizens (Seidel et al., 2009). Theater teachers frequently regard themselves as independent-minded cultural champions rather than uncritical followers of uniform curricular agendas (Nicholson, 2009). A key element in establishing district programs is to clarify the collective program's purpose compared to the individuals' purposes and experiences (Oyserman et al., 2002; Seidel et al., 2009). Effective arts educators must continually seek an understanding of quality instruction and programming and strive to implement in their own practices while aligning with the organizational mission (Seidel et al., 2009).

Across a district, state, and nation, theater teachers often compete against each other in theater festivals and events, creating power distance which may limit opportunities to build collegial relationships and trust for shared learning and knowledge. Given the competitive and individualistic nature often present in theater education, a collectivist PLC focused on student learning would be ideal for creating and sustaining district and school theater education programs in public schools (Bennett, 2001; Omasta, 2012; Oyserman et al., 2002; Seidel et al., 2009).

Professional Development in Theater Education

Effective PLCs often result in greater teacher participation in professional development events, which positively impacts student achievement and growth (Phillips, 2003). Harris and

Sass (2007) conducted a study that focused on teacher education and followed students and teachers over time, and they found that students learned more when their teacher had participated in content-focused, professional development. Utilizing teacher expertise and encouraging teacher leaders to facilitate professional development, as represented in the PLC model, provides meaningful learning opportunities in professional development where participants can develop as educational leaders and share responsibility within academic and arts communities improving individual pedagogy and practices which will support positive program and student outcomes. (Harris & Sass, 2007; Omasta, 2012; Phillips, 2003).

This research acknowledges that effective PLCs are necessary to develop and sustain quality district and school programs, both in theater education and core content areas (Dunne et al., 2000; Louis & Marks, 1998; Strahan, 2003). In developing PLCs in theater education, the leadership must consider the social-emotional dynamics of the team members and utilize teacher leaders' expertise and collaboration to build a collectivist community (Basabe & Ros, 2005; Bennett, 2001; Gibson & Zelmmer-Bruhn, 2001; NEA, 1988; Omasta, 2012; Seidel et al., 2009).

Discipline-specific PLCs and professional development events are essential to support teachers' professional growth and success (Harris & Sass, 2007; Phillips, 2003). These elements are more consequential for teachers who may not have completed a teacher preparation program, who have limited content knowledge in assigned content or course areas, or who lack learning standards and/or curricular resources (Bennett, 2001; Elmore, 2004; Omasta, 2012; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The lack of discipline-specific PLCs and professional development events in theater education is detrimental to the success and quality of district and school theater education programs. (Bennett, 2001; Elmore, 2004; Omasta, 2012; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Leadership in Theater Education

Discipline-specific, effective leadership is seen as necessary to cultivate and support quality district and school programs. The researcher explored the relevant literature to better identify and describe effective leadership in theater education. The topics that emerged include proven strategies for effective leadership, leadership in arts education, and school leadership in theater education.

Strategies for Effective Leadership

Educational research suggests there are three essential leadership behaviors that promote success: setting direction, developing staff, and creating a positive culture (Wilson & Ortega, 2013). Leadership, whether it be for a district, program, or school, must therefore not be an individual task but as a collective process of goal-setting, collaboration, and influence (Bales, 1951; Bolman et al., 2010; French & Raven, 1968; Hackman, 2002).

These processes are defined as transformational leadership, which prioritizes and models shared problem-solving among stakeholders to find solutions to complex problems that affect student performance (Hallinger, 1992). Transformational leadership supports favorable working conditions, staff motivation, and teacher efficacy in schools and across content areas (Wilson & Ortega, 2013). Stakeholders who feel little influence or responsibility in accomplishing organizational goals often feel disenfranchised, disillusioned, and disengaged (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992). This literature indicates that when developing district theater education programs, district and school leaders should consider utilizing transformational leadership strategies to engage theater teachers, who are often solitary in their school buildings, and who are disenfranchised due to workload and isolation. Participation in a discipline-specific PLC and professional development may support teachers in finding shared solutions and advancing the success and quality of district and school theater education programs (Bennett, 2001; Elmore, 2004; Hallinger, 1992; Omasta, 2012; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Leadership in Arts and Theater Education

Leadership in arts education is often defined and demonstrated by arts policymakers, district leaders, program directors, and schools (Project Zero, 2001; Wan et al., 2018). These decision-makers play an essential role in cultivating and sustaining quality arts education and student learning experiences. Policymakers at the federal and state levels are critical, as their decisions impact access, presence, and expectations of arts learning opportunities (Seidel et al., 2009). Arts educators, students, parents, and community members have little control over decisions but have been significant and influential advocates for arts education (Seidel et al., 2009).

Eight categories affect decisions regarding arts education and programs. These categories, as defined by Seidel et al. (2009), include: students, programming/offerings,

allocation of resources, staffing, program evaluation, program culture, growth and development, and partnerships. The most common challenges in providing consistent and quality arts education experiences are resources (money), time, space, and professional expertise (Seidel et al., 2009). This research reiterates the need for discipline-specific leadership in district theater education programs to address disparities in expectations, staffing, programming, evaluation, resources, support, and development.

As with academic programs, there needs to be continued dialogue between arts leaders, schools, and teachers to establish hiring criteria, to develop curricular frameworks and resources, to respond to program and teacher needs, and to determine practical priorities to create and sustain quality arts programming (Project Zero, 2001; Seidel et al., 2009). These categories, challenges, and communication strategies related to district and school administration should be considered when cultivating quality theater education programs in public schools.

Due to limited expectations, programs, teachers, and student participation, there is not always a designated central office leader or curricula resource teacher who specifically and wholly supports theater education programs and teachers (Catterall, 2009; McMurrer et al., 2008; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001). If a representative exists, they often do not possess a background or pedagogy specifically in theater education but are usually arts or academic coordinators or specialists, with theater falling under their supervision (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001).

The absence of discipline-specific leadership limits the development and quality of instructional resources, teacher collaboration opportunities, and professional development events (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001). It also becomes challenging to provide meaningful and authentic feedback to support teachers in their instructional delivery (Omasta, 2012). The absence of district-level leaders also hinders the operationalization of theater programs, which can be quite complicated with theater programming needs, including scheduling, facilities, equipment, finances, content selection, and parent/student communications (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001). It may also lead to lost opportunities for advocacy, representation, and the inclusion of theater education in broader district discussions and decisions (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001).

School Leadership in Theater Education

Effective school leadership significantly impacts student outcomes and performance and is second only to instructional practices (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Waters et al., 2003). Many theater teachers are evaluated by their school principals or assistant principals, with a small minority assessed by their department chairs (Omasta, 2012). Many of those who are assigned to supervise and evaluate theater teachers do not have background knowledge or administrative resources in theater education. Twenty-one percent of administrators utilized student test scores or other measurable outcomes in teacher evaluation and effectiveness, a sizable increase from data collected from previous studies (Omasta, 2012). This research demonstrates the increasing need for, and importance of quality student assessment based on theater learning standards.

When surveyed, 97% of administrators believed extracurricular theater programs, events, and productions to be valuable for the students involved. In comparison, less than 1% viewed them as not at all valuable, though they did indicate that there was some value to the broader community (Omasta, 2012). Generally, school administrators indicated that they view directing a theater program as "somewhat" time intensive and somewhat less expensive than other school programs like sports or music; however, theater programs were viewed as less profitable than other school programs (Omasta, 2012). Theater teachers strive to provide quality theater events and experiences in school settings that often lack the resources, support, and additional staffing to meet program and teacher needs and expectations (Bennett, 2001; Omasta, 2012). Arts educators must differentiate personal goals from practical and feasible quality arts learning experiences within a public school environment (Seidel et al., 2009).

Administrative presence at theater events and productions are often perceived as indicators of how much the program and work of the teacher is valued. Survey shows that 87% of school administrators stated they "almost always" attended theater events. However, only 45% of surveyed theater teachers believed that school administrators attended "very often" (Omasta, 2012). Overall, 82% of school administrators surveyed indicated that the school theater program was in the upper 50% of school activities, in terms of overall importance, with under 5% considering it to be not "at all" important (Omasta, 2012). The discrepancy between administrator and teacher perception of program value may impact teacher efficacy and their beliefs on district and school leadership and support.

This literature acknowledges that discipline-specific, effective leadership is necessary to cultivate and sustain quality district programs, both in theater education and core content areas (Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001; Wan et al., 2018; Wilson & Ortega, 2013). By utilizing transformational leadership strategies, both at the district and school levels, leaders can engage teachers in shared decision-making to focus on the eight categories to support effective communication and provide needed resources to develop and sustain quality district and school programs in theater education in public schools (Bennett, 2001; Elmore, 2004; Hallinger, 1992; Omasta, 2012; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

The research conducted through this literature review indicates that universal components in education include: 1) curricula and instruction, particularly learning standards and curricular resources; 2) qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices; 3) discipline-specific PLCs and professional development; and 4) discipline-specific leadership. These components are often not available in theater education but are necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. These components may also support the success and quality of theater education programs in public schools (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001).

Chapter 3
Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology for this study, which investigates the components needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program in public schools. Based on the research conducted for the literature review, the components that may impact the development and longevity of district programs include: curricula and instruction, particularly theater learning standards and curricular resources; qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices; discipline-specific Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and professional development; and discipline-specific leadership (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001). Also related to this research, which is necessary to understand the findings of the primary research question, is how teachers and arts leaders identify and differentiate success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. This chapter outlines the methodology for the case study of a selected school district. It includes an explanation of the purpose and design, orientation, researcher positionality, IRB approval, population, sampling and recruitment, data instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Purpose and Design

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as the indicators of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. The research most closely aligns with a case study approach. Case study research investigates a phenomenon within its authentic settings and is often used as a method of inquiry where the researcher examines an organization or community using various data collection procedures over a period of time (Creswell, 2018; Merriam,1998; Yin, 2012). Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach based on exploring and understanding individual experiences from the perspective of the individual (Patton, 2002).

The four components cited in Chapter 1 that are needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program in public schools are:

- theater learning standards and curricular resources that impact the delivery of meaningful instruction and student assessment (Bennett, 2001; NEA, 1988);

- qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988);
- PLCs and professional development opportunities specific to theater education (Catterall, 2009);
- district leadership, representation, and advocacy specific to theater education and teachers (Project Zero, 2001).

A single school district was selected for this study, one in which theater education is a standard and sequential offering with a certified theater teacher in all traditional middle and high schools and an extracurricular presence in most elementary schools. All but one of the teacher participants teach students in grades 6-12 as there is only one elementary school in the district with a curricular theater program. The selected district of study possesses a broad range of curricular offerings and resources including, but not limited to, standards of learning for theater, technical theater, and musical theater, planning and pacing curricula guides, example unit and lesson plans, as well as technical theater safety and assessment resources. The district theater learning standards and curricular resources were created by teachers in collaboration with the Fine Arts Office and incorporate state theater learning standards.

At the time of this study, the district employed 58 certified theater teachers, many who possess a theater degree or have completed a teacher preparation program in theater education. The theater teachers in the district have sustained a PLC where teachers are provided with professional development specific to theater education. These opportunities include regularly scheduled district theater meetings, participation in a new teacher induction program specific to theater education, and access to several digital and practical platforms that support instruction and collaboration. Lastly, the district employs a central office curricula specialist in the Fine Arts Office, the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist, specifically to support and advocate for PreK-12 theater and dance teachers, programs, and resources. As such, the identified components are well established to cultivate and sustain theater education programs in this school district. Yet, how do the theater teachers and arts leaders identify and differentiate success and quality of the programs for which they are responsible? And if so, how is that determination made?

The data collected in this research included a review of student enrollment, surveys, and interviews. Enrollment data spanned from the 2019-20SY through the 2021-22SYs. The feedback and narratives collected provided a deeper understanding of the teachers' and arts

leaders' perceptions of the components needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. This research also sought to better understand participants' perceptions of success and quality in theater education in public schools. Yin (2012) elucidated that case studies often contain embedded sub-cases. This case study and phenomenological inquiry regarding participant perceptions sought to shed light on the culture and environment of the organization. Organizational environments are socially constructed, and research findings synthesize lived experiences from various points of view and perspectives (Schwandt, 2000). This study is primarily exploratory as there is little available research on cultivating and sustaining a district theater education program in public schools, although the identified components reflect characteristics that seem to support educational organizations and core content areas. These research findings may serve as a foundation for future studies or larger-scale projects but cannot be considered generalizable (Patton, 2002).

Researcher Positionality

The researcher serves as the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist for the selected district of study and had held that position six years prior to conducting this research. There was no monetary compensation for this research, and many tasks and undertakings during the implementation of this study were within the scope, expectations, and responsibilities of the researcher's professional role within the school district.

This case study may also reveal conscious and implicit bias (Creswell, 2018). The role of the researcher in phenomenology is to serve as the conduit for participants' perceptions, stories, and reflections. Awareness of the elements with which a researcher personally identifies is imperative in qualitative research (Seidman, 2013). The researcher's involvement may also vary as they shift from participant to observer (Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, in the interviews for this study, a primary goal was to collect accurate and unbiased data through active listening, remaining neutral, and asking clarifying questions to better understand the participants' perspectives (Galletta, 2013).

Research Questions

As noted in Chapter 1, the research questions that guided this study are:

1. What do theater teachers and arts leaders perceive to be the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program?

2. How do theater teachers and arts leaders identify success in:
    a. district theater education programs?
    b. school theater education programs?
3. How do theater teachers and arts leaders identify quality in:
    a. district theater education programs?
    b. school theater education programs?

IRB Approval

To protect the identities of the school district and participants involved in this study, pseudonyms were used for all people, places, and organizations. As this study involves human participants and educational practices, a submission to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (see Appendix A) and the selected district of study (see Appendix B) were required and approved prior to the implementation of the study. Participant-informed consent forms (see Appendix D) were signed and collected prior to the collection of any data. No identifying or personal student information was collected during the course of this research.

Population

The selected school district maintains 198 schools and centers and serves a culturally and socio-economically diverse population of over 185,000 students in grades PreK-12, who speak more than 200 languages. It employs 58 total theater teachers. The district has 25 traditional high schools, with 26 high school theater programs, one being a magnet theater academy drawing student from multiple schools. The district has 26 traditional middle schools, each with theater programs. Each of the middle and high school programs employ one to two theater teachers. In total, the school district employs 57 middle and high school theater teachers. There is one elementary school with a curricular theater program employing one theater teacher. Many of the district's 141 elementary schools offer an extracurricular theater program or grade-level

production often directed by the general music teacher, grade-level teacher, or a teaching artist. These data are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

PreK-12 Theater Teachers by Grade Level and Gender (2021-22SY)

School Level	Programs	Teachers	Male	Female
Elementary School	1	1	0	1
Middle School	26	28	5	23
High School	26	29	15	14
Total	53	58	20	38

Of the 58 theater teachers, 42 teachers are female and 16 are male. Each were offered the opportunity to complete the teacher survey, 31 (53.45%) elected to do so. Participant demographic, licensure, and educational background information were collected through teacher surveys and interviews. The arts leader participants were selected based on their professional roles and knowledge of the district's theater education programs.

Sampling and Recruitment

All teacher participants in this study were theater teachers in the selected school district during the 2021-22SY. Arts leader participants are current or former employees of the selected school district. This research was conducted in three phases: 1) Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey; 2) Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interviews; and 3) Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews.

Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey

In Phase One, each teacher was sent an invitation to participate (see Appendix C) through an internal email system, which explained the purpose and overview of the study. They were also sent a participant informed consent form (see Appendix D) and a digital survey. They were informed that participation would not affect their employment, professional opportunities, or teacher evaluations. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any

time, that only the researcher would examine data collected, and that their identity and feedback would be coded and kept confidential.

Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interviews

Phase Two participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- willingness to participate in Phase Two of the research study;
- employment at the same school and in the current position from 2019-20SY through the 2021-22SYs;
- highest percentage of student enrollment in theater courses from 2019-20SY through the 2021-22SYs;

Five theater teachers were selected for Phase Two of study: two middle school teachers; two high school teachers; and one elementary school teacher. The criteria were waived for the elementary school participant as there was only one elementary school theater teacher at the time of the study.

To calculate the highest student enrollment percentage in theater courses at the middle and high school levels, the number of theater students was divided by the total population for each middle and high school. The two middle and two high school theater teachers with the highest student enrollment percentage also met the additional two criteria. As such, all four teachers participated in Phase Two of the study. It is noteworthy that many students participate in the extracurricular theater programs but do not enroll in theater courses. Therefore, the percentage of students enrolled in theater courses does not illustrate the total participation in a school's theater program (curricular and extracurricular).

The teachers selected for Phase Two were sent an invitation to participate (see Appendix E) through an internal email system, which explained the purpose and overview of the study as well as a consent form (see Appendix D). The communication reiterated that further participation would not affect employment, professional opportunities, or teacher evaluations and again confirmed that the participants could withdraw from the study at any time, that only the researcher would view the data collected, and that identities would remain confidential. The teachers were given seven days to accept or decline the invitation, which was communicated via email response to the researcher. All were given the option to speak to the researcher, ask questions, or to discuss participation prior to consent. If a potential participant declined, another

teacher would be selected who exhibited the identified criteria. However, all accepted the invitation.

Phase Three: Arts Leaders Open-Ended Interviews

In Phase Three of the research, arts leaders were selected based on their professional roles and knowledge of the district's theater education programs. The arts leaders were selected to document their thinking and perspectives on the components they believed cultivate and sustain a district theater education program in public schools. The arts leaders were also asked to identify and differentiate success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. The arts leaders included:

- a district Fine Arts Coordinator: possesses an understanding of district theater programs, curricular resources, administrative support, and resources needed;
- a former district Fine Arts Coordinator: an arts leader who supported the development and presence of theater education programs in the selected district as well as advocated and created the Theater and Dance Educational specialist position to support PreK-12 theater and dance teachers and programs;
- a former district Theater and Dance Educational Specialist: a former theater teacher in the district and first arts leader to hold the position who possessed knowledge of the district theater education programs, theater teachers, and theater curricula over several years;
- a former district school board member and theater awards program director: a school board member who advocated for the district theater programs and the Theater and Dance Educational specialist position. Also, the current program director of an international high school theater program that celebrates high school theater and critical reviews. The program supports more than 40 participating high schools from local districts. The awards program originated in the district of study, and most the district's high schools participate in the program annually. As the director of the theater awards program and former school board member, the arts leader brings vast knowledge of the district theater education program, as well as knowledge of other public school theater education programs in local districts and states.

All the arts leaders were sent an invitation email (see Appendix F), which explained the purpose and overview of the research study as well as a consent form (see Appendix D). The arts

leaders were encouraged to participate but it was made clear that participation would not affect the leaders' relationships with the district or relationship to the researcher. All communications conveyed that the leaders could withdraw from the study at any time, that only the researcher would view the data collected, and that participant identity would be coded and kept confidential. The arts leaders were given seven days to accept or decline the invitation, which was communicated via email in response to the researcher. They were also given the option to speak to the researcher to ask questions or to discuss participation before providing consent. All arts leaders accepted the invitation to participate.

Data Instrumentation

In this case study, three instruments were utilized in the data collection: 1) Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey (see Appendix G); 2) Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interview Documentation (see Appendix H); and 3) Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interview Documentation (see Appendix I). All data instruments were created based on research completed during the literature review and feedback from arts education researchers and professionals. The primary studies that guided this research and impacted the creation of the data instruments were: The Educational Theater Association's (EdTA) survey, *Theater Education in the United States High Schools*; *A Survey of School Theater* (Omasta, 2012), led by Matt Omasta in collaboration with EdTA; and Project Zero's study, *The Qualities of Quality Understanding Excellence in Arts Education* (Seidel et al, 2009).

Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey (see Appendix G)

The Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey sought to acquire broad data from the teacher perspective for all research questions. A digital survey was created and distributed to all theater teachers for optional participation. The first 12 survey questions were multiple choice and inquired about teacher education, licensure, and classroom experience. A qualified teacher as defined in this study is an educator who 1) holds a bachelor's degree; 2) holds a state certification or licensure; and 3) demonstrates subject matter competency (NCLB, 2002). These survey questions sought to understand how many district theater teachers were certified and/or qualified and how this correlated to perceived program success and quality (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988).

Questions 13 through 20 of the survey were divided into three sections: Curricula and Instruction (Bennett, 2001; NEA, 1988), District Professional Learning Community (Catterall, 2009), and School and District Leadership (Project Zero, 2001). Each section contained two to three Likert-scale questions based on the identified component and sought to gain insight on teacher perceptions of how particular components supported their individual and program success and quality. The five response options included 1=Not at all, 2=Minimally, 3=Somewhat, 4=Supports, and 5=Very much.

Question 21 was open-ended and sought to glean the theater teachers' perceptions of the components needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. Survey questions 22 and 23 were open- ended and asked participants to identify success and quality in a district and school theater education programs. Questions 24 and 25 were optional and provided opportunities for participants to provide clarifications or additional information on given responses, research questions, and purpose of the research study. Questions 26 through 29 were optional, multiple-choice, and offered teachers an opportunity to share demographic information including race, ethnicity, gender, and age.

Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interview Documentation (see Appendix H)

Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interview Documentation sought to answer all the research questions. Hancock and Algozzine (2017) considered semi-structured interviews to be an ideal method for case studies. The first five entries identified the teacher's name, school, grade level, program enrollment, and school profile for coding purposes and to examine findings across school and student populations. Questions 1 through 4 were open-ended, some with follow-up options based on response, to gain insight on the teachers' perspectives on the components needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program in public schools. These questions also sought to understand teacher preparation, instructional planning, (Bennett, 2001; NEA, 1988), and how teachers identify and differentiate success and quality in theater education in public schools.

Questions 5 through 10 inquired about the extracurricular theater program. Extracurricular theater programs are often driven by the individual theater teacher's objectives, personality, and capabilities, and these impact overall program success (Gonzalez, 2006; Nicholson, 2009; Omasta, 2012). The interview questions were designed to understand student participation in the extracurricular school theater program, its correlation to theater courses and

student participation in extracurricular school theater programs, and extracurricular theater program design and offerings.

Question 11 sought to expand on the answers collected from the Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teachers Survey regarding the teachers' perceptions of the components needed to cultivate and sustain a theater education program at the district level, as well as success and quality in theater education programs. Questions 12 and 13 were optional and provided opportunities for participants to provide clarifications or additional information on given responses, research questions, and purpose of the research study. The data design and instrument were semi-structured, allowing for follow-up questions based on participant responses to collect comprehensive research findings.

Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interview Documentation (see Appendix I)

The Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interview Documentation was created utilizing the first two data instruments. This data instrument sought to answer all the research questions. The first four entries identified the arts leader's name, organization, professional role, and relationship to the school district. Questions 1 and 2 gathered information regarding the arts leader's education, background, and professional experiences. Questions 3 through 7 asked the arts leaders to describe the district theater education programs as well as to identify and differentiate success and quality in both district and school theater education programs. Questions 8 through 13 sought to obtain the arts leaders' perceptions of the components needed to cultivate and sustain theater education programs at the district and school level. Questions 14 and 15 were optional and provided opportunities for participants to provide clarifications or additional information on given responses, research questions, and purpose of the research study. The data design and instrument were semi-structured, allowing for follow-up questions based on participant responses to collect comprehensive research findings.

Data Collection

Data were collected, controlled, and managed following IRB protocols. The participants received and completed consent forms for all phases of the study. Any identifiable district or participant data were coded and maintained by the researcher. Data that were collected digitally were stored electronically with password-restricted access. The physical data, including consent forms, interview transcripts, and researcher notes, were stored in a locked cabinet. The

participants engaged in the study within scheduled time frames. Data collection was contingent on the phase of the research study, as well as on the instrument used to collect the participant data.

