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# Designing Professional Development for Elementary School Teachers

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Simon Quattlebaum

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2015

Abstract

Designing Professional Development Programs for Elementary School Teachers

by

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MA, College of St. Rose, 1997

BS, Upsala College, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Within a Northeast urban school, there is little empirical evidence to indicate the effectiveness of the district professional development (PD) program. Elementary teachers at the study site reported that they encountered problems accessing professional development programs applicable to their needs. The purpose of this case study was to examine teacher perceptions of district PD programs and to discover teacher perceptions of PD best practices. Guided by Knowles' adult learning theory, a conceptual framework was used to explore teacher perceptions of preferred PD programs. The research questions assessed teachers' perceptions of the format, content, and process of professional development programs and examined how teachers applied new knowledge, concepts, and skills offered in professional development training. A case study design was used to gather data from a critical case sample of 6 elementary teachers. The criteria for voluntary participation in the study required teachers to be participating in PD training or to have participated in PD within the past 3 years. Data were generated from focus group interviews. Emergent themes were identified from the data, and the data were triangulated across the individual interview responses. Findings were developed and validated with member checking. The findings indicated that teachers want to be involved in planning relevant PD, request greater time allocated to collaborative activities, and desire more grade level customized programming. Implications for positive social change include improved district professional development opportunities that align with best teaching practices for effective student instruction and increased student achievement.

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Dedication

This doctoral research study is dedicated to my late parents, Samuel and Carrie, who in their own way, encouraged me to forge ahead in spite of, and despite, the challenges that were ahead of me. This study is also dedicated to my big sisters and brothers, my spiritual family, close friends, and associates.  Each of you encouraged me to continue my quest to be the first doctor in the family and lovingly pushed me when I felt the need to quit.  Your dreams for me have become a reality, and I am forever appreciative of each of you.

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Thank you my big brothers and sisters--especially those who have passed on to the other side--for your nurturing, tough love, and always believing in me.

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I am especially thankful for the participants in this study. Former Principal, and school Superintendent for allowing me the opportunity to complete the final portion of this journey by opening the school district to my inquiry. I did not expect to get the level of information they so graciously shared.  I am forever grateful.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Professional development is not a one size fits all for teachers in the field of education. While concern for teacher learning is fundamental, teachers possess specific learning needs that are unique in their field of study (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Teacher learning preferences, for example, must be embedded within professional development programs and included within in-service events. Equally, teacher training activities, for whatever reason, must be aligned with state and district curriculum requirements (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Teachers are a diverse population who participate in countless in-service programs in large groups (Darling-Hammond, 1998). To improve instructional effectiveness and increase student academic achievement, professional development programs are designed to prepare teachers to meet the learning needs of students (Lampert, 2010). If teachers have appropriate professional development training available to them, they could incorporate new practices and innovative ideas to improve student achievement. Professional development, in turn, could result in positive advancements for both students and schools. However, professional development initiatives and in-service programs often lack permanence and adequate development (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009).

Cohen (2010) explained that professional development programs rarely are evaluated, due, at times, to limited resources. Without the proper resources, it is difficult to evaluate in-service programs and the impact the programs have on student achievement. As participants in professional development programs, teachers appear to

be the focus in evaluation efforts as opposed to enhanced instructional practices as the target in professional development programs (Guskey, 2000). Moreover, Guskey (2000) called attention to the fact that program components in professional development initiatives describe evaluations insufficiently and do not determine whether program goals were completed successfully. Guskey further posited that data resulting from professional development evaluations reveal very little regarding the impact of the program on teacher learning and knowledge. Guskey found that most of the data collected from professional development initiatives measured the extent of the professional development program and reported the number of participants who completed the scheduled activities.

Continuous formative assessment of professional development programs is an essential aspect of determining the productiveness of these initiatives. Formative assessment is more than procedures for collecting data and distributing an end of activity form. Neither of these procedures addresses participating teachers' concerns or provides an assessment of job training needs (Sleeter, 2014). Essentially, formative assessment determines whether the professional development activities are improving overall instructional performance and student achievement. Sleeter (2014) assessed that sufficient time to conduct an evaluation and an effective assessment plan are needed to measure the quality and effectiveness of professional development initiatives.

Problems related to summative evaluations include failing to assemble sufficient data to make reliable assessments and failing to provide specific feedback to the

participants (Hammer et al., 2011). These problems result in many agendas being obsolete.

Conducting professional development programs before establishing the goals and objectives of such programs frustrates participants and makes them skeptical about volunteering to enroll in future professional development activities (Guskey, 2000). Without sufficient assessment data, administrators are unable to determine the effectiveness of educational programs or initiatives implemented in schools. However, for many school administrators, assessment and evaluation of professional development programs is too costly and are difficult to conduct, causing many administrators to shy away from such processes (Guskey, 2000).

Evaluation questions about the successfulness of in-service training programs are difficult to answer, especially for administrators who are unaccustomed to thinking in evaluative terms (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Furthermore, teachers and administrators desire to resolve problems rapidly during the early stages of improvement efforts (Guskey, 1997). Most evaluation discussions are often undesired and perceived as an intrusion into the important work at hand (Guskey, 1998).

Evaluation of in-service programs in education is a concern because any accepted assistance could be deemed as not in the best interest of students or the school community. Specialists who fail to evaluate the influence of process and knowledge to determine further needs for teacher development programs also fail to advance the case for successful goal-oriented adult learning.

If educators do not use the evidence distributed during professional development programs, specialists cannot identify whether participants are acquiring the knowledge and skills delivered. Numerous teacher development programs begin and end with school supervisors having no understanding of program achievements or insights about areas of the training initiative requiring attention for improvement. For administrators to understand the complex nature of the improvement process within professional development programs, evaluation data, in specific detail, must be available (Guskey, 2000). Although current information is replete with teacher in-service studies, negligible attention has been given to administering and assessing the five Guskey (2000) professional development processes, from beginning through classroom application. Moreover, few researchers have investigated the impact of teacher development practices. Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to investigate the overall significance of professional development assessment for elementary school teachers.

## Historical Perspectives

Although the concept of professional development originated with the early Greeks, Guskey (2000) suggested that most of the criteria used to evaluate professional development programs have not been explored thoroughly. He argued that professional development evaluation procedures appear to have constant challenges. For example, challenges relate to certain participants' questions; lack of investigations into program usage, skill effectiveness, and execution; and a lack of knowledge and understanding about how to properly evaluate a program (Guskey, 2000). Without proper support, organizations lack the capability to apply and support productive change in school

improvement initiatives (Schwan & Spady, 1998). School systems cannot assess whether educators are successful at delivering and implementing desired knowledge and skills in teacher development programs if proper and effective evaluation does not occur.

**Professional Development Research**

In research on professional development, Zapeda (2008) found that in many cases, programs are judged to be ineffective and eventually cancelled. Rather than to collect evidence of need systematically, Zapeda further posited that judgments of the programs are based simply on perceptions alone and not examined relative to any specific goals. Furthermore, Guskey (2000) concurred that evaluations of professional development programs are neither summative nor formative. Evaluations simply give information about what has occurred. Information such as how the activities are planned, the number of participants, and the number of planned workshops is useful, Guskey explained. If none of the aforementioned documentation is present, professional development presentations truly are not evaluative.

Implementation of programs in professional development needs support that includes structured and effective inquiry. Implementation of professional development events and activities with directed preparation, proper funding, and administration support helps administration support classroom and teacher success. The gap in the literature supports the need for specific goals of educators to be met.

Killion (2002) suggested that if professional development programs and associated events were well designed, logically created, and well researched, these programs would have a better probability of producing results. Killion further suggested

using *back mapping* by studying factors under assessment to identify equivalence between student and educator learning needs. Back mapping is a process by which planners examine the desired impact of targeted professional development activities and expedite establishment of goals and standards toward this end. Additionally, back mapping assists with organizing support systems for a clearer understanding of how teacher knowledge and skills are offered, understood, and subsequently implemented.

Porter, Garet, Desimone, and Yoon (2000) shared a report from K-12 teachers, which indicated that there was "little change in overall teaching practice after 6 years . . . Teachers changed little in terms of the content they teach, the pedagogy used to teach it, and their emphasis on performing goals for students" (p. 70). However, there were some teachers who demonstrated adequate change after in-service events. Elmore (2002) claimed challenges associated with teachers who struggled to apply new knowledge learned without proper and effective ongoing evaluation. While Dixon (1996) reported that effective teacher development programs do not require costly investments or sophisticated technology skills. The only requirement is a basic understanding of how to ask questions of quality that gather practical and logical answers.

**Professional Development Program Evaluations**

Reliable assessments help deliver consistent and adequate information for teachers to draw dependable conclusions relative to in-service procedures and outcomes (Fessler, 1995). If the wide-ranging learning styles of teachers are accommodated, teacher assessment and successful classroom experiences cannot be properly fulfilled (Renyi, 1998). The Department of Education and Curriculum Standards (2014) clearly

stated what teachers should be able to implement through research-based needs that assist in the application of effective student learning. Also reflected in the policy documents is the reason why the state requires teacher development standards (Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Hong, 1996; National Commission on Teaching America's Future, 2010; Semadeni, 2009).

Professional development programs are designed to effect change within school districts. If the achievement of transformation is to be deemed effective, information that is gathered must be relevant, analyzed, and must demonstrate meaningful curriculum connections (Hanushek, 2003). Moreover, for assessments to be considered efficacious, relevant knowledge related to explicit goals must be assembled, investigated, and presented meaningfully (Guskey, 2002). Collecting information, making sense of it, and properly reporting it are all related to the process of evaluation. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) indicated that the need for increased information greatly improves educational reform with greater effectiveness. Many school reform strategies have been unsuccessful with overstated claims of successful evaluations and policies. However, there is a danger to overstating and exaggerating evaluations that claim to have succeeded. Following and measuring district evaluations against such claims could skew collected data and cause unanticipated costs and the overall positive effect of proper evaluations.

## Social Change

This study supported the Walden University mission for social change in that it provided school districts with a clear understanding of the structure needed for application and assessment of effective professional development program activities and

events. Through the research, I also identified ways educators should be able to process, understand, and use related initiatives. Participating teachers identified knowledge gained through professional development and identified the benefits they received from such programs. In a broader sense, through this study, I assisted educators within the state by providing a resource to facilitate their identification of recommendations made by the State Professional Standards for Teachers and Leaders (2013).

## Problem Statement

Within a Northeast urban school, there is little empirical evidence to indicate the effectiveness of the district professional development program.  Specifically, the teachers in a public elementary school have expressed that they encounter problems accessing relevant professional development programs and activities. Throughout this northern state, educators are required to complete a minimum of 180 credit hours for licensure and renewal every 5 years. District professional development seeks specific and relative results but fall short of connecting professional development events and activities that affect teacher learning. During faculty and team meetings in my school site, I noticed that teachers tended to express concerns associated with the lack of professional development presentations aimed at improving their instructional practice. Ost and Schiman (2015) related that teachers tend to complain about professional development issues such as inconsistent and questionable workshop presentations, unpredictable district improvement plans, lack of follow up activities, and lack of time allotted for teacher collaboration and recognition of their style of learning, thereby challenging their effectiveness as teachers.

The problem also impacts two populations in the local setting: (a) students who receive inconsistent classroom instruction and (b) new teachers with fewer than 5 years of classroom teaching experience. School districts across the country sought to improve student success by requiring teacher training in all content areas because student achievement is directly related to quality teaching (Kraft & Papay, 2014). Nationwide, professional development training is characterized as piecemeal and short-term, a unilateral development of training curricula, and limited in scope to make a difference in the careers of teachers (Ost, 2014; Ost & Schiman, 2015).

Teacher effectiveness is a factor in student success. Teachers who are less than effective have a negative effect on student achievement (Mahinney, 2010; Niesz, 2010; Stronge et al., 2008). Professional development for classroom teachers costs approximately $6 billion dollars a year between federal, state, and district allocations (Avalos, 2010; Hadar & Brody, 2010). If half of that investment is useless in improving teacher efficiency and instruction, $3 billion is being thrown away on a yearly basis for unsuccessful improvement methods (Davey, 2013; Marrongelle, Sztajn, & Smith; 2013).

Problems associated with professional development studies have shown that simply exposing a teacher to a new concept or skill has little to no impact on classroom performance. Most professional development opportunities continue to be lecture style, showing, explaining, and telling how something can be done (Levine & Marcus, 2010). When the professional development activity is over, teachers return to the classrooms with little ongoing support. Davey (2013) and Webster-Wright (2009) posited that teacher professional learning should exhibit more than just a one-time proposition for

learning. However, many professional development programs fall short of incorporating presentations that that take into account: (a) the learning styles of adults, (b) the acquired knowledge of teachers, and (c) whether new knowledge is transferred to the classroom (Marrongelle et al., 2013).

Studies have shown that student learning increases when professional development training takes into account teachers' learning styles, offers effective and engaging content of subject matter, and provides for peer collaboration (Goldhaber & Hansen, 2012; Hadar, & Brody, 2010; Harris & Sass, 2011; Korthagen, 2010, Levine & Marcus, 2010; Mawhinney, 2010; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). Recognizing teachers' learning styles and teachers' development preferences is necessary for in-service planners and administrators to meet the needs of teacher (Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009).

Professional development activities in the school district often end without follow-up training or a general concern for teacher knowledge and understanding. Factors contributing to this problem relate to various formats of in-service events including budgets, lack of resources, time needed to develop programs that are differentiated, lack of understanding of adult learning styles, and a lack of balance between the professional development activity and the needs and desires of the teachers, (Diaz-Maggioli 2004).

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the overall significance of professional development assessment for elementary school teachers. A significant social implication for this study was that with improved professional development programs for teachers, a byproduct of successful professional development programs for teachers could

be increased student achievement. Evidence from this research study could provide school leaders and professional development presenters in the local setting, district-wide, statewide, and perhaps nationally with a more enlightened understanding of professional development assessment by teachers, thus reducing teacher apathy, increasing teacher efficacy, and improving classroom success for students.

## Purpose of the Study

Given the aforementioned problem statement, the purpose of this case study was to investigate the overall significance of professional development programs for elementary school teachers. According to Sparks (2004),

> If teachers are to [teach] successfully all students to high standards, virtually everyone who affects student learning must be learning virtually all the time. That not only includes teachers and principals, but superintendents and other administrators, school board members, and school support staff. Because the vast majority of the decisions about staff development are made in district offices and school improvement team meetings, the urgent pressure that many school leaders feel to improve student learning means that they are interested in knowing . . . if their staff development is making a difference (p. ix).

The rationale for investigating teachers' current professional development experiences was that education decision makers often ignore teachers' views even though teachers are directly impacted by educational change (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Guskey, 2002). This study was designed to give teachers a voice in their description of professional development and how it might affect their practice.

I sought to understand ways in which teacher assessment of professional development maximized their instructional effectiveness. An analysis was included to explore how teachers viewed themselves as efficient change agents in the classroom and how designing of professional development emerged. I made the findings available to the professional development committee members who were responsible for the planning and executing teacher in-service programs and administrators within the county of the participating school district

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study was adult learning theory (Knowels, 1984). The focus of the paradigm was on learning preferences of the mature learner. Knowles (1984) posited a set of assumptions about adult learners explaining that adult learners move to self-directedness as they mature. To direct their own learning and to draw upon their wealth of life skills and knowledge, adult learners are ready to learn when they assume new social roles or life skills. In addition, adult are problem-centered learners, apply new knowledge upon learning, and are motivated to learn intrinsically. Knowles (1984) suggested that it is necessary to (a) set a climate for cooperative learning, (b) develop objectives based on learners' needs, (c) design activities in a sequence, (d) work collaboratively with learners, and (e) evaluate the quality of the learning experience through various follow-up activities.

Additionally, Brookfield (2005) recognized five principles of effective practice in facilitating adult learning (i.e., voluntary participation, mutual respect, collaborative spirit, action reflection, and self-direction) that move outside the notions of humanistic

and intellectual psychology and the importance of the environment in adult education and learning.  Assessment is important to understand teachers' needs as adult learners in professional development programs. Accordingly, Sadler-Smith (2006) posited that consideration for adult learning styles could drive the improvement of diverse teaching and learning techniques, which could enhance learning performance.

## Nature of the Study

The research study was a qualitative, single bounded case study. According to Yin (2009) and Creswell (2009), using case studies help researchers to examine meaning in the experiences of participants. In this study, I investigated teachers' perceptions of professional development events within a K-8 urban school. For an in-depth understanding of human behavior, case studies are quite useful (Stake, 1999). Showing a case with multiple perspectives of a problem or process helps to enhance clarity and understanding (Creswell, 2009).