District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey

All district PreK-12 theater teachers received an invitation through the internal email system providing a purpose and overview of the study and a link to the digital survey, which was implemented through the web-based platform Qualtrics. At the start of the survey, participants clicked on a link, which led to an informed consent form. If and when the teacher agreed to participate and accepted, the consent form transitioned to the digital survey for completion. The survey had 29 questions and took each participant roughly 20-30 minutes to complete. The participants were given one week to complete the survey. When a teacher completed the survey, an automated response was generated, thanking them for their participation.

Teacher and Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews

Phase Two and Phase Three open-ended teacher and arts leader interviews were scheduled at a mutually agreed-upon time. All interviews were conducted using the digital platform Zoom and were recorded to prevent inaccuracies (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Zoom provides a feature that automatically transcribes the audio of a meeting. Once the transcript is processed, it appears as a separate file with the option to display the text within the video as a closed caption display.

Internal validity in data collection was ensured by reviewing the transcripts in accordance with the Zoom teleconference recording. Following this internal validation, the participants were sent a transcript of their interview through email for member checking (see Appendix J). Member checking is a qualitative research strategy recommended by influential researchers (Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake 1995). The participants then had two weeks from the receipt of their transcript to review, revise, and add narratives to best represent their thoughts and perspectives. The participants edited the received transcript using the edit tracking feature in Google Documents. The researcher maintained all the transcripts of interviews but used the revised participant transcript for data analysis. Upon the successful completion of this study and publication of the dissertation, the files are to be retained for three years after the publication date, after which they will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the surveys and open-ended interviews were analyzed and coded by hand. Patterns and themes were used to compare and analyze research findings across participant groups and phases of research. Data analysis was contingent on the phase of the research study and on the instrument used to collect the data. The data was coded in three steps: 1) initial coding, 2) second-level coding to develop categories, and 3) theme development.

The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the participant responses and to identify the frequency of responses, categories, and themes. Phase One survey responses provided an opportunity to identify early categories, themes, and to recognize variance in the teachers' perceptions (Saldaña, 2016).

Labels were created by the frequency of words or phrases from the data collected (Given, 2008). Labels for research question one included, but were not limited to, identified components including theater learning standards, curricular resources, qualified teachers, Professional Learning Communities, professional development, and leadership. Labels for research questions two and three included, but were not limited to, enrollment, participation and engagement, program funding and resources, equitable access, and identified components.

The researcher then completed second-level coding to develop categories and to organize and conceptualize the data (Creswell, 2018; Dye et al., 2000). After the transcription, review, and coding were completed, the researcher compared the results across all groups and phases of research to develop themes and determine findings. The researcher continued to adjust findings by clarifying participant intent to best represent their perspectives when discrepancies were found.

Limitations of the Research Design

Due to the size, characteristics, and fiscal resources of the selected school district in this study, the findings cannot be considered generalizable or transferable. These research findings may serve as a foundation for future studies or larger-scale projects. In a case study, the goal cannot be generalization or transferability to a wider population but rather to provide robust descriptions and narratives for the potential for transfer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, the reader determines transferability by reviewing the data and findings and making

comparisons to their own organization or circumstances and to other collected research (Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 1998).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is dependent on the ethical behavior of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The goal of this study is to identify the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as the indicators of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. There is limited study or academic literature on this topic, which makes this research necessary. Through the comprehensive collection and analysis of data, the researcher hoped to identify common and relevant ideas and practices, to determine if the identified components reflected the research findings and outcomes. The time and intention given to establish credibility and dependability corroborate the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility and Dependability

Credibility may also be identified as validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). External validity, or transferability, is not a traditional goal of qualitative research. To support the credibility of research findings, Creswell (2018) suggested that multiple validation methods be applied in a case study such as this. The methods of data validation utilized in this study were: 1) internal validation, 2) member checking, and 3) data source comparison (Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldaña, 2016; Stake, 1995). Member checking, along with internal validity aided credibility. The collection and comparison of data through multiple sources including enrollment data, teacher surveys, and teacher and arts leader open-ended interviews, promoted the credibility of the research findings (Stake, 1995). Data was reviewed and analyzed across participant groups and phases of research to verify the perceptions and findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). All phases of this study were driven by the research questions. Reliability, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), may be defined as dependability. By conducting a thorough analysis of all the collected data, the researcher compared and confirmed data across groups and phases of research, which ensured the dependability of the findings.

Summary

This study explored the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a theater education program at the district and school level, as well as their perceptions of indicators of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. The methodology used was a case study that utilized phenomenological inquiry. This study examined a selected school district, where theater education is a standard and sequential district offering with certified teachers in all traditional middle and high schools. All PreK-12 theater teachers were invited to participate in a survey, and five teachers, four of whom oversaw theater programs that exhibited the highest student enrollment at the middle and high school levels, were selected to participate in open-ended interviews. The fifth teacher selected oversaw the only curricular elementary school theater program in the distinct. The arts leader participants were selected based on their professional roles and knowledge of the district theater education programs. They also participated in open-ended interviews.

Three instruments were applied to collect data: 1) Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey (see Appendix G); 2) Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interview Documentation (see Appendix H); and 3) Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interview Documentation (see Appendix I). The data was hand coded in three steps: 1) initial coding, 2) second-level coding to develop categories, and 3) theme development. Member checking was employed during Phase Two and Phase Three to ensure validity. Chapter 4 presents the research results on the components needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as on the indicators of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools as perceived by theater teachers and arts leaders.

Chapter 4

Research Findings and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as the indicators of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. Then to compare these perceptions with available research conducted through the literature review. Finally, through research and analysis, the identified components that may impact a district program's development and longevity were refined. The components include: curricula and instruction, qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and professional development, and leadership (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001). Necessary to understanding the findings of the primary research question, is how theater teachers and arts leaders identify and differentiate success and quality in a district and school theater education programs in public schools.

The case study was completed in a selected school district that exhibited the identified components and was conducted in three phases: 1) Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey; 2) Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interviews; and 3) Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews. Each phase of research utilized a purposeful participant group and data instrument that sought to answer the research questions and to gain further understanding and context regarding the theater education programs, schools, teachers, and curricular and extracurricular offerings, along with teacher and arts leader perceptions in all areas. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What do theater teachers and arts leaders perceive to be the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program?
2. How do theater teachers and arts leaders identify success in:
    a. district theater education programs?
    b. school theater education programs?
3. How do theater teachers and arts leaders identify quality in:
    a. district theater education programs?
    b. school theater education programs?

The primary studies that influenced this research were: The Educational Theater Association's (EdTA) survey, *Theater Education in the United States High Schools*; *A Survey of School Theater* (Omasta, 2012), led by Matt Omasta in collaboration with EdTA; and Project Zero's study, *The Qualities of Quality Understanding Excellence in Arts Education* (Seidel et al, 2009).

Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey (see Appendix G)

In Phase One of the research, all PreK-12 theater teachers in the selected district of study who were employed during the 2021-22SY were invited via the internal email system to participate in a digital survey implemented through the web-based platform Qualtrics. The teachers had two weeks to complete the survey and received an email reminder seven days before the deadline. Of the 58 district theater teachers, 31 completed the survey at a response rate of 53.45%. However, not all survey participants responded to every question which resulted in varied response rates per question.

Phase One: Participant Demographics

Questions 1 through 12 of the survey (see Appendix G) collected information on teacher demographics, including but not limited to, the current grade level in which they were teaching, their acquired education, and their teaching licensure. These questions sought to understand if the district teachers were qualified theater teachers who 1) held a bachelor's degree; 2) held a state certification or licensure; and 3) demonstrated subject matter competency (NCLB, 2002).

There are 58 total theater teachers in the school district, 31 of whom participated in the Phase One teacher survey. Of the 31 surveyed participants, all grade levels were represented, with 45.16% of the respondents being high school theater teachers, 51.61% being middle school theater teachers, and 3.23% elementary school theater teachers. The one curricular elementary school teacher, 57.14% of middle school teachers, and 48.28% of high school teachers participated in the survey. Of total survey participants, 3.23% were elementary school teachers, 51.61% were middle school teachers, and 45.16% were high school teachers (see Table 2).

Table 2

Phase One: PreK-12 Teachers Survey Participation by Grade Level

School Level	Total Teachers	% Total Teacher Participation by Grade Level	Phase One Participants	% Phase One Participation by Grade Level
Elementary School	1	100%	1	3.23%
Middle School	28	57.14%	16	51.61%
High School	29	48.28%	14	45.16%
Total	58	53.45%	31	100%

Survey questions 2 through 7 (see Appendix G) were multiple choice and inquired about teacher education and licensure. Of the teachers surveyed, 58.06% held a Bachelor of Arts degree, 29.03% held a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, 9.68% held a Bachelor of Science degree, and 3.23% held a Bachelor of Music degree (see Table 3).

Table 3

Phase One: PreK-12 Teachers Undergraduate Degree Type

Undergraduate Degree Type	Phase One Participants	% Phase One Participants
Bachelor of Arts	18	58.06%
Bachelor of Fine Arts	9	29.03%
Bachelor of Science	3	9.68%
Bachelor of Music	1	3.23%
Total	31	100%

The primary areas of study for the undergraduate degrees included Theater Performance (58.06%), Theater Education (25.81%), and other areas, including Theater Arts (9.68%), Theater Management (3.23%), and Musical Theater (3.23%) (see Table 4).

Table 4

Phase One: PreK-12 Teachers Undergraduate Area of Study

Undergraduate Area of Study	Phase One Participants	% Phase One Participants
Theater Performance	18	58.06%
Theater Education	8	25.81%
Theater Arts	3	9.68%
Theater Management	1	3.23%
Musical Theater	1	3.23%
Total	31	100%

The highest percentage of degrees earned was a Bachelor of Arts (58.06%), with the primary area of study being Theater Performance (58.06%).

Of the surveyed teachers, 54.85% held a Master's degree, which included: Master of Arts (25.81%), Master of Education (9.68%), Master of Arts in Education (6.45%), Master of Arts in Teaching (3.23%), Master of Fine Arts (3.23%), Master of Science in Education (3.23%), and Master of Theater Studies (3.23%).

The primary areas of study included but were not limited to Theater Education, Arts Management, and Technical Theater. Of the teachers surveyed, 45.16% did not possess a Master's degree (see Table 5). Fifty percent of the participants surveyed pursued theater professionally before becoming public school theater teachers.

Table 5

Phase One: PreK-12 Teachers Master's Degree Type

Master's Degree Type	Phase One Participants	% Phase One Participants
No Master's Degree	14	45.16%
Master of Arts	8	25.81%
Master of Education	3	9.68%
Master of Arts in Education	2	6.45%
Master of Arts in Teaching	1	3.23%
Master of Fine Arts	1	3.23%
Master of Science in	1	3.23%
Master of Theater Studies	1	3.23%
Total	31	100%

Of the surveyed teachers, 83.87% held teaching licensure in theater, 6.45% held teaching licensure in another content area with a secondary endorsement in theater, and 9.68% were currently on provisional teaching licensure (see Table 6).

Table 6

Phase One: PreK-12 Teachers State Licensure Status

Licensure Status	Phase One Participants	% Phase One Participants
PreK-12 Licensure Theater	26	83.87%
Provisional Licensure	3	9.68%
Endorsed in PreK-12 Theater	2	6.45%
Total	31	100%

The data collected demonstrates that 100% of the survey participants were certified to teach theater. As indicated in Table 4, 25.81% of participants earned an undergraduate degree in Theater Education. As indicated in Table 5, 22.59% of participants earned a Master's degree in Education or Teaching. As such, the majority of Phase One participants did not complete a traditional teacher preparation program in theater education but obtained certification through alternative pathways. The demographic information collected that was pertinent to the Research Question One indicated that the selected district of study possessed qualified theater teachers as 100% of teachers 1) held a bachelor's degree; 2) held a state licensure in theater; and 3) demonstrated subject matter competency (NCLB, 2002).

Phase One: Research Question One

Research Question One sought to understand the components needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program based on the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders within the selected district of study. Through the research conducted in the literature review, it was determined the components that might impact the development and longevity of district programs include: curricula and instruction, qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices, PLCs and professional development, and leadership (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988, 2009; Omasta, 2012; Project Zero, 2001), which also reflect characteristics that support educational organizations and core content areas.

The selected district of study was a public-school system that possessed all the identified components in its PreK-12 theater education programs. It has been posited that the identified components had cultivated and sustained this district theater education program. The data instruments and research questions tested the researcher's hypothesis and encouraged the research participants to suggest additional components or to reject those identified based on their experiences, perceptions, and professional roles.

In Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey (see Appendix G), Questions 13-20 focused on Research Question One and the components that were necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, along with additional components relative to those areas. Phase One participants provided feedback on their perceptions using a Likert scale, with 5 being "Very much supports" to 1 being "Not at all."

The Phase One participants indicated that the provided district learning standards (see Table 7; mean: 4.16, standard deviation (std): 0.72) and the discipline-specific leadership of the

Fine Arts Office, Theater and Dance Educational Specialist (see Table 8; mean: 4.21, standard deviation (std): 1.00, variance 0.52) most support their instructional planning, assessment, and extracurricular program delivery.

Table 7

Phase One: The Component of District Theater Learning Standards

Likert Scale	Phase One Participants	% Phase One Participants
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	6	19.35%
4	14	45.16%
5	11	35.48%
Total Responses	31	100%

Table 8

Phase One: The Component of the Fine Arts Office, Theater and Dance Educational Specialist

Likert Scale	Phase One Participants	% Phase One Participants
1	0	0
2	3	10.34%
3	3	10.34%
4	8	27.59%
5	15	51.72%
Total Responses	29	100%

The component of the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist demonstrated the highest mean but had a greater standard deviation than the component district theater learning

standards, suggesting that although some participants may have rated it as a higher component, there was a greater range in the participant responses.

The Phase One participants indicated that the components that least supported their success and that of the district theater education program were school-based leadership (see Table 9; mean: 3.5, std deviation: 1.02) and district leadership (see Table 10; mean: 2.82, std deviation: 1.07).

Table 9

Phase One: The Component of School-Based Leadership

Likert Scale	Phase One Participants	% Phase One Participants
1	0	0
2	5	17.86%
3	10	35.71%
4	7	25.00%
5	6	21.43%
Total Responses	28	100%

Table 10

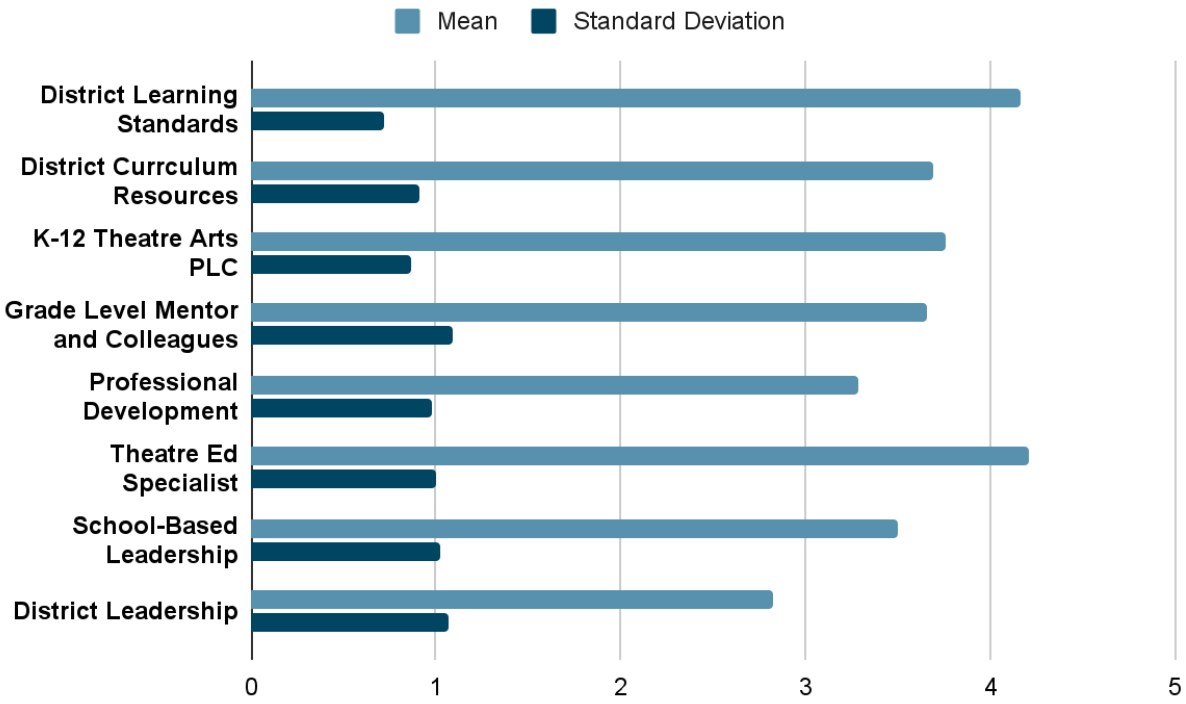
Phase One: The Component of District Leadership

Likert Scale	Phase One Participants	% Phase One Participants
1	3	10.71%
2	9	32.14%
3	7	25.00%
4	8	28.57%
5	1	3.57%
Total Responses	28	100%

District leadership was the only area with a mean below 3.00 into the "minimally supports" range. There were no component means that fell into the "Not at all" range (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Phase One: PreK-12 Teacher Value of Surveyed Components



Question 21 of the PreK-12 District Theater Teacher Survey (see Appendix G) asked the participants what components they believed were necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. Optional questions 24 and 25 (see Appendix G) encouraged the participants to clarify or expand on their provided perspectives. The most suggested additional components suggested by the Phase One participants were program funding and resources and community participation and engagement.

Phase One: Research Questions Two and Three

Questions 22 and 23 of the Phase One: PreK-12 District Theater Teacher Survey (see Appendix G) sought to answer Research Questions Two and Three on how theater teachers and arts leaders identify success and quality in the district and school theater education programs. The majority of Phase One participants did not differentiate between district or individual school

theater education programs or success and quality. A Phase One participant commented, “I feel like the schools’ individual programs set the standard or tone for the view of the district itself regardless.” Three Phase One participants communicated that success and quality in school theater education programs were specific to those students and school communities, and that universal standards of success and quality may not be possible to achieve. A Phase One participant stated that school theater education programs were successful when “they integrate well with the school goals and mission.” Another participant commented, “[s]uccess should be measured on the individual and collective outcome within your specific school culture.”

After review and examination of the data collected from Phase One for questions 22 and 23 (see Appendix G), three categories emerged by frequency of response rate, which included themes that indicated success and quality in a district and school theater education programs. The three categories were: 1) student and theater program-centered, 2) teacher-centered, and 3) district and school leadership-centered. Forty-three Phase One responses were coded using indicators (themes) and frequency. Not all participants responded to both questions 22 and 23.

In the student and program-centered category, the primary indicators (themes) of success and quality that emerged by frequency were: 1) student enrollment, 2) student participation and engagement, 3) community participation and engagement in the extracurricular theater program, and 4) students meeting identified learning standards. Student enrollment (16 responses) emerged as the most frequent indicator of success and quality in district and school theater education programs. This response was often followed by a justification that enrollment should not be the primary or sole indicator of success or quality, as there are several contributing factors outside of the teacher’s control that may impact enrollment. A Phase One participant stated:

> It’s difficult to answer what a “successful” theater program looks like because success could be interpreted to mean a lot of different things and my version of success, and my own school may look very different from another’s. For example, the number of students enrolled in my school may be quite higher or lower than another school’s but may not be under the direct control of the teacher due to schedule conflicts, different student populations, and accessibility to theater courses.

Enrollment was coded by number of students enrolled in theater courses, student retention, and student enrollment in the next level course or another theater elective.

Student participation and engagement (13 responses) emerged as another primary indicator and was coded by participation in theater beyond coursework, connecting learned theater skills to applicable life skills, individual growth, collaboration, communication, social-emotional well-being, and confidence.

Another element that emerged as a primary indicator was community participation and engagement in the extracurricular theater program (12 responses), which was coded by audience attendance, positive feedback regarding performances, and parent and administrative support. One Phase One participant stated:

> Class retention and enrollment are huge. I personally track what students take my class, and then take it again to see if I'm successful at what I'm doing. After-school performances are also a great way to increase enrollment. I look at other schools for their engagement and community attendance as well.

Another Phase One participant commented:

> The continued enrollment of students in a program is a solid gauge of the success of a program, but also the consistent attendance of community members for extracurricular productions help to highlight the continued value of the program to the community. This support generally follows programs that value the quality of their own work, and it reflects community interest.

Another participant explained how student and audience participation and engagement also impacts the value of the theater education program within the school community and the district: "Number of participating students, in classes and in extracurricular programs, reactions from participants, audiences, and our community. Our standing in the community at large."

Additional indicators mentioned were awards or placements at state or regional theater competitions (2 responses) and student efficacy (2 responses). Student efficacy meaning, value and ownership of the creative process and artistic works.

In the teacher-centered category, the primary indicators that emerged from Phase One data were: 1) the PLC of theater educators (9 responses); 2) collegial support (9 responses); and 3) theater professional development events (7 responses). Teacher collaboration was emphasized by several Phase One participants, to include collaboration between school regions and pyramids, which are composed of the elementary schools that feed into the middle schools and then into the high schools. Another indicator of success and quality in teacher collaboration, as

indicated by the Phase One participants, was the support and respect of theater colleagues. A Phase One participant stated, "[t]eachers are supported by other teachers."

Theater professional development events (7 responses) were also a frequent indicator mentioned by several participants, as these events are often where theater teachers have ample time to collaborate and share. One participant stated, "[t]eachers are collaborating. Teachers are provided with professional development opportunities to continue their learning and help develop new ideas, activities, and lessons to fit the learning standards and curriculum requirements." In the selected district of study, discipline-specific PLCs most often met and collaborated at district-provided professional development events orchestrated by the Fine Arts Office, Theater and Dance Educational Specialist. At these events, district-provided instructional resources, generally created by teacher curricular teams under the leadership of the specialist, were shared with teachers, along with instructional strategies to implement the provided resources and student assessments. Professional development events also included workshops with arts professionals and/or academics, local theater organizations, or professional development and training in other theater areas, general education, or district initiatives.

Other notable indicators communicated by the Phase One participants in the teacher-centered category were teacher retention (3 responses), qualified teachers (2 responses), and teacher efficacy (2 responses). One participant stated, "teachers are thriving and feel competent, knowledgeable, and supported."

In the district and school leadership-centered category, the most frequent and primary indicator that emerged from Phase One data were: 1) theater learning standards (6 responses), followed by 2) a district that visibly values and supports arts education and programs (5 responses), and 3) program funding and resources (4 responses). A Phase One participant commented that the district-provided theater learning standards asserted the success and quality of the selected district of study's theater education program as it promoted equitable opportunities for every student to access quality theater education and experiences across the district, regardless of the school community or teacher expertise.

A district that visibly values and supports arts education and programs (5 responses) was another indicator that emerged from codes that included "value," "priority," and "belonging." A Phase One participant communicated, "[d]o the teachers feel supported by their administration and colleagues? Do teachers feel like they are being provided with the resources and tools they

need to be successful in their programs?" Another Phase One participant stated, "[a] successful program is one where every theater teacher feels valued and supported by their administration as well as the central office."

The Phase One participants remarked that program funding and resources (2 responses) supported success and quality in a district and school theater education programs. Resources include learning standards, curricular resources, materials, equipment, or administrative, school, or district support. As one Phase One participant stated:

> I believe that that a teacher needs to feel they have the proper tools, resources, and support before they can be successful in any of their classroom endeavors. Tools can be defined as classroom management strategies, lesson plan templates, etc. Resources could include access to learning standards and curricula. Support includes the district itself, but more importantly, the individual school's administration. And my version of success and my own school may look very different from another's but that may not be under the direct control of the educator. To me, successful theater programs consist of students who feel included, are experiencing growth, and have a genuine appreciation of theater by the end of the year.

Another indicator in the district and school leadership-centered category was staffing and the presence of full-time theater teachers at every school (2 responses).

A review and comparison of Phase One categories and indicators in response to Research Questions Two and Three on how theater teachers identify success and quality in a district and school theater education programs can be found in Table 11.

Table 11

Phase One: Indicators of Success and Quality in a District and School Theater Education Programs

Student and Program	Teacher	District and School Leadership
Student enrollment	Theater PLC	Theater learning standards
Student participation and engagement	Collegial support	District that visibly values and supports theater education and programs
Students meet identified theater learning standards	Theater professional development events	Program funding and resources
Community participation and engagement in the extracurricular theater program		
Other notable indicators: ● State and regional awards ● Student efficacy	Other notable indicators: ● Teacher qualifications ● Teacher retention ● Teacher efficacy	Other notable indicators: ● Staffing ● A full-time teacher at every school

Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix H)

Five theater teachers were selected for Phase Two of study: two middle school teachers; two high school teachers; and one elementary school teacher. The criteria were waived for the elementary school participant as there was only one elementary school theater teacher at the time of the study. Phase Two participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- willingness to participate in Phase Two of the research study;
- employment at the same school and in the current position from 2019-20SY through the 2021-22SYs;
- highest percentage of student enrollment in theater courses from 2019-20SY through the 2021-22SYs;

The Phase Two participants engaged in open-ended Zoom interviews that ranged from 45 to 120 minutes per participant. Each participant received a transcript of their interview and had two

weeks to participate in member-checking to best represent their individual perspectives. The five Phase Two participants were coded by role and grade level (see Table 12).

Table 12

Codes Representing Phase Two Participants

Participant Role and Grade Level	Code
Theater Teacher Elementary	ES1
Theater Teacher Middle School	MS1
Theater Teacher Middle School	MS2
Theater Teacher High School	HS1
Theater Teacher High School	HS2

Phase Two: Participant and School Demographics

The selected elementary school (ES1) theater teacher currently works at an elementary school that serves grades 3-5 and that offers a Spanish Immersion Program. The school is one of the few elementary schools in the district with specialized instruction and programs that focus on the sciences, arts, and technology. ES1 is also one of the only elementary schools in the district that offers all arts disciplines as courses, including general music, band, orchestra, visual arts, theater, and creative movement. ES1 also participates in a partnership with the John F. Kennedy Center Performing Arts Center as a part of the Changing Education Through the Arts (CETA) program, which utilizes instructional strategies and teachers in the arts in core content areas.

During the 2020-21SY, ES1 had a total school enrollment of 503 students, with 61.03% receiving English Learner Services, 14.91% receiving Special Education Services, and 88.27% participating in the Free and Reduced-Price Meals program. The ES1 theater teacher has taught at this school for the 2020-21SY and 2021-22SY and teaches all students at all grade levels in the school. In the 2021-22SY, the ES1 teacher provided theater instruction to grades 3 throughout the academic year and grades 4 and 5 during separate trimesters. The ES1 teacher also offered an extracurricular theater program that included a morning news show, a grade-level production, and a drama club. The ES1 teacher described the student population as having a high percentage of Spanish speakers, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and 504 Plans. The

ES1 teacher communicated that the students required a lot of support, particularly in terms of literacy, and that a primary objective of their theater instruction was to support the students' development and acquisition of literacy skills and the English language. The ES1 teacher earned an undergraduate degree in a non-theater content area with a minor in theater performance. They went on to earn a Master's degree in Theater and was hired in the district of this study on a provisional teaching license. The ES1 teacher is currently completing a teaching licensure program in PreK-12 Theater while also teaching theater full-time.

The middle school teachers selected for this study represented contrasting school communities and demographics. Both selected middle schools offered beginning and advanced theater courses as well as extracurricular theater programs, including but not limited to a one-act production, mainstage production, drama or improvisation club, talent show, and theater field trips. Middle School 1 (MS1) is in a higher socio-economic area of the district. During the 2020-21SY, MS1 had a total school enrollment of 1,216 students. Of the total enrollment, 3.95% of the students received English Learner Services, 14.97% received Special Education Services, and 14.14% participated in the Free and Reduced-Price Meals program. The MS1 theater teacher described the school as being a "higher-income population with high Standards of Learning (SOL) student scores" and described the students as often having anxiety due to the high expectations of their parents or guardians. In 2019-20SY, 27% (343 students) of the MS1 total student enrollment participated in a theater course, 26.39% (322 students) did so in the 2020-21SY, and 31.89% (389 students) did so in the 2021-22SY. The MS1 teacher obtained an undergraduate degree in theater and was hired on a provisional licensure. The MS1 teacher was in the process of completing a teaching licensure program in PreK-12 Theater while also teaching theater full-time.

Middle School 2 (MS2) is in a lower socio-economic and more diverse area of the district. During the 2020-21SY, MS2 had a total school enrollment of 801 students. Of the total enrollment, 29.21% of the students received English Learner Services, 18.85% received Special Education Services, and 62.80% participated in the Free and Reduced-Price Meals program. The theater teacher at MS2 described the theater classes as being inclusive and the students as often being ELLs, primarily Spanish speakers, and Category B students. Category B refers to students who access an adapted curriculum and are receiving services for intellectual and physical disabilities through the IEP program. The MS2 teacher communicated that many students at MS2

are on behavior plans and are not able to stay after school for theater activities due to family responsibilities. In 2019-20SY, 33% (269 students) of the MS2 total student enrollment participated in a theater course, 26.15% (233 students) in 2020-21SY, and 26.15% (210 students) in the 2021-22SY. The MS2 teacher earned an undergraduate degree in theater and was hired on provisional licensure. The MS2 teacher recently earned a Master's degree in Theater Education and acquired their licensure in PreK-12 Theater Arts while teaching full-time.

The high school teachers selected for this study represented similar socio-economic school communities with contrasting student demographics. Both high schools offered Theater Arts 1-4 and Technical Theater 1-4 (beginning- advanced). Both high schools also offered robust extracurricular theater programs, including but not limited to a one-act play production, often the state one-act competition selection, a mainstage play, a mainstage musical, participation in International Thespian Society (ITS), drama or improvisation club, talent shows, cabaret, and theater field trips. High School 1 (HS1) is in a higher socioeconomic area of the district, with a large percentage of the community known to be affiliated with various branches of the military. During the 2020-21SY, HS1 had a total school enrollment of 2,482 students, of whom 3.22% received English Learner Services, 13.90% received Special Education Services, and 14.83% participated in the Free and Reduced-Price Meals program. The HS1 theater teacher described the school community as being "upper-middle-class and mostly White," although the school serves a wide range of students of varying socioeconomic statuses, which is reflected in its theater enrollment and students. In the 2019-20SY, 6.05% (146 students) of the HS1 total student enrollment participated in a theater course, 5.94% (149 students) did so in the 2020-21SY, and 6.34% (159 students) did so in the 2021-22SY. The HS1 teacher grew up in the selected district of study, earned an undergraduate degree with a focus in theater education, and was hired as a fully licensed PreK-12 theater teacher. The HS1 teacher remarked that it was surprising that during their student teaching experiences, which took place out of state, the program struggled to find school placements, as there were limited theater education programs in public schools available, particularly at all grade levels. This was contradictory to the teacher's experience as a student in the selected district of study.

High School 2 (HS2) is in a more rural area of the district and has one of the larger percentages in the school system of Black students represented in total school enrollment, which is also reflected in the theater enrollment. During the 2020-21SY, HS2 had a total school

enrollment of 2,265 students. Of the total enrollment, 3.97% of students received English Learner Services, 13.77% received Special Education Services, and 20.57% participated in the Free and Reduced-Price Meals program. The HS2 theater teacher described the school community as “ethnically diverse”. In the 2019-20SY, 6.55% (147 students) of the HS2 total student enrollment participated in a theater course, 5.6% (128 students) did so in the 2020-21SY, and 5.73% (131 students) did so in the 2021-22SY. The HS2 teacher grew up in the district of study and earned an undergraduate degree in theater and was hired on a provisional teaching license. The HS2 theater teacher later earned her PreK-12 Theater licensure while teaching theater full-time.

Table 13 provides an overview of the Phase Two total school enrollment, demographics, and percentage of theater enrollment for the 2019-20SY, 2020-21SY, and 2021-22SY (see Table 13).

Table 13

Phase Two: School and Theater Enrollment Comparison

School	Enrollment	ELL (%)	SPED (%)	FARM (%)	% Theater Enrollment 2019-20SY	% Theater Enrollment 2020-21SY	% Theater Enrollment 2021-22SY
ES1	503	61.03	14.91	88.27	100%	100%	100%
MS1	1,216	3.95	14.97	14.14	27%	26.39%	31.89%
MS2	801	29.21	18.85	62.80	33%	29.02%	26.15%
HS1	2,482	3.22	13.90	14.83	6.05%	5.94%	6.34%
HS2	2,265	3.97	13.77	20.57	6.55%	5.6%	5.73%

The schools and teachers selected for Phase Two of study represent a broad range of both school and student communities, demographics including lower and higher socio-economic areas and student needs. All the middle and high schools experienced a decline in enrollment from the 2019-20SY to the 2020-21SY. The COVID-19 pandemic closed public schools in the district of study on March 13, 2020 (Education Week, 2020), which may have impacted student enrollment in theater courses for the following school years. MS1, HS1, and HS2 saw an increase in enrollment for the 2021-22SY, while MS2 demonstrated a continued decrease. In the selected district of study, most of the 2020-21SY was conducted through distance learning (virtual)

instruction and program offerings. This may have also impacted enrollment for the 2021-22SY. The Phase Two schools represented diverse student and school communities but offered similar courses and extracurricular theater offerings based on grade level, which were inclusive of students with a range of social-emotional and academic needs and capabilities. All the Phase Two participants were female, White, and between the ages of 25- 35. All had been teaching theater in the selected district of study for less than 10 years. All the Phase Two participants held a degree in Theater, though only one participant held a completed licensure in PreK-12 Theater at the time of hire. Several of the Phase Two participants pursued theater professionally prior to teaching or were employed as a teaching artist with theater organizations. Two of the five teachers grew up in the selected district of study, and four in the state. All had access to theater courses and education in their PreK-12 public school experience, which influenced their choice to pursue theater education as a profession.

Phase Two: Research Question One

Questions 1, 2, and 11 of the Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interview (see Appendix H) investigated Research Question One on the components needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. Optional Questions 12 and 13 encouraged Phase Two participants to clarify or expand on their given answers or to suggest additional components for consideration.

Curricula and instruction: Theater learning standards and curricular resources. Question 2 (see Appendix H) asked the Phase Two participants to explain how they planned curricula and instruction, including student assessment. The purpose of this question was to understand how the selected teachers utilized the district theater learning standards and curricular resources in their instructional planning and if these resources supported teacher and program success. All the Phase Two participants communicated that the district theater learning standards and resources supported their curricula and instruction and were a necessary component to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. Three of the five participants indicated that the theater learning standards were imperative to their instructional planning and assessment. The MS1 teacher remarked that the theater learning standards provided a clear guide when they started teaching, and that they were further emphasized through the provided resources and by instructional resources shared by fellow theater teachers. The MS1 teacher described feeling overwhelmed by the vast content and topics available in theater education and stated that the district standards provided a clear “roadmap” for them to shape their curricula, particularly in

their first years in the classroom. The MS1 teacher used theater learning standards to create assessments and to articulate specific concepts, skills, and outcomes to their students, parents, and school administrators. The MS1 teacher believed the district resources enable teachers to better advocate for the need for theater education and the benefits of theater courses and experiences for all students. The MS1 teacher also believed that these resources provide a level of credibility, like the core content areas justified by state standards of learning and promoted greater access to theater education in public schools.

The HS1 teacher also relied heavily on the theater learning standards provided by the district and used them to articulate their learning objectives and student outcomes and to shape their curricula and theater experiences to meet the established goals. Like the MS1 teacher, the HS1 teacher used theater learning standards to demonstrate and explain the meaning of a well-rounded theater education. In their opinion, a well-rounded theater education includes various processes and concepts in theater, including but not limited to artistic leadership, scriptwriting, technical theater, theater safety, theater history, critique, society and cultural context, professional pathways, arts administration, and performance, all outlined in the district learning standards. The HS1 teacher communicated that many students "just wanted to act." The district resources assisted the HS1 teacher in the justification and need to learn various aspects of theater to provide a range of skills that were utilized through the artistic process, performance, and critique and to encourage students to demonstrate knowledge through various forms of assessments. The state in which the HS1 teacher completed their teacher preparation program had adopted the National Core Arts Standards. However, during school placements and while working with theater teachers in the district, not one of the supervising theater teachers was aware of or used the national standards in their own curricula and instruction, nor did they encourage the HS1 theater teacher to do so.

The Phase Two participants indicated that the district theater learning standards supported teacher success but were often used as a supplemental resource. Both participants spoke to the use of backward design and reviewed the theater learning standards after instructional units had been created. The MS2 teacher commented that they found the learning standards to be restrictive at first, but then became increasingly comfortable and utilized them more in instructional planning as they continued to learn and grow as an educator. The MS2 teacher most frequently used theater learning standards to create and shape student assessments.

Discipline-specific PLCs and professional development. All the Phase Two participants articulated that the PLC of theater educators supported their success and was a necessary component to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. The ES1 teacher described the district PLC as "integral" to their success. They also communicated that although most district theater teachers were middle and high school teachers, while ES1 was an elementary school teacher, the collaboration with fellow teachers within the school pyramid was extremely helpful to understand how the elementary theater learning standards scaffolded into secondary instruction and programming, which they, in turn, used to shape their own curricula and instruction. The ES1 teacher appreciated the theater professional development events but believed the PLC collaboration to be the most helpful aspect of these events. The ES1 teacher also believed that the continued collaboration and conversations with theater colleagues and sharing of teacher resources throughout the school year on shared district digital platforms to be instrumental to their success.

The MS2 teacher remarked that a teacher never walks away from a theater professional development event without instructional resources and suggestions from theater colleagues that can immediately be used in the classroom. The MS2 teacher remarked that districts that have limited theater teachers or professional development events "greatly suffer from not having the resources of other theater teachers." The HS1 teacher also perceived the district theater PLC to support the success of theater teachers and the district and school theater education programs because community members possess diverse areas of theater expertise, so when a teacher is in need of resources in which they may not be trained, they are able to acquire quality lessons from a fellow teacher in a timely fashion, saving needed time and energy, which can then be focused on students and program offerings.

Similarly, all the Phase Two participants communicated that when they needed set pieces, props, costumes, or technical equipment for production, it was extremely helpful when they were able to ask and acquire help from a community member, again allowing them to focus needed energy and resources on the students and programming.

Discipline-specific leadership. All the Phase Two participants stated that the discipline-specific leadership at the central office level supported their success and was a necessary component to cultivate and sustain the district and school theater education programs. The Phase Two participants believed that the Fine Arts Office discipline-specific leadership position of the

Theater and Dance Educational Specialist was needed and imperative to advocate for programming, staffing, and resources and essential to support the success and quality of theater instruction and programs. The Phase Two participants also believed it was necessary for an advocate who was knowledgeable of theater and theater education to be a part of district-level planning and decision making. Multiple participants remarked that the theater specialist position provided quick administrative answers or solutions that often allowed them to focus on their students and program offerings. The ES1 teacher remarked that having a theater specialist, particularly during the first year of teaching, supported them through several challenges that would have taken much time and energy, and that they provided needed communication and clarification with school administrators who lacked knowledge and experience in theater. The ES1 teacher also found it beneficial to have an administrator who was able to observe and provide feedback on instruction and programming specific to theater education. The MS1 teacher communicated that the specialist position was essential for program success, as the position provides teachers with the district theater learning standards and curricular resources. The MS1 teacher believed the district resources and professional development events were unique to the district of study and very much supported the success and quality of the district theater education program where theater teachers in other districts may not have access to similar resources or support. The HS2 teacher believed that a central office representative who was "well-versed" in theater education was essential and that the need for this position became more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic when performing arts student enrollment declined throughout the district:

> This past year with COVID, so many numbers went down. We needed somebody at the central level to advocate for us and say that we are so much more than just numbers. We also need resources. Teachers need resources in order to be successful. Resources can look like a program of studies which we are super fortunate to have, curricula, and there needs to be a community in which you are able to rely on other colleagues. Theater teachers need to rely on colleagues to feel supported because so often, the theater teacher is a singleton in their building… I know administrations vary across school buildings, even with my own; as supportive as they are, they really don't know what I do. They just don't know. So, having an advocate is vital. Vital. And having colleagues who are able to

support you and provide additional resources, lesson plans, or just lend an ear as a sounding board is really important to be successful. It's a big job—a big job.

An additional component suggested by several Phase Two participants was program funding and resources. The HS2 teacher described how theater programs are self-funded and self-sustaining. Ticket sales often fund future productions and program needs, which include rights and royalties, artistic staff (choreographer, music director, pit director, tech director, stage combat choreographer), technical equipment, set and prop materials, costumes and makeup, administrative supplies, and more, all of which are essential for theater education programming and production.

Other components suggested by Phase Two participants were theater facilities, supportive school administrators, community support, including Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO) or theater booster organizations, teacher planning time, and technology to adhere to and meet increasing and evolving virtual demands in both education and theater. The lack of program funding and parent support seemed most challenging for Phase Two participants, who represented lower socioeconomic and more diverse school communities where parents were not able to financially contribute to support program and production needs, to volunteer to support productions, or to show the same appreciation or interest in theater due to a lack of experience or exposure.

Phase Two: Research Question 2b and 3b

Research Questions Two and Three addressed success and quality in district and school theater education programs. Interview questions asked participants to identify and differentiate indicators of success and quality at both levels. Therefore, for Phase Two and Three, the collected data are presented by the comparison and differentiation of success at the district level and at the school level to best represent research findings and teachers' and arts leaders' perceptions of indicators of success and quality in a district and school theater education programs in public schools.

Success in school theater education programs. Question 3 of the Phase Two: Teacher Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix H) sought to answer Research Question 2b on how theater teachers identify success in school theater education programs, specifically regarding theater courses, instruction, and assessment. Three primary indicators emerged by frequency from the Phase Two participant responses, which were: 1) students meet identified learning standards; 2)

student participation and engagement; and 3) a safe learning environment in which students can explore, collaborate, and take creative risks.

All Phase Two participants perceived that students' ability to meet the identified theater learning standards was indicative of success in a school theater education program. The ES1 teacher communicated:

> In my school, I am in no way beholden to enrollments. Students come to my class as a special. So, I don't consider enrollment part of my success definition. I consider my class successful when they are able to meet the objective of the lesson.

The HS2 teacher reiterated that students meeting learning standards was an indicator of success for school theater education programs, along with the benefit of sharing the indicated standards with students to reach shared success: "I believe that there should be learning outcomes that are defined by learning targets and benchmark indicators. It's helpful to share those with the students too. If they know where they're going and how, then their buy-in and their understanding increases."

While all the Phase Two participants referenced students meeting learning standards as an indicator of success in the school theater education program, they also emphasized the importance of individual assessment and growth as another barometer of success in theater instruction and assessment. More than standard and universal rubrics, all Phase Two participants communicated that they based assessment on an individual student's growth, effort, and were inclusive of the "whole child." The MS2 teacher remarked on the importance of commitment, effort, and efficacy in theater assessment: "If they just commit and they try and they are trying, but they did a terrible job, they are not going to get a terrible grade and they can feel some efficacy from the effort because I don't feel like they get that in a lot of other classes." The HS1 reiterated and further clarified this point:

> So, success is so hard in the arts. In my courses, when I'm grading my students, I really try to avoid rubrics being too focused on following the instructions of the assignment. I would rather be assessing them on theater-specific criteria because then I communicate to my students that when they receive grades in my class, it's not all on the same scale. It's based on each individual student. So, everyone is succeeding on paper and everyone's succeeding in their own way in performance, and that allows me to measure success by

> their individual growth. So, I'm measuring my own success by making sure that my students are growing. If everyone is stagnating, then my instruction is not successful.

Another indicator of success in a school theater education program mentioned by four of the five Phase Two participants was student participation and engagement, which included student enrollment in theater courses. Although all Phase Two participants acknowledged that student enrollment may be one signal of success in a school theater education program, a more comprehensive indicator was the active participation and engagement of the students in theater coursework, activities, and offerings. The MS1 teacher remarked:

> I feel like it's based on every single student and every project, and we look at success in a different way. For myself, I identify success with my students when they're engaged and they're enjoying what they're learning or performing. If my students are having a blast in class and during rehearsals, then my class numbers or audition numbers will reflect that. It's the kid's individual success and if they're enjoying themselves, then that's making them want to participate and they can have a safe place to do so.

Another notable indicator that pertained to student participation and engagement beyond enrollment in a single course was continued enrollment in theater courses both within and at the next grade level.

A final indicator of success in theater courses, instruction, and assessment voiced by several of the Phase Two participants was a safe learning environment in which students were able to explore, collaborate, and take creative risks. The ES1 teacher stated, "I want to leave students with a sense of empowerment, confidence, ease onstage, that they feel, 'this is for me, it's not just for those people over there.' I want students to feel comfortable stepping up on a stage or doing a role in technical theater. That for me is what success looks like." The MS2 teacher expanded on the importance of a safe classroom environment that allowed students to cultivate relationships and collaborate with peers to reach shared goals as a team or theater ensemble, often a primary goal in theater instruction or performance:

> In a theater classroom, it's vital to be a successful ensemble member first, within their classroom environment. So, a student who can work well with others and contribute to the group setting. Other attributes are cultivating an environment in which students feel they can take risks, they're engaged, and they're able to develop positive relationships with their peers and the teacher.

The ES1 teacher communicated that by creating a safe learning environment in a theater classroom, students, regardless of their exposure or experiences with theater, are more apt to access theater content and the art form:

> I would like my students to leave feeling like theater is a welcoming place to them. Because a big problem, in my opinion, [is that] the theater space can be a hierarchical sense of us and them and what's allowed in these spaces and what's not. And my goal is to help students feel that those spaces are for them; in fact, they're for everyone. And also, there's a lot of other theater for them outside of those spaces.

Quality in school theater education programs. Question 4 of the Phase Two: Teacher Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix H) explored Research Question 3b on how theater teachers identify quality in school theater education programs. The most frequent indicators that emerged from collected data were: 1) teacher quality, and 2) student efficacy in the creative process and artistic work.

The most frequent indicator of quality in school theater education programs communicated by the Phase Two participants was teacher quality. The characteristics of teacher quality are effective teacher pedagogy and practices and the ability to cultivate relationships and effectively communicate with students. The HS1 teacher defined success as "how the students take in the information and engage with learning" while quality is "about my own pre-planning." The HS2 teacher communicated:

> If the instructor is competent in what they are teaching so students can obtain new knowledge in theater. Is the teacher using different delivery styles to engage learners and embracing technology in instruction? Are they aligning the curriculum to the learning standards? That, to me, is quality instruction versus success.