I sought to develop an understanding within this study by employing multiple perspectives of six experienced classroom teachers who participated in ongoing professional development events in their schools. To yield the most useful information, I used participants who were easily accessible because collecting data in a case study is extensive and draws upon multiple sources such as interviews. Merriam (2009) suggested that certain sample sizes are required and sampling concludes when saturation occurs during data collection. Each of the participants had been participating in professional development events for a minimum of 5 years and had opportunities to implement what they learned into their instructional procedures in their classrooms. The experiences and

information the participants obtained were similar, which helped me to create an analysis of the themes. Using a critical case sampling of six participants, I was able to generalize themes logically.

I rejected a quantitative design because the categories used might not reflect the teachers' understandings of the goals and objectives of professional development training. Moreover, the theories that I used might not reflect the teachers' understandings of the purpose of the study. In addition, I might have missed out on concerns participants had because of the focus on theory or hypothesis testing rather than on theory or hypothesis generation. Knowledge produced from the study might be too abstract and general for direct application to specific local situations, contexts, and individuals. Instead, qualitative design was chosen because I was able to analyze information received from participants in their natural setting (Creswell, 1998). Alignment with the broader sense of teachers' experiences helped to build a holistic picture of their needs and concerns because inquiry was conducted on teachers' assessments of professional development events. Triangulation of interviews, member checking, and verification of recurring themes helped me to establish recommendations about how district professional development events could be designed effectively to meet the needs of teachers. The recommendations will be discussed in Section 5.

## Research Questions

Anchored in the problem statement and purpose for the study, the following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do the format, content, and process of professional development in the city school district meet the needs and match the learning styles of the elementary school teacher?

2. How and to what extent do elementary teachers in the city school district apply the new knowledge and skills in the classroom?

3. How and to what extent does the quality of professional development within the city school district impact the initial satisfaction of elementary school teachers?

**Definition of Terms**

*Evaluation:* The systematic investigation of merit or worth. The term *systematic* distinguishes the process from a multitude of informal assessment acts in which teachers consciously or unconsciously engage (Royce, Thyer, & Padgett, 2010).

*Investigation:* A collection of appropriate and pertinent information via a process based upon conjecture or opinion (Auerbach & Silverstien, 2003).

*Merit or worth:* Implies appraisal and judgment. Assessments are defined to determine value or worth (Creswell, 2003).

*Professional development:* Teacher education following initial licensure with educators engaged in an ongoing process to improve or enhance teaching skills. Such programs may include individually guided and collaborative problem solving, observation, and assessment of teaching, training, and action research (Borko, 2004).

*Self-efficacy:* The origin of beliefs surrounding personal worth, the structure and function, and the processes through which the diverse effects are manifested. Self-

efficacy influences how individuals think, feel, act, and how they are motivated (Bandura, 1997, p. 2).

*Teacher efficacy*: Abilities for teachers to organize and execute courses of action necessary to bring about desired classroom results (Borko, 2004).

## Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The research was conducted under two major assumptions. First, it was assumed that all participants would answer the study survey and interview questions honestly and to the best of their ability. Second, it was assumed that I would control personal bias relating to training practice in qualitative research. This included scrupulous data checking across sources, member checks, and frequent consultation with colleagues and faculty members.

Due to the unique sample of the case study, the results were not drawn beyond the specific sample population. The issue of researcher bias was a limiting factor in the study. I was familiar with the professional development programs and objectives within the schools and district. Given these conditions, I was not merely an objective observer; hence, the study presented potential limitations for replication. Instruments and procedures used in the study could be used in future related research. Careful analysis of multiple sources of data assessed the extent of professional development events and explored how professional development activities impacted teacher efficacy.

The delimitation of cases was bound by several criteria. The participants were experienced teachers within the school district and expected to participate in the study conducted. They had participated in professional development programs, exhibited an

openness to change, and transformed their existing teaching practice. Further, the participants collaborated with their peers during and following professional development events.

## Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is the assistance it provides staff-development specialists within the school district to evaluate the nature, process, role, and weight of the components of teacher professional development.

Assessment of a professional development event is conducted with two critical purposes in mind: (a) to develop the value of the activity under assessment and (b) to influence the comprehensive effectiveness of the activity. To bring about significant improvement in a professional development event, district standards provide the guidance for classroom instruction. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of professional development program directors to empower teachers to translate their professional development learning experiences to instructional enhancement to meet  student needs and (b) ensure classroom assessments and learning are measured effectively, according to district and state standards (Guskey, 1999).

Assessment was performed during periods of the professional development training activity. Feedback and comments were generated from participants, which enabled training program developers to perfect courses and make midcourse alterations to the program (Hanna & Dettmer, 2004; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1999; Joyce & Showers, 2002). Meaningful participant experience that could be translated within the classroom ensures formative assessment meets participant expectations (Stronge, 2002).

Summative assessment provides in-service designers and decision makers an opportunity to judge the general merit or value of the activity or program (Sadler, 1998). Unlike formative assessment, which guides enhancements and improvements, summative assessment presents program developers with the guidance needed to make pivotal decisions related to the life of a program or activity (Butler, 1995).

Many assessments are summative in nature because of educators' focus on immediate results of evaluations (Black, Bracey, & Brookfield, 2003; Guskey, 2000). The National Staff Development Council (2001) noted that self-assessment instruments assist in determining the " state of implementation of the context, process, and content of effective staff development [and] can be used to reveal strengths as well as areas for improvement" (p. 58). This important aspect of professional development evaluation contributes to a positive impact on teachers, which is expected to be ultimately transferred to learners.

**Summary**

Section 1 included an introduction to the research study, a discussion of the problem statement, a nature of the problem, statement of the purpose of the study, the conceptual framework, assumptions, limitations, scope, delimitations, and significance of the study, research questions, and terms used in the study. Section 2 is a review of the literature containing empirical research that guided this study. Section 3 includes methods and procedures implemented in the research process. Section 4 includes my findings and an analysis of the data collected. Section 5 consists of conclusions, discussion of the

results, recommendations, and a commentary on future research and effective

differentiated instructional practice.

Section 2: Literature Review

**Introduction**

**Content and Organization of the Review**

This review of literature provides an understanding of the topic for study. The strategy of the review is to define the topic and keywords, evaluate existing related literature, and gather a variety of resources for the research. A search was conducted for past studies related to teacher professional development, journal articles, and books. The following keywords guided the search: *staff development, professional development, current state of professional development and format of professional development, characteristics of professional development, evaluating professional development, adult learning theory, adult learning styles,* and *professional development formats.* Topics included in the literature review include professional development; professional development background, with a discussion of status, format, process, and effective models; teacher self-efficacy, with a discussion of general and professional and effects on schools; and adult learning styles and course differentiation, with a discussion of practical application.

**Professional Development**

Recognizing concepts applied in administering professional development shows its true connection to education. The National Staff Development Council (2007) generated standards professional development programs. Elements of professional development programs include (a) content understanding and superior instruction, (b) teamwork, (c) distinct knowledge requirements, (d) student scholarship surroundings, (e)

family participation, (f) assessment, (g) data, and (h) teacher education. Conversely, determining whether accountability measures are gathered to determine the benefits of professional development events to education as a whole was not discussed.

Professional development is the personal enhancement of one's professional role. Avalos (2011) posited that within one's teaching role, experience is gained through personal development. Professional workshops and formal meetings help define professional development experiences (Ganzer, 2000). Professional development occurs through cycles of career training activities (Avalos, 2011). Moreover, professionally designed in-service programs foster the growth of teachers, assess the content of practices, measure the occurrence of each process, and evaluate each developing progression (Barnhart, 2015; Bartell et al., 2013; Guskey, 2000).

Brookfield (2005) explained that at one time, in-service training was simply a number of workshops or brief program options that offered teachers updated communication on characteristics of program efforts. Champion (2003) stated that routine teacher in-service programs often yielded reasonable development. However, research referring to these dynamic modifications, new images, or modules of teacher education and new standards based on reform has escalated (Bullock, 2011; Cohen, 2010; Goldring et al., 2015; Grossman et al., 2009; Kedzior & Fifield, 2004). The crucial component has been that effective professional development has fashioned an empathetic base that has helped to change and transform quality schools (Harris & Sass, 2011).

**Professional Development Background**

The available research on professional development shows relationships to student performance, but researchers cited differences in this relationship. Marzano (2003), for example, identified specific variables to the relationships, which included the school, teacher, students' levels of learning in the classroom, parent and community participation, teaching policies, and classroom management. Other variables included how the curriculum is represented, student prior capabilities, and motivation. Marzano inferred, however, that teacher workshop events are analogous to student achievement.

Active learning of content proficiency and consistency of professional development content are strong characteristics of effective professional development programs (Hadar & Brody, 2010). The consistency of a staff development program was perceived as an integrated whole with events that build upon each other consecutively (Marzano, 2003). Marzano (2003) warned that systematic professional in-service events are ineffective if they do not transform teacher professional conduct.

The concept of effective professional development as a process suggests that the format is neither a 1-day workshop nor a sequence of workshops, but a well-planned agenda of events to improve teaching on a long-term basis. This type of teacher training program would result in improved student achievement (Guskey, 2000; Joo et al., 2013; Sparks, 2004). Richardson (2003) advocated specific characteristics for effectual professional development, declaring that programs ideally,

should be statewide, long term, with follow-up; should encourage collegiality; foster agreement among participants on goals and visions; have a supportive

administration; have access to adequate funds for materials, outside speakers,

substitute teachers, and so on; encourage and develop agreement among

participants; acknowledge participants existing beliefs and practices; and make

use of outside facilitator/staff developers. (p. 402)

Horn and Little (2010) and McDonald et al. (2013) defined professional

development as a sustained feature of classroom instruction that is incorporated

consistently and integrates coherent experiences that are structured within the goals of

teaching. Professional development programs are associated with benchmarks,

evaluations, and include best practices and investigative evidence. Levine and Marcus

(2010) described professional development training as continual and coherent with best

practice.

D'Ambrosio, Harkness, and Boone (2004) advanced the idea that understanding

learner needs could help teachers choose what professional development programs are

necessary to assist in the development of academic knowledge in the classroom.

However, teachers are not able to espouse what they learn in professional development

programs. Consequently, Loughran (2010) suggested that opportunities should be

available to increase current teacher knowledge and beliefs and sustained events that

address (a) how teachers are likely to treat learners, (b) how considering teachers as

learners is congruous with how they are likely to treat learners, (c) how supporting

scholarship and deliberation fit into effective classroom preparation, and (d) why a

stipulation of substantial time is necessary for assessment and collegiality. Guskey (2000)

examined 13 lists, categorizing facets of successful professional practice and confronted a

number of cohesive elements such as the demonstration of standards at program onset, alignment with additional advantages of reform, and evaluation that is reliable and embedded.

The term *development* indicates constructing upon a foundation; however, not all teachers share comparable experiences. This connotation becomes difficult when one defines the term *professional development.* The Public Education Network and The Finance Project (2004) considered a bachelor's degree, academic and topic course work, and classroom knowledge as shared requirements for highly skilled teachers in the United States. However, beyond these commonalities, state-by-state needs vary. As supervisors respond to teacher shortages, they rely upon professional programs to improve teaching skills. Professional development programs create an environment similar to a typical classroom in schools, with scholars presenting content, knowledge, and skills to participants, with varying degrees of abilities, different backgrounds, and diverse educational cultures, expecting all participants to accomplish the educational goals and objectives at comparable levels. Professional development training to achieve an exceedingly competent status required by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 or to sustain licensure requirements (Public Education Network & The Finance Project, 2004). Professional development training is proposed with an amalgamation of objectives, from teacher retaining, licensure, and maintenance to introducing teachers to new investigative or instructional training for implementation within their classrooms.

**Current Status**

Despite the dearth of evidence on professional development programs, many teachers do not report uplifting professional development experiences. Marrongelle et al. (2013) stated that 50% of the participating teachers stated insignificant change in their professional learning experiences and improved teaching practice. Penuel et al. (2011) noticed a majority of professional development events conducted with K–12 teachers appraised in their research made little difference in teachers' instructional practices; gave negligible reflection relative to the realities of classroom teaching, the school, or the district; offered nominal involvement of teachers in discussions; and provided no opportunities for follow up. Sparks (2002) reported that professional development programs for teachers are disintegrated and disjointed, lack academic rigor, and do not build on prevailing understanding and skills to support the tasks of cultivating student scholarship.

Sleeter (2014) analyzed professional development programs and investigated whether their in-service experience was analogous to state standards, or if teachers were able to share learning with colleagues or school administrators. On a scale from 0 to 9, with 0 representing no coherence and 9 representing a form of coherence, the mean was 5.33, reflecting a low level of consistency. In spite of its fundamental role in education and improvement, the professional development experience receives very little support in systematic reform (Barko, Elliot, & Uchiyama, 2002). Thompson et al. (2013) advanced that a great deal is known on the appearances of professional in-service programs; however, less is known with regard to how to establish effective professional development programs that positively influence teachers' instructional practices.

Hornbeck (2003) stated, "School districts spend much more on professional development than they think, and most of [the training activity] is neither actively managed nor explicitly linked to a district strategy" (p. 28). Of all funds allocated to professional development, from 40% to 60% is allocated to funding outside of school parameters. Hornbeck viewed this issue as contributing to disjointed professional program efforts and a lack of long-term preparation. He advanced that professional development planners in school districts must move from systematizing events around subsidy foundations and conglomerate funding to support unified efforts aimed at school necessities.

Existing literature on effective professional development emphasized inconsistencies between successful in-service programs and the state of professional expansion in populations of teachers (Cohen, 2010; Hang et al., 2012). As Thompson et al. (2013) postulated, financing of existing professional development events as designed unlikely have any substantial effect on the information educators receive or on increased student performance. The literature also emphasized a dearth of examples and research findings from across-the-board professional development efforts and systemic restructuring initiatives in schools (Avalos 2011; Damon, 2010; Durlak et al., 2011; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2012; Semadeni, 2009).

**Format**

A convincing association exists relative to student accomplishment and teacher quality. An undisputed concern, combined with other factors, such as a robust and appropriate curriculum, collective management activities, elevated outlook of students, a

vigorous community, parent partnerships, and better-organized teachers could equate to higher academic success among students. With the question of whether professional development programs are making a change in this regard, a richer understanding of its impact becomes essential. Guskey (2000) offered the following alternative approach: "Begin from the end and work backward" (p. 35). According to the Public Education Network and the Finance Project (2004),

> For a variety of reasons, [academic achievement] . . . often tell[s] if districts and schools are getting a good return on the professional development dollars they spend. Although a number of professional organizations have agreed on the characteristics of professional development-and NCLB reflects many of these-[a disconnection exists] between identified parameters of quality professional development and the one-shot seminars most teachers receive [*sic*]. (p. 13)

The issue referred to in this quote is between what is known as best practices and the professional development teachers receive. This disconnect is a fundamental problem with in-service workshops. Goldring et al. (2015) suggested that quality professional development programs are results oriented, have standards that define excellence in practice, and are focused on best teaching practice and improved student learning within the classroom. Although most educators can express what they like about their own professional development, many fail to see direct results solely with authorized courses.

Grossman et al. (2009) observed several approaches of professional practice in education. One approach was designed under the supposition that teachers tend to work hard only if they trust they will attain results for students. Teachers must be able to

distinguish and understand the influences between their growth and student success. A trend in many school districts is offering online in-service professional development, which can be accomplished asynchronously or synchronously (Joo et al., 2013). Many districts have opted for this inventive mode of professional development distribution. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2010) reported several advantages of online professional development opportunities such as time and cost savings, increased accountability, and increased excitement with regard to learning. Perna et al. (2014) stated that online professional development programs benefit administrators in that data are automated and tracked, while principals benefit from assessing which in-service programs and events are effectively assisting teachers. However, most teachers favor the personal interaction type of professional development programs because technology causes teachers to feel apprehensive about its usage.

Fulantelli et al. (2014) studied three schools employing internal and external network methods to professional development opportunities for their teachers and found that administrative support is crucial to the success of such networks and that professional development programs could be taught effectively in diverse manners, using a variety of other educators, from private companies to textbook representatives.

Professional development led by teachers is a common practice, but it has its cynics (Rebora, 2009). School district administrators often provide conferences other educators led.  Employing other educators to conduct professional development activities is an important method of delivery because colleagues share the same background, apprehensions, and students (Knight, Emm, & Wade, 2007). Grossman et al. (2009)

suggested using collegial teams, design programs with learners in mind, and encouraging teachers to take ownership of professional experiences, which are quite useful to instructors leading a professional development sessions. Teacher leaders can facilitate appropriate activities through the development of teams to help build teacher ownership of their development. Development activities tailored to the wishes of the teacher learner give educators a choice of activities to meet their needs.