The MS2 teacher reiterated the importance of teacher pedagogy and of cultivating relationships and communicating with students to encourage them to reach identified goals based on individual aptitudes and limitations:

> I think the one thing above everything else… I think that they're a good teacher if they can switch in the middle, they read the room and go, oh this is not working, we got to change something. And that they do by listening and talking to the kids, checking in, and showing understanding that they are people who have certain limitations.

Another indicator of quality in a school theater education program as perceived by several of the Phase Two participants was student efficacy in the creative process and artistic work. The MS1 teacher communicated, "[i]f the kids feel like they were successful, then I find that every piece of their work is quality. I also find you can identify quality in theater instruction on how the kids leave that room feeling." The ES1 teacher spoke to quality being demonstrated in theater instruction through activities where students can identify, cultivate, and express artistic integrity:

> I want to make art with a script, and I want kids to exercise their own creativity in making art with those scripts. That is what I consider quality, is that we're looking at drama aesthetic and artistic integrity and students are seeing theater as an art form, not just entertainment. And I would say quality includes teaching the thinking routines for consuming art.

A review and comparison of Phase Two indicators in response to Research Questions 2b and 3b on how theater teachers identify success and quality in a school theater education program can be found in Table 14.

Table 14

Phase Two: Indicators of Success and Quality in School Theater Education Programs

Success: Theater Instruction and Courses	Quality: Theater Instruction and Courses
Students meet identified theater learning standards.	Teacher qualifications.
Student participation and engagement.	Effective teacher pedagogy and practices.
Student enrollment.	Student efficacy.
Safe learning environment in which students can explore, collaborate and take creative risks.	

Success in school extracurricular theater programs. Question 9 of the Teacher Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix H) sought to answer Research Question 2b on how theater teachers identify success in a school theater education program, specifically in extracurricular theater programming. Most Phase Two participants communicated that they perceived the indicators of success for an extracurricular theater program to be like the indicators addressed for

success in theater courses, instruction, and assessment. The three primary indicators that emerged by frequency were: 1) students can complete performance tasks and the theater production; 2) student participation and engagement in extracurricular theater offerings and production processes; and 3) the production budget and fiscal returns were met by the theater program and teacher.

Quality in school extracurricular theater programs. Question 10 of the Teacher Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix H) investigated Research Question 3b on how theater teachers identify quality in a school theater education program, specifically in extracurricular theater programming. The primary indicators that emerged were: 1) student efficacy in extracurricular theater offerings and production processes; and 2) participation and engagement in the extracurricular theater program by student peers, parents, school administrators, and community members.

Student efficacy was frequently mentioned by several of the Phase Two participants as a strong indicator of quality in a school's extracurricular theater program. The Phase Two participants explained that success may be identified by students memorizing lines and completing performance and production tasks and responsibilities, but quality is demonstrated when students take ownership of their creative work and of the production, so the teacher is then able to participate as an observer or audience member. The MS1 teacher communicated:

> My kids do everything. They run the lights. They run the sound. They call the show. They are running backstage and I'm sitting in the back panicking. Hopefully, everything is going to go well, but seeing them complete a show all by themselves because it is their show; it's not mine. And at the end of the day, this is their thing and they will make it successful if they want to make it successful.

The HS2 teacher further explained:

> I do think that the quality of a production has to be from the student ownership of the actual show or whatever you are trying to do. I feel like the students are even more proud and feel more accomplished because they were the ones that had all of the ownership and needed to create their own goals. I think that quality really is, are the students taking ownership of their work? And have they accomplished their own personal goals that they needed in order for the show—or whatever you are doing—to feel like it was a success.

> Quality is when you are able to let go and the ship be run by the students because it really is theirs. Or at least it should be. Because if not, what are they learning?

MS2 reiterated the responses by MS1 and HS2 and added that quality is indicated in a school extracurricular theater program when students demonstrate artistic integrity in the ownership of their artistic work and commitment to the success of their fellow ensemble members:

> The kids are showing efficacy, they've shown progress in their care to develop, they're making strong choices and they're not worried about the audience, but they're still performing and following all of the structures and connecting with ensemble partners. That's when I consider it a high-quality production.

Participation and engagement in the school extracurricular theater program by student peers, parents, school administrators, and the community was another indicator of quality frequently referenced by several Phase Two participants. The characteristics of participation and engagement as indicated by the Phase Two participants were seen in the participation and engagement of students in the technical theater offerings and program, in parents serving as volunteers throughout the production processes and/or in the theater booster organization, and in the support of school administrators. The Phase Two participants communicated that participation and engagement are also demonstrated through audience attendance at theater performances by students, parents, community members, and school administrators and in the positive feedback received on the success and quality of the production. The ES1 teacher stated:

> I think it's really important that students are celebrated by their peers. Those students are building relationships with their peers and building a sense of confidence and mastery with something that they invest their time in and that they show up regularly and they see the payoff at the end. I think that's a life skill. And there are lots of other ways to get that life skill. You could train for a marathon or practice an instrument. But in theater, you rehearse for a show and show dedication to a task and see it through to completion and celebrate that success. For me, that is what we are really teaching in those extracurricular offerings, is the life skill components of theater.

A review and comparison of Phase Two indicators in response to Research Questions 2b and 3b on how theater teachers identify success and quality in a school extracurricular theater program can be found in Table 15.

Table 15

Phase Two: Indicators of Success and Quality in School Extracurricular Theater Programs

Success: Extracurricular Theater Programs	Quality: Extracurricular Theater Programs
Students can complete performance tasks and production.	Student efficacy in extracurricular theater offerings and production processes.
Student participation and engagement in the extracurricular theater program and production processes.	Participation and engagement in the extracurricular theater program by student peers, parents, school administrators, and the community.
Production budget and fiscal returns are met by the theater program and teacher.	

Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix I)

A purposive group of arts leaders, described in Chapter 3, were selected for Phase Three of research based on their professional roles and knowledge of the district's theater education programs. The arts leaders possessed a wide range of experience, training, and content knowledge in theater education. The Phase Three participants engaged in open-ended Zoom interviews that ranged from 45 to 120 minutes per participant. Each participant received a transcript of their interview and had two weeks to participate in member-checking to best represent their individual perspectives. The five Phase Two participants were coded by role and relationship to the school district of study (see Table 16).

Table 16

Codes Representing Phase Three Participants

Participant Role and Relationship to School District of Study	Code
Former Theater and Dance Educational Specialist	AL1
Current Fine Arts Coordinator	AL2
Former School Board Member and Director of International Theater Awards Program	AL3
Former Fine Arts Coordinator	AL4

Phase Three: Participant Demographics

Arts Leader 1 (AL1) was the former Theater and Dance Educational Specialist and the first person to hold this position in the selected district of study. AL1 was also a co-founder and a current board member of an international awards program that celebrates high school theater and critique. AL1 earned an undergraduate degree in English Education with a minor in Theater and graduated with a teaching license with endorsements in English and PreK-12 Theater. AL1 later accrued a Master's degree in a non-theater content area. AL1 did not have additional education or training in theater outside of participation in community theater productions.

AL1 was originally hired as a middle school English teacher but often used theater as an instructional strategy in English courses and directed several extracurricular productions. The school principal later asked AL1 to create a middle school theater course offering. This single offering evolved into more offerings, which became multiple middle school offerings and later theater programs that were primarily taught by English teachers and fell under the English department. AL1 was later asked and went on to write district theater learning standards for middle school theater. Once retired from teaching, AL1 was hired as a Theater and Dance Resource Teacher in the central office, and a decision was later made by the leadership to move Theater and Dance (from English and Health and Physical Education) to the Fine Arts Office. At this point, the position of resource teacher was bolstered to the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist.

In the role of Theater and Dance Educational Specialist, AL1 focused on creating meaningful professional development events for the district theater teachers and supporting programs and schools with needed theater materials and equipment. AL1 also worked with school administrators to interview and select theater teachers for the available positions. AL1 described the district theater programs as vital and noted that a primary contributor to that vitality was the full-time theater programs and teachers at the middle and high schools.

Arts Leader 2 (AL2) is the current Fine Arts Coordinator for the selected district of study and oversees the Fine Arts Office, which includes dance, theater, visual arts, and music, which hosts general music, band, orchestra, and chorus. There are currently five educational specialists in the selected district of study's central office, which represent general music, secondary music, theater arts and dance, visual arts, and special projects. The Fine Arts Office also employs

resource teachers in chorus, orchestra, elementary visual arts, and secondary visual arts. AL2 is the fourth person to hold the position of Fine Arts Coordinator in the selected district of study.

AL2 graduated with an undergraduate and Master's degree in Visual Arts Education and holds licensure in PreK-12 Visual Arts and Administration and Supervision. AL2 was a high school visual arts teacher prior to becoming a visual arts resource teacher, and was later promoted to the Visual Arts Educational Specialist position. Several years later, AL2 was promoted to the position of Fine Arts Coordinator and described the position as a "middleman" between arts programs, central and school leadership teams, and the school board. AL2 saw the primary function of the Fine Arts Coordinator position to be a proponent of district fine arts programming in finance and to work with central leadership to develop policies and procedures and to assist the school leadership in the implementation of policy. Coming from a visual arts background, AL2 admitted to having limited experience in theater, dance, or music and relied on the educational specialists to be "program managers." AL2 described the district theater programs as "robust" and believed the district possessed one of the larger theater education programs in the United States due to the considerable size of the district and the extensive number of secondary schools and theater programs. AL2 believed that the district theater education program is specialized, as it is one of the few to have a full-time theater teacher in most middle and high schools, and they believed there to be high community support for the district theater education programs.

Arts Leader 3 (AL3) served as a school board member in the selected district of study for 20+ years. AL3 is the program director for an international awards program that celebrates high school theater and critique. AL3 earned an undergraduate and Master's degree in non-theater content areas. They participated in theater throughout high school and described those experiences as being their "favorite memories of high school." Much of AL3's work in education and service on the selected district of study's school board was to support and innovate arts education, particularly in diverse schools and systems. AL3 described the district theater education program as having "high marks" due to the quality of the district theater learning standards as well as the PLC of theater educators. AL3 believed the district theater programs are successful but need to find better systems and practices to support school-based administrators in the management and evaluation of arts programs and teachers.

Arts Leader 4 (AL4) was the former district Fine Arts Coordinator and was in this position when the theater teacher resource position (AL1) was bolstered to a specialist position (AL1) and in this role when the district theater education programs demonstrated significant growth. AL4 obtained an undergraduate degree and teaching licensure in PreK-12 Visual Arts and went on to earn a Master's and Doctor of Philosophy in non-theater content areas that focused on Visual Arts Education and Curriculum and Instruction. AL4 was a visual arts teacher in public schools who often directed extracurricular theater productions. They were later hired as the Visual Arts Educational Specialist in the selected district of study and, after serving in that position for several years, were promoted to the position of Fine Arts Coordinator and served in that capacity for 10+ years. AL4 described the selected district during the time of their leadership as "a significant time for changes in Theater Arts."

AL4's earliest memories of theater stemmed from elementary school and involved being in community youth productions. AL4 continued with theater in high school, performing in several school productions and later in several community theater productions. After retiring from the selected district of study, AL4 went on to work in higher education as a professor in arts education and teacher preparation programs. AL4 has participated in several research programs and projects in arts education, served as a leader in local and national arts organizations, and is a highly respected professional and contributor to fine and performing arts education and research. From AL4's perspective, a primary incentive to work in the selected district of study was that it was a school system that possessed the opportunity to provide quality and rigorous arts education curricula to all students, not just a selected and talented few. AL4 believed that, over a period of time, the selected district of study became a system that included parents and community members, who saw "the arts as a part of basic education and critical to a successful school system."

During the time in their leadership positions, AL4 implemented a backward-by-design approach to instruction and assessment, where learning standards and curricula were shaped based on the content knowledge, skills, and concepts students needed to know when they graduated. They aimed to create an arts education where students are familiar with all arts disciplines but specialize in a selected area of interest, and where graduates are prepared to pursue their selected discipline in college or at the professional level—and not just some students, but all students.

AL1 and AL4 were instrumental in spearheading the creation of the international high school awards program that celebrates theater performance and critique, in collaboration with AL3 and other influential members. AL4 believed the awards program celebrates high school theater and students but also engages students in deeper learning, which includes theater history, content, criticism, and critique, all while promoting skills in literacy, critical thinking, and communication. AL4 believed the awards program, having originated in the selected district of study, was the face of theater for the district and supported the district in being a national leader in theater education.

The demographics data collected from the Phase Three participants indicates that, although several Phase Three participants held a deep appreciation and various experiences in theater education, none held a degree in theater or theater education. AL1 possessed a minor in theater, but it was not their primary area of study. Three of the Phase Three participants were female, and one was male. All the Phase Three participants were White and above the age of 50. Two of the four arts leaders, both of whom held the Fine Arts Coordinator position in the selected district of study, possessed a visual arts background. Three of the four arts leaders were instrumental in the creation of the international high school awards program that celebrates theater performance and critique, and which became an acclaimed community event that provides more representation and visibility for the schools and the greater district theater education programs. Lastly, researcher observation and the interviews conducted made evident that all Phase Three had immense buy-in for the district theater education program and for the benefits of theater education for all students throughout their PreK-12 public school experience.

Phase Three: Research Question One

In the Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix I), Questions 8-13 focused on Research Question One and the components needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program as posited by the researcher. Optional Questions 14 and 15 encouraged the participants to clarify or expand on their given answers or to suggest additional components for consideration.

Curricula and instruction: Theater learning standards and curricular resources. All the Phase Three participants indicated that the theater learning standards and curricular resources supported the success and quality of a district and school theater education programs, and ensured equitable opportunities for all students to access quality theater education and theater

offerings. AL1 believed the theater learning standards to be "the bedrock on which the programs are built," providing consistency in instruction and curricula for students across schools regardless of the school community or teacher expertise. AL3 and AL4 also communicated that theater learning standards and curricular resources were essential to enable equitable access and quality programs for all students and schools. AL3 commented, "[i]t's the access to high-quality standards for all kids. Not just some. This is how we provide access and equity through our theater programs and public schools."

AL4 reiterated and confirmed AL1 and AL3's arguments that, to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, the district must provide teachers with quality learning standards and curricular resources, but also quality materials that enable arts teachers to meet the identified learning standards and curricular expectations. AL4 described how, in the position of Visual Arts Specialist and Fine Arts Coordinator, it was imperative to research, advocate, and acquire arts materials that might not always be the most affordable but that would best support teachers in meeting district learning standards, which would result in quality instruction, learning outcomes, and student artistic work. AL4 communicated that equitable access to quality resources needed to be available for all schools and programs or quality arts education and experiences would become specialized and for a privileged minority, often school communities and students located in higher socioeconomic areas.

Qualified teachers. Question 8 of the Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix I) questioned Phase Three participants on the impact of qualified teachers, which they all believed to support the cultivation and sustainment of a district theater education program. AL1 perceived it to be extremely important to have qualified theater teachers and recalled that when they were a theater teacher in the selected district of study, and later the theater resource teacher, most of the theater courses were taught by English teachers who did not have training or licensure in Theater. AL1 further communicated that many of these teachers were not interested in teaching theater but were assigned by the school principal as they were the only teachers available. AL1 believed the lack of qualifications, pedagogy, and teacher enthusiasm negatively impacted the success and quality of theater instruction and programming, which deterred student enrollment and often created a "domino effect" across the school and district theater education programs.

AL4 believed that qualified teachers "are more important than curriculum." They shared that while in the position of Fine Arts Coordinator, all the arts specialists focused on teacher recruitment by attending discipline-specific conferences, teacher preparation programs, and job fairs to hire qualified candidates to promote and further the success and quality of the district and school arts programs. When possible, the arts specialists also conducted discipline-specific interviews with potential candidates and advised school administrators when they were interviewing for school-based arts positions.

AL3 also agreed that the classroom teacher was "the most critical component of any learning activity in a school" and could also be an influential deterrent to the success of the district and school theater education programs. This is often due to the lack of experience or content knowledge school-based administrators have in the arts, specifically theater, which impact the hiring and evaluation of teachers. AL3 described that, with only one theater teacher per school, an unsuccessful teacher may have a severe and lasting impact on the district theater education program:

> This came at the time of the No Child Left Behind Act. There was an emphasis on quality, and how do you make sure that your staff is quality? How do you evaluate them? All those pieces were important in the evolution of improving schools for all children. You have to have quality instructors. You have to figure out a way to evaluate and observe quality, and how to report that.

AL2 agreed that school administrators needed to address unsuccessful practices of arts teachers through the evaluation process, as these may have a lasting impact on the success and longevity of the district theater education program.

Discipline-specific PLCs and professional development. Three of the four Phase Three participants believed the PLC of theater educators supported the district theater education program, whereas one participant, AL2, believed it to offer support but not be as essential as other suggested components. AL2 communicated that a qualified teacher who was provided with learning standards, resources, and theater professional development would be able to lead a successful and quality school arts program, and that a theater PLC might not be as impactful.

Contrarily, AL1 believed that the theater PLC was instrumental in the growth of the district theater education program, particularly as it led to collaboration within school pyramids,

which supported vertical planning and practices along with student participation and engagement across grade levels:

> The middle school teachers could do so much if they connected with the high school teacher to which their program would feed, and they learned about each other's programs. The middle school teachers didn't have a clue what the high school teachers were up against, and vice versa. If they could make nice with each other, it would really help build both programs. Getting a middle school teacher and students invited to see a rehearsal at a high school, for instance, was really exciting for those middle school kids because all they really want to be is high school kids. When the teachers saw that they could learn from each other, it really got off the ground.

AL4 also believed that theater PLCs are imperative for the success and quality of the district and school theater education programs, as they provide opportunities for teacher collaboration across schools, which lead to teacher buy-in. AL4 believed that this collaboration often transpires during theater professional development events, where teachers can review learning standards and curricular resources and to identify these resources as a collaborative effort created by a team of theater teachers, often respected colleagues, and the theater specialist. AL4 explained that these interactions and professional development events, often guided by teacher leaders, encourage fellow teachers to see themselves in the district theater learning standards, curricular resources, and initiatives that promote shared goals and community buy-in. AL4 concluded that if a teacher group does not buy into the vision and goals of the district program, it will most likely not come to fruition: "…to get teacher buy-in to the vision among all teachers at professional development events. I knew I couldn't do it by myself. I had to enlist really great, respected teachers to achieve that goal."

AL1 believed that providing theater professional development events was a primary responsibility in the role of the theater specialist, which supported the theater teachers AL1 represented and the success and quality of the district and school theater education programs. AL1 and AL4 also agreed that discipline-specific professional development events promote teacher efficacy and perceived value, which is particularly needed when a teacher is solitary in a school building and may lack administrative or collegial support. AL4 remarked:

> I thought it was critical to wrestle theater away from the Language Arts department, as the theater teachers were getting no attention whatsoever. Those were ugly days when the

> teachers felt no one listened to them, that they had a voice nowhere, and they had no discipline-specific training. After that, they got a district theater resource teacher, were moved to the Fine Arts department, and they found themselves in a whole different roadshow.

Discipline-specific leadership. The data collected through Question 11 in the Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix I) indicated that all the Phase Three participants perceived leadership, including central leadership, that of the school board, county and state leadership, the Fine Arts Office, Theater and Dance Educational Specialist, and school administrators, to support the success and quality of the district and school theater education programs. The Phase Three participants agreed that leadership must align to cultivate and sustain programs that include standards and expectations, funding, support, and staffing. AL3 commented:

> You need leadership to be aligned from the superintendents to senior leadership, to the school board, to principals, to Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs). Everybody. If you are really going to have a strong curriculum area, they all have to be working together and to agree on the major principles, standards, and funding. Otherwise, you can't maximize programs. You don't have the equity of access. All pieces have to work together.

AL4 questioned if the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist position, a position AL4 secured while serving as the Fine Arts Coordinator, was as critical of a component if there was ample support from the district and school leadership. AL4 further clarified that many school districts across the state and nation, most of which are smaller in size and less affluent than the selected district of study, often have only one central office to represent all fine arts discipline areas, where another district may have arts disciplines absorbed under other content areas including but not limited to Language Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Physical Education, and/or Career and Technical Education. With or without discipline-specific representation at the district level, AL4 believed there must be distinct school leaders who advocate for and support arts programs to be successful and of quality. Although AL4 perceived that the discipline-specific leadership in the selected district of study supported the district theater education program and teachers, a similar position may not be possible for all school districts. Therefore, support and buy-in from the district leadership and school administrators is imperative for program success and quality. AL2 agreed that if programs lack the support of district leadership,

particularly the superintendent and school board, this will diminish the teacher staffing, funding, and resources, which are all imperative for the success of a quality district and school theater education programs.

Additional components suggested by Phase Three participants were program funding and resources, community support, the local arts community, theater elementary school offerings and programs, program visibility, teacher enthusiasm, and the understanding among all stakeholders of the value and impact of arts education on overall student learning and well-being. The additional components most frequently referenced by Phase Three participants were program funding and resources as well as community support and buy-in.

Phase Three: Research Question 2a and 3a

Success in a district theater education program. Question 6 of the Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix I) sought to answer Research Question 3a on how arts leaders identify success in a district theater education program. The primary indicators that emerged by frequency from the collected data included: 1) equitable access to theater instruction and programs, meaning a theater education program exists in all schools and is led by a qualified theater teacher; 2) program funding and resources, including staffing, materials, and equipment; and 3) community and district leadership support and buy-in.

All Phase Three participants acknowledged that success is indicated in a district theater education program by robust and successful school programs. Theater education programs exist in all schools and offerings are accessible to all students. AL3 stated, “I think in a district if you’re committed to having a robust arts program in every single school, that is in fact where you start to see enrollment.”

Another indicator of success in a district theater education program, as perceived by the Phase Three participants, was in program funding and resources for school theater education programs, including in adequate staffing, materials, and equipment. One of the most impactful resources on success, as indicated by the Phase Three participants, was the full-time staffing of qualified teachers. All Phase Three participants agreed that if a district does not commit to the appropriate staffing of school programs, it may have a severe and lasting impact on the longevity of the district theater education program. AL3 remarked on the importance of a district’s commitment to staffing arts programs at a full-time status and the need to consider this when developing district budgets and allocating resources:

> If you are going to staff the school, you are going to staff the school. You are setting aside your central budget to staff enough. I always think of this one, when times are tough. You don't make a cut that is solely based on the number of students per teacher. That you take the act of faith and say, "I will overstaff." That is something I learned early on as a school board member. If you cut a curriculum area, you cut a program, you don't get it back for a very long time, and sometimes never.

At times, AL3 noted challenges when staffing full-time positions due to limited qualified teacher candidates. AL4 elaborated that one has to be careful in the perception of success in relation to the staffing of a full-time teacher in a school building. Staffing must be indicative of the students being served in arts courses and the time designated for arts instruction:

> However, some schools would feel great about their success because they had a full-time art teacher in the building. But the difference in the school size was dramatic. One small elementary school might only have 18 classrooms in the building to be served by the art teacher. These lucky students could see their art teacher for an extended lesson every week. Another school might have 45 classrooms to be served by a specialist, and the students could only receive a short lesson every three weeks. Each building was proud of the fact that it had a full-time art teacher.

Another frequent indicator of success for a district theater education program emphasized by several Phase Three participants was the support and buy-in of the community and district leadership. This included support from the pertinent community and district stakeholders, particularly parents and parent organizations. Several Phase Three participants emphasized that community, district, and even county leadership support and buy-in was essential during a budget crisis or when there were threats of reducing arts programs and teaching positions. AL4 stated:

> There is additional support needed. You need support from your district leadership and from your school board but also the board of supervisors. And when our district arts support organization went into high gear, which it did for several years while I was the Fine Arts Coordinator, they had a big job to do in advocating for our programs.

Other notable indicators mentioned by Phase Three participants were district theater enrollment as compared to other arts, elective or content areas, district student pass rates in theater courses, and school awards or accolades in state and regional theater competitions.

Quality in a district theater education program. Question 7 of the Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix I) examined Research Question 3a on how arts leaders identify quality in a district theater education program as compared to success. The most frequent indicators to emerge reflected the identified components including theater learning standards and curricular resources, qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices, theater PLCs and professional development events, and leadership. The most frequent indicator of quality in a district theater education program mentioned by Phase Three participants was qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices. This also reflected Phase Two results on the indicators of quality in school theater education programs. However, contrary to the Phase Two participants, the arts leaders perceived the characteristics of qualified teachers at the district level to be demonstrated through the thoughtful recruitment and selection of teacher candidates and through the retention of teachers by providing them with quality resources, professional development, and support. AL2 remarked:

> It does go back to qualified teachers, which we do here in the office by interviewing and making recommendations for our teachers that are licensed. Making sure we provide learning standards, instructional resources, and professional development when able. Making sure we have instructional leaders to support the programs.

Another notable indicator also mentioned for quality, as for success, was visible community support and buy-in. The community support and buy-in characterized by most of the Phase Three participants was seen through parent support, particularly in times where arts programs and positions were at risk and when the parent and community organization advocated before the district leadership, school board members, and at the county level to maintain program offerings of quality.

A review and comparison of Phase Three indicators in response to Research Questions 2a and 3a on how arts leaders identify success and quality in a district theater education program can be found in Table 17.

Table 17

Phase Three: Indicators of Success and Quality in a District Theater Education Program

Success: District Theater Program	Quality: District Theater Program
Equitable access to theater instruction and programs in all schools	Qualified teachers
Program funding and resources, including staffing, arts materials, and funding	Theater learning standards and curricular resources
Leadership support and buy-in	Theater PLC
Community support and buy-in	Theater professional development events
	Discipline-specific leadership
Additional notable indicators: ● District theater enrollment ● District pass rates in theater courses ● Success in state and regional theater competitions	Additional notable indicators: ● Community support and buy-in

Phase Three: Research Question 2b and 3b

Success in school theater education programs. Question 4 of the Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix I) explored Research Question 2b on how arts leaders identify success in school theater education programs. The most frequent indicators to emerge from the collected data were: 1) student enrollment, and 2) participation and engagement in the school extracurricular theater program.

All the Phase Three participants agreed that student enrollment was a primary indicator of success for a school theater education program, but concurred that enrollment alone was not a credible assessment of program or teacher success or quality. AL1 stated, "I would have to say that the numbers would be one indication, but that is not the entire answer. Success is deceptive if you base it only on numbers." AL2 agreed that one of the few methods to document success for a school theater education program would be through student enrollment, but they also acknowledged that several factors, including the schoolmaster and student scheduling, graduation requirements, excessive elective options, advanced academic classes and requirements, parent expectations, and administrative aspects, often affected a student's ability to

enroll in a theater course. AL3 believed that the number of theater offerings, environment, and the participation and engagement of various school stakeholders all support theater enrollment and the success of a school program: “The bread-and-butter spot is enrollment, but to get the enrollment, it’s all those other opportunities. It’s the extracurricular theater offerings. It’s providing fun for everybody. Sometimes having a role for the other teachers, a walk-on spot.”

Several Phase Three participants indicated that the number and rigor of extracurricular theater offerings, as well as the student and community participation and engagement in those offerings, were strong indicators of success in school theater education programs. AL1 stated, “making a lot of opportunities available. Several high schools did more than just two types of performances, and I think that helped grow the programs significantly.” AL3 defined success as “the opportunities or the offerings that are both the curricular and extracurricular programs and then the visible engagement of students and community in those offerings.”

Other notable indicators of the success of school theater education programs communicated by Phase Three participants were the number of students who elected to pursue theater in higher education or professionally, the number of scholarships awarded to students to pursue higher education in theater, the rigor of performance content, and student participation in both theater and technical theater courses and offerings. AL4 echoed AL3’s sentiment on the importance of finding a role for every student to be engaged in order to promote program success:

> And so, the really successful school programs find a spot for everybody in some capacity. It might be to understudy, or they have a lighting switch they are responsible for. Who knows? But the theater program finds a way for everyone to be able to play their part, no matter how small that part may be.

Quality in school theater education programs. Question 5 of the Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews (see Appendix I) investigated Research Question 3b on how arts leaders identify quality in a school theater education program. The most frequent indicators to emerge, like those of the Phase Two responses regarding indicators of quality in a district theater program, were again: 1) qualified teachers, and 2) effective teacher pedagogy and practices. Another indicator of quality frequently mentioned by Phase Three participants for school theater education programs that differed from other answers was: 3) equitable access to theater instruction through the scheduling of courses and students.

All the Phase Three participants believed that the qualifications, pedagogy, and practices of theater teachers are primary indicators of quality for school theater education programs. AL3 stated:

> The teacher who can create a safe place for all kids. It is the talent of the teacher and their ability to handle a class—the skill of the theater teacher, which is different for a Math or English teacher. The theater teacher knows how to inspire a child, how to set high standards for behavior, and can inspire them to do amazing things, and how to reign in inappropriate behavior at the same time when they're also pulling out unusual talents. I mean, that's just so hard to do. But that is also the skill of a theater teacher, knowing what to try to produce with the kids based on the kids that year.

AL4 also described the impact of the teacher on the quality of the theater program:

> You can take the best curriculum in the world, but if you put it in the hands of a poor teacher, you might as well have made it a doorstop and simply use it to hold the door open and see who shows up. But alternatively, you can have the poorest curriculum in the world, and you put it in the hands of really good teachers, magic happens every time. I would be most happy if we interviewed ten times the number of teachers we were able to hire every year. Because my feeling was, if we hired the top tenth, we are getting highly qualified teachers.

Another strong indicator of quality in school theater education programs, from the perspective of Phase Three participants, was equitable access to theater education through effective scheduling at the school level, including through the creation of the master schedule, course scheduling, and student scheduling and placement. Two of the four Phase Three participants spoke of the need for elementary school theater instructional programs, particularly when building enrollment, interest, and participation in secondary programs, and the way to make this possible was through the thoughtful scheduling of theater courses, which also support academic areas and teachers. AL4 described the importance of scheduling and access to arts courses as "making sure that there was a really well thought out place for how instruction and the arts were also going to be implemented at the highest level of quality."

Another indicator mentioned by several Phase Three participants was the positive perception of the school theater program, including the pride of students, parents, and the community in the program and created work. AL1 stated:

> Quality comes from how the students feel about what their programs offer. I always believe the total engagement of the student is a requirement to have a quality program. And, in most cases, they are engaged. They have chosen to be there. They want to Participate, whether it's on the stage or behind the scenes. And their level of that participation certainly helps determine the quality of the program.

A review and comparison of Phase Three themes and indicators in response to Research Questions 2b and 3b on how arts leaders identify success and quality in school theater education programs can be found in Table 18.

Table 18

Phase Three: Indicators of Success and Quality in School Theater Education Programs

Success: School Theater Programs	Quality: School Theater Programs
Student enrollment	Teacher qualifications
Participation and engagement in extracurricular theater programs	Effective teacher pedagogy and practices
	Equitable access to theater offerings through the school master schedule
Additional notable indicators: ● Number of students who elect to pursue theater in higher education or professionally ● Number of scholarships awarded to students to pursue higher education in theater ● Student participation in both theater and technical theater courses and offerings	Additional notable indicators: ● The perception of the school theater program by students and community members

Analysis Across Participant Groups

After the three phases of research were completed, the collected data were compared and analyzed across participant groups. All phases of research sought to answer the three research questions that guided this study. The Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey provided quantitative data in response to Research Question One and qualitative data in response

to Research Questions One, Two, and Three. Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interviews provided quantitative data through the evaluation of school and theater enrollment data and qualitative data through open-ended interviews in response to all research questions. Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews provided qualitative data in response to all research questions. Data collected from the surveys and open-ended interviews were analyzed and coded. Most of the data was hand coded in three steps using descriptive statistics: 1) initial coding, 2) second-level coding to develop categories, and 3) theme development by participant group. Results were then compared across participant groups to determine findings based on frequency.

Analysis Across Participant Groups: Research Question One

Research Question One sought to understand the components theater teachers and arts leaders perceive to be necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. The data and analysis through all phases of research and across participant groups found that the four identified components were necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. However, individual components demonstrated greater value and variance depending on the phase of the study and participant group. The four components also emerged as the primary indicators of success and quality in Research Questions Two and Three.

Curricula and instruction: Theater learning standards and curricular resources. Across all phases of study, district theater learning standards and curricular resources were perceived as necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, with an emphasis on theater learning standards. In Phase One, the district theater learning standards proved to be one of the two most impactful components that supported program and teacher success (mean: 4.17, std deviation: 0.72). All five Phase Two participants confirmed that the theater learning standards supported success in areas including but not limited to instructional planning, student assessment, and the articulation of student growth. They also demonstrated the value of theater education to stakeholders. The HS2 teacher shared:

> I often plan backward. So, what is the end goal for what we should be accomplishing? I often look at the learning standards provided by the district, [that I] am adhering to what we should be teaching at each level, and that my instruction is going to meet those particular standards. I often rely on the unit plans and assessments provided by my

district. I think we are very fortunate to have those resources, and they are extremely helpful.

All the Phase Three participants agreed that the theater learning standards support greater opportunity and equitable access to quality theater education as they hold teachers and students accountable for the same rigor in the breadth of the curricular content.

An indicator of success in a district theater education program that emerged from the research was in theater learning standards and in equitable access to theater education for all students, which was ensured through available program offerings that met the shared learning standards. Another indicator of success in school theater education programs was that students met the identified learning standards through assessment.

District learning standards and equitable access. In the selected district of study, the theater learning standards were created and revised by teacher curricula teams, the theater PLC, and the Fine Arts Office, Theater and Dance Educational Specialist. Employing teachers in this work also cultivated a sense of shared ownership and buy-in for the created resources and district initiatives. As AL4 explained:

> You don't want teachers to see the curriculum as something that is solely created by the central office when, in fact, it wasn't. The best of your teachers made that curriculum. And so, they all should have joint ownership with that curriculum. The content knowledge and skill development that exists, they put it there.

The district theater standards of learning were created and revised using the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS), the state theater standards, and models from other districts. The district standards mirror the NCAS format and scaffold across grade levels from elementary schooling to grade 12. The sequential nature of the district standards and curricular resources that offer examples of the indicated standards in practice and assessment are resources that promote teacher implementation as well as a greater understanding of learning expectations across grade levels. The MS1 teacher communicated that, as a new teacher who had not completed a formal teacher preparation program, the theater learning standards provided a clear "road map" for the curricula and assessment in the vast content of theater. The ES1 communicated that the standards supported their success as it provided them with an understanding of the knowledge and skills students needed to be prepared for middle school theater offerings. The ES1 teacher said, "I find

the standards as my main touchpoint and it's very clear to me what they are and easy for me to say, 'Yes, we've done that or we definitely still need to do that with each grade level.'"

The district theater learning standards also align to district vision and goals and clearly identify graduate outcomes, which include a well-rounded curricula of theater concepts and skills that do not focus solely on performance. These standards also promote greater access for students as course offerings encompass an array of topics, including but not limited to playwriting, technical theater, design, arts administration, and professional pathways in theater.

AL4, an Educational Specialist and the former district Fine Arts Coordinator, described their method of developing learning standards through backward curricula design, with the starting point being what student graduates should know to pursue arts opportunities in higher education or professionally. Importantly, they wanted this to apply not to *some* students, but to *all* students. AL4 noted, and AL3 confirmed, that the district learning standards supported equitable access for all students to a quality theater education. Having district learning standards that have been approved by leadership teams and the school board also aids in building credibility for the material and showing that the content area is a supported and established program of studies with documented student learning outcomes. These standards also hold teachers and school administrators accountable for providing appropriate instruction and resources for students to obtain the identified goals. AL3 commented, "When we talk about equity of access for theater, it's up to the school division itself to provide those opportunities to make sure that people have what they need to produce. If we are going to hold teachers to a high standard then you must have good curricula standards, the school division must provide that."

District learning standards and quality assessment. Several Phase One, and four out of the five, Phase Two participants communicated that a primary indicator of success in school theater education programs, and of teacher success, is in students' ability to meet the identified learning standards. AL2 stated that an indicator of success for district and school theater education programs may be student pass rates, which may also be connected to students' ability to meet the learning standards.

Theater learning standards provide clarity and transparency in student assessment, particularly in theater education, where assessment is often subjective and based on individual student aptitudes, needs, and creativity. AL4 confirmed, "[i]f assessment in the arts hinders creativity, you're assessing the wrong things." As demonstrated in a majority of Phase One and

all Phase Two participant responses, theater teachers often assess the "whole child" and grade on individual growth, effort, commitment, creativity, and peer collaboration rather than universal criteria. The HS1 teacher stated, "I communicate to my students that when they receive grades in my class, it's not all on the same scale. It's based on the individual student." The MS2 teacher grades her students on "commitment, effort, and content."

Learning standards support student assessment, which provides valuable data to teachers and school administrators on teacher and program success. The HS1 teacher stated, "I think success is learner-focused and quality is teacher-focused. Success is about the students and how the students take in the information and engage in the learning and quality of my own pre-planning." AL4 commented:

> Measuring student learning, the knowledge skills, the concepts taught, and the outcomes of the program through the stages of student success in all areas is critical. The program and teachers must be accountable. So, here's one thing that happened well for all of us as a part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which was little for the arts, but with the advent of NCLB we were held accountable. The arts were seen as subjects that should be held accountable and we took advantage of these NCLB requirements. Not with statewide testing, because we wanted to avoid that at all costs because we felt it could only be done poorly, but successful programs are accountable.

Four of the five Phase Two participants also communicated that the district theater learning standards provided needed data to articulate student growth. The MS1 teacher explained that the theater learning standards enabled her to participate in school conversations with core content teachers and to make cross-curricular connections correlated to student achievement in all areas. The Phase Two and Phase Three participants reiterated that the standards and assessment data for demonstrated growth were beneficial for school administrators, who often lacked theater knowledge or experience.

Qualified teachers. Qualified theater teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices in both instructional and extracurricular programming were a component that all participant groups perceived necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program.

Effective pedagogy and practices often result in greater student and community participation and engagement, both indicators of success in a school theater education program.

Another outcome of effective pedagogy and practices is student efficacy, also an indicator of quality in school theater education programs. Effective pedagogy and practices that result in student and community participation and engagement and that offer opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate efficacy often resulting in increased theater enrollment, which is an indicator of success in a district and school theater education programs. After a comprehensive review and analysis of the data gathered in all phases of research, qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices may be the most impactful component on the success and quality of a district and school theater education programs.

Qualified teachers and effective pedagogy and practices. Qualified theater teachers are better prepared with the content knowledge and pedagogy to meet the needs of a diverse theater classroom that consists of heterogeneous learners, some of whom may not have selected the course but have been placed by school administrators or counselors. A teacher may possess content knowledge or pedagogy, but it is the synthesis of the two supported by theater-specific strategies appropriate for public school settings that support program and student success. The MS2 teacher, a former teaching artist, acknowledged the need and benefit of their teacher preparation program as it provided them with valuable pedagogy regarding classroom management and instructional strategies: "Having been a professional in the theater world and being there and also having the benefit of being in a teacher preparation program, I would have failed in education if I had just been a professional and gone into the classroom. I would have been gone in the first three months." This expertise may lead to increased student participation, engagement, and efficacy.

Participants from all the phases of research confirmed that, for students to engage in meaningful theater education and experiences, there must be a safe learning environment in which they can explore, collaborate, and take creative risks. The ES1 teacher stated, "I want students to feel comfortable stepping up on a stage or doing a role in technical theater. That, for me, is what success looks like." Several Phase One and Phase Two participants reiterated the importance of the theater teacher's ability to create a classroom environment that cultivates trust, collaboration, and relationships, all of which are characteristics of an effective theater ensemble. The HS2 teacher observed, "[i]n a theater classroom, it's vital to be a successful ensemble member first, within the classroom environment. A student who is able to work well with others and contribute to a group setting."

Theater curricula are broad and often demand the sharing of individual ideas and feelings, collaboration with peers, active play, for a student to frequently stand in front of their peers, share created works, and receive teacher and peer critique. Creating a classroom environment conducive for these activities, while also maintaining classroom management and student behavior, is challenging for even the most experienced teacher. AL3 communicated:

> It's the theater teacher that knows how to inspire a child, how to set high standards for behavior, and can inspire them to do amazing things they didn't think they could do before, and how to reign in inappropriate behavior among children at the same time when they're also pulling out unusual talents. I mean, that is just so hard to do. But it is also the skill of a theater teacher to know what to produce with the kids based on what they know.

Qualified theater teachers are often prepared with pedagogy and practices needed to cultivate safe and creative spaces necessary for quality theater education, which then result in student participation and engagement as well as opportunities for student efficacy.

Qualified teachers and professional expectations and responsibilities. Theater teachers are most often responsible for two jobs: serving as theater teacher and artistic director. A theater teacher must possess the content knowledge and pedagogy that supports the curricula, instruction, and student assessment. Theater teachers must also be able to fill the role of artistic directors in extracurricular theater programs, which includes but is not limited to directing, ensuring student safety, managing arts administration, finance, marketing, and technical areas. As the extracurricular theater program is often the "face" of the theater program, and a passion for many theater teachers, it can often become the primary focus for teachers. The many responsibilities of extracurricular theater programs often require various and specific skillsets, knowledge, and an immense amount of time and energy. Often, due to limited program funding, resources, and administrative support, most of these responsibilities fall solely on the theater teacher and their volunteer support, which varies greatly depending on the school community and demographics. The HS2 teacher shared:

> I think something we have to look at is the nature of the job and what is being asked of theater educators. As somebody who loves my job, sometimes I look at the scope of what I'm being asked to do, and it does create overwhelming expectations. It's like four full-time jobs. You're in charge of your classes. You're in charge of the extracurricular program. You're a finance accountant, and you're also a technical director. Most of the

> time it's impossible to find somebody who's an expert at all four things, so it takes a lot of time and energy to try to be successful. I do think that sometimes there is a major burnout from all these responsibilities.

An extracurricular theater program requires that a teacher produce and direct theater productions and events while also managing the social-emotional demands of students, parents, and caretakers when dealing with casting, student and parent relations, rehearsals, scheduling, and the many demands associated with the production process. AL3 confirmed:

> You always have the teacher who knows the pedagogy, who knows the stuff you're supposed to communicate. Who not only loves the children but can handle the strong feelings, emotions, hammering, painting, time management… and somehow manage all these pieces to put on a production. They really have to become a jack of all trades. I think that is the challenge of a really good theater teacher.

In public school education, a theater teacher must achieve instructional and extracurricular expectations while maintaining an educational focus that emphasizes student growth and the learning process over the product. Qualified teachers may be better prepared to successfully manage the professional expectations and responsibilities of both the function of theater teacher and artistic director while keeping student learning and growth at the center.

Process over product. The Phase Two teacher participants all demonstrated consistent and above-average student enrollment and implemented robust extracurricular theater programs, which are both indicators of success in school theater education programs. The Phase Two participants represented diverse school communities and student populations yet demonstrated similar success in enrollment. All the Phase Two participants communicated that they utilized the learning standards in curricula, instruction, and assessment, but explained their varied use and value. The themes based on frequency that emerged during the Phase Two research reiterated the importance of an effective pedagogy and practices- including but not limited to classroom environment, ensemble relationships, individual growth, process over product, student efficacy, and being a "teacher" first and an artistic director second. The HS2 teacher questioned, "[a]re your students excited to be there? What is the overall morale of your classroom? Are your students comfortable? Do they feel included? Do they feel supported in their classroom environment? Do they feel comfortable going to their teacher if they don't? I do think that students need to be aware of transferrable skills to their real-life situations and be able to define

them." The HS1 teacher agreed: "I feel my extracurricular program is most successful when all students feel welcome and end the experience with a positive feeling." The MS2 teacher also confirmed this: "I feel that the success of arts programs, but specifically theater, is directly correlated to the type of social, emotional growth that we can see in a year from students." The Phase Two participants described effective pedagogy and practices that focus on the success of the whole child and maintain an educational focus in both the instructional and extracurricular theater programs. None of the Phase Two participants spoke at length or focused on production or awards. The qualifications, pedagogy, and practices of the Phase Two participants may have been conducive to more active student participation and engagement, which may have resulted in greater student enrollment.

Effective pedagogy and practices may be demonstrated in extracurricular theater programs through the number and variety of offerings, the rigor of the content, and the production quality. Throughout this research, quality in extracurricular theater programs was indicated through various characteristics, including awards and recognition from state or district theater awards programs, audience attendance, production revenue, and perceived production quality based on audience critique and perception. While enrollment represents the success of instructional theater programs, the research participants also confirmed this should not be the only or primary indicator of quality; as already established, arts assessment is subjective and production quality is impacted by program and community participation, engagement, and program funding and resources, factors which are often not within the theater teacher's control. A primary indicator of quality of a school theater education program that emerged throughout all phases of research was student efficacy. AL1 stated, "I think quality really comes from how the students feel about what their programs offer." Many Phase Two participants emphasized the importance of students taking ownership of their creative works, of individual aesthetics, and of students' developing artistic integrity and a responsibility toward their peers and ensemble. The MS1 teacher stated:

> By seeing the kids doing, for all my shows, my kids do everything. At the end of the day, this is their thing, and they make it successful if they want to make it successful. When they go through a weekend of shows and it goes well with maybe some minor mistakes, that's success for me and shows that they have achieved their goals and their parents are so proud of them. Seeing their smiling faces and all those kids so excited, and wanting

more and more, always makes me excited, because I really let them do the whole thing. It's their thing.

The participants in all phases of this research emphasized the value of student participation and engagement in all areas of the theater and the importance of finding various opportunities for students to be involved in extracurricular theater programs. AL4 communicated, "I think in terms of success, the number of students with both performing and non-performing roles assisting with any given production. How you can find a niche for anybody who's interested, if they're interested. The really successful school programs find a spot for everybody in some capacity." Finding opportunities for students to participate and engage in extracurricular theater programs may lead to increased participation and engagement and student enrollment. The MS1 teacher explained, "[i]f you open the extracurricular theater program to the whole school and you give them opportunities to love theater, that will get them involved and wanting to sign up."

Benefits of a robust extracurricular theater program are often the participation and engagement of parents, staff and school administrators, and the community, which is another indicator of the success of school theater education programs. AL3 stated, "[i]n order to get enrollment, it's all those other opportunities. It's providing fun for everybody. Sometimes, a role for other teachers, a walk-on spot." Several Phase One and Phase Two participants explained that participation and engagement are illustrated through audience attendance and feedback at theater productions and events. The ES1 teacher stated that success is when "students are celebrated by their peers" after a theater performance. Participation and engagement in the extracurricular theater program provides greater visibility for the program and illustrates the value of theater education, thereby promoting community and administrative buy-in and support. Participation and engagement may include audience attendance, applause and positive feedback, and program donations. Other participant responses indicated that parent engagement through volunteer efforts during the production process was a strong characteristic of participation and engagement. These efforts may include assisting with set building, costumes, ticket selling, administrative duties, and student supervision and support. A Phase One participant shared, "[w]ithout parent support and willingness to take on jobs, it cannot be done alone." Other participants communicated that participation and engagement were indicated through positive feedback following a production.