Grossman et al. (2009) investigated whether professional development training is best when it is divided into discrete categories based upon objectives. These authors concluded that real growth in learning is in self-selected courses and not in district mandates. Korthagen (2010) maintained that action research be accomplished within the classroom in which teachers take proprietorship of their professional progress, and the readily obtainable data within the classroom renders germane and valid information.

**Processes**

Moving from initiatives to classroom execution requires an intensive view of learning by the school community and assurances from administrators to recognize the goals and accomplishment levels of a professional development program. Tomlinson (2005) posited that teachers are ill-equipped and should have professional development plans to gain the crucial skills needed to teach in contemporary schools. Such expansion needs to change from the normal custom of "training via mass inoculation [to] professional learning opportunities proactively planned to be the catalyst for persistent and personalized teacher growth throughout a career" (pp. 11–12). Tomlinson further posited that program development must be insightful, conversant, investigative,

presentation oriented, dedicated, supportive, continuous, cooperative, and differentiated. Collaboration and choice offer an outlet for reflection and permit all stakeholders to own a component of the development. A gap found in existing literature, however, was the minimal study struggling to establish whether the teaching staff is retaining this type of professional development and if it is transferred to the classroom.

Levine and Marcus (2010) suggested a new understanding of questioning, learning, and classroom instruction must be created by teachers to increase reflection on individual learning. Reflection brings clarity regarding student capabilities, creating a repertoire of teaching methodologies and increased management of learning style skills (Margolin, 2011). In-service programs could also help teachers tailor their learning style needs to assist with structured, yet flexible classroom goals and objectives within reliable assessment systems, while administrators identify whether new knowledge is conveyed in the classroom and is useful to all stakeholders.

**Effective Models**

Effective professional development planners consider the local environments within which participating teachers operate.  Training programs are conducted over time, rather than within a 1-day workshop (Knight et al., 2012). Consequently, such professional development activities involve teaching with active and cooperative participation. Various education groups, both public and private, have defined general commonalities among quality professional development programs. Students do not learn new concepts or innovative hypotheses in one setting; the same applies to educators (Niesz, 2010).

The concepts of quality professional development programs are individual, interconnected, and school based; they allow for choice, encourage commitment, and consider various forms of learning modalities (Webster-Wright, 2009). A professional development activity is applicable when it allows time for teacher contemplation and investigation; whereby, teachers improve and sustain a sense of proprietorship of the knowledge they gain that could intensify student interest within the classroom (Marra et al., 2011). The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2009) listed several features of professional development programs that included research based relevance. These programs are continuous and maintained by exhibiting, coaching and specific problem-solving activities, based upon updated knowledge relative to the ways individuals learn.

Marra et al. (2011) and Marzano (2007) recommended three steps concerning professional development within school districts: (a) determine norms of behavior for collegiality, (b) increase teacher participation in decisions and guidelines for the school, and (c) delivery of important staff development activities for teachers. The first two actions steps are transparent; however, the third is subjective in the explanation of significant professional development programs. Here again, basic commonalities exist among worthwhile professional programs; however, each district has varying standards for the definition of meaningful programs. Second, it is crucial and essential that teacher input is included in successful staff development initiatives.

Moreover, with the lessons teachers impart to students, teacher learners must take proprietorship of their learning for learning to become significant and enduring. Teachers who are engaged in professional development training simply need time and opportunity

for inquiry and reflection (Marzano, 2007). Before, during, and after any professional inservice program, teacher input into the long and short-term goals must be gleaned. In addition, it is important to schedule time for teacher reflection to improve skills and accelerate learning for maximum results (Murata et al., 2012). Learning communities support teachers in using their time effectively and in investigating student needs efficiently.

Hadar and Brody (2010) posited that within learning communities, teachers impart a greater sense of control when allowed to share that which increases student learning and share ways to disseminate their lessons in the classroom. Kraft and Papay (2014) found that certain characteristics of in-service programs significantly affect instructional practices. These include continuous comprehensible study, supportive scholarship, time for classroom investigation, and follow up (Ost, 2014).

In 2008, the National Staff Development Council observed professional program events at public schools that had improved student accomplishments. The study found that professional development programs shifted from sequestered learning and intermittent workshop to concentrated, ongoing learning, based upon cooperative thinking and joint action.

The American Education Research Association (2005) developed an informational guide on professional development for teachers and presented several suggestions particularly for policy makers, to increase educator skills and to accelerate their learning strategically to increase results.  Professional development training must first focus on the content to be taught. Second, professional in-service events should be

aligned with the working practices of teachers, using genuine curriculum material and assessments. Third, sufficient time should be available for in-service activities, including observing and investigating student work. Finally, school districts administrators need reliable systems with which to measure the influence of professional teaching and learning levels (Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009).

**Barriers**

Financial planning is also a source of complication inside many school districts. Cogshall, Ott, and Lasagna (2010) reported that funding from varying sources is uncoordinated. As a result, professional development in most districts often includes content that is disjointed and haphazardly presented. Armour and Makopoulou (2012) noted the unjustified position of staff development as demands for limited funds increase. High quality and suitable professional development is essential and to the majority of teachers.

At the state and local level lies the power to make decisions relative to professional development programs, which leads to the implementation of standards across the nation. Therefore, teacher choice becomes specialized coursework that fluctuates and may not relate to classroom content and teacher experience (Butler & Schnellert, 2012). Teacher choice in specialized course work fluctuates and may not relate to classroom content. Staff development programs, nonetheless, often do not follow essential learning models (Ost, 2014). Evaluations are often related to enjoyment or contentment rather than classroom training, the intergration of learning into the

instructional program, and applicability (Public Education Network & The Finance Project, 2004).

Ineffictive experiences leave many teachers with a negative attitude toward their past professional development training activities. Such experiences can become a progression of negativity toward future staff development opportunities (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). A teacher participating in a study conducted by Viadero (2007) reported dreading a professional development workshop because "it was a lot of what we would call 'sit and git' workshops . . . very fragmented, and there was not understanding that staff development could lead to student achievement" (p. 15). Wood (2001) recounted the following frustration articulated by a teacher study participant:

I am tired of hierarchical school cultures that reward teachers for obediently following the latest 'experts' instead of building knowledge from lived experiences and collegial dialogue. Ironically, teachers, charged with educating children for a democratic society, have precious few opprotunities to exercise their voices or control their profession. (p. 34)

Another obstacle reported by educators is the continually shifting climate of in-service training as a result of technology updates, economic developments, leadership representations, business viewpoints, administrative climates, cultural and directives, and related terms (Wood & Borg, 2010). They noted that the content selections of staff development activities are often based on trends or charismatic staff development specialists.

Programs that ignore individual learning needs are characterized by the *one size fits-all* approach. When school districts mandate every teacher to be staffed developed as a group, many educators demonstrate minimal interest in the selected topic for training (Tyler et al., 2010). Jacob et al. (2010) posited that training becomes a passive experience because with little time to interact with colleagues, teacher participation is limited regarding the presentation of learned approaches and plans for follow up events during the school year are neglected frequently. Although teachers are often passionate about new methodologies, studies have shown new concepts and approaches rarely are transmitted to classroom preparation when there is no or little follow up (Jackson & Bruegmann,2009).

Marzano (2007) reported that some schools disrupt best known practice for staff development because the sessions do not relate to topic areas and do not address the transformation of standard stratgies into detailed content areas. Marzano further reported that schools characteristically do not offer teachers the chance to field-test strategies studied during in-service workshops and often specify only a few unrelated and fragmented staff development sessions.

### Teacher Efficacy

Since the 1980s, researchers have been exploring the concept of teacher efficacy, which is an extension of the self-efficacy theory (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Woolfolk Hoy, & Spero, 2005). Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as "people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce desired effects by their actions" (p. vii). While this is not a measure of performance, Bandura noted,

Not only can percived self-efficacy have directive influence on choice of activities and settings, but through expectations of eventual success, it can affect coping efforts. . . . Efficacy expectaions determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. (p. 194)

Perceived self-efficacy is a substantial issue because the expenditure of effort and perseverance are key issues in the success of most professional development endeavors (Dweck, 2000; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). In the context of teaching, Tschannen-Moran et al. explained, "Teacher efficacy . . . proposes that the level of efficacy affects the amount of effort a teacher will show in the face of obstacles" (p. 313).

Bandura (1997) attempted to define the extent to which efficacy beliefs function causally within an array of circumstances and stated that related research on children and adults is "relatively consistent in showing that efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to level of motivation and performance" (p. 61). This makes a persuasive case for self-efficacy as a convincing independent variable in measuring success (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Conceptualizing teacher efficacy, in general, Guskey and Passaro (1994) described the paradigm as "teachers' belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated" (p. 628). Other related literature on teacher efficacy indicated that educators who perceive their success at helping students to learn often are a strong influence on their students both in and outside the classroom (Dembo & Gibson, 1985; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). According to Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), "Student achievement, attitude, and affective growth" all benefit (p. 215). Dembo and Gibson (1985) investigated the

personalities of teachers with strong efficacy beliefs and surveyed the classroom

performances of educators teaching both small groups and entire classes. They reported:

High efficacy teachers were observed to redirect students who were working

independently, to answer questions of students who came up to the small groups, and in

general to achieve more student on task behavior in the entire class while they were

instructing in small groups. (p. 176)

Studies of secondary classrooms established that teachers with stronger efficacy

beliefs demonstrate greater academic orientation and had a more compassionate

classroom environment (Dembo & Gibson, 1985). Bandura (1997) named four major

areas as sources of efficacy expectancies, including performance achievements, vicarious

understanding, verbal encouragement, and emotional stimulation. Particularly significant

is the performance-accomplishments source, which delivers the practice and the

experience of accomplishment or disappointment that can influence future efficacy

beliefs. When considering initial new teacher progress, comprehensive teaching

internship was theorized to be a major factor in the development of self-efficacy through

performance accomplishment (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fieman-Nemser, 2001;

Johnson, 2004; Rushton, 2003; Woolfolk Hoy & Spero, 2005).

Bandura (1997) primarily investigated the effects of negative emotions such as

anxiety on efficacy beliefs and found that unenthusiastic emotional arousal can be

diminished by performance success. When considering teacher efficacy, however, Hoy

and Woolfolk (1993) found two subcategories of the construct—general teaching efficacy

and personal teaching efficacy.

**General and Personal**

Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) drew a distinction between two types of efficacy beliefs, defining general teaching efficacy as a judgment of one who is capable of creating a preferred outcome of student growth and development even when the student is most difficult or unmotivated. These researchers defined personal teaching efficacy as "the more accurate indicator of a teacher's personal sense of efficacy" (p. 357). They maintained that both forms of efficacy must be measured individually. In the Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) study, there was a positive relationship between teaching and self-efficacy, but no association occurred with general teaching efficacy. Hoy and Woolfolk explained, "That is, experience improved the likelihood that teachers would believe that they could motivate difficult students and at the same time promoted a sense of powerlessness to overcome the negative constraints of the home environment" (p. 368).

For new teacher development, the reported findings hold important inferences. According to the research, teachers often experience a sense of low self-efficacy, which can have a damaging effect on their classroom practice (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Onafowora, 2004; Shaughnessy, 2004). Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) stated, "It is too much to expect that any program will produce beginning teachers who have a firmly established sense of personal teaching efficacy" (p. 369). Thus, the responsibility rests with school officials. Much of the data collected on teacher efficacy is sourced in quantitative, survey based study. Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998), therefore, called for additional qualitative

studies exploring efficacy beliefs among teachers, enabling a clearer understanding of this phenomenon within the domain of teacher development and retention. These investigators urged additional studies to be conducted by qualitative researchers to "explore what events and influences teachers attribute to the development of their efficacy beliefs" (p. 242). They also suggested that a research agenda should focus on the extent to which "collective efficacy [is] important in the socialization of new teachers" (p. 241).

**Effects on Schools**

Dembo and Gibson (1985) argued that greater efficacy beliefs amongst teachers could improve schools. Subsequently, providing new teachers with a school-based induction program with opportunities to develop varied and extensive experiences prior to their fulltime service helps toward developing approaches for the desires of all learners. Hoy and Woolfolk (1993) surveyed 179 elementary school teachers and an identified reciprocal effect between teacher efficacy and school health. Their findings indicated that the influence of the school principal and emphasis on academics effect personal teaching efficacy. Hoy and Woolfolk also found that "institutional integrity and morale had significant, independent effects on [a] sense of general teaching efficacy" (p. 363). It is important to identify differences between a collegial school environment and one providing the described institutional support. Hoy and Woolfolk stated that supportive environments increased teacher job satisfaction, but teacher job satisfaction had little influence on reaching students with problems. Administrators and experienced

teachers working collaboratively could provide daily assistance valued by novice teachers to enable them to succeed with their students. As explained by Hoy and Woolfolk,

Gaining and maintaining the cooperation of students in class activities and seeing students participate enthusiastically provide an immediate sense of accomplishment and, thus, of efficacy. Shared goals that emphasize learning, schools and classrooms that are organized, and help from administrators in solving instructional and management problems should provide a foundation for success and for efficacy. (p. 367)

Tshcannen-Moran et al. (1998) contended that teacher efficacy proposes that the "level of efficacy affects the amount of effort a teacher will show in the face of obstacles" (p. 313). Evaluating staff development of educators and teacher efficacy has linked these constructs in the following ways: (a) rich and diverse experiences laying the foundation for high efficacy beliefs, and (b) solid encouragement for teachers that safeguards or increases self-efficacy belief.

**Adult Learning Styles and Course Differentiation**

Professional development in education places emphasis on adult learning as a goal for cumulative student accomplishment. Yet, research-based instructional policies endorsed for teacher use within classrooms frequently conflict with the method teachers are taught within in-service programs. Just as many education researchers cannot agree on how students learn best, such debate is also prevalent within adult learning. Trotter (2006) argued that school districts must offer programs that acknowledge the existing understanding of teachers is based upon adult learning theory. Teachers have a wide range of contextual skills and preferences, as well as age and expertise, which influence

their diverse developmental stages (Lieberman & Miller, 2001). These factors must be contemplated in the purpose of professional improvement agendas.

Brookfield (2005) noted that understanding adult learning equates to understanding the amount of necessary tasks involved in knowledge such as "how to perceive and challenge dominate ideology, unmask power, contest hegemony, overcome alienation, pursue liberation, reclaim reason, and practice democracy" (p. 2). While teacher development programs may not openly list the particular tasks as goals, the tasks subliminally are involved in teacher learning and thinking (Jackson & Brogman, 2009). A challenge for teacher development organizers is meeting the diverse needs of teachers as adult learners. As noted earlier, teachers convey an eclectic range of experiences, styles of learning, content information, specialties, age issues, and learning preferences. These dynamics strongly encourage professional development organizers to consider their own familiarities and learning needs, to expand their teaching and interaction skills, and to align them to the diverse needs of students (Hiebert & Morris, 2012).

Professional development initiatives involve change, which can be threatening to adults who have prospered and are contented in their situations. Hodson, Smith, and Brown (2012) found that four circumstances are necessary for teacher transformation, including an understanding of the philosophy behind, or purpose for, change; validated practice inside the actual classroom, the capacity to exercise new behavior connected to change, and opinion and preparation from their contemporaries and administrators. These aspects are tantamount to developing professional development programs.

Professional in-service programs are shifting to becoming a student-centered and process-oriented approach to teaching and enhanced learning Lampert (2010) The result is a model that meets the needs, attitudes, and efficacy of teachers as adults. Numerous staff development courses do not distinguish presentations that appeal to multiple intelligences (Bloom, 1956). Adult learners differ from their younger counterparts, but commonalities remain. Trotter (2006) hypothesized that in-service coordinators consider age and stage theory, cognitive development theory, and functional theory.

Löfström and Poom-Valickis (2013) recommended instead of teacher focusing on daily survival in the classroom, they should lean toward developing an instructional program and a stage of comprehensive teaching. Löfström, and Poom-Valickis further state that few teachers reach differentiated pedagogics where they are able to discover fresh routes to e adapt instruction and curriculum to the needs, interest, and abilities of all students. If educators do reach the state of differentiating in0struction, it would follow that this would be a primary goal of professional development for teacher learners.

Houle (1980) recognized three distinctive categories of adult learners based on reasons why adults participate in learning; they are (a) oriented learners who use training to accomplish goals, (b) activity oriented learners who participate in the learning experience because it is a unique learning activity, and (c) learn for the sake of learning. Schmeck (1983) maintained that it is possible to learn from at least two different perspectives; the experimental in which learning is defined by those who participate and the behaviorist in which learning leads to observable change in ones reaction to a

stimulus. This act of learning helps the brain to facilitate advanced learning levels in the future.