The expectations and responsibilities of theater teachers are multi-faceted and demanding. A teacher must possess content knowledge along with effective pedagogical practices to manage both curricular and extracurricular programs. Qualified teachers may be better prepared to meet professional demands while focusing on student and program growth and success.

Quality teacher preparation programs. As demonstrated in Phases One and Two of this study, most theater teachers in the selected district of study acquired an undergraduate degree in Theater and later pursued theater education in public schools. Interestingly, two of the five Phase Two participants grew up in the selected district of study, four of the five in the local region, and all five participants grew up in districts where theater was offered in secondary schools and participated in extracurricular theater programs. Several Phase Two participants explained the impact of their participation in their public school theater education programs and teachers in their decision to pursue the role of a theater teacher. The MS1 teacher stated:

> The reason I wanted to become a theater teacher was that my high school teacher, who I loved very much and was my mentor, left and I was stuck with an English teacher teaching theater and it became very textbook. That destroyed not just me, but other kids who needed that experience in a different way. It made me realize there needs to be more people that care about theater and want to teach it. Having an English teacher as your theater teacher can be a lot different compared to having a theater teacher, someone with a certified license. You can also have a theater education degree and not be there for the right reasons. We are there for the kids. It's a hard job. I think that some teachers, and I, didn't know this. I didn't realize how hard this was going to be.

The HS1 teacher remarked:

> I grew up in this district, like many of our theater teachers, and I think you can see the way that our district has supported our education to prime us to be successful. I have been surrounded by these principles and ideas that shaped me to fit well within this structure to shape the next generation of, I don't know, the future of theater teachers in this district.

Many theater teachers hired in the selected district of study, and four of the five in Phase Two of study, were hired on provisional licensure and did not complete a traditional teacher preparation or student teaching experience but, rather, completed licensure requirements while teaching theater full-time.

Several of the teachers who had completed licensure coursework did not feel it adequately prepared them for their roles as public school theater teachers, or that it connected directly to theater content or learning standards. The HS1 teacher, the only Phase Two participant who completed a teacher preparation program prior to hire, explained that throughout their student teaching placements, the supervising teachers did not utilize or emphasize learning standards in their instructional planning or assessment. The HS1 teacher affirmed that district support, particularly of theater learning standards, promotes teacher and program success.

The selected district of study has provided resources and support, including but not limited to theater learning standards and curricular resources, theater-specific professional development events, opportunities for the theater PLC to collaborate and communicate, theater mentors for new teachers, and the position of the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist. These are primarily pedagogical forms of support. These curricular and teacher resources may support limitations that exist for teachers who have a theater degree and licensure but have not participated in a quality teacher preparation program.

Discipline-specific PLCs and professional development. From the perspectives of theater teachers and arts leaders, PLCs of theater educators and theater professional development events are needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. In the selected district of study, there were multiple pathways for theater teachers to collaborate and share resources. The most common method, which provided the greatest opportunity for teacher participation and interaction, was through district-provided theater professional development events organized by the Fine Arts Office, Theater and Dance Educational Specialist.

Theater PLCs and professional development events were also indicators of quality in a district theater education program. The research indicated that the Phase One and Phase Two participants perceived theater PLCs, and particularly collaboration, communication, and sharing with colleagues, as more beneficial to their success than professional development events, although both were important. In contrast, 75% of the Phase Three participants found the theater PLCs to support program and teacher success, but one Phase Three participant believed teacher professional development and training to be the most impactful.

***PLC collaboration and communication*.** Theater teachers are often alone in their discipline at their schools and are not assigned to a teacher or Collaborative Learning Team (CLT), and, if they are, they do not have dialogue or strategies pertinent to theater education. As

discussed, theater education is often an elective course in public schools, with limited representation, and this has resulted in fewer public curricular models and instructional resources. Also, many theater teachers have not completed teacher preparation programs, so they may not possess the training or experience for effective planning, instruction, and extracurricular theater programming. A Phase One participant commented, "[c]ollaboration among colleagues across schools is key. As most schools have only one theater teacher, we don't have the opportunity to collaborate in CLTs the way core subjects do. Opening the doors to allow us to communicate and collaborate with theater teachers across the county is vital."

Theater PLCs also allow teachers to share needed curricula, program resources, and instructional strategies for comprehensive theater content and extensive production responsibilities. At times, theater teachers do not have the opportunity to acquire the training, or lack expertise, in essential areas for extracurricular theater programs. A primary example of this deficiency for many teachers is in technical theater and production. As indicated in Phase One, many theater teachers have earned and come from a theater performance background and have not acquired formal training in technical theater. However, they are responsible for the design and construction of sets, light and sound design and implementation, costumes and makeup, and for training students and parent volunteers in all areas while monitoring safety protocols. In theater organizations, these various roles and responsibilities are usually covered by different individuals, experts who have been trained in those specific areas. Therefore, for teacher and program success, and to ensure student safety during production, theater teachers must be able to share their expertise, resources, and strategies with their colleagues.

Another form of program and teacher support theater PLCs provide in the selected district of study is in the sharing of production items. As many schools select similar performances, the teachers can share costumes, props, set pieces, and equipment, saving much needed time and energy and allowing teachers to focus on the programs and their students. Sharing production items also supports schools that lack program funding or resources, and allows them to provide more equitable student experiences and production outcomes. The MS2 teacher stated, "I think that other school districts greatly suffer from not having the resources that are the other people in our programs and don't have the community we have." A theater PLC may support a district and school theater education programs if theater teachers participate and engage in the PLC process and in professional development events.

Perspective on student learning and programming through PLCs. A theater PLC allows teachers to come together at professional development events to learn and explore district initiatives, guidelines, and protocols for instruction and extracurricular programming. This is necessary for theater education, as many aspects of extracurricular programming require teachers to adhere to district regulations and policies regarding production content, student safety and supervision, facilities, human resources, and finance. These events also provide opportunities for PreK-12 teachers to examine and discuss curricular and program resources, including learning standards, which engage teachers in dialogue that spans across grade levels and school communities. AL1 explained the importance of theater PLCs sharing across grade levels and the impact on teacher success and program growth: "The middle school teachers could do so much if they connected with the high school teacher to which their program would feed. When they figured out they could learn from each other, it really got off the ground." As one of the few elementary school theater teachers, the ES1 teacher shared how the theater PLC supported scaffolded instruction and programming: "The support from other theater teachers is integral to my success. Even as an elementary teacher, the support from the middle schools and high school teachers and collaboration within pyramids or understanding how those standards translate from elementary to middle school to high school is really important for my work." Teacher communication and collaboration across grade levels supports a shared understanding of district goals and enables teacher ownership in the district and school theater education programs. AL4 stated, "[i]f you don't have that kind of cross-pollination between school programs, you don't get the buy-in, and you don't have nearly as strong of a program." Effective collaboration and communication between PreK-12 teachers is essential to professional development to support teacher and program success.

PLCs and theater-specific professional development. All the participant groups confirmed that the theater professional development events supported the success of the district and school theater education programs and were an indicator of quality, although at different levels. The HS1 theater teacher confirmed, "I think the professional development and the training that we receive are really important." In the selected district of study, professional development events often included training from local and national theater organizations and experts on various aspects of theater education, performance, and production. These authentic professional development events provide teachers with training in areas they might not be as

familiar with and offered inspiration and opportunities for teacher learning and artistry, which is something many theater teachers valued. It also provides teachers with current and innovative practices in the field of theater, which may positively impact the curricula and instruction.

Discipline-specific professional development also reiterates the value of theater education programs and teachers at the district level. Theater teachers often participate in school and district training that does not pertain to their content area, often leaving them disenfranchised and disengaged. AL4 explained the importance of theater-specific professional development events, and of teacher appreciation and value: "We worked so hard to wrestle theater away from Language Arts. Those teachers would tell you what it meant to get attention as theater teachers." Teachers who feel valued as professionals and educators are more likely to be retained by the district and demonstrate efficacy, an indicator of quality in school theater education programs.

Effective PLCs often result in greater teacher participation in professional development events, which positively impact student achievement and growth. However, as AL1 mentioned, and as a recurrent theme in the Phase Two interviews, it is challenging to obtain consistent teacher attendance at professional development events as theater teachers often feel overwhelmed by their instructional and program responsibilities, both curricular and extracurricular. Phase Two participants, all of whom consistently engage in the theater PLC and attend professional development events, may exhibit their high levels of success due to this participation.

Teacher leadership opportunities within PLCs. Through teacher leadership and facilitation of professional development events, teacher communities are more likely to buy into and implement district initiatives and create curricular resources to meet the theater learning standards. Utilizing teacher expertise supports program and teacher needs in areas that the district or district specialist does not possess or are unattainable from outside organizations. As AL4 explained:

> It's through the professional development events where the teachers see that it wasn't just you that created the curriculum, it was all their buds, that they really respect that made the curriculum. They see how they are all involved. That was my main objective: to get buy-in to the vision among all teachers at those events. And I knew I couldn't do it by myself. I had to enlist the really greatly respected teachers to achieve that goal.

However, due to district and state competitions, and the visible nature of theater productions in the community, theater teachers often feel that they are compared to and/or in competition with one another. Yet, teachers who may feel isolated from their school colleagues, crave the camaraderie and support theater PLCs provide.

Theater teachers frequently regard themselves as independent-minded rather than uncritical followers of uniform agendas. This may lead theater teachers to be reluctant to conform to district expectations. As the research indicates, many theater teachers have not completed teacher preparation programs, so they revert to their personal theater experiences and struggle to conform to district guidelines. MS2 shared, "…which leads me to the Professional Developments (PDs). Theater people are great and sometimes they're not. I feel like sometimes there's a lot of clicking and posturing and inauthentic connections that happen. So, I never feel totally comfortable being at the professional developments and that affects how much I receive. I never leave a professional development event empty-handed, overwhelmed sometimes, yes."

At times, it is difficult for theater educators to maintain perspective on the fact that the theater program exists within a public school district and must therefore work within institutional structures, and not as a separate theater organization. A risk to this line of thinking is that instructional and extracurricular theater programming will become about the teacher and their preferences rather than the students' education. Effective PLC's combat this challenge.

Due to the smaller numbers in PLCs, theater teachers often know each other, each other's work, and may be influenced by personal relationships and by the opinions of their peers. It is imperative to cultivate a positive climate and culture within a theater PLC to reach shared goals. PLCs must effectively collaborate and communicate as a collective to support the success of all members. Utilizing teacher expertise and encouraging teachers to facilitate professional development provides meaningful learning opportunities, where participants can develop as leaders and share responsibility which may promote greater teacher buy-in.

Discipline-specific leadership. Leadership was a component that all participant groups perceived necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. Leadership specific to theater education is represented in the selected district of study through the position of the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist, and includes district leadership, the school board, and school-based leadership. All areas of leadership are necessary for success and quality in a district and school theater education programs. Indicators of success include theater learning

standards, program funding and resources, equitable access to theater education, and leadership buy-in. Most indicators of success come from the decisions made at the district and school board levels of leadership.

The Phase One and Phase Two teacher participants focused on the importance of discipline-specific leadership such as the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist, while the Phase Three arts leader participants focused on the importance of district leadership and school-based management. The Phase One and Two teacher participants also communicated the importance of feeling valued in the district, which is often demonstrated and felt through resources, including staffing, scheduling, funding, and professional development events, all which are provided and supported by district and school- based leadership. In the selected district of study, the teachers were often only able to witness the decisions made by the leadership through the resources provided by the Fine Arts Office, Theater and Dance Educational Specialist and not the broader district leadership. A reason for this discrepancy may be that teachers are not always aware of the impact and outcomes of district leadership.

Without the support and buy-in of district and school-based leadership, school theater programs and staffing do not have the opportunity to exist. However, theater teachers may not have perceived these to be the result of greater leadership, and this may have been a contributing factor to the variance between the perceptions of the theater teachers and arts leader regarding leadership support and buy-in.

Funding and resources. To cultivate and sustain a district and school theater education programs, there must be support and buy-in from all levels of leadership. Support and buy-in are often demonstrated through program funding for schools and teachers and the resources needed to meet curricular and programming requirements.

The primary resource needed to support a district theater education program is the equitable access to quality theater education and offerings for all schools and students. Equitable access to quality theater education includes appropriate staffing, demonstrated through a qualified and full-time theater teacher. A qualified teacher is often the channel through which students, particularly from disadvantaged communities, may access quality theater instruction and experiences. AL4 explained that a sign of quality is, “the number of highly qualified, certified theater teachers when compared to the total number of students in the middle and high schools.” Another needed resource to ensure equitable access to theater education is theater

learning standards that promote quality learning experiences for all students and teacher accountability. There must also be ample opportunities for students to equitably access curricula across a district to develop and sustain comprehensive programming and expectations. A Phase One theater teacher participant confirmed:

> A district first acknowledges the value of theater education by making it a priority to hire full-time theater teachers across all its schools, and secondly provides the financial and human resources to support those programs and the curricular tools to achieve pre-established and universally accepted arts standards.

Equitable offerings supported by quality staffing will support the growth of district and school theater education programs. AL3 reiterated:

> I think in a district if you're committed to having a robust arts program in every single school, that is in fact where you start to see enrollment. You are going to staff the school, you are setting aside your central budget to staff enough.

Equitable access and opportunities in theater education are also illustrated through program funding and quality resources to meet curricular and program needs. The Phase One and Phase Two participants agreed that the struggle to produce theater productions using only ticket revenue placed an unnecessary burden on the teacher as well as created inequitable opportunities and experience for students in programs that lacked resources or community support. A Phase One participant stated, "I believe that a teacher needs to have the proper tools, resources, and support before they can be successful in any of their classroom endeavors." AL3 reiterated:

> When we talk about equity of access to theater, your school with wealthier parents are always eager to provide all kinds of bells and whistles. So, it's up to the school division to provide those resources and opportunities to make sure that teachers and schools have what they need to produce as well as opportunities for teachers to learn within their professional learning communities.

AL4 confirmed:

> It can't be that some schools have quality resources and some schools don't, or you're not going to have a quality program across the district. Some of my biggest battles were with the county board of supervisors having to do with contractual obligations for quality supplies and equipment for fine arts programs.

To cultivate and sustain theater education programs, district and school leadership must have continued dialogue to establish staffing criteria, develop curricular frameworks and resources, respond to program and teacher needs, and determine practical priorities to create and sustain quality arts programming.

Recruitment and selection of qualified teachers. All the Phase Three participants emphasized the importance of teacher recruitment and selection for the success of a district and school theater education programs, particularly due to the complex nature and responsibilities of theater teachers in both curricular and extracurricular programs. AL3 stated, "[t]he teacher is the most critical component of any learning activity in a school. And certainly, theater teachers are right up there." AL4 confirmed that a district may provide learning standards and curricular resources, but if not in the hands of a capable teacher who has training and effective and authentic pedagogy and curricula, "it might as well serve as a doorstop."

Hiring qualified teachers starts with the recruitment of qualified teachers. All the Phase Three participants emphasized the importance of recruitment and how that was a primary focus as arts leaders to ensure program success. AL3 remarked: "To put effort into recruitment, to get qualified capable teachers in those positions, I think it is such a valuable place to put time and energy." To recruit and select qualified teachers, you often need specialists in that content area to recognize quality training and pedagogy, something that many school-based administrators lack as they do not come from arts backgrounds. This must be a collaborative process between the arts specialist, district, and school-based arts administrators. AL4 explained:

> I retooled the Fine Arts Office to be about seeking out the best-qualified candidates for our fine arts teaching positions, making sure they got interviewed by Human Resources and making sure that our Fine Arts Office staff were trusted by principals and assistant principals when making hiring recommendations. I would be most happy if we had interviewed 10 times the number of teachers that we were able to hire every year. My feeling was, if we hired the top 10th, we are getting highly qualified teachers.

Once recruited and hired, the district must provide the needed resources and support to ensure that the selected candidates are retained. AL3 queried, "[a]re you attracting and hiring good people? Are you hiring credentialed people? Are you attracting and keeping good people?"

School-based administrators. This research has also established that school-based administrators often lack knowledge or experience in theater education. To support program and

teacher success, it is important that school-based administrators understand the benefits and value of theater education and have the tools to support teachers. A Phase One participant communicated, "I believe that if school administrators consistently engage with families and the surrounding community, keeping our program in mind, we will succeed. Too often, theater educators are left to their own devices and just expected to succeed. Administrators do not attend shows, do not offer public support, and then demand success."

Administrative support also includes school counselors who are responsible for counseling, scheduling, and placing students in classes, which greatly impacts the student enrollment needed to sustain school theater education programs and teacher status. A Phase One participant stated, "[i]t is essential that school-based administration, as well as school counselors, see the value of theater education for students. Without necessary school support, it becomes very difficult to recruit and retain students for our classes."

All Phase Three participants emphasized that the lack of experience and knowledge of school-based administrators may have a lasting impact on a district and school theater education programs if they are not able to evaluate unsuccessful teachers appropriately. There are times when a school-based administrator alone is not able to support an unsuccessful teacher to succeed or appropriately evaluate them. As a result, the school program often declines in enrollment, diminishing it from a full-time to a part-time program with part-time staffing. That teacher, still contracted to a full-time position within the district, is often de-staffed and placed at another school with a full-time program and position. At times, the teacher who was unsuccessful in practice will diminish another program and will be de-staffed to yet another full-time program. It is challenging to recruit and hire qualified candidates for part-time positions and it may take several years for a program to build from part-time to full-time status. AL2 said, "[w]e need more leaders and school leaders to take care of problematic teachers because those problems affect quality, our numbers, and successful programs. So, it's very important that we have school leaders for our theater programs."

For a district and school theater education programs to be successful, school-based administrators and counselors must be provided with information and experience to understand the benefits of theater education and the tools to support theater programs, including teacher evaluation. In the selected district of study, much of this support is provided by the Fine Arts Office and through the role of the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist position.

A theater content specialist. A specialist in any content area provides needed expertise and support in teacher training, instructional and program support, teacher support and evaluation, communication with stakeholders, and advocacy. In Phase One of this research, the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist demonstrated the greatest impact of support for teacher and program success (mean: 4.21, std deviation: 1.0), while the district leadership demonstrated the least impact (mean: 2.82, std deviation: 1.07). The researcher believes this may be because teachers do not perceive the resources and support demonstrated through the Fine Arts Office or the position of the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist as support and allocation of resources from broader district leadership. The ES1 teacher described the role of the Theater Specialist: "I see this as a doorway through which to access all the resources that a teacher would need." AL2 confirmed:

> We also need administrative leadership at the district level. It's important to have someone who has program knowledge that can support our teachers and our programs by providing professional development and instruction resources and bringing the teachers together and provide that community of teachers the time to work together and to support them with administrative policies and instructional planning.

The role of the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist is to serve as the conduit between stakeholders for theater education to thrive, and to provide needed advocacy, particularly when programs or teacher positions are threatened by budgetary cuts. The HS2 teachers stated, "[t]his past year with COVID, so many numbers went down. We needed somebody at the central level to advocate for us and say that we are so much more than just numbers." The role of the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist supports the buy-in of theater education programs at all levels and allows teachers to be seen, supported, and valued in their work.

Analysis Across Participant Groups: Research Questions Two and Three

A sub-case for this research, which was necessary to understanding the findings of the primary research question, asked how teachers and arts leaders identify success and quality in a district and school theater education programs in public schools. To cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, there must be successful and quality school programs.

The data and analysis through all the phases of research and across the participant groups found that the four identified components emerged as primary indicators of success and quality, with their characteristics and coding, outlined in the analysis of data below.

Success in a district and school theater education programs. All the participant groups acknowledged that student enrollment was a clear and practical indicator of success in school theater education programs. In the selected district of study, adequate student enrollment, often determined by the school principal, was also needed to ensure a teacher position and/or employment status at that school. All the participant groups acknowledged that while student enrollment is a good baseline indicator of success for school theater education programs, it should not be the only indicator, and should be considered in conjunction with student participation and engagement. The latter often leads to greater parent and community participation and engagement and is also an indicator of the success of the extracurricular theater program through participation, attendance, and student efficacy and enjoyment during the production processes. Student participation and engagement in curricular and extracurricular theater programs may result in increased student enrollment. Similarly, several participants from all phases of research indicated that awards in state or district theater competitions may serve as indicators of success but acknowledged that they do not always correlate to quality. Theater competition and award programs are also powerful tools to obtain community participation and buy-in and provide needed visibility for theater programs, especially when compared to athletic or music programs. However, as awards are often perceived as success by the community or school administrators, it is understandable that teacher and program focus may become product-oriented rather than process-oriented and center around the extracurricular program rather than instruction.

Theater awards and competition can also impact a theater PLC if teachers view colleagues as competitors rather than collaborators. Theater competitions and awards can become indicators of success that detract from quality. It is important not to discredit the value of awards as they often provide theater students with opportunities to participate in robust theater programming, add awards to their resumes and college applications, and provide students with needed skills in the profession of theater when self or production work is not based on getting a part, a packed audience, or a positive review. These programs often contribute to district and community buy-in. However, theater PLCs must work together to increase the visibility and

value of these programs, collaborate on program implementation and strategies to make programs most beneficial for the district and students, and keep the focus on indicators of quality in the artistic process, including student learning, efficacy, and participation and engagement.

The primary indicators of how theater teachers and arts leaders identify success in a district and school theater education programs can be found in Table 19.

Table 19

Research Question Two: Indicators of Success in a District and School Theater Education Programs

Success: District Theater Program	Success: School Theater Programs
Theater learning standards.	Student enrollment.
Equitable access to theater education.	Student participation and engagement.
Program funding and resources.	Community participation and engagement in the extracurricular theater program.
Leadership support and buy-in.	Students meet identified theater learning standards.

Quality in a district and school theater education programs. Arts leader participants indicated that quality was dependent on teachers who understood the content, educational pedagogy specific to those practices, and who utilized theater learning standards to support students to meet the identified learning goals and their own individual social/emotional and academic growth. The majority of Phase Two participants differentiated success and quality as success being student-focused, as determined by student enrollment, participation and engagement, and the ability for students to meet learning standards, and quality in terms of students achieving goals from teacher instruction and practices in doing so.

The last indicator of quality in school theater education programs was student and teacher efficacy. The Phase One and Two teacher participants emphasized that quality is demonstrated in school theater education programs when students take responsibility in their academic and artistic growth, can take ownership in the creative process and produced works, and are able to critique and articulate their personal aesthetics, and see the value of theater education.

The primary indicators of how theater teachers and arts leaders identify quality in a district and school theater education programs can be found in Table 20.

Table 20

Research Question Three: Indicators of Quality in a District and School Theater Education Programs

Quality: District Theater Program	Quality: School Theater Programs
Theater PLCs	Teacher qualifications
Theater professional development events	Effective teacher pedagogy and practices
	Student and teacher efficacy

Summary

In summary, the four identified components that support educational organizations and core content areas include: 1) theater learning standards and curricular resources that impact the delivery of meaningful instruction and student assessment (Bennett, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); 2) qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices (Catterall, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); 3) Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and professional development opportunities specific to theater education (Catterall, 2009); and 4) district leadership, representation, and advocacy specific to theater education and teachers (Project Zero, 2001) are also necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program in public schools from the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders. These components emerged as the primary indicators and characteristics of success and quality in the selected district of study

Success indicators are ideal outcomes for a district and school theater education programs. Quality indicators represent the components and strategies that need to be in place to achieve the ideal outcomes that represent success. However, as demonstrated through the research conducted and similar studies in other elective content areas, success does not always lead to quality, and quality does not always lead to success. It is also important to note that, through the research conducted, indicators of quality often lead to success, but when too much focus and emphasis is placed on indicators of success, they can detract from quality, which may not result in beneficial outcomes for theater education programs, teachers, or students.