As theoreticians parted with the behaviorists' focus on inputs and outputs, a learner's characteristic became the focus of attention. The focus shifted from the external to the internal such as various adult learning styles. Kolb (1981) developed a model of learning through feeling and thinking. He divided learners into four individual learning styles: (a) dynamic learners who learn by trial and error, and although sometimes pushy, they generally get along with others; (b) imaginative learners combine experience with self and have some difficulty in making decisions, and yet, they are able to approach problems reflectively; (c) common sense learners integrate theory and practice, have a low tolerance for ideas that are fuzzy, yet they are experimental; and (d) analytic learners who perceive information in an abstract manner, seek continuity, value sequential thinking, are thorough, and appreciate traditional environments. Kolb explained that the experimental learning style is seen on a continuum, ranging from tangible experiences to introspective observation and abstract concepts to active experimentation.

Gregorc's (1982) mind styles theory stems from the cognitive standpoint in that learning styles are symptomatic. Gregorc identified ways in which learners approach learning: (a) the concrete learner is sequential; they are structured, predictable, practical, and thorough; (b) the immaterial chronological learner is logical, theoretical, and academic; (c) the immaterial unsystematic learner is sensitive, friendly, resourceful, and expressive; and (d) the tangible, random learner is able to solve problems, original, and investigative.

Keefe (1988) posited there are three areas of learning styles: (a) cognitive styles are preferred ways learners perceives, coordinates, and preserves knowledge; (b) affective styles are learners whose personalities are motivated by attention, emotion, and valuing; and (d) physiological learner's personalities are founded gender related differences, the physical environment, and personal health and nutrition. Contemporary researchers such as James and Gardner (1995), posited learning styles consist of distinct but interrelated dimensions such as speech, movement, the five senses, mental, and emotional.

**Practical Applications**

Professional development managers recognize the process of learning is critical to understanding the ways teachers learn, which is the key to instructional development. The learning styles of teachers, if accommodated properly, can result in improved evaluations and learner attitudes toward increasing productivity, academic achievement, and creativity in the classroom. Professional development leaders could accommodate participants to help them focus their energy on learning.

In-service leaders could benefit from the use of a learning style instrument which helps create rosters that indicate the preferred learning style of participants (Keefe, 1988). This could help organize and group learners contingent on the need of class activity. A study by Keefe found that understanding the learning styles of participants helped to lessen divergence between presenter and participant primarily due to differences in learning styles and decreased adjustments to specific learning environments that hindered the learning process. James and Gardner (1995) indicated that because most affective

learning style mechanisms are not perceived directly, they provided the following recommendations:

Design a process to enable participants to become acquainted with the program as well as with each other while providing personalized communications with each participant before implementation or initial program segments.  Design options about content and process, while using an informal style in written and spoken components of the program. Provide images and languages that provide different cultural perspectives while using a process for peer support.  Communicate with teachers by name and establish regular active dialogue beyond the classroom learning experience.  (p. 25)

**Summary**

Professional development is an essential topic within the field of education because classroom teachers participate in some form of development, as required in the state or in the school district. Professional development programs are available in various formats, including conferences, workshops, online classes, college courses, and action research projects. Across the United States and internationally, effective models of professional development programs have been studied. Best practice for the career development of teachers can be gleaned from reported findings. This research also highlighted barriers to professional development programs, including budget issues, adverse teacher attitudes and perceptions, poor program design, and a lack of teacher choice and ownership of their professional development tasks.  Research into adult learning styles has had an impact on the professional development of educators. Just as children learn differently, the same is true with adults. Differentiation and knowledge

surrounding the myriad adult learning styles could aid in the information delivery,

retention, and application of educators.

Section 3: Research Method

**Introduction**

This case study was designed to evaluate the professional development processes of public school teachers in a northern state. The case study design was selected to explore ways the assessment process could increase teacher effectiveness over time. Limited research was available that addressed the evaluation process in terms of the change manifested in teacher knowledge and skills, school organizations, and classroom practice. The case study design allowed for an in-depth discussion of the professional development evaluation process within the daily procedures of the classroom. It was for this reason that I chose to conduct a qualitative, descriptive case study instead of measuring the success of professional development based on student quantitative data.

**Research Design**

I employed the qualitative, descriptive case study approach (Saldana, 2013; Yin 2003b, 2013). In qualitative research, "the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). This process aligns with the problem examined in the study in terms of limited investigations into effective assessment and evaluation of the professional development process. Many processes have never been assessed fully to determine whether they are creating positive change in teacher knowledge and skills, school organizations, or classroom practice. The descriptive case study methodology provided the opportunity to explore processes of evaluation, as they related to professional development, and determined which professional development activities

provided the greatest benefit to individual teachers in classroom practice. The focus group interview responses and reflections of the participants created a holistic picture of how specialists can move professional development evaluation from initiatives to effective classroom implementation.  With this qualitative study, I investigated these processes from within the natural setting of the school; therefore, I chose a qualitative research method over the quantitative method because qualitative research is open-ended and allowed for themes to emerge during the study (Auerbach & Silverstien, 2003; Creswell, 2003: Merriam, 2002).

Stake (1995) and Merriam (2003) defined case study as an in-depth explanation or investigation of an occurrence, a collective entity or of a distinct individual, and an obligated, blended structure. Merriam stated that by focusing on a single occurrence or case, this method can be used to describe the occurrence in depth. By design, case study is linked to time and activity as detailed information is collected using a variety of procedures (Stake, 1995). These procedures allowed direct input from participants and the use of multiple forms of data collection, including interviews and reflections.

After deciding on qualitative research, I evaluated the research questions. Saldnana (2013) suggested that researchers look at their research questions to help determine the type of approach used to collect data.  I, therefore, chose a case study approach because case studies are useful when answering *how* or *why* questions. My choice was supported in Yin's (1984, 2003b) discussions of case study methods. Moreover, I wanted to help establish a foundation through which future researchers could compare their personal circumstances. Therefore, I decided to collect data through focus

group interviews because the focus group interview is one of the main modes of data collection in the case study approach advocated in the research literature by Creswell (2007), Merriam (2002), and Saldana (2013). I thought a case study would be beneficial for investigating the culture of teacher professional development program in the school district as case studies are used for educational programs and complex issues around them.

I chose case the study approach to get teachers' perspectives on the evaluation of professional development programs as opposed to a single person's perspective as is the process in narrative form. Eliminating case study history helped me to focus instead on professional development events. Ethnographies were not chosen because they take place over a period of time, and I chose to examine only professional development assessment and evaluation policies and purposes. Grounded theory was not appropriate because my plan was not to engender abstract theory about professional development assessments and evaluations; I was only interested in discovering veteran teachers' feelings and experiences relative to professional development and accompanying overall evaluations and assessment of the professional development events. Phenomenology was not an option because I realized the application approach did not have practical implementation aspects once I analyzed the phenomenon. In the end, the case study approach was the best option.

## Research Questions

Throughout this study, the following research questions were considered:

1.  To what extent do the format, content and process of professional development in the city school district meet the needs and match the learning styles of the elementary school teacher?

2.  How and to what extent do elementary teachers in the city school district apply the new knowledge and skills in the classroom?

3.  How and to what extent does the quality of professional development within the city school district impact the initial satisfaction of elementary school teachers?

## Context for Study

This study was conducted in a northeastern state in an urban K-8 school. The school had a total of 341 students. The student population was comprised of 61% Hispanic, 38% African American, less than 3% Asian, and less than 3% Native American. Of those students, 48% were labeled as special education or intervention level. The faculty was comprised of one administrator, 29 classroom teachers, four special education teachers, 12 paraprofessional, and one literacy and math coach. The local public school was funded by the state and the instructors followed the state curriculum in math and literacy.

## Role of the Researcher

**Role of the Researcher at the Setting and With the Participants**

I was a teacher in a neighboring county and a doctoral student who actively collected and interpreted data at Walden University. I was in the school district for approximately 7 years and had participated in several professional development programs

and professional development evaluations at the elementary school level. For that reason, the elementary school at which I was employed was not used in this study.

**Criteria for Selecting of Participants**

Selecting a sample, on purpose, to yield the most information is the key to success in conducting qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Further, Yin (2014) suggested that to have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge, case sampling is likely to yield the most information. I used participants who were willing and easily accessible to provide information, who had completed professional development training within 3 years prior to the study, or who were in process of completing professional development training provided within the school district.

**Justification for the Number of Participants**

Creswell (2007) and Hatch (2002) stated that because data collection is extensive and draws upon multiple sources of information and because member checking is necessary, conducting a case study with a minimum of 3 to 5 participants is necessary to identify themes and to make an analysis of themes. Therefore, six participants were selected from the selected school in the district. The participants consisted of classroom teachers, in Grades Kindergarten through Grades 5, who taught at least 5 years, and who had experienced professional development during those years as teachers.

**Ethical Protection of Participants**

I presented all participants with a copy of a Consent Form (see Appendix A) to sign after they agreed to participate. By signing the form, participants agreed to

participate in one 45 to 90 minute focus group interview, with member checking to follow.

**Methods for Ethical Protection of Participants and Consent**

I acquired Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Walden University prior to beginning the study (see Appendix A). The IRB approval number is 07-23-13-0113692. Before selecting participants, I requested approval from the city school District Superintendent (see Appendix B) and school principals (see Appendix C). Before beginning the interviews, I had participants to sign an informed consent form outlining the purpose, goal, and objectives of the study and the right to discontinue participation at any time (see Appendix D).

Confidentiality was paramount because participants would be sharing their lived experiences. In order to protect the participants, I used numbers in the data collection and coding process, which were kept on a sheet of paper and was only available to me. Additionally, a secure password was created for all computer data and related information, and all digital audios were copied to a memory disk and kept in a locked file case when they were not in use. Member checking was used after analyzing the interview data to ensure participants' transcripts were accurate. A colleague who was not affiliated with the school or school district was available to look over the coded data as necessary and to help identify any themes that I did not address. The participants were not coerced, did not have their privacy violated, and were not placed under any unnecessary stress as a result of their participation in the interviewing process. No participant suffered psychosocial anxiety; nor were they deceived during their participation in the study. At

the conclusion of the study, data were stored on a password protected memory disk and will be kept for 5 years in a locked file case at my home.

**Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants**

The process I used to gain access to the participants included contacting the school principals from schools in the school system. I emailed the school principals asked them if they would permit teachers from their schools to participate in the study. I included in the email a copy of the Notification of Approval from a Community Research Partner to acknowledge that I had permission from the IRB of the school system to conduct the study. After receiving responses from the principals, I chose the first principals who responded and invited teachers from this school to participate in the study. I emailed teachers who met the inclusion criteria from and invited them to participate in this study. I used the random selection process to select the participants who responded positively to the invitation.

**Methods of Establishing Researcher-Participant Working Relationship**

During the course of the study, I generated questions for the interviews, conducted the interviews, transcribed the interviews, and analyzed the data from the interviews. I was the sole person working on this study; therefore, it was important to disclose that personal interest in this topic stemmed from discussions with colleagues, regarding their general dissatisfaction with their personal professional development experiences as well as a desire to learn about how professional development events could be tailored through effective assessments to meet the needs of teachers with various adult

learning styles. I knew only a few teachers outside the school, so it was unlikely they would volunteer for the study.

**Researcher's Experience or Biases Related to the Topic**

To further minimize the threat of researcher bias, the research questions were developed prior to the interviews, and there was no deviation from these questions. The participants were not guided to respond to the interview questions in any way. I did not express opinions or thoughts on professional development or how programs were evaluated during the study.

**Data Collection**

The focus group interview was used to collect data. Focus group interviews involve a researcher preparing an interview instrument, organizing a group of no more than four to six individuals to answer questions about a topic. Individuals who participate in focus group interviews should be knowledgeable about a subject based on personal experience and are able share insights about the subject under investigation and answer the questions asked on the instrument. The researcher records their responses about the questions on the instrument (Merriam, 2009). Data collection began following IRB approval and once participants signed all consent forms electronically and in person (see Appendix A). I began contacting the participants by telephone and in person to set up times for their participation in the estimated 45 to 90 minute semistructured focus group. The focus group interviews consisted of open-ended questions centered on teacher's experiences in professional development over the past 12 months (see Appendix D). I recorded the focus group session, which lasted approximately 45 to 55 minutes.

Once transcribed, I checked the transcriptions for accuracy, and the interview transcriptions were shared with participants to allow for member checking. Member checking increases the dependability of the researcher's findings by allowing the participant to comment on researcher's interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2009). As a result of member checking, additional information was received from participants. That information was added to the transcripts and coded using Microsoft Word to add to the recurring patterns and similar themes.

## Data Analysis

### Data Analysis Procedures

Stake (1995) indicated that a case study includes an analysis of the data for themes. In an effort to identify themes, I read through the data looking for general thoughts and ideas that might address the research questions. As general ideas arose, I began to highlight the ideas in different colors. After I highlighted the general ideas, I sorted them (using copy/paste function in Microsoft Word) and placed them into a new document. Within the new document, I gave each color a specific code, according to recurring patterns and similar themes (see Appendix E). To add to internal validity, I emailed the coded data to a fellow colleague, who worked in another district and state. The colleague looked over the coded data to verify any themes and patterns that I did not note and e-mailed it back to me. The coded themes and patterns were used to help guide a final conceptualization that addressed each research question.

**Methods to Address Validity and Trustworthiness**

Validity is a method used to check for accuracy of the finding (Creswell, 2009; Hatch, 2002). I was able to ensure the validity of this study by using data triangulation from six different participants in a focus group interview, member checks, and peer debriefing (e.g., Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Merriam and Associates (2002) stated that member checking allows the participant to comment on the researcher's interpretation of the data. Creswell (2009) stated that peer debriefing is having a colleague review the information and interpretation of the results.

## Summary

Section 3 contained the methods used to conduct the research study. I included specific reasons and approaches for choosing the research design, the participants, and the collection and storage of data. I also included details about the background of the study, schools, and the participants, in conjunction with my role as the researcher. I concluded Section 3 with an explanation of how I planned to ensure the validity of the study findings before presenting the results and analysis of the data.

Section 4: Results

**Introduction**

Section 4 includes a presentation of the data and findings as a result of data collection and analysis in four parts. Part 1 begins with the methods used to collect, record, and transcribe data. Part 2 includes an explanation of how the data were triangulated to insure the validity of the findings. An explanation of how the data were analyzed and coded is included in Part 3. The section ends with the findings from the data analysis and how the findings addressed the research questions. When referring to participants in the last section, identification numbers were used to protect their identity.

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the overall significance of professional development assessment for elementary school teachers. The study included insights about the role of adult learning styles and teachers' assessment of professional development events. The process of implementing beneficial professional development with a focus on adult learning styles could assist teachers to become effective in teaching any content. The research questions at the foundation of this study were the following:

1. To what extent do the format, content and process of professional development in the city school district meet the needs and match the learning styles of the elementary school teacher?

2. How and to what extent do elementary teachers in the city school district apply the new knowledge and skills in the classroom?

3.  How and to what extent does the quality of professional development within
    the city school district impact the initial satisfaction of elementary school
    teachers?

**Data Collection and Recording**

**Process for Generating Data**

The 15 interview questions were aimed at identifying perceptions and needs of
teachers as adult learners and finding suggestions for meeting the needs of teachers
through professional development events.  During the interview, I took reflective notes in
a journal in order to prepare for probing questions and questions for participants for
member checking in the next stage.  The journal was kept in a secure, locked file box in
my home. The highest number of participants taught in the early primary grades.

Table 1

*Background of Participants*

| Participant | Grade | Subject | Years |
|---|---|---|---|
| P-1 | Kindergarten | All | 30 |
| P-2 | 2 | All | 20 |
| P-3 | 2 | All | 15 |
| P-4 | 1 | All | 10 |
| P-5 | 3 | All | 7 |
| P-6 | 4 | All | 5 |

**Transcribing and Organizing the Data**

Once all the interviews were conducted, I transcribed the data using speech recognition software developed by Apple Communications, similar to Dragon Naturally Speaking. I read the transcripts carefully, looking for errors that could have been as a result of inaudible parts on the recording device, made manual corrections on the computer, and saved the transcription to my computer. Each participant received an email copy of the transcripts, checked them for accuracy, and replied to email with revisions, corrections, or an agreement of accuracy, using the phrase *I agree with the transcript as written.* Corrections were made as necessary.

The next step was to read the transcripts multiple times, making a concerted effort to begin interpreting the data. After reading the transcripts numerous times, I summarized each participant's responses to each interview question in separate files, seeking themes and ideas that addressed the research questions. I then created individual Microsoft Word documents from each coded transcript into appropriate electronic file.

Themes and ideas noticed were placed in the notes section of each file. After summarizing and note taking on each interview question, I began conducting member checks with each participant. This information was useful in beginning to understand what issues affected the participants. Member checking allowed me to gather more in-depth information and clear up any misconstructions. Auerbach and Silverstien (2003) stated that member checking increases the researcher's dependability and findings by allowing the participant to make comments on researcher's interpretation of the findings. Information from member checking was gathered, recorded, transcribed, checked for

accuracy, and summarized in the same manner as the initial interviews.  The recording

device was kept in a locked cabinet in my home office and all transcripts and notes were

kept on my home computer in a secure encrypted password.

## Data Coding

This case involved explaining what was learned from the interviews and

reasoning how various themes, events, and data concepts were connected. After

interviews were transcribed, I came up with five overarching themes that matched three

of the research questions.  Those themes were positive professional development

experiences, negative professional development experiences, administrative actions about

professional development, learning styles, and professional development collegiality and

sharing. I then created separate files for each interview question, and once the files were

created, I reviewed the transcripts to identify other possible themes.  As a result, one

additional theme was found.  The theme was professional development quality. I was

able to code a total of six emerging themes to help develop the findings from this study.

Using the highlight function in Microsoft Word, I coded sentences, idioms,

phrases, and paragraphs that helped to identify each theme.  The comment function was

also used to add thinking points, related comments, and notes in the margin. I then

created numerous subcategories after reading the highlighted areas and comments.  The

coding chart (see Appendix G) notes the subcategories in each theme. Manually coding

the data helped me to appropriate the data into more than one category.  Although this

task was arduous, the validity of the information in the findings became more distinct.

**Presentation of Data**

At the start of the focus group interview, the participants seemed ardent in anticipation and welcomed the opportunity to respond to the first section of questions asked. It was not difficult to elicit responses because of their willingness to share in a discussion that meant so much to them. Their body language exhibited confidence, and they seemed excited about the prospect of participating.

Participants shared their professional development experiences and the anxiety associated with their experiences during and after some professional development workshops. They discussed professional development objectives, and how effective assessments could help them become more successful as classroom teachers. Six themes emerged from the findings of the data. Each theme is discussed in-depth.

**Organizational Support**

The participants in the study shared their perception of what constitutes quality professional development experiences relative to the school district. Their views helped to address the following research question: How has the city school district implemented evaluations of professional development for the elementary teacher? To describe how elementary teachers felt about professional development experiences, it was necessary to describe the overall structure, planning, knowledge learned, participant reaction, use of new knowledge and skills, and organizational support of professional development programs.

Professional development refers to many types of educational experiences related to an individual's work (Dantonio, 2001). For teachers and school district leaders to be as

effective as possible, they must continue to expand their knowledge and skills to implement the most effective educational practices. There was a consensus among researchers in the literature review that professional development is the only strategy school systems have to strengthen educators' performance levels (Cubukcu, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Desimone, 2009; Fullan, 2007; Hadar & Brody, 2010; Hall & Hord, 2011). In the city public schools, effective professional development affects students.

The study district professional development system for P-5, P-6, and P-1 was helpful. However, the types of professional development offered were inconsistent with what they sought as teachers, and the quality was less than what they expected. P-6 described her professional development activities as being "centered around the evaluation system [but] instead of helping, it has increased my anxiety."

P-1 concurred but stated further, "It seems the entire teaching staff has anxiety. You can feel it in our conversations during professional development days." Ingersoll (2003) stated that experienced teachers encounter great challenges on a yearly basis, such as subject matter, innovative instructional procedures, innovations in technology, different laws and processes, and student scholarship. P-5 concluded, however, "If it's a good workshop, I take those ideas back to my classroom and try them out." All six participants agreed that effective professional development workshops result in positive classroom experiences and increased student achievement.

When asked what could be done at the school level to improve implementation of professional development ideas in your classroom, P-2 stated,

Right now, it seems confusing to the district office and at the school level because

most of the presentations are not organized well at grade level. Though the

training we receive is mentioned as a practice, the presentations are not often

presented in that way.

P-1 agreed by stating, "Often the workshops lump kindergarten in with first, second, and third graders, which is too hard. Kindergarten is a different animal." But most times the workshop leaders just don't get it."

Observing the professional development structure of the school district, there was a consensus that there was very little time for teachers to engage in shared learning after professional development workshops. "We are told to come back and share what training we learned," P-3 stated, "but there is very little time to do so." P-2 concurred: "For example, the Math Department at one college shared useful ideas on how to use virtual manipulative materials for every grade." P-3immediately responded, "But we were kept so busy with grading, testing, and other school related activities, I was not able to 'turnkey' what I learned with my colleagues."

The participants also shared their concern over professional development follow up of the city school district. Evidence over several years posits that most effective in-service programs include activities that are ongoing, sustained over time, and engage teachers who interact with each other (Desimone et al., 2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). However, according to P-4, "[With] some of the workshops, I just go there and it's like something you've heard over and over. It's like here we go with something new and what I just had hasn't sunk it yet." All six participants lifted their voices in support.

"Moreover," P-3 said, "district professional development planners will ask teachers, 'Well, what do you need to know?' And I say, 'If this is something new, I don't know what I need to know.'"

Participants shared their concern about the workshop of the school district leaders and their preparation. P-2 stated, "Sometimes I feel I know more than the presenters. To me, some of the presenters appear to be unprepared and to just want to get things over with." Three out of the six participants chose professional development workshops out of the district because, according to P-5, "There's more available that suit my needs for many of the lessons I teach." However according to P-1, "The district and the school board make the decision for their availability and the process of signing up is extensive and often time consuming and that is frustrating." All six participants expressed their concern about access and the inconvenience associated with attending workshops outside the district. "I'd rather attend workshops in the district," P-5 explained, "because it's so convenient. But if it's something I need to help with my classroom instruction, I will make the sacrifice. And that is something that I think the district just doesn't get." The apparent strategies used to organize professional development activities in the district garnered varied opinions and concerns among the participants. Their anxieties were based on actual experiences over 5 years, and they were uncertain as to the direction of professional development in the future.

**Participant Learning**

The participants in the study shared their perception as to whether the professional development content met their needs as a teacher. These views helped to address the

following research question: To what extent do the format, content, and process of professional development in the school district meet the needs and match the learning styles of elementary teachers? All six participants stated that their professional development needs were not met at one time or another.

P-4's concern was that there was "too much lecture and not enough hands' on activities." Their concern was that elementary grade teachers (Grades K-3) used more hands on activities than upper grade teachers used, and it was important that professional development workshops included more opportunities for teachers to create with their hands at all elementary levels. Cross-curricular lesson planning is tantamount to student learning because elementary teachers often incorporate all subjects in their classes. P-2 stated, "For me, as a hands-on learner, I think there should be a better balance of visual, auditory and hands' on projects and presentations."

When asked about their individual learning styles, all six participants expressed most professional development workshop presentations did not address their style of learning. P-6 stated, "I'm a very hands-on person. Given the grade I teach, hands-on learning is a must for the students' and my understanding of the content. But it does not mean I ignore other levels being taught. It's just my preference."

P-4 concurred, "I'm a very visual learner more than hands-on. But I too must use both to help my students understand the content." All six participants agreed that professional development workshops should address the learning styles of adults. P-3 agreed: "They [school district, school board, and principal] don't seem to understand that just as we have to get to know the learning styles of our children, those children grow up

to be adults with those same learning styles." P-3 continued by stating, "Teacher

workshops could go a little farther in helping us become more effective in the

classroom." P-6 concurred, "Yeah. It's like when you hired me, what did you expect for

me to do as a teacher? Just to become something similar to a robot is that it?" P-5 was in

accord by stating, "Most professional development at this school doesn't offer hands-on

activities. For example, I like things like 'make it and take it' where I could create

manipulatives that are mainly effective in the primary grades-especially kindergarten and

first grade." She went on to explain, "When you make something yourself, you are more

likely to appreciate its value and the students recognize that and want increase their

learning by participating more."

The participants agreed there is a culture that is created within each classroom

that aligns itself with the culture of the school. The participants also agreed that

professional development should help to create learning culture that shows professional

development administrators believe in teachers as students. To achieve the professional

development goals and objectives, instruction should be individualized and should foster

a sense of community. P-4 asserted, "If I feel like I have to sit there for hours and just

listen, then who wants to do that?"

Participants in the focus group indicated that a survey of teacher professional

development needs is necessary to help enhance their workshop experiences. "I believe,"

P-1 stated, "a good way to develop effective professional development would be to create

a survey asking teachers what they really need." The six participants felt a teacher survey

would assist them with how to choose which workshops based on content, clarity of

workshop purpose and objectives for their classroom success. "There are so many things we need help with," P-1 further stated. "If we need help with math, why send us to literacy workshops?" Too many teachers, according to the P-6 are asked to participate in professional development that is often meaningless and unimportant.

When participants were asked about being active or passive learners, two participants shared their responses. P-5 stated, "It depends on the workshop leader's knowledge of our learning styles. If you are allowed to have a partner to work with, what you learn stays with you." "But," P-1 stated, "Just sitting and taking notes is not profitable at all. I get bored real easy and shut down." All six participants agree that interactivity of professional development workshops adds to the interest of teachers and increases learning. P-1 continued by adding, "If the presenter is up there, simply talking and talking, how is that helping me? If you don't know or cannot show me, how is that helping me?" P-1 agreed and added, "If the presenter is going to show photographs of students interacting with the lesson, it makes sense to show them close up as opposed to appearing to be 500 feet way." Workshop presentations and visuals need to be clear and understandable, according to P-1. All the participants shared the consensus that workshop presentations be deliberate in their attempt to present and share knowledge to them adults as learners. All six participants agreed that the district should take better leadership in choosing professional development workshops, which according to Miechtry (2007), helps to foster a better sense of caring and concern for teachers and teacher learning.

Research has shown professional development allows teachers as learners to be regularly accountable for their decision-making, actions, and performance (Darling-

Hammond, 2006; Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Durlak et al. 2011; Fleischman, 2006). All six participants agreed that everyone involved with educating children should be held accountable for improving teacher learning capacity.

**Use of New Knowledge and Skills**

All the participants responded to the question: As a result of professional development, what results have you noticed in your classroom? These views helped to address the research question: How and to what extent do elementary teachers in the city school district apply what has been learned as a result of professional development in the classroom? Three of the six participants stated that new knowledge is obtained if the content of professional development is related to what, why, and how they teach in the classroom. P-4stated:

I went to a literacy workshop where the current reading standards called for Text Evidence in reading. And as a part of text evidence, my class discussed learning Essential questions before I knew the importance of essential questions. So this year, I make sure students know how to answer these essential questions.  And when I ask the students for text evidence after they read specific passages, they know the standards because the workshop discussed them ahead of time.

P-1 shared her positive results of new knowledge learned and used in the classroom and stated, "Yes. Stuff like that is what I use including the stuff I throw in." She continued:

I went to a kindergarten workshop where the presenter used a lot of cute ways to help students learn at least 60 sight words. She said to simply write the words on plain

paper, ball them up and create a snowball game! I'm like, wow! Just writing words on plain pieces of paper and using it as a snowball game? Now I use it all the time with my kindergartners! Even children who are having problems with sight words are getting it! That was over two years ago and I still use it. Now when I say snowball game, the kids go crazy!

All the participants agreed how the positive effects new knowledge and skills learned greatly enhances teacher classroom performance. P-2's response was more guarded as she stated, "If we learn specific skills from professional development, I apply them if I feel it will increase my student's learning. But too often I have to rely on my own strengths." The six teachers agreed that inconsistent new knowledge produced in professional development causes them to rely solely on what they already know. This was a concern for 4 of the six participants because they felt their evaluations as teachers greatly depend on what is learned and how well the students retain information that was taught.

When participants were asked to share some of the challenges they face in implementing the new knowledge, P-1 and P-6 shared their concern of the lack of available materials available to implement certain lessons. "Well for one thing", P-6 stated, "Not having the materials to implement lessons; you have to beg, borrow, and sometimes steal from other teachers! And that becomes a problem especially when you feel uncomfortable asking teachers to loan or give you certain things you should already have available." P-1 agreed that the availability of materials such as required reading text, paper, suggested reading material, and various media challenges teachers to implement

classroom instruction sufficiently. All agreed that if certain materials are not available, they do with what they have access to in their classrooms. Their concern for unfair accountability by school district and building leadership evaluations increased their anxiety and it simply is not fair to them. For example, the timing of professional development workshops and requirements was a concern of P-3. She said,

The last workshop I attended would've been nice if it was at the beginning of the school year. Here it is at the end of the school year and we are given a workshop we could've used at the beginning of the school year! The timing of some workshops is totally off!

The timing of professional development was a problem for all of the participants as they concurred with response. "Education has a certain flow to it," P-3 stated. "By the time we get to the end of the school year, in my assessment, it seems as though administration should be planning for next year at the end of the school year." "Furthermore," P-3 continued,

If they are introducing something new, give it to us at the end of the school year so we could play with it, turn it over, think about it, interact with it and be able to apply it for the coming school year."

P-1, P-2, P-4, P-5, and P-6 agreed that attention to better timing, planning, and continuity of professional development workshops helps to increase teachers' planning and effectiveness. P-2 said, "But what usually happens is that they give us a professional development workshop and say 'now, go and apply it!' It's crazy! And then we become accountable for implementing the workshop results into our lessons! Really? What?"

The discussion of teacher evaluations and professional development garnered responses from all six participants. P-5 agreed and stated, "Yes!! And on top of that, the trainers are not that good!"

Professional development timing and presentation continuity continued with P-3 stating, "The one thing I noticed is that, let's say the training has five parts, right? Professional development might only do parts one and two and not complete all five parts for some reason or another!"

P-5 concurred and added, "Or they only train you on those parts and then tell you not to use it!" "Yes. Use something totally new." P-2 chimed in, "With unavailable materials," P-1 added. P-3 declared, "Here's our training manual with great ideas for teaching writing and they don't even use those ideas. They use other ideas, which are not often associated with the classroom text. "And only certain components are purchased by the district and you have to make up for the rest," P-5 exclaimed. "We try and make up for the rest of the materials that are missing."

**Participants' Reactions**

Participant's frustration with seemingly endless and difficult teacher expectations stirred responses. For example, P-1 declared, "It is wrong for district expectations to be hard on the students and us as teachers!" P-6 concurred, "It's really frustrating sometimes when we are seemingly forced to do what we have to do instead of doing things the way we'd like to do." P-1 added, "Although some of the best workshops are not offered in the district, I feel bad about attending those workshops because my teaching experience is with this district."

When participants were asked about the possibility of attending professional development workshops during the summer, all of them agreed and would make the sacrifice if the district were to offer them. All six participants agreed that consistent professional development; quality of content, and district availability of workshops would help teachers with classroom teaching continuity.

When teachers were asked to what extent these challenges did affect or interfere with their implementation of the professional development experience, all participants agreed that the interruption of the teaching flow within the school district was a problem for them.  P-3 stated,

The thing that happens when teaching flow is interrupted; it takes me off course, especially when there is an implementation of requirements district-wide. There is no flow with our teaching in the district when we leave for the summer and come back to school the next year. We are required to implement training that many of us have forgotten over the summer months. So, by the time I step into the new school year I've already outlined my approach for that year. And then I'm told, 'No. You cannot do it that way!'

P-5 agreed and stated,

I want to be an effective teacher for the students. I want to be a team player. But because the school district administration sends me in circles for minute, it seems professional development is not well thought out or presented in a timely manner."

All the participants agreed that there is a lack of time for collegiality and if given the opportunity they felt based on their classroom teaching experience the opportunity to

design professional development classes would be beneficial to them and their colleagues. For example, P-2 shared her concern about the latest technology training of the Promethean Board in her classroom. She said,

It would've been helpful to first ask the teacher where the placement of the board could be in our classroom. The district never conferred with us as to where we would like the board place in our classroom. It's those small nit picking things such as this that really annoy me.

P-2 added,

Their training on how to use the Promethean board was just one day! It's a fantastic piece of technology! But one-day training just does not work! Although every class has a Promethean board the design and the software used is completely different.

P-3 added,

All they did was give us a cheat sheet on how to start it up but no additional documents that talk about what to do once you get started. So, we had to take time from our lesson planning and preparation time to figure out how it worked. Most of us are familiar with the technology now but there is still a lot to learn. But the workshops seem to have dried up!