Chapter 4 has presented the findings and analysis of this case study. The data collected were presented in the three phases of research, each phase designed for a purposeful participant

group and with a specific data instrument for that group. The data included participant and school demographics as well as findings and analysis in relation to the three research questions. The research participants were assigned codes and the findings were presented in tables, figures, categories, and indicators organized by theme and frequency. Chapter 5 will present study findings, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5

Findings, Implications, and Future Research

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, as well as the indicators of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools. This chapter presents the significant findings and implications based on the research conducted as well as recommendations for further research and the researcher's personal reflections.

This case study was conducted in a selected school district and data was collected through three phases of research which included survey and open-ended interviews. Data instruments were created for each phase of research and for each participant group to answer the research questions that drove this study. These were:

1. What do theater teachers and arts leaders perceive to be the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program?
2. How do theater teachers and arts leaders identify success in:
    a. district theater education programs?
    b. school theater education programs?
3. How do theater teachers and arts leaders identify quality in:
    a. district theater education programs?
    b. school theater education programs?

Findings

After analysis of the data, as presented in Chapter 4, the following findings have been identified. The findings will be presented in response to each research question.

Research Question One

Research Question One sought to identify the necessary components theater teachers and arts leaders perceive to be necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program.

Finding 1: Theater Learning Standards and Curricular Resources are Necessary to Cultivate and Sustain a District Theater Education Program

Across all phases of study, the indicated component of curricula and instruction, specifically the district theater learning standards and curricular resources, were perceived as necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, with an emphasis on theater learning standards.

In Phase One, the district theater learning standards proved to be one of the two most impactful components that supported program and teacher success (mean: 4.17, std deviation: 0.72) as indicated in Table 7 and Figure 1. All Phase Two participants confirmed that the theater learning standards supported success, particularly for newer teachers who may not have completed a teacher preparation program, in areas including but not limited to instructional planning, student assessment, and the articulation of student growth. The MS1 teacher described feeling overwhelmed by the vast content and topics available in theater education and stated that the district standards provided a clear "roadmap" for them to shape their curricula, particularly in their first years in the classroom. All Phase Three participants agreed that the theater learning standards support greater opportunities and equitable access to quality theater education as they hold teachers and students accountable for the same rigor in the breadth of the curricular content. Theater learning standards and equitable access to theater education emerged as indicators of success in district theater education programs while students meeting identified theater learning standards emerged as an indicator for success in school theater education programs as indicated in Table 19.

This finding is supported by academic literature which established that for content areas to flourish in public schools, there must be age-appropriate standards to guide instructional planning and to assess student knowledge and skills (Bennett, 2001; SEADAE, 2019). There must also be ample opportunities for students to equitably access curricula across a district, at various grade levels and schools, to develop and sustain comprehensive programming and expectations (SEDAE, 2019; Project Zero, 2001)

Finding 2: Qualified Teachers are Necessary to Cultivate and Sustain a District Theater Education Program

Qualified theater teachers were a component that all participant groups perceived necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. After comprehensive analysis of the data gathered in all phases of research, qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices may be the most impactful component on the success and quality of a district and school theater education programs.

The data collected demonstrated that 100% of the Phase One and Phase Two participants were certified to teach theater in the selected district of study and met the following district requirements for employment 1) held a bachelor's degree; 2) held a state licensure in theater; and 3) demonstrated subject matter competency (NCLB, 2002). Teacher qualifications may have contributed to the success of the theater education programs in the selected district of study. Phase Two participants all exhibited the highest and consistent student enrollment and implemented robust extracurricular theater programs. The Phase Two participants represented diverse school communities and student populations yet demonstrated similar success in enrollment and student participation and engagement. All the Phase Two participants communicated that they utilized the theater learning standards in curricula, instruction, and assessment. The themes that emerged during the Phase Two research reiterated the importance of effective pedagogy and practices- including but not limited to classroom environment, ensemble relationships, individual growth, process over product, student efficacy, and being a "teacher" first and an artistic director second. All Phase Three participants agreed that qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices may be the most impactful component. AL3 stated that qualified teachers are "the most critical component of any learning activity in a school" and could also be an influential deterrent to the success of a district and school theater education programs. Teacher qualifications and effective teacher pedagogy and practices emerged as indicators for quality in school theater education programs as indicated in Table 19. Equitable access to theater education, program funding and resources, and leadership support and buy-in emerged as indicators for success in a district theater education program which are reflected in the recruitment, hiring, and retention of qualified theater teachers as indicated in Table 19.

Research presented in Chapter 4 found that qualified theater teachers are better prepared with the necessary content knowledge and pedagogy to meet the needs of a diverse theater classroom that consists of heterogeneous learners. A teacher may possess content knowledge or educational pedagogy, but it is the synthesis of the two supported by theater-specific strategies appropriate for public school settings that support program and student success. AL4 described the impact of teacher quality:

> You can take the best curriculum in the world, but if you put it in the hands of a poor teacher, you might as well have made it a doorstop and simply use it to hold the door open and see who shows up. But alternatively, you can have the poorest curriculum in the world, and you put it in the hands of really good teachers, magic happens every time.

Quality teacher preparation programs in theater education are needed to support instruction and assessment based on learning standards and practices that supports all learners to collaborate and created in a safe learning environment which fosters student efficacy through the artistic process.

This finding is supported by academic literature that teachers with a greater knowledge of student learning needs, accommodations, and instructional strategies are more highly rated and effective with students, particularly during learning activities that require creative and higher-order thinking and problem-solving as in theater education (Darling-Hammond, 1999). This expertise may lead to increased student participation, engagement, and efficacy. Additionally, pedagogical knowledge, including an understanding of the curricula, instruction, and student learning, are more impactful on teacher performance than subject-matter knowledge (Ashton & Crocker, 1986; Begle & Geeslin, 1972; Byrne, 1983; Evertson, 1985; Ferguson & Womack, 1993; Guyton & Farokhi, 1987; Monk, 1994). Byrne (1983) suggested that content knowledge provides the basis for teacher effectiveness, but the most relevant knowledge is that which concerns the pedagogical strategies employed in a safe classroom environment.

Finding 3: Discipline- Specific PLCs and Professional Development are Necessary to Cultivate and Sustain a District Theater Education Program

From the perspectives of theater teachers and arts leaders, PLCs of theater educators and theater professional development are needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. In the selected district of study, there were multiple pathways for theater teachers to collaborate and share resources. The most common method, which provided the greatest opportunity for teacher participation and interaction, was through district-provided theater

professional development events organized by the Fine Arts Office, Theater and Dance Educational Specialist.

The research indicated that the Phase One and Phase Two participants perceived theater PLCs, and particularly collaboration, communication, and sharing with colleagues, as more beneficial to their success than professional development events, although both were important. Phase Two participants, all of whom consistently engage in the theater PLC and attend professional development events, may exhibit their high levels of success due to their consistent participation and engagement in these offerings. Additionally, 75% of the Phase Three participants found the theater PLCs to support program and teacher success, but one Phase Three participant believed teacher professional development and trainings to be the most impactful. Theater PLCs and Theater professional development events emerged as indicators for quality in a district theater education program as indicated in Table 19.

Research presented in Chapter 4 found that Theater PLCs provide needed collaboration and communication for theater teachers, who are often the sole teachers in their content area at their schools. The MS2 teacher remarked that districts that have limited theater teachers or professional development events "greatly suffer from not having the resources of other theater teachers." Theater PLCs also provide needed perspective on student learning and programming across a district. Theater PLCs should strive to nurture a positive culture and foster teacher leadership opportunities within the PLC and professional development events.

This finding is supported by academic literature that PLCs are defined as educators who work collaboratively in ongoing collective inquiry and action research to achieve optimal results for the students (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). PLCs are derived and sustained by teachers' continuous and collaborative efforts, which is the fundamental principle of a PLC (DuFour, 2004). Effective cooperation and communication between teachers are essential components of professional development, supporting student achievement, and student and program success (Lieberman 1990; Little, 1982). Effective PLCs often result in greater teacher participation in professional development and collaboration, positively impacting student achievement and growth (Phillips, 2003). In developing effective PLCs in theater education, leadership must consider the social-emotional dynamics of the team members and utilize teacher leaders, expertise, and collaboration to build a collectivist community (Basabe & Ros, 2005, Bennett,

2001; Gibson & Zelmmer- Bruhn, 2001; Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, Palmer, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988; Omasta, 2012).

Finding 4: Discipline-Specific Leadership is Necessary to Cultivate and Sustain a District Theater Education Program

Leadership was a component that all participant groups perceived necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. Leadership specific to theater education is represented in the selected district of study through the Fine Arts Office, Theater and Dance Educational Specialist, and includes but is not limited to district leadership, the school board, and school-based leadership. All areas of leadership are necessary for success and quality in a district and school theater education programs.

The Phase One and Phase Two teacher participants focused on the importance of discipline-specific leadership such as the Theater and Dance Educational Specialist (see Table 8; mean: 4.21, standard deviation (std):1.00, variance 0.52) while the Phase Three arts leader participants focused on the importance of district and school-based leadership. The Phase One participants indicated that the areas that least supported their success and that of the district theater education program were school-based leadership (see Table 9; mean: 3.5, std deviation: 1.02) and district leadership (see Table 10; mean: 2.82, std deviation: 1.07). District leadership was the only area with a mean below 3.00 into the "minimally supports" range.

A reason for this discrepancy may be that teachers are not always aware of the impact and outcomes of district leadership. In the selected district of study, the teachers were often only able to witness the decisions made by the leadership through the resources provided by the Fine Arts Office, Theater and Dance Educational Specialist and not the broader district leadership. As with good technical theater, this behind-the-scenes support operates at its best when not seen or recognized by the audience, in this case the teachers, thus promoting greater teacher efficacy. Without the support and buy-in of district and school-based leadership, school theater programs and staffing do not have the opportunity to exist. Support and buy-in are often demonstrated through program funding for schools and the resources needed to meet quality curricular and programming requirements. However, theater teachers may not have perceived these to be the result of greater leadership, and this may have been a contributing factor to the variance between the perceptions of the theater teachers and arts leader regarding leadership support and buy-in. The Phase One and Two teacher participants also communicated the importance of feeling

valued in the district, which is often demonstrated and felt through program funding and resources, including staffing, scheduling, representation, curricular resources, and professional development events, often provided and supported by district and school- based leadership.

Leadership support and buy-in emerged as an indicator for success in a district theater education program as indicated in Table 19. Theater learning standards, equitable access to theater education, program funding and resources, were also indicators of success in a district theater education program, all made possible through decisions made and demonstrated through district and school leadership. Theater PLCs and professional development events were indicators of quality in a district theater education program. Teacher qualifications and student and teacher efficacy were indicators of quality in school theater educator programs. All quality indicators are characteristics and outcomes of district and school-based leadership as indicated in data collected in all phases of research and presented on Table 19.

Research presented in Chapter 4 found that theater education programs must have the necessary funding and resources to thrive. School administrators must be provided the necessary resources and tools to support theater education programs, particularly in the hiring of theater teachers. The recruitment and selection of qualified teachers support both a district and school theater education programs. AL3 remarked: “To put effort into recruitment, to get qualified capable teachers in those positions, I think it is such a valuable place to put time and energy.” A theater content specialist will provide support in needed areas to cultivate and sustain a district and school theater education programs.

This finding is supported by academic literature that leadership in arts education is often defined and demonstrated by arts policymakers, district leaders, program directors, and school administrators. These decision-makers play an essential role in cultivating and sustaining quality arts education and student learning experiences (Project Zero, 2001; Wan et al., 2018). Eight categories affect decisions regarding arts education and programs: students, programming/offerings, allocations of resources, staffing, program evaluation, program culture, growth and development, and partnerships (Seidel et al., 2009). As with academic programs, there needs to be continued dialogue between arts leaders, school administrators, and teachers to establish hiring criteria, develop curricular frameworks and resources, respond to program and teacher needs, and determine practical priorities to create and sustain quality arts programming (Project Zero, 2001; Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009).

Research Questions Two and Three

Research Questions Two and Three asked teachers and arts leaders to identify and differentiate success and quality in a district and school theater education programs in public schools. To cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, there must be successful and quality school programs.

Finding 5: Success is Indicated in a District Theater Education Program Through: 1) Theater Learning Standards; 2) Equitable Access to Theater Education; 3) Program Funding and Quality Resources; and 4) Leadership Support and Buy-In

Success was indicated in the selected district theater education programs through: 1) theater learning standards; 2) equitable access to theater education through district learning standards and staffing; 3) program funding and resources; and 4) leadership support and buy-in. The primary indicators of how theater teachers and arts leaders identify success in a district theater education program are presented in Table 19.

Success indicators in a district theater education programs are outcomes and characteristics of the identified components 1) theater learning standards and curricula resources that impact the delivery of meaningful instruction and student assessment (Bennett, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); 2) qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices (Catterall, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); and 3) district leadership, representation, and advocacy specific to theater education and teachers (Project Zero, 2001).

Finding 6: Success is Indicated in School Theater Education Programs Through: 1) Student Enrollment; 2) Student Participation and Engagement; 3) Participation and Engagement of the School Community in the Extracurricular Theater Program; and 4) Students Meeting Indicated Learning Standards

Success was indicated in the selected district school theater education programs through: 1) student enrollment; 2) student participation and engagement; 3) participation and engagement of the school community in the extracurricular theater program; and 4) students meeting the indicated learning standards. The primary indicators of how theater teachers and arts leaders identify success in school theater education programs are presented in Table 19.

Success indicators in school theater education programs are outcomes and characteristics of the identified components 1) theater learning standards and curricula resources that impact the delivery of meaningful instruction and student assessment (Bennett, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); and 2) qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices (Catterall, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988).

Finding 7: Quality is Indicated in a District Theater Education Program Through: 1) Discipline-Specific PLCs That Support Teacher Collaboration and Collegiality; and 2) Discipline-Specific Professional Development.

Quality was indicated in the district theater education program through: 1) discipline-specific PLCs that support teacher collaboration and collegiality; and 2) discipline-specific professional development. The primary indicators of how theater teachers and arts leaders identify quality in a district theater education program are presented in Table 20.

Quality indicators in a district theater education program are outcomes and characteristics of the identified components 1) Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and professional development opportunities specific to theater education (Catterall, 2009); and 2) district leadership, representation, and advocacy specific to theater education and teachers (Project Zero, 2001).

Finding 8: Quality is Indicated in School Theater Education Programs Through: 1) Qualified Teachers; 2) Quality Teacher Instructional Practices and Student Assessment; and 3) Teacher and Student Efficacy.

Quality was indicated in the selected school theater education programs through: 1) qualified teachers; 2) quality teacher instructional practices and student assessment; and 3) teacher and student efficiency. The primary indicators of how theater teachers and arts leaders identify quality in school theater education programs are presented in Table 20.

Quality indicators in school theater education programs are outcomes and characteristics of the identified components 1) theater learning standards and curricula resources that impact the delivery of meaningful instruction and student assessment (Bennett, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); 2) qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices (Catterall, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988); and 3) district leadership, representation, and advocacy specific to theater education and teachers (Project Zero, 2001).

Discussion of Findings 5, 6, 7, and 8. Success in a district theater education program aligns with the hypotheses of available research and is demonstrated through district and school leadership that values theater education and provides equitable access for all students to quality theater experiences through district learning standards and provides program funding and resources so teachers and students may reach curricular and program standards. Enrollment is an indicator of success in school theater education programs but both teachers and arts leaders provide the caveat that enrollment should not be the only or primary indicator of success, as it is impacted by many variables beyond the teacher's control. Other indicators of success in school theater education programs are student participation and engagement in instruction, the participation and engagement of students and the school community in extracurricular theater programs, and students meeting the identified learning standards in instruction and theater offerings.

Quality in a district theater education program is demonstrated through leadership that provides discipline-specific professional development and opportunities for a theater PLC to collaborate as a collective community to reach shared goals. Quality in school theater education programs emerges through qualified teachers who demonstrate effective and authentic pedagogy and programming.

Success indicators are ideal outcomes for a district and school theater education programs. Quality indicators represent the components and strategies that need to be in place to achieve the ideal outcomes that represent success. However, success does not always lead to quality, and quality does not always lead to success. It is also important to note that, through the research conducted, indicators of quality often lead to success, but when too much focus and emphasis is placed on indicators of success, they can detract from quality, which may result in unbeneficial outcomes for theater education programs, teachers, or students.

Implications from Findings

After an analysis of the findings, the researcher identified several implications for districts and school leaders to consider in response to the research questions and the data collected. Findings apply to the selected district of study, but implications may be directed to future study that may find similar results.

Implication 1. A school district should employ theater learning standards and curricular resources.

The implications of Finding 1 which pertains to Research Question One and the components of theater learning standards and curricula resources that impact the delivery of meaningful instruction and student assessment (Bennett, 2001; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988) suggest that, if possible, school districts should employ theater learning standards and curricular resources. Learning standards should be sequential and implemented across grade levels and schools to ensure equitable access to quality theater education for all students. Learning standards and curricular resources are necessary for teacher success and accountability, particularly for teachers who may not have completed a teacher preparation program or hold a theater licensure. Learning standards support quality and transparent student assessment, which provides valuable student, teacher, and program data. Theater learning standards developed for, and authentic to, a school district reflects the values of the district community and promote teacher ownership and buy-in. Districts that are not able to create theater learning standards should utilize state theater standards or the National Core Arts Standards and should provide ongoing teacher professional development, led by an experienced theater educator, on instructional planning and assessment with the selected standards. The district should also provide curricular resources that demonstrate the standards in practice and allow teachers autonomy to implement curricula that best supports their community of learners. Lead theater teachers should facilitate professional development events on district resources to promote teacher buy-in and shared ownership.

Implication 2. A school district should employ qualified theater teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices.

The implications of Finding 2 which pertains to Research Question One and the component of qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices (Catterall, 2009; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988), suggest that, if possible, a district should employ qualified theater teachers to cultivate and support a district and school theater education programs. Qualified teachers may be better prepared with pedagogy and practices specific to theater education that maintain a “student” and “teacher first” focus. Effective pedagogy and practices may lead to greater student and community participation and engagement, which may

result in higher student enrollment. Therefore, to cultivate a district and school theater education programs, a priority must be placed on the recruitment and selection of qualified theater teachers. If possible, a district should provide clear theater learning standards and curricular resources, as well as ongoing professional development to support teachers, particularly those who may not have completed a teacher preparation program. There is a need to expand opportunities for quality teacher preparation programs in theater education led by experienced and successful theater educators who have worked in public schools. A way to increase teacher preparation programs in theater education is through demand, which means that there must be available teacher positions and students must have access to theater education programs and courses in public schools so that, like the Phase Two participants, other educators and students can also realize there are opportunities to become public school theater teachers.

Implication 3. A school district should employ discipline- specific professional development and ongoing opportunities for theater teachers to collaborate as a PLC.

The implications of Finding 3 which pertains to Research Question One and the component of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and professional development opportunities specific to theater education (Catterall, 2009) suggests that, if possible, a district should employ professional development and ongoing opportunities for theater teachers to collaborate, communicate, and share curricular resources. Selected teachers should support the development of district learning standards and resources and support the facilitation and sharing of created resources to support teacher buy-in and shared ownership in district programs. Discipline-specific professional development should be provided by the district, theater organizations, or lead teachers to support and innovate teacher practices. Thoughtful strategies that cultivate a positive PLC culture and climate and demonstrate the characteristics of the collectivist model will support the success and quality of both a district and school theater education programs.

Implication 4. District and school leaders should have continued dialogue to establish shared priorities for theatre education programs to succeed.

The implications of Finding 4 which pertains to Research Question One and the component of district leadership, representation, and advocacy specific to theater education and teachers (Project Zero, 2001), suggest that district and school leaders must have continued

dialogue to establish hiring and staffing criteria, respond to program and teacher needs, develop quality curricular frameworks, and determine practical priorities for district and school programs to succeed. This alignment is demonstrated through equitable access to quality PreK-12 theater education at all schools and for all students. Equitable access is better ensured through appropriate and quality staffing and through theater learning standards and curricular resources. Schools and teachers should also receive program funding and quality resources to meet the identified curricular and program standards. School administrators and staff should be provided with the resources and tools to evaluate teachers based on student and program outcomes. If possible, a district should employ a content specialist to support program implementation and mitigate limitations that may exist due to inadequate teacher preparation, lack of administrative discipline-specific knowledge, and to provide needed advocacy to support and sustain a district and school theater education programs. If not possible, a district should designate lead theater teachers to work with district leadership on curricula development, professional development, and program supports.

Implication 5. District and school leaders should promote equitable access to theater education through theater offerings, resources, and funding.

The implications of Findings 5 and 6, which pertain to Research Question Two, suggest that to cultivate successful district and school theater education programs, district leaders and school leaders must align on the benefit and value of theater education in a student's public schools experience. District and school leaders should provide equitable access for all students to theater experiences through school offerings, theater learning standards, and program funding and resources so that teachers and students may meet curricular and program standards. Enrollment is an indicator of success in district and school theater education programs but should not be the only indicator, as it is impacted by variables beyond the teacher's control.

Implication 6. District and school leaders should prioritize the recruitment and retention of qualified theatre teachers.

The implications of Findings 7 and 8, which pertain to Research Question Three, suggest that to cultivate a quality district and school theater education programs, district leaders should provide ongoing theater professional development events and opportunities for theater teachers to collaborate and communicate as a theater PLC to reach shared goals. For program success, it

is imperative to have dedicated effort and attention to the recruitment, hiring, and retention of qualified theater teachers that demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices referenced in Implication 2. The lack of proper selection and support of effective theater teachers may be the most beneficial or detrimental component to the success and quality of a district and school theater education programs in public schools.

Implication 7. District and school leaders should seek a balance between the indicators of success and the indicators of quality.

The implications of Findings 5, 6, 7, and 8 which pertains to Research Questions Two and Three, suggest that indicators of success do not always lead to quality and indicators of quality does not always lead to success. District and school leaders should seek a balance between the indicators of success and the indicators of quality. As when too much focus and emphasis is placed on success, it may detract from quality, and this does not result in beneficial outcomes for theater education programs, teachers, or students.

Recommendations for Future Research

This case study focused on a selected district of study and was guided by three research questions related to the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders regarding the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program, and the indicators of success and quality of theater education in public schools. The study was conducted in a school district that demonstrated the components hypothesized by the researcher which also reflect characteristics that support educational organizations and core content areas. The district possessed full-time theater programs in all its traditional middle and high schools and extracurricular theater programs in most of the elementary schools. The district resides in a metropolitan area that possesses a strong professional arts community and that holds the arts and arts education in high regard. Therefore, the findings from this study are not readily transferrable to other school districts. Future researchers may build upon this study to explore areas beyond the presented research questions or to expand the research sample to include districts of various demographics, locations, and arts education programs and offerings. The components, themes, and indicators that emerged from this study, as well as the data not directly related to the research questions, may be viable and valuable topics of further study. Some recommendations

of future research, all of which the researcher would be interested to collaborate with or support, may include:

1. An in-depth study of each of the hypothesized components which may be necessary to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program.
2. An in-depth study of suggested indicators of success and quality in district and school theater education programs, strategies that lead to success and quality, and further opportunities for differentiation of success and quality in theater education.
3. A study of education and arts leaders from diverse districts across the United States, and possibly abroad, to achieve greater perspective and data on the presented research questions.
4. A study that employs selected or all components to test hypotheses and document results.
5. A study of elementary theater education programs and offerings.
6. A study of teacher preparation programs in theater education.