All the participants agreed with P-1 when she shared,

It's hard to make time to learn any new information because there's just no time so I stay after school when I can, try new things on the fly, and hope things go well. Now, with all district testing, it's even harder to find time to do all that!"

All of the participants agree that the use of the Promethean board technology is a vital necessity in that it includes the teachers learning plan, student attendance requirements, listing of professional development workshops, and weekly, quarterly, and final grade software. For example, P-4 stated,

It is also a way of communicating to teachers as to what professional development is available. Teachers can go on and sign up for professional development, read their learning plan, which tells us what professional development workshops we are available to sign up for or what is already a sign for us.

The participants agreed that many of the posted district professional development for teachers that is available are often irrelevant or not interesting. The district mandates specific workshops teachers must attend but most of the workshops according to the participants, failed to ignite any excitement or enthusiasm. Moreover, according to the participants, most workshops they would like to attend are out of the district where there is an added cost of paying for them, the inconvenience of driving to them, the distance they must travel–usually in another city–and the difficult application process. This adds to their anxiety–especially if it's a workshop that they feel could help them enhance their learning experience.

**Participant Anxiety**

From the responses given by the participants to the previous interview questions I was able to make an assumption of how the participants would respond to the question, How does the professional development affect how they feel about their jobs as teachers?

All six participants expressed a desire to respond to this question. For example, P-4 stated,

It depends on the workshop. For me, I feel anxious when I attend certain workshops because for me it is an additional thing that I have to do. It's something else to be responsible for. I'm thinking about what more what I have to do–especially if the workshop is not meaningful. With all that I have to do already, I'm going to be expected to do more things for my class and myself. To me, attending some workshops simply means more work to do.

P-6 felt the workload seems to increase each year and with that comes more responsibility. "It's really tough," she stated. "There are times, and too many days I feel like quitting." P-3 stated. When I talk about my job, I feel there are two parts; the administrative part and the teaching part. It's trying to handle the administration parts where I get frustrated. Doing the actual teaching does not frustrate me. It's the administrative stuff in the classroom that gets to me.

P-4 stated, "All our leadership is so far removed on the day to day activities of the classroom and implementation of lessons that the administrative things just don't fit. P-3 exclaimed, "For example, the administration and distribution of unit tests at the end of chapters in Math, Reading, and Science for district requirements.  P-3 continued:

We have unit tests to administer based on the common core assessments for students. Let's say the assessment is for counting money. Why is there a need for 35 questions; especially for one second grade class?  By the time students get to let's say, 20 questions, they become frustrated. Then, I have to grade by coloring in bubbles on a

Scantron sheet. This represented 35 questions for 23 students, with one on one assessment procedures!

P-6 stated her frustration and added, "That is weeks and weeks I could be spending teaching during the year." P-3 added, "And if I don't do it, I am considered and insubordinate teacher." P-4 agrees. "There is frustration because you can't do more of what you love to do. Because of testing I should be given a choice to teach more on that which I am testing. Something is wrong, just wrong!"

The teachers felt their teaching time and lesson choices for effective implementation have been diminished because of the amount of testing that is required as result of the new state mandated common core requirements, All agreed that more time to share with colleagues could help to increase teaching effectiveness in spite of the state mandated Common Core requirements being a challenge for them at times.

All six participants felt there was a disconnection between district and school leadership when it came to professional development and teacher effectiveness. P-3 stated, "For example, when a child enters a classroom, his or her interests are strongly considered as learners. Why can't school and district administration do the same for teachers?"

The participants agreed that their learning needs were not being met because of a lack of communication between school administrative staff and other teachers. "It seems the only time we get to talk to other teachers is in passing and maybe the break room during our prep time", P-6 explained. "Many things from administration seems great in theory but its application is so far removed from the need to help us help our children

become successful and to show mastery at their respective grade level", stated P-4. "Lisa remarked, "When we do compete those evaluations after professional development workshops," "Ask us relevant questions or ask us to give relative comments according to our true feelings about what was presented."

The six participants agreed that there could be better connections between theory and application of teacher workshops, increased administrative support for teacher learning, and more professional development preparation. P-5 stated, "I would love to see professional development that didn't seem as if it was thrown together the night before! Sometimes when I go to these workshops, it's obvious that nobody prepared ahead of time." P-3 added, "Right now, I'm feeling very incredulous. I hope your study helps in letting the administrators understand how frustrating professional development is and how it is not helping as much as they think".

Based on the data collected from interviews and review of documents, many themes emerged regarding professional development programs and activities, professional development evaluation, adult learning theory, and teacher efficacy. The findings revealed how effective evaluation of professional development and the focus on learning styles of teachers help to increase teacher productivity. Major headings represent the themes gathered from the focus group interviews, while the sub-headings represent specific themes created as a result of the research and final focus group codes. All findings are discussed relative to the theoretical framework and the literature.

**The Findings**

**Research Question #1**

To what extent do the format, content, and process of professional development in the city school district meet the needs and match the learning styles of the elementary school teacher? Most professional development initiatives offered fell very short of teachers' expectations as per their response to the interview questions. According to the participants, the generalized nature of professional development and its lack of focus failed to effect teacher learning. Butler (2012) stated that professional development programs are, in general, ineffective. Teachers are neither changed or the training program fails to make a difference in student learning. A summary of the finding suggests the focus of the construct of professional development should not be generic, but instead grounded in the learning styles of teachers.

**Content and Process**

Each interview response to the focus group questions included concerns over the quality and inconsistency of professional development programs as they related to the teachers' styles of learning. P-6 described her professional development experience as having been centered on the evaluation system, but instead of helping, the learning experiences increased her anxiety. In spite of its fundamental role in education and school improvement, the professional development experience for most teachers received little support in systematic reform (Ermeling, 2009).

Active learning, content comprehension, and rationality of professional development are the primary characteristics of staff development (Guskey, 2000).

Guskey further posited that the consistency of a professional development program is apparent, as an integrated whole, and is constructed upon development activities in a consecutive fashion. For P-4, she stated that she could "feel the anxiety in our conversations during the days leading up to and during the professional development days," The participants also felt their efforts to bring about effective change in the classroom, as a result of poor professional development, was not supervised. Teachers, therefore, closed the doors to their classrooms and often taught privately in a similar manner as described in the literature (Zapeda, 2012).

P-2 felt there were some professional development workshops that were beneficial when the content presented was helpful. "But it must be something in the workshop that I can use," she exclaimed. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) reported that over 90% of teachers having participated in professional development reported that most of the training was not useful. Workshops planned on a long term basis, in a series, and sustainable, would result in improved student achievement (Meichtry, 2007). The participants indicated that if professional development programs were consistent and longer in duration, opportunities for a successful classroom experience would be an asset to the teachers' classroom experience. Lieberman and Wilkins (2006) posited that the duration of professional development must be significant to allow time for teachers to learn new strategies and to grapple with the problem of implementation.

P-3 and P-6 voiced their concerns over how professional development programs were presented without favorable structure and clear objectives and organization. According to P-1, "We just went there and it was like something we've all heard over and

over. It's as if no one asks for your input before you attend and while you are there."

D'Ambrosio, Harkness, and Boone (2004) advanced that professional development

programs are needed to help teachers decide which program events are important to assist

student learning. Yet, teachers are not able to adopt what they learn in most teacher

workshops because most professional development workshops are presented passively as

opposed to any engagement.

P-4 stated that because of her 30 years of teaching experience, it is very difficult

to "dazzle her" with workshops that do not present clear challenges to her learning

experience. Most content presented in teacher learning workshops should not be generic,

but instead grounded in the teacher's grade level. P-4 explained,

I remember one workshop on literacy where the presenter actually brought

different types of anchor charts that I could actually see and use and take back to my

classroom. I took photographs of them because I felt there were some things that I could

actually use in my classroom.

Louchs-Horsley (2010) advised that professional development facilitators should

help teachers become self-reliant so as to present in their classrooms the knowledge,

concepts, and skills that they acquire from the workshop settings. Moreover, Louchs-

Horsley posits that as teachers become more responsible for what they learn, the

facilitator could gradually move from instructor to participant by having teachers become

self-directed learners. Using interactive techniques instead of lectures, professional

development workshops would not appear disconnected, as P-4 stated. Her concern about

presentations was like "something I've heard over and over." Whether facilitators are

used internally or externally, it is important that they have credibility with teachers

(Redding & Kamm, 1999). Teaching experiences at or near grade level and discipline,

according to Redding and Kamm, also helps to give credence to a facilitator.

**Relationship to Literature**

The findings of this research study are analogous with the broader literature.

Joyce and Showers (2005) stated that only 5-10% of the knowledge gained in

professional development training makes its way back to classroom if there is no follow

up. The National Staff Development Council (2007) generated shared standards, which

include but are not limited to content knowledge, quality teaching, inquiry based,

teamwork, diverse learning fundamentals, scholarly learning atmospheres, family

contribution, assessment, data driven instructional processes, and teacher education. All

of the participants contended that if more attention were given to high quality workshops,

this attention would allow for personal reactions other than anxiousness and apathy.

Professional improvement and other in-service platforms are intended to foster

progression of teachers to further their development (Williams, 2013).

Cookson (2007) and Guskey (2000) related that it is imperative that examination

of content and how professional development takes place become the primary factor for

successful classroom experiences for teachers. One comprehensive study analyzed over

1,200 studies, covering the entire landscape of professional development research (Yoon

et al., 2007). The results showed that programs that were less than 14 hours long (similar

to the one shot in services held in most schools) had no effect on student achievement.

Further Yoon et al. acknowledged that there was little to no teacher change in classroom

teaching efficiency. P-3 summarized her professional development concerns this way, "After professional development presentations and its content, I expected something different from each new workshop experience, but for most workshops, it's the same old thing."

There is a disconnection between what is known as best practices and the professional development experiences teachers receive. Most educators can articulate what they like and dislike about their own professional development. However, many educators do not see the immediate results with solely mandated courses. Teachers must be able to see rewards for their hard work by having the ability to be able to perceive and understand the connection between their development and student achievement (Knight, 2007; Knight, Emm, & Wade, 2007).

Common practice is that teachers should be able to lead professional development presentations because colleagues share some of the same context, concerns, and students (Knight, Emm, & Wade, 2007). Best practices are useful to instructors when teachers are in charge of creating learning teams, designing programs with teachers as learners in mind, and have the ability to feel ownership of their professional development experience. Learning teams help to facilitate events that are appropriate to build teacher ownership, while customizing activities to fit the needs of the teacher (Knight, 2007). Thus, taking ownership of their professional growth with available classroom data offers correlative and applicable information.

Identification of quality professional development programs takes a commitment from the school community to involve other stakeholders in the process of teacher

enhancement actives. Parents, community partners, and administrators are needed to help identify the goals of professional development. This process may have its skeptics, but Tomlinson (2005) posited that a holistic professional development plan and a change from the mass inoculation of teachers' professional development throughout their career inhibit teacher growth and progress. Reflective, informed, connective, diagnostic, problem focused, and quality concerns are key elements in staff development programs. Identifying new knowledge, developing appropriate assessment systems, and measuring how professional development training transfers to the classroom, and to district, to school administrators, and to other stakeholders could help to determine (a) inadequate repertoire of instructional approaches, (b) lack of consideration of teachers as individuals, and (c) a scarcity of proficiencies to manage various types of adult learning styles (Tomlinson, 2005).

Students in one setting do not easily learn new concepts or innovative ideas; and the same should apply to teachers. Instead of one-day workshops, effective professional development training is conducted over time, and as such, involves teaching with active and collective participation. Michaelson, Knight, and Fink (2009) indicated that some professional development workshops were monotonous for teachers and were like "hearing the same thing over and over. It is like nobody is asking you for your input before you go to any of these workshops." (p.3)

A sense of ownership in professional development planning and the knowledge teachers' gain allows time for reflection and inquiry and can increase the effectiveness of instruction in the classroom (Davis, 2009). According to Marzano (2007), relevance of

professional development training is sustained by modeling, coaching, and specific

problem solving, based upon the knowledge surrounding the ways teachers learn.  Hadar

and Brody (2010), Marzano (2007), and Mockler (2005), recommend three action steps

for professional development; (a) that they establish norms of collegiality conduct, (b)

teachers be involved in the school decision making, and (c) meaningful staff development

activities for teachers. Meaningful teacher workshops must include teachers in the design

and in the implementation.

Professional development programs need time and the opportunity for reflection

and inquiry. Teacher input before, during, and after professional development activities,

must be gleaned (Wolf, 2007). It is important to schedule time for reflection to improve

skills.P-5 stated that teachers were told that some of the training they received should be

shared with their colleagues. "We are asked to turnkey-come back and share what we

learned so that they could benefit from the learning.  But we rarely, if ever, have time to

do it." According to Skerrett (2010), in order for teachers to deliver rigorous and relevant

learning for their students, they need to engage in collective inquiry, particularly with

regard to the decision making process, lesson design, and analyzing data from collective

sources. Effective practice offers time for teachers to reflect on professional development

knowledge, concepts, and skills because focused reflection encourages teachers to

reshape their imagination and helps them to reconstruct their knowledge.

**Relationship to the Theoretical Framework**

**Adult learning styles.** Teachers evolve through developmental stages during

career advancement, and their unique needs at each stage must be addressed in the

professional development plan and in each event (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Recognition of teachers' performance at varying levels is in direct conflict to the supposition that all teachers learn the same regardless of their prior experiences. Houle (1964) recognized diverse adult learners grounded in reasons why they participate in an educational venture. He found that (a) goal oriented learners achieve goals through education, (b) activity positioned learners choose learning based on activities involved in the learning, and (c) learning oriented students seek learning for the sake of learning.

Kolb's (1984) theory of experimental learning declared that each adult develops a distinctive learning style with strong and weak points. He identified the characteristics of each learner as either imaginative, analytic, common sense, or dynamic. Kolb's theory places learning styles on a scale, shifting from concrete through reflective and conjectural to active administration. Knowles (1990) considered the adult learner as a neglected species. Research has shown that the teachers of adult students regard adult experiences and employ those experiences to situations producing effective educational results (Desimone, et al., 2006; Kardos et al., 2007; Miechtry & Smith, 2007; Patterson et al., 2004). Sadler-Smith (2006) posited that learning styles could drive the development of different learning and teaching techniques, which enhance learning performance.

Professional and educational leaders acknowledge the process of learning is important and understanding how individuals learn is the key to instructional improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2003). Adult learning styles, if accommodated, result in enhanced approaches towards learning, with increased productivity, educational achievement, and innovation (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004).

Desimone et al. (2002) posited that teachers must be afforded the opportunity actively to engage and to interact with each other around curriculum and instruction. P-5 confirmed her concern by stating, "Although we do have our learning teams, we are not given a fair amount of time to meet on an ongoing basis. Without more consistent time to share with my colleagues, how can we continue to grow as teachers?"

Collaboration between learners may improve learning. According to Marzano (2007) and Van der Linden, Erkens, Schmidt, and Renshaw (2000), learners working together to create a common product, helps to increase a common bond, which is so often neglected in teaching. Construction of knowledge through communication gives adult learners the opportunity to externalize meaning and reasoning through communication (Berkley, Cross, & Howell Major, 2005).

In summation of the focus group responses from all the participants, the review of literature, and the theoretical framework, professional development, according to Bolt (2009b), Cafferella (2002), Guskey (2000), and Zapeda (2012), must consider that adults use their experience as a resource, which cannot be ignored, and adult learners who are responsible for instructing students, need to plan their own educational paths, based on their own interest and their students' needs in the classrooms. The aim of adult learning should be to promote individual development by encouraging their reflection and inquiry.

**Research Question #2**

How and to what extent does the quality of professional development within the city school district impact the initial satisfaction of Elementary school teachers? Participants agreed that professional development anxiety affected their ability to perform

in the classroom. P-4 stated, "I feel anxious when I attend some workshops because it means I will have one more thing to do. With all that I have to do already, attending poor workshops makes me feel even more anxious." Along with their anxiety, the increased workload, responsibilities in and outside of school, frustration with a disconnected administration and school building leadership, challenged their implementation of oftentimes-poor quality professional development program.

Moreover, with the Common Core teaching assessments, high-stakes testing, and new mandated district requirements, the participants' often felt teaching was not worth the effort. "There are too many days I feel like quitting," exclaimed P-3. "When I think about my job, I feel there are two parts; the administrative and the teaching.  It's the administrative part where I become frustrated."

An agreement among the participants was that there is a disconnection between administration and the teachers' classroom performance.  "Doing the actual teaching doesn't frustrate me,"P-5 stated. Participants felt that district leadership and school leadership are far removed from most of the day-to-day activities in the classroom. Second grade teacher P-3 pinpointed administrative tests for the state Common Core Assessments. "We have unit tests to administer, based on the Common Core Assessments in Mathematics, for example. Why is there a need for 35 questions for a second-grade class? By the time my students get to question 20, they become frustrated. Then, I have to grade by coloring bubbles on a Scantron sheet! Ninety three questions, times 23 students, with one-to-one assessments are enough to drive you crazy!"

Diaz-Maggioli (2004) explained that most one-day professional development workshops often focus on administrative issues and classroom management as opposed to subject matter content. If teachers participate in quality and effective professional development workshops, higher student achievement would more than likely be obtained (Fleishman, 2006).

Participants expressed concerns over an ever-increasing workload, classroom responsibilities, poor experiences with school leadership, and lack of collegial experiences. These and other issues increased participants' frustration and raised anxiety both in the school building and in the teachers' classroom. Their teaching time diminished, while classroom administration responsibilities continued to rise. Although they expressed their love for teaching, participants felt frustrated because, as P-6 stated, "We can't do more of what we love to do, and that is to teach." For them, teaching has become "very uncomfortable," and poor correlated workshops decreased their effectiveness as teachers. According P-5, "district administration needs to tie professional development programs to what we as teachers are doing. Year-after-year, we wait for the district to get it." Participants felt that implementation of some district mandates is often against their will, giving them the feeling, according to P-2, "Administration is 'up there' and we're 'down here.'"

I asked what they felt could be done at the district and school level to improve implementation of professional development in their classrooms? P-2, P-3, and P-6 felt the district and school level administrators were confused because most of the professional development workshops were not organized at grade level. Based on my

review and literature research, I was convinced that professional development programs should (a) enhance core academic areas, particularly at grade level; (b) be supported by research; (d) be long term; (e) support teacher efficacy; (g) build community; (h) be teacher lead; and (i) boost student performance (Learning Forward, 2013).

**Relationship to the Literature**

The finding is consistent with the broader literature on general, personal, and collective teacher efficacy. Over a few years, investigators helped to postulate an answer to such questions as, how does a teacher's sense of efficacy affect teaching and how does it connect to student learning? For teachers to become and maintain effectiveness, the availability of resources, better communication between district and school administration, increased self-worth, and the ability to be able to master teaching experiences are more likely to yield a successful classroom experience as opposed to the absence of such elements (Shaughnessy, 2004).

Tschannen-Moran (1998) explained that instructional effectiveness imitates the amount of effort a teacher shows in the face of difficulties. Jerald (2007) asserted that a strong sense of efficacy tends to produce greater levels of organization and planning. Effective teachers are resilient when things do not go as planned; they are open to new ideas, succeed with the help of administration, and are willing to experiment with new methods.

Researchers Goddard (2006), Spero (2005), and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) explored the concept of teacher efficacy, which is an extension of the self-efficacy theory which Bandura (1977) described as "people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce effects by

their actions" (p. 11). Bandura cautioned that although self-efficacy is not a measure of performance, it can, through expectations of eventual success, effect coping efforts. This issue is significant because the expenditure of effort and persistence are key factors in individual success and most endeavors (Brinson & Steiner, 2007).

Jerald (2007) added that though teacher efficacy improves with time and experience, it could also diminish, particularly among teachers who might be disillusioned or nearing retirement. P-4 stated, "Teaching and learning experiences should be fun, but with all the expectations by the school administrators and the district leaders, it really makes teaching difficult. It's so frustrating at times that I often consider quitting." The lack of available classroom resources, poor workshop timing, lack of learning style recognition, ill-timed presentation flow of workshops, lack of school and district support, all contribute to decreased teacher discouragement in and outside of the classroom.

The participants' general faith in their teaching ability to continue to teach amidst the lack of care and concern for the ways in which professional development was presented by the district and the school greatly affects teachers' confidence in their personal teaching ability. Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy, (2000), and Guskey (2000) drew a distinction between two types of personal efficacy beliefs, defining general teaching efficacy as a belief about the power of teaching and being able to reach students no matter their learning level and personal aptitude. Yet, teacher efficacy remains challenged if the proper tools are not available for classroom and personal success, as P-1 described,

"It's really difficult for us to teach effectively without the materials needed, but I try my best to do what I love to do anyway."

## Theoretical Framework

Other factors in the findings that impact teacher effectiveness include the inability to connect with each other to either share frustrations or to celebrate classroom success. Hoy (2000) viewed the school setting as having a powerful impact on a teacher efficacy. Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith (2002) found through vicarious experiences that teachers may observe each other using an exceptionally effective practice that could increase their success at reaching students in their classroom. Social persuasion, feedback, and pep talks that accentuate effective teaching practices and provide feedback are factors that improve teacher efficacy.

Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy's (2000) concept of collective efficacy relates to the school faculty environment, which has a positive effect on students and teachers. P -6's concern for the lack of time to share with colleagues was a major issue when she mentioned, "We are asked to return from a workshop and share with our colleagues, to 'turnkey,' but with no time to share and connect with my colleagues is a real problem." Colleagues who develop a positive attitude are likely to undertake challenging goals and teacher shortcomings and are less likely to give up easily. Goodard and Skrla (2006) observed school characteristics reported by 1,981 teachers, reported their level of efficacy, and suggested that principals build collective efficacy throughout the experiences they provide for teachers.

Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) concurred that administrators, who provide school faculty with efficacy, created mastery experiences through carefully designed professional development programs. School community and the commitment from teachers and administration require a focused view of learning and attainment levels of professional development programs. Labone (2004) and Wheatley (2005) associated positive collective teacher efficacy with increased job satisfaction, a higher display of teacher effort, increased job satisfaction, enthusiasm about extracurricular activities in schools, and spirited involvement across their teaching careers. While individual teacher efficacy increases the use of innovative strategies for teaching, setting attainable goals and designing instruction increases student learning (Woolfolk, Hoy & Davis, 2005). However, according to Fives et al. (2007), seeking effective professional development to help build subject mastery, could engage and preserve teachers' sense of self-survival.

Resistance to change comes at a cost of properly giving students effective classroom instruction. As P-3 stated, "If students' interests are strongly considered, why can't the same happen for me?" It is for this reason that administrators should consult with teachers prior to any professional development reform or reorganization.

According to P-1 who was keenly aware of her feelings about the lack of communication between teachers and administration, she said, "If administration would consult with teachers before selecting specific professional development workshops, it could probably save time and money and a lot of frustration for us." Hoy Woolfolk (1993) and Tshcannen-Moran et al. (1998) were in agreement that it is important that distinctions are drawn between a warm collegial atmosphere and one providing

institutional support. Through appropriate and reliable systems support, administrators can identify whether new knowledge is transferring to the classroom and if it is beneficial to stakeholders (Walsh & Sattes, 2005).

**Research Question #3**

How and to what extent do elementary teachers in the city school district apply what has been learned in the classroom? When exploring how continuity effects classroom teacher success, Fullan (2005) stated that professional development programs do not have a lasting effect unless they are designed to give continuity between what teachers already know, what they have to have to learn, and what goes on in the classroom.

**Use of New Knowledge and Skills**

New knowledge is obtained when effective models of professional development and presentations are used (Tomlinson, 2005). When participants were asked to asked to share what worked in their classroom as a result of their professional development experiences, P-4  responded by saying that "with all the standards the district is throwing at you, you have to be able to discern what is necessary for now and later." She continued by saying:

> I attended a literacy workshop on standards that required us to learn how to help students find text evidence in reading to be able to respond to Essential Questions. Now, we had already been discussing what Essential Questions are. So, the workshop on Text Evidence helped me a lot. Now, when I ask the students

for to find text evidence for the essential questions, they are already familiar with the standards because of the workshop I attended ahead of time.

P-2 concurred,

Yes. That's the kind of stuff I use. The stuff I throw in that is useful for the students and me. For example, I went to a kindergarten workshop where the presenter used a lot of cute ways to get student's attention and focus on learning sight words. She simply said to write student vocabulary words on sheets of paper, balling them up to create a snowball game! I'm like, 'wow!' Just writing words on plain paper and pretending they are snowballs? Now I use it all the time. Even those students having trouble with sight words are getting it! Now, when I say 'snowball game, they go crazy for it!

P-1 agreed. However, she cautioned that too often she has to rely on her own strengths to get her through most of what she felt was missing during most professional development workshops. "It's easier for me to go with what I already know because I feel unchallenged by most professional development workshops, and that is not what I think most workshops are about in my opinion," P-5 opined.

"For one thing," P-6 chimed, "in the workshops that are available, the presenters often do not understand most of what they present, and we don't have the materials to apply the new concepts in our classrooms. We have to borrow from our colleagues. And if they don't have the materials, we have to simply make do with what we have. But if we don't have the materials, how can we make do?" "Also, if more focus on continuity was

in the workshops, it would help with my planning and presentations of lessons that are required for the standards," P-1 stated.

> The last workshop I attended would have been nice if it were at the beginning of the school year. Here it is the end of the school year and a workshop is presented that could've been used at the beginning of the school year. Their timing of some of the workshops is off.

P-3 stated,

> It seems administration should be planning at the end of the year for what is needed for the beginning of the next school year. And then, we become accountable for implementation into our lessons. And I'm like, really? What?

P-4 who strongly agreed stated, "It's crazy!! And then it becomes a part of our evaluations! And on top of that, the presenters are not that good!" The participants felt that professional development workshops often failed to assist their learning flow, similar to how they teach their learners.

> Let's talk about the Promethean Board as an example. It would have been helpful to ask the teachers their view on where it could be placed in the classroom, how to use it, how it could be helpful to me in teaching and assignments, other than district requirements.

The inconsistent presentation of new knowledge caused a stir among P-1 who stated,

> All they did was to give us a 'cheat sheet' on how to start the board, where to find district stuff, but nothing more on its usefulness. Plus, most classrooms have

different models of Promethean Boards. The one day session given to us simply did not work. So, we have to spend time trying to figure out the do's and don'ts.

This was another example of how continuity is important in teacher development and how continuity is valued among classroom teachers in the district. Moreover, time was important factor in continuity. P-6expressed her concern by stating,

The time to learn new technology and its advantages is not given to us. Often, we have to spend more time after school just figure out the districts learning plan for the school year. Then, there are workshops to attend, and if you're a classroom teacher, you don't get the chance to attend because most of the lesson plans are on the Promethean Board. So it's a catch 22.

P-1, P-3, P-5, and P-6 indicated that professional development workshop location was a problem for them. P-3 explained that although most of the workshops she attended out of the district were good, she felt bad about participating because of her experience and personal connection to her present school district. "It's also a matter of time and money spent attending workshops that are not in my district," P-5 exclaimed. "But if it's something you need, how could I not attend?" P-6 added, "It is more convenient to attend within the district because I do have another life outside of teaching, and I must plan carefully in order to be able to attend." P-1 expressed her concern over having to reschedule if she misses an out-of-district session.

If I miss an out of district session, I have to go through too many steps to get permission in the first place. For example, asking the school board and principal, for approval, which is not necessarily approved all the time?"

The process, according to all the participants is time consuming and often frustrating. According to P-2,

The out of district professional development "is hard to attend because there are numerous amounts of forms and permission slips that have to be completed and given to this department and that department. By the time the paperwork is completed, you lose all interest in going.

P-4 chimed in by stating, "It's a head scratcher because the paperwork has to be turned in at different times. And if it's handed in late or not handed in, you miss the chance to attend." Procedures for applying for out of district professional development continue to be an issue for two participants, who shared,

You must apply months in advance and literally takes a month for approval. I remember signing up for one workshop in the district at the same time as another out of the district. Although I chose to attend the one in the district, it really wasn't that great in my opinion. So, imagine how I felt about missing the one out of the district.

P-4 finalized the entire discussion by stating,

It would be great to have a community of teachers come together to discuss and share ideas. However, because administration seems so disconnected, to me, it's a waste of district resources to appear to be so disorganized in many ways.

**Relationship to the Literature**

Darling-Hammond (2007) stated that all systems of teacher professional development must be flexible to be able to respond to the changing needs of teachers as professionals and teachers need to be at the center of that change and flexibility, and this

change posits Leahy, Lyon, Thompson, and William (2005), is not conducted in one-day workshops but developed over a period of time. The qualities of professional development are collegial, personal, and school based while allowing for choice, encourage engagement, and the consideration of various forms of adult learning. Three action steps are necessary for the development of teachers in the school environment and for the success of professional development continuity and teacher learning. Marzano et al. (2007) posited them as being able to provide (a) meaningful staff development activities, (b) to include and involve teachers in the policies and decisions of the school, and (c) to establish norms of continuity and purpose in professional development workshops and activities. P-2 agreed,

Workshops could be planned according to our needs for the school year and we could choose what interests us according to the needs of our students. I may want to attend a particular workshop with one or more of my colleagues so that we could learn together.

Hirsh (2014) posited actions that support teachers and staff members within the school district; (a) schedule conversations that focus on individual goals and successes, (b) be available to giving helping help beyond scheduled meeting times, (c) ask for responses to questions in a meaningful way, (c) engage in coaching conversations that promote deeper reflection, (d) begin each interaction focus on expected goals, (e) recognize contributions and successes, and (f) invest in building personal relationships. P-6 expressed her concern over how administration's lack of understanding and knowledge of the how teaching is personal expressed, "Year after year, we wait for

someone in administration to get it; ask us what we need and encourage us in spite of all that they feel needs to be improved."

The American Education Research Association (2005) guide to staff development for teachers presented a policy that focuses on education content, professional development activities aligned with work experiences of teachers using genuine curriculum materials, and produce acceptable time for effective in-service programs and observance of student work. School districts also need reliable and flexible systems that evaluate teaching, professional development, and teacher learning (Guskey, 2002; Viadero, 2007).

Teacher choice in professional development workshops varies greatly and often does not relate to their classroom content. As participant-2 stated, "When we do complete professional development workshops that are uninspiring, I hope they ask us relevant questions so that our concerns and feelings can be expressed giving them a heads up." Teacher led professional development is a common practice but it does have its skeptics, according to Rebora (2009). In most schools, good teachers are left to work largely alone, meet infrequently with colleagues, and rarely get clarity about those teachers who are successful in their classrooms (Fullan, 2005).

Teachers leading professional development workshops are an important method of delivery because colleagues get to share same contexts, concerns, assessments, and student outcomes. Knight et al. (2007) explained that the use of several practices such as learning teams, program designs with teachers in mind, and encouragement of teacher ownership, become best practices for instructional leaders as the design appropriate

activities. Teacher leaders develop learning teams that help build character, customizing lessons and units for learners.

Yet, with little or no checks and balances for grade point average, relevance, attendance, content or participation, many workshops and courses are often viewed by participants as just something else to do. With very little teacher support and collegiality, most professional development programs often do not follow a specific learning model associated with the district or the school (Zapeda, 2012). The majority of evaluations focus simply on the comfort or enjoyment rather than basic classroom practice (Public Education and Finance & the Finance Project, 2004).

Additionally, shifting climate of workshops as a result of technology changes, cultural and economic trends, leadership models, political climates, and community mandates, become obstacles for most staff development (Viadero, 2007). Goddard, Goddard and Tschannen-Moran (2007) investigated the question of whether workshops should be divided into categories or themes based upon specific goals. They found that teacher growth and learning is not tied to district mandates but rather is presented in self-selected courses and objectives. Thus, teachers take ownership of their professional growth and the readily available data gives applicable statistics. As P-5 noted,

Most workshops appear to deliver only parts of what could be a whole. But if only certain components are shared, I have to scramble to make up the rest or seek a colleague for assistance. We seldom get the whole package." Another participant agreed but stated, "Varying expectations makes it difficult to plan for the week, month or year.

And again, the requirements we are to address and not complete effects our teacher evaluations.

When participants were asked if these challenges affected or interfered with implementation of their professional development experience,  P-1 felt the unorganized workshop schedule, district requirements, high expectations, and lower quality professional development, took her off course.  She added,

Especially when something is implemented district wide and it seems as if you are the last to know. By the time I step into the new school year in September, I've already outlined my approach based on that which I was not given the school year before.  When I work with the plan I developed, I am told I cannot do it that way.  As she continued frustrated, I want to be an effective team player!  But because the district and school administration send me in circles for a minute…well…it seems things were not thought out correctly!

Desimone (2009) suggested that the focus of professional development programs and workshops include five features based on emergent consensus grounded in research. These five are (a) focus on content, (b) participation that is collective, (c) learning that is active, (d) developed over time, and (e) be logical. Good teaching occurs when educators are involved on teams that help to explore analytic data, determine student and adult learning outcomes that are evidence based, and have room for teachers to assess their own teaching skill and style (Hirsh, 2009).  P-4, who helped to summarize the entire focus group session stated, "I hope your study helps in letting administration understand

how frustrating professional development is and how it's not helping as much as they think."