Summary

Chapter 5 has presented and provided further discussion of the research findings, implications, and recommendations for future research. In conclusion, through the perceptions of theater teachers and arts leaders, the four components needed to cultivate a district theater education program are: 1) theater learning standards and curricular resources that impact the delivery of meaningful instruction and student assessment (Bennett, 2001; NEA, 1988); 2) qualified teachers who demonstrate effective pedagogy and practices (Catterall, 2009; NEA, 1988); 3) Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and professional development opportunities specific to theater education (Catterall, 2009); and 4) district leadership, representation, and advocacy specific to theater education and teachers (Project Zero, 2001). These components also emerged as the primary indicators and characteristics of success and quality in the selected district and school theater education programs. The research conducted suggests that indicators of success are positive and visible outcomes, while indicators of quality are components and strategies that are needed to achieve success. However, success is not always correlated to quality, and quality does not always ensure success. When too much value and focus is placed on success indicators alone, quality may be inhibited.

Personal Reflections

The researcher believes that this research is necessary and may support greater opportunities for equitable access for all students to quality theater education in their public school experience. In hindsight, although this study was well intentioned, its breadth may have been too broad for a comprehensive study. Also, the study was conducted over the 2019-20SY, 2020-21SY, and 2021-22SY, with the implementation of the survey and interviews during the 2021-22SY. These years were all impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which included a year of distance learning which affected program offerings, instructional delivery, student and community participation and engagement, and student enrollment. Due to general teacher fatigue and burnout, this may have led to lower participation in Phase One, along with non-characteristic perceptions, attitudes, and feedback from the teachers and arts leaders.

This study was predominantly positive and affirming for the researcher, as several research participants agreed that the research was needed and overdue. Several participants also confirmed that the stated challenges presented a "chicken or the egg" paradox. The participants also communicated that theater education will never be an equitable offering until there are elementary school curricular expectations and offerings available, as in music and the visual arts.

On the wall of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, a national monument dedicated for arts for all people, there is a quote made by President Kennedy in 1962 that reads,

> I look forward to an America which will reward achievement in business or stagecraft. I look forward to an America which will steadily raise the standards of artistic accomplishment and which sill steadily enlarge cultural opportunities for all citizens. And I look forward to an America which commands respect throughout the world not only for its strength but for its civilization as well.

In these times of isolation and social discourse, theater education is needed now more than ever to demonstrate universal connections despite adversity, to promote community and communication through collaboration, to create artistic works, and to illustrate the human experience through live storytelling. And these opportunities must not be for some students and school communities, but for **all**. For theater education to take its place among the fellow arts and core content areas, it is imperative for the community of theater educators to unify and mobilize to advance theater education in public schools. Theater educators must continue to put competition aside and work together for collective success. Only as a community can we bring

this dream to fruition and support the theater makers and educators of tomorrow. As seen on the stage and in production, when theater people bring together their individual strengths, skills, and talents to work toward a common goal, anything is possible.

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Appendix A

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University IRB Approval

Division of Scholarly Integrity and Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp

MEMORANDUM

TO:	Tara Hammond Taylor, M. David Alexander, Carol S Cash
FROM:	Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572)
PROTOCOL TITLE:	Cultivating and Sustaining Theater Education Programs in Public Schools: Teachers, Curricula, Community, and Leadership
IRB NUMBER:	**21-421**

Effective July 21, 2021, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category (ies) 2(i),2(ii).

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit an amendment to the HRPP for a determination.

This exempt determination does not apply to any collaborating institution(s). The Virginia Tech HRPP and IRB cannot provide an exemption that overrides the jurisdiction of a local IRB or other institutional mechanism for determining exemptions.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at: https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/responsibilities.htm (Please review responsibilities before beginning your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.104(d) category(ies) 2(i),2(ii)**

Protocol Determination Date: **July 21, 2021**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

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

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

*Please note: The HRPP office has stopped stamping documents for Exempt protocols. It is your responsibility to maintain these documents and make current versions available on request.

Appendix B

Selected District of Study IRB Approval

THIS LETTER IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESEARCHER RESPONSIBILITIES

Dear Ms. Taylor,

This letter represents the final phase of your application to conduct a study titled *Cultivating and Sustaining Theater Education Programs in Public Schools: Teachers, Curricula, Community, and Leadership.* The Research Screening Committee has reviewed and approved, with conditions, your application to conduct the study. The conditions of approval for this study are described in the attached Acknowledgement of Researcher Responsibilities, which you have signed. The Division places great trust in you to maintain the highest standards for research, to uphold all the researcher responsibilities you agreed to in the attached Acknowledgement, and to seek counsel from your sponsor if your commitments are ever in jeopardy. The assistant superintendent of Instructional Services has agreed to be your sponsor.

You are authorized to begin data collection upon receipt of this letter. You should be prepared to share this approval letter and your signed Acknowledgement of Researcher Responsibilities with schools and/or participants, **if** requested.

We look forward to receiving the study results, which are expected to benefit the system by providing information about theater teachers' and arts leaders' perceptions of the components necessary to cultivate and sustain a theater program and their perceptions of success and quality of the program.

Sincerely,

XXX

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate, Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey

Dear [insert name],

Based on your role as a teacher and experiences in **XXX**, you have been selected as a potential participant in a study I am conducting regarding theater education in PreK-12 public schools. I am exploring the components necessary to cultivate and sustain theater education programs at the district and school level, as well as teachers' and arts leaders' perceptions of success and quality in theater education. Due to the nature of and the number of theater programs and teachers in our district, you hold valuable perspectives about both district and school theater education programs that other teachers' might not have. I hope you will consider participating so we may utilize the unique circumstances we possess in **XXX** to contribute to needed research in theater education in order to advocate for and provide more equitable access to theater education for all students in their PreK-12 public schools experience.

This study will result in a published dissertation through Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Your identity, and the identity of the school district, will remain private. Participation is voluntary; and you may leave the study at any time, for any reason.

If you choose to move forward with participation, you will read and acknowledge the digital informed consent included in the digital survey which is implemented through the web-based program, Qualtrics. Once completed, the consent form will automatically link to the survey which will take you approximately 20- 30 minutes to complete. The survey explores teacher education, licensure, and perceptions on the components necessary to cultivate a district and school theater education programs as well as indicators of success and quality in district and school theater education programs in public schools. At the end of the survey, there are several open-ended questions where participants may provide clarification or additions to survey responses. Upon receipt, participants will have seven days to complete the survey with a submission deadline of _____.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions about this study. I appreciate your consideration and hope to incorporate your expertise and knowledge into research findings.

Warm regards,

Tara Taylor
She/Her/Hers
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Appendix D

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Research Study: 21-421 Cultivating and Sustaining Theater Education Programs in Public Schools: Teachers, Curricula, Community, and Leadership

- **Principal Investigator:** M. David Alexander, MDavid@vt.edu

Other study contact(s):

- Tara Taylor, Tarat77@vt.edu,
- Carol Cash, CCash48@vt.edu

Key Information: The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether to be a part of this study. More detailed information is listed later in this form.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research study?

We invite you to take part in a research study because you are PreK-12 Theater teacher or an arts leader in the selected district of study

What should I know about being in a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this case study is to identify theater teachers' and arts leaders' perceptions of the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a theater education program at the district and school level, as well as their perceptions of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools.

How long will the research last and what will I need to do?

There are three phases of this study: 1) Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey, 2) Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interviews, and 3) Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interviews. Each phase involves different participant groups and/or different responsibilities.

- Phase One: District PreK-12 theater teachers will be asked to complete a short digital survey that will take approximately 20-30 minutes.
- Phase Two: Selected PreK-12 theater teachers will be asked to take part in an open-ended interview conducted over a Zoom conference session that will take approximately 75 minutes. Participants will have the opportunity to review and revise interview transcripts to ensure feedback and narratives are represented in the most accurate manner.
- Phase Three: Selected arts leaders will be asked to take part in an open- ended interview conducted over a Zoom conference session that will take approximately 75 minutes. Participants will have the opportunity to review and revise interview transcripts to ensure feedback and narratives are represented in the most accurate manner.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

There are no benefits to you from taking part in this research. We cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to others include a better understanding of the components necessary to cultivate and support a district and school theater education programs as well as how quality and success are identified in district and school theater education programs. This shared research may support the growth of theater education programs and promote more equitable access to theater education for all students in their PreK-12 public school education.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

Taking part in research is completely up to you. You can decide to participate or not to participate. The decision whether to participate or not will have no effect on opportunities, performance evaluation, or relationship with the selected district or Virginia Tech.

Signature Block for Capable Adult

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research. We will provide you with a signed copy of this form for your records.

Signature of subject	Date
Printed name of subject	
Signature of person obtaining consent	Date
Printed name of person obtaining consent	

Appendix E

Invitation to Participate, Phase Two: Theater Teacher Interview

Dear [insert name],

Based on your role as a theater teacher and experiences in **XXX**, you have been selected as a potential *Phase Two* participant in a study I am conducting regarding theater education in PreK-12 public schools. I am exploring the components necessary to cultivate and sustain theater education programs at the district level, as well as teachers' and arts leaders' perceptions of success and quality of theater education programs in public schools. Due to the nature of and the number of theater programs and teachers in our district, you hold valuable perspectives about both district and school theater programs that other teachers' may not have. I hope you will consider participating so we may utilize the unique circumstances we possess in **XXX** to contribute to needed research in theater education in order to advocate for and provide more equitable access to theater education for all students in their PreK-12 public schools experience.

After review and evaluation of district and grade level course enrollment data, you have been identified as a district theater teacher who has been employed at your school from 2019-20 through 2020-21SY and maintained higher than average district enrollment during that time. I am interested in gathering feedback through an open-ended interview on your instructional planning, practices, as well as your perceptions of the components necessary to cultivate and sustain theater education programs at the district and school level, as well as your perceptions of indicators of success and quality in theater education in public schools.

This study will result in a published dissertation through Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Your identity, and the identity of the school district, will remain private. Participation is voluntary; and you may leave the study at any time, for any reason.

Please review the timeline and responsibilities below before agreeing to participate in *Phase Two* of the study. Participation is voluntary; you may leave the study at any time, for any reason.

1) We will schedule one Zoom conference session at a mutually agreed upon time.

2) We will begin with an introductory 10-minute conversation to review the study and the informed consent form. You will then participate in a 60-minute Zoom conference open- ended interview session. The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes and to ensure accuracy. Following your interview, you will have the opportunity to participate in member checking where you may review interview transcripts to revise, clarify, or add as needed to ensure your perceptions are accurately rendered. Each member checking session should be completed within three days, with additional time granted if needed.

If you are interested in participating in *Phase Two* of this study, please respond to this email within seven days at tarat77@vt.edu and include the following information:

1. Three potential times that you are available for one 75-minute meeting via Zoom conference during the weeks of _____.
2. The best email to send the Zoom conference invitation and a phone contact.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions about this study. I appreciate your consideration and hope to incorporate your expertise and knowledge into research findings.

Warm regards,

Tara Taylor
She/Her/Hers
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Appendix F

Invitation to Participate, Phase Three: Arts Leader Interview

Dear [insert name],

Based on your professional role and relationship with **XXX** as well as your knowledge of the district's theater education programs, you have been selected as a potential *Phase Three* participant in a study I am conducting regarding theater education in PreK-12 public schools. I am exploring the components necessary to cultivate and sustain theater education programs at the district level, as well as teachers' and arts leaders' perceptions of success and quality of theater education programs in public schools. Due to the nature of and the number of theater programs and teachers in our district, you hold valuable perspectives about both district and school theater programs that other teachers' may not have. I hope you will consider participating so we may utilize the unique circumstances we possess in **XXX** to contribute to needed research in theater education in order to advocate for and provide more equitable access to theater education for all students in their PreK-12 public schools experience

This study will result in a published dissertation through Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Your identity, and the identity of the school district, will remain private. Participation is voluntary; and you may leave the study at any time, for any reason.

Please review the timeline and responsibilities below before agreeing to participate in *Phase Three* of the study. Participation is voluntary; you may leave the study at any time, for any reason.

1) We will schedule one Zoom conference session at a mutually agreed upon time.
2) We will begin with an introductory 10-minute conversation to review the study and the informed consent form. You will then participate in a 60-minute Zoom conference open- ended interview session. The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes and to ensure accuracy. Following your interview, you will have the opportunity to participate in member checking where you may review interview transcripts to revise, clarify, or add as needed to ensure your perceptions are

accurately rendered. Each member checking session should be completed within three days, with additional time granted if needed.

If you are interested in participating in *Phase Three* of this study, please respond to this email within seven days at tarat77@vt.edu and include the following information:

1. Three potential times that you are available for one 75-minute meeting via Zoom conference during the weeks of _____.
2. The best email to send the Zoom conference invitation and a phone contact.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions about this study. I appreciate your consideration and hope to incorporate your expertise and knowledge into research findings.

Warm regards,

Tara Taylor
She/Her/Hers
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Appendix G

Phase One: District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey

District PreK-12 Theater Teacher Survey

A Case Study of Theater Education in Public Schools

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore theater teachers' and arts leaders' perceptions of the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a theater education program at the district and school level, as well as their perceptions of success and quality in theater education programs in public schools.

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this qualitative case study focused on components which cultivate and support a district theater education program in public schools. This survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. The questions are foundational to the study. Your answers will assist in Phase Two and Phase Three of the study as well as determine research findings. Please be as accurate and concise in your responses as possible. This study is seeking your perspective and feedback based on your own experiences as a theater teacher in this school district. Your identity and responses will remain confidential.

1. Teacher grade level (select one)
    - ○ Elementary School
    - ○ Middle School
    - ○ High School

2. Undergraduate degree type (Select one)
    - ○ Bachelor of Arts (BA)
    - ○ Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA)
    - ○ Bachelor of Science (BS)
    - ○ Other
    - ○ If other, please type degree type here

3. Major area of study (Select one)
    - ○ Education
    - ○ Theater Education
    - ○ Theater Performance
    - ○ Technical Theater
    - ○ Other Theater Types (Arts Administration, Directing, Playwriting, Etc.)
    - ○ Other Education Types (English, Music, Etc.)
    - ○ Other
    - ○ If other, please type major area of study here

4. Teacher licensure (Select all that apply)
    - ○ My teacher licensure is in theater education (example: PreK-12 Theater)
    - ○ My primary teacher licensure is in another content area, but I am also endorsed to teach theater
    - ○ My primary teacher licensure is in another content area, and I am not endorsed to teach theater
    - ○ I am currently on a provisional teacher licensure
    - ○ I do not yet hold any teacher licensure

5. Master's degree type (Select one)
    - ○ I do not yet have a Master's degree
    - ○ I am currently completing a master's degree
    - ○ Master of Education (M.Ed.)
    - ○ Master of Arts in Education (M.A.Ed.)
    - ○ Master of Science in Education (M.S. Ed)
    - ○ Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)
    - ○ Master of Arts (MA)
    - ○ Master of Fine Arts (MFA)
    - ○ Other
    - ○ If other, please type degree type here

6. Master's degree area of study (Select one)
    - ○ I do not have a Master's degree
    - ○ Education
    - ○ Theater Education
    - ○ Theater Performance or other theater types (Arts Administration, Directing, Playwriting, etc.)
    - ○ Technical Theater
    - ○ Educational Leadership or Administration
    - ○ Other
    - ○ If other, please type major area of study here

7. Did you pursue theater performance or technical theater professionally prior to becoming a theater educator?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Other
- ○ If other, please provide more information here

8. Number of years teaching theater in public schools (Select one)

- ○ 0-3 years
- ○ 3-5 years
- ○ 6-9 years
- ○ 10- 14 years
- ○ 15- 20 years
- ○ 21+ years

9. Number of years teaching theater in this school district (Select one)

- ○ 0-3 years
- ○ 3-5 years
- ○ 6-9 years
- ○ 10- 14 years
- ○ 15- 20 years
- ○ 21+ years

10. Total number of districts in which you have been a theater teacher (Select one)

- ○ 1 district, this district only
- ○ 2 districts
- ○ 3 districts
- ○ 4 districts
- ○ 5+ districts

11. Total number of schools in which you have been a theater teacher (Select one)

- ○ 1, the school I am currently assigned
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 or more

12. Grade levels in which you have taught theater in public schools (Select all that apply)

- ○ (ES) PreK-5/6
- ○ (MS) 6/7-8
- ○ (HS) 9-12

The following questions revolve around curricular planning and instruction, our Theater Professional Learning Community (PLC), professional development, and leadership. Using the Likert Scale response system, please rate how much each indicated area has supported your success in curricular planning, instructional delivery, and theater programming.

Curricula and Instruction

13. How much does the district Program of Studies (theater learning standards) support your curricular planning and instructional delivery?

- o Not at all
- o Minimally
- o Somewhat
- o Supports
- o Very much

14. How much do district curricular resources support your curricular planning and instructional delivery?

**Examples include Planning and Pacing Guides, Hybrid Planning and Pacing Guides, Technical Theater Documents and Assessments, Platforms for shared resources, etc.*

- o Not at all
- o Minimally
- o Somewhat
- o Supports
- o Very much

District Professional Learning Community (PLC)

15. How much do our district theater teacher Professional Learning Community and collaborations support your instructional planning, delivery, and programming?

- o Not at all
- o Minimally
- o Somewhat
- o Supports
- o Very much

16. How much do/did your Theater mentor or grade level theater colleagues support the success of your curricular planning, instructional delivery, and theater programming?

- o Not at all
- o Minimally
- o Somewhat
- o Supports
- o Very much

17. How much do district-provided professional development opportunities support the success of your curricular planning, instructional delivery, and extracurricular theater programming?

**Examples include In-Services, Level Department Chair Meetings, PDs provided by Professional Theaters arranged by the Fine Arts Office.*

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Minimally
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Supports
- ○ Very much

School and District Theater Leadership

18. How much does your school-based leadership support the success of your curricular planning, instructional delivery, and extracurricular theater programming?

**Examples include: Principal, Assistant Principal, Supervising Fine Arts School Administrators.*

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Minimally
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Supports
- ○ Very much

19. How much does the Fine Arts Office (Theater and Dance Educational Specialist) leadership support the success of your curricular planning, instructional delivery, and extracurricular theater programming?

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Minimally
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Supports
- ○ Very much

20. How much does district leadership support the success of your curricular planning, instructional delivery, and extracurricular theater programming?

**Examples include Superintendent, School Board, Executive Principal or Regional School Leader*

- ○ Not at all
- ○ Minimally
- ○ Somewhat
- ○ Supports
- ○ Very much

21. What do you perceive to be the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program?

22. How do you identify success and quality in ***district*** *theater* education programs?

23. How do you identify success and quality in ***school*** theater education programs?

24. Optional: Please provide any or all additional clarification or information you would like to offer to the researcher regarding provided answers or for additional consideration.

25. Optional: Please provide any thoughts or feedback you would like to offer to the researcher regarding the purpose of the research study.

Appendix H

Phase Two: Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interview Documentation

Theater Teacher Open-Ended Interview Documentation

A Case Study of Theater Education in Public Schools

Selected teacher first and last name:

Teacher school:

Grade level:

Program Enrollment:

School Profile:

---

1. How well did your teacher preparation program prepare you to be a theater teacher in public schools?
2. Explain how you plan for instruction and student assessment in your theater courses.
    - *Follow up question: Do you use the district learning standards or provided district curricular resources in your planning or assessment?*
3. How do you identify success in theater instruction, courses, and general theater programming?
    - *Follow up question: What are your measurements of success in theater instruction, courses, and general theater programming?*
4. How do you identify quality in theater instruction, courses, and general theater programming?
    - *Follow up question: Are success and quality different?*
    - *Follow up question: If so, what are your measurements of quality in theater instruction, courses, and general theater programming?*
5. Approximately how many students participate in the extracurricular theater program?
6. How many students who participate in the extracurricular theater program are enrolled in theater courses?
    - *Why do some students only participate in the extracurricular theater program?*
7. Explain how you plan for extracurricular theater programming.

8. What activities or events do you offer in your extracurricular theater program?
9. How do you identify success in extracurricular theater programming?
    - *Follow-up question: What are your measurements of success in extracurricular theater programming?*
10. How do you identify quality in extracurricular theater programming?
    - *Follow-up question: Are success and quality different?*
    - *Follow-up question: If so, what are your measurements of quality in extracurricular theater programming?*
11. In the Phase One Survey, you were able to offer your perceptions of necessary components needed to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program. Is there anything you would like to add to expand on that answer?
12. Optional: Please provide any or all additional clarification or information you would like to offer to the researcher regarding provided answers or for additional consideration.
13. Optional: Please provide any thoughts or feedback you would like to offer to the researcher regarding the stated purpose of the research study.

Observations and Field Notes:

Appendix I

Phase Three: Arts Leader Open-Ended Interview Documentation

Open-Ended Arts Leader Interview Documentation

A Case Study of Theater Education in Public Schools

Arts leader first and last name:

Organization (if applicable):

Role within the current organization (if applicable):

Relationship to the school district:

---

1. Provide a brief overview of your education, background, and professional roles you have held in the theater, theater education, arts education, or education.
2. Describe your relationship to the school district and their theater education programs.
3. How would you describe the district theater education programs?
4. How do you identify success in a public schools theater education program?
    - *Follow-up question: What are your measurements of the success of a school theater education program?*
5. How do you identify quality in a public schools theater education program?
    - *Follow-up question: Are success and quality different?*
    - *Follow-up question: What are your measurements of the quality of school theater education programs?*
6. How do you identify success in a district theater education program?
    - *Follow-up question: What are your measurements of the success of a district theater education program?*
7. How do you identify quality in a district theater education program?
    - *Follow-up question: Are success and quality different?*
    - *Follow-up question: What are your measurements of the quality of district theater education programs?*

8. How important is it to have highly qualified theater teachers in public schools?
9. How important is it that learning standards and curricular resources are provided to public school theater teachers?
10. How important are theater-specific professional learning communities for public school theater teachers?
11. How important are theater-specific teacher professional development opportunities for public school theater teachers?
12. How important is administrative leadership for public school theater programs and teachers?
13. What do you perceive to be the necessary components to cultivate and sustain a district theater education program?
14. Optional: Please provide any or all additional clarification or information you would like to offer to the researcher regarding provided answers or for additional consideration.
15. Optional: Please provide any thoughts or feedback you would like to offer to the researcher regarding the stated purpose of the research study.

Observations and Field Notes:

Appendix J

Phase Two and Three: Member Check Invitation Email

Hello,

Thanks again for participating in the research study, *Cultivating and Sustaining Theater Education Programs in Public Schools*. I enjoyed our time together and learning from you through our conversation.

As discussed, you are now able to participate in "member checking" where you can ensure that your perspective and thoughts are represented in a way that makes you feel most comfortable. As a reminder, district and participant information (including name and school) will be kept anonymous and not be identified in publication. It is up to you if you choose to share this information or your participation with others.

Click here to access your interview transcript.

This is a shared google document which you have editing rights. The form has been changed to "suggesting" or "track changes" mode. (This can be done in the upper right-hand corner, by clicking on editing and changing to suggesting- the document should already be in suggesting mode).

Please feel free to review the document and revise to best reflect your perspective and thoughts. If needed, the original interview questions are attached. You are encouraged and welcome to revise the transcript, but it is not necessary if you feel it adequately represents your views.

Please complete any revisions by _____. Following that time, you will no longer have access to the transcript. Should you need more time to make revisions, please don't hesitate to reach out and an accommodation will be granted.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about this information. Again, thank you for contributing to this research.

Warm regards,

Tara Taylor
She/Her/Hers
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University