## Procedures for Dealing With Discrepancy Case

The findings represented a clear picture of the importance of this study and the focus group sessions conducted at each site served as the groundwork for follow up and member checking for an in-depth analysis of the data collected. Discrepant data cases were not evident due to positive and extended responses received after member checking. None of the focus group questions were problematic for participants. Their willingness to participate and their eagerness to respond to the focus group questions extended the responses of other participants in the study.

## Evidence of Quality

Member checking and triangulation strategies were employed to help increase the quality of the research findings. Through member checking, the participants were given the opportunity to review the raw data collected from the focus group interview sessions and to provide clarity to their responses. This opportunity provided participants an opportunity to bring added meaning and accuracy to the interview responses. Through triangulating the data, multiple sources were used to validate data and connect findings with broader literature.

## Member Checking

Member-checking occurs when data, investigative groups, clarifications, and deductions are tested with members of those groups from whom the data originally were

obtained (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2006; Neuman, 2002). To ensure data that are valid,

member-checking is a relevant action to take (Creswell, 2007). After completing the

interviews, copies were emailed and hand-delivered to participants for clarification, if

necessary. For one participant, clarification was needed for the grade and her transfer to

another school since the finalization of the focus group. Two participants mentioned that

they were asked to lead a professional development workshop as a result of the focus

group interview. P-3, P-5, and P-6 felt that they needed additional responses to three of

the focus group questions. The majority of the participants was more than satisfied with

their responses and expressed eagerness to read the results.

### Triangulation

Different participants were used to triangulate the findings. Using multiple

sources of data helps to validate the findings. According to Creswell, (2007) and Hatch

(2002), qualitative researchers generally use this technique to ensure that an account is

rich, robust, comprehensive, and well developed. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) stated that

triangulation is used to validate data and to capture different dimensions of the same

phenomenon. Stake (1995) posited researchers follow protocols to check for truthfulness

and legitimacy of research based on more than one source of data. By interviewing

varying categories of participants, factors were explored based on the quality of

professional development and its system of evaluation within the field of education. Six

participants were interviewed for this study. Stake's (1995) method recommended that

researchers should have more than one interpretation as opposed to a single meaning.

Themes such as teacher efficacy, self-efficacy and adult learning styles, professional development content, and process emerged from participants as a result of interviews.

Using fewer participants would not have yielded data rich in description and meaning. For example, P-4 shared her experience about anxiety each time she attended a professional development workshop that was not high quality, knowing that if she did not produce high results for her students, she would be considered as insubordinate. Or one participant, P-3, feeling that her job was more administrative than teaching, suggested that this factor  made her job that much more difficult. According to Creswell (2003), triangulation of various sources of data helps researchers to find themes that address issues of validity.

## Final Thoughts/Next Steps

Throughout the study all six participants shared their personal thoughts, concerns, and experiences about professional development, their school, and classroom environment. Using what they shared, I was able to discern what I thought professional development was contributing to or inhibiting, relative to participant success as classroom teachers.  Although the participants were implementing their professional development workshop experiences, they were very concerned about the effectiveness of the experiences, how well the topics were presented, how meaningful the topics were to them, and the overall impact of the workshops on their effectiveness as classroom teachers. Their uncertainty as to whether their concerns are heard over the myriad of state mandated requirements, classroom administration failures, the lack of collegiality, and administrative disconnect appeared to be a commonality among them.

There were many facts I noted during the interview with the six participants. One primary fact I noted was that all six participants had a sense of unselfishness in their quest to help make the professional development programs of the school as efficient as possible as a collective body. There were no selfish responses. Although their experiences were personal, they were for the betterment of the entire faculty and staff within their schools. Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) defined this concept as collective efficacy, whereby, the teacher perceives faculty as a whole having a positive effect on students, and how it could deliver positivity to any implemented program. It left no doubt in the mind of the interviewer that the participants were passionate about their work, and its importance to their environment and their students.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

**Introduction**

Studying professional development and how it is evaluated in the county to learn its strengths and weaknesses was an important endeavor because it could affect each teacher on a personal level, as each teacher was required to attend professional development workshops. How professional development programs were evaluated was an important relevant topic because effective evaluations appeared to be lacking in many schools. Rebora (2009) stated that there are too many professional development programs taking place that are not getting intended results nor having a positive return on school investment. If professional development is insufficient, it is important that assessments of each event reflect teacher input, through perceptions of how professional development affects student learning.

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the overall significance of professional development assessment for elementary school teachers. In the study, I also explored the importance of evaluating the professional development of elementary school teachers in the county. Focus group interviews were conducted to help answer the following three research questions derived from the problem statement and purpose of this study:

1. To what extent do the format, content, and process of professional development in the city school district meet the needs and match the learning styles of elementary teachers?

2. How and to what extent does the quality of professional development or professional development within the city schools district impact the initial satisfaction of elementary school teachers.

3. How and to what extent do elementary teachers in the school district apply what has been learned in their classrooms?

I used case study research to inquire about the problem of professional development and its impact on teachers and schools. Data were collected through semistructured interviews in a focus group setting with six participants. The participants consisted of classroom teachers Grades K through 5, with 5 or more years of experience and who were familiar with the professional development process and content. Interviews were conducted in private locations and were followed with member checking to assist with validation of data collected.

The participants expressed appreciation for having the opportunity to reflect on what effect professional development had on their careers as teachers. The interviews allowed participants to identify their strengths, successes, weaknesses, and to identify the individual challenges they faced as professionals in their school district and their community. The interviews highlighted the participants' strong desire for effective, specific, sustained, quality professional development experiences, and increased and effective collegiality among other teachers and leadership within their district and their school.

The participants acknowledged that the school community placed an emphasis on professional development programs, but teachers lacked the opportunity to increase

program effectiveness in most aspect of their careers as teachers. There was a consensus of beliefs that the district needed to evaluate professional development programs, based on teacher learning styles, professional development processes, content, and teacher efficacy. In addition, participants believed that district administrators and school leaders should take steps to create a culture of learning that is conducive to student learning.

## Interpretation of Findings

In this study, there was a broad consensus among the participants about the design, process, and content of professional development programs within the school district. According to the participants, professional development programs must have a significant impact on teaching practice and student learning, and professional development programs needs to be intensive, embedded in the school day, sustainable over time, relate to teachers, and have engaging content and how that content is measured. Further, professional development programs must be coherent with district policies, and how training activities relate to the curriculum. Further, regularly structured professional learning communities should be available and offer opportunities for teachers to discuss curriculum, instruction, and assessment in an atmosphere in which problems of practice can be discussed through collaboration. Desimone (2009) stated that producing staff development programs that are well-designed increases its likelihood of success for teachers and students. Professional development content should differentiate between knowledge received and drawn from workshops and other classes and constructed knowledge that relates to teacher experiences and beliefs (Davis, 2009; Fullan, 2005; Hirsh, 2009; Zapeda, 2014).

In this study, I showed that all professional development operated within a framework that combined structure, substance, and content. Beyond these three components were elements specific to the quality of professional development. Desimone (2009) and Hirsh (2009) advanced and defined the quality of professional development as being able to improve teacher practice, increase knowledge and skills, and contribute to a professional community. Across the collective research (Davis, 2009; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Lieberman & Wilkins, 2006), the following elements emerged from the findings: (a) coherence, (b) duration, (c), content focus, (d) active learning, and (e) collective participation.

**Coherence**

Borko (2004) insisted teachers must have knowledge about their subject matter that is rich and flexible if they are to help their students achieve. As teachers become more comfortable with their own understanding of subject content, they become better equipped to guide their students to classroom success. When professional development training is linked to teachers' everyday experiences and aligned with state and district mandates, the training programs are to change instructional practices and meet district assessment standards (Davis, 2009). The participants felt those who plan and organize professional development programs did not connect opportunities for learning with actual classroom experiences.

**Duration**

Guskey and Yoon (2009) explained that the number of hours spent on an activity and the amount of time spent over which an activity is extended is necessary to enhance

professional development workshops, making them broad and inclusive. A minimum of 8 to 30 hours or more helps to embed on going duration, quality assessment, and follow-up support. These three elements interact and provide space for each other. Guskey and Yoon added that when more time is allotted for learning, richer conversations are likely to occur. Teachers are able to anticipate students' reactions to content strategies and problem solve with their colleagues and other participants. These researchers further posited that when more time is available for professional development activities, teachers are able to try out practices in their own classrooms and receive feedback on implementation. Factual and procedural knowledge of when, how, and where to use their knowledge helps teachers to acquire proficiency.

**Content Focus**

The focus on subject matter or content is an influential feature in professional development programs. Desimone (2009) reported in her article on measuring the quality professional development that

> A compilation of evidence in the past decade points to the link between activities
> that focus on subject matter content and how that content increases teacher
> knowledge and skill, improve [teacher] practice, and to a more limited extent,
> increases student achievement. (p. 184)

The focus on standards based and Common Core teaching and deeper understandings of content rather than rote memorization of facts necessitates increased teacher understanding of how to guide student learning, rather than simply dispensing knowledge (Zapeda, 2014). P-5 explained the need for teacher understanding of content

as follows: "The workshops that are available for me using my flexible and interactive teaching methods simply do not match what I'm doing in my classroom."

**Active Learning**

The level of engagement of participants is reflective in active learning. Desimone (2009) categorized active learning as "observing expert teachers or being observed, followed by interactive feedback and discussion; reviewing student work in the topic being covered; and leading discussions" (p. 184). Professional development participants respond positively when they are engaged in concrete teaching, observation, reflection, and assessment, similar to students when they are involved in opportunities that help to construct their own meaning. Margolin (2011) stated that learning should be regarded as both a process of creation and inculcation.

**Collective Participation**

Professional development formats that feature a community of learners working together is growing in popularity (Zapeda, 2014). The advantages Zapeda (2014) stated are that teachers who work together have opportunities to discuss and share practices, share space for community learning that allows reflection of and implement practices, and increase the likelihood of sustained changes over time. As more teachers become involved with the implementation of new practices and initiatives, the entire school creates a different culture for learning and practice. An established culture is created for new teachers to be involved and openly to share their ideas and practices. Teachers need opportunities to communicate about teaching strategies, content knowledge, student work and assessments as well as school policies. Educational reformers concurred that the

teachers need for like mindedness, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement need opportunities to share intellectual conversations.

The findings indicate that adult learning styles and course differentiation should be incorporated into professional development presentations. Research based instructional strategies recommended for use within teachers' own classrooms often conflicts with the manner in which teachers are learn within professional development programs. Adult learning styles differ, and just as many education researchers cannot agree on how students learn best; the debate applies to adult learners.

All the participants expressed their concern about the challenges of learning without workshop content differentiation. T-1, who taught kindergarten, observed that most of the workshops she attended failed to take into account the need for presentations to have a balance of lecture and hands-on lessons. Felder and Brent (2005) posited that good instruction alternates between addressing preferences of sensory and intuition learners. Felder and Brent further stated that these levels of course recognition and backgrounds of learners help to strike a balance between the two types of learning styles. Coffield et al. (2004) explained that it would be ideal for presenters to choose models previously characterized as successful based upon the population of learners and preferences at both ends of the learning spectrum. Although this idea is not radical, assessment of adult learning styles and needs is tantamount to the classroom teachers' success. Merriam (2012) suggested that acknowledging the experience and prior knowledge of adult learners, including their ability to recognize their own life experiences by having workshop lessons goal and relevancy oriented, allow for life

experiences and prior knowledge and should be autonomous and self-directed. Understanding how best to facilitate presentations suggested that participants have particular requirements as learners.

When learners are engaged in lessons on a certain topic, knowledge is being constructed throughout (Dewey, 1938). Moreover, the social context of learners must be allowed to exist for effective learning learners are allowed to contest hegemony, dominate ideologies, reclaim reason, and practice democracy (Brookfield, 2005). The participants expressed their concern over the lack of time for collegiality to help scaffold their learning experiences, which to them, helped to make what they learn become a fluid progression toward how to use the new knowledge, concepts, and skills received. Workshop presentations lack appeal to adult learners' multiple intelligences because of the lack of differentiation (Bloom, 1956).

King and Lawler (2003) stated that professional development organizers be forced to think beyond their own expectations and experiences to broaden their teaching communication skills to meet the needs of adult learners. P-6 shared that just as children have different learning styles, those children grow to be adults with the same learning styles. Feedback from coaching and colleagues, the ability to practice new behavior with change, and demonstrated practice within real classrooms are three conditions needed for understanding of teacher change and development (Cochran-Smith, 2005). Although adult learners differ from younger learners, their commonalities remain important. Trotter (2006) posited that professional development be cognizant of age and stage theory and teacher cognitive development. Lieberman and Wilkins (2006) recommended that

professional development organizing be moved from the focus on daily teacher survival toward instructional programs that of generalized pedagogy. An attitude of challenge and trust among teachers regarding professional development is imperative in teacher professional growth.  If teachers do not feel comfortable, trusting their learning will be unsupported and invalidated, and opportunities for transformational change could remain mediocre at best.

The findings in this research study indicated that effective teachers are successful in their classroom experiences if the environments of the district and the school are conducive to learning.  Woolfolk et al. (2005) stated that the characteristics of teacher efficacy, which is an extension of the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), include better teacher organization. Teachers who are willing to try new ideas to meet student needs are more positive about teaching.  Although the participants' responses revealed no loss of self-efficacy, their efficacy as teachers was connected to the lack of effective professional development workshop and training. Their internal efficacy as teachers produced the willingness to influence and effect student learning. The participants believed in their ability to teach all their students, regardless of the concerns they held about the professional development workshops.

Scharlach (2008) stated that efficacious teachers include high standards, excellence, and compassion for students' learning styles, regardless to what could affect their learning because they love what they do. Teachers with these qualities and beliefs remain efficacious for their students and their overall success. When considering teacher development, extension of teaching participation in their learning was theorized to be a

major factor in teacher efficacy. The participants' passion for teaching outshined the negative effects of some professional development workshops as referred to by one participant who would seek to beg and borrow teaching materials from her colleagues to help a lesson to be successful. Dembo and Gibson (1985) posited that teachers with a higher sense of efficacy beliefs demonstrate a stronger academic and more supportive classroom than teachers who do not.

A stronger supportive and knowledgeable teaching staff working together has a positive impact on the teaching and learning experience. Briggs and Coleman (2007) stated that teaching efficacy is met through effective teaching practices and professional development, while Darling Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2005) recognized that effective teaching practices inspires some teachers to develop and deliver professional learning and activities to other colleagues. Donaldson (2006) posited that effective professional development programs support teachers' intelligence, their willingness to use self-assessment for their professional growth, and increased teacher efficacy. Evaluation of professional development must assess and support the impact professional development has on teaching and teacher efficacy. When effective professional development programs immerse teachers in their own learning, teacher efficacy increases the quality classroom results (Bernhardt, 2009).

Douglass, Burton, and Reese-Durham (2008) found that extended opportunities to better understand curriculum materials and student learning helped to boost student performance and teaching efficacy. The participants in the study admitted to not feeling motivated by their professional development experiences, which added to their stressful

experiences of not being provided quality in-service presentations. The anxiety they felt after attending poor quality workshops and not being able to implement the strategies taught greatly interfered with collegial community development. The participants felt that adopting unique educational and teaching paths could help their teaching effectiveness without the feeling of having to struggle with classroom content. Moreover, when school and district administrators provide teachers with opportunities to learn and develop academically and professionally, administration would be able to set higher goals and objectives for the teaching community, thereby helping to increase teacher efficacy (Ng, Nicolas, & Williams, 2010).

What is not evident in the study was the opportunity for teachers to mentor each other in a formal setting, nor were they assigned to other teachers as mentors. Teacher efficacy increases when teachers are able to attend in-service programs with other teachers. All the participants agreed that the more job related professional development programs they could attend--especially with their colleagues--the better their teaching efficacy would be. Those who were able to attend professional development workshops with another colleague felt their needs were met and their skills improved. Three participants mentioned that they would attend a quality professional development workshop anywhere if it was curriculum based, had creative subject matter, and targeted grade specific content, which would allow them the freedom of not having to be concerned if it would work for their student and their classroom success.

**Implications for Social Change**

Presented in Section 1 were significant findings for conducting this study on evaluation of professional development within the field of education. Section 4 included a presentation of the findings collected from the interview data, while Section 5 offered an interpretation of the findings. Social change implications of this study described the results for school administrators to understand the process, nature, and role of professional development programs to empower teachers to be more effective, and to use related initiatives and assessments to identify the benefits received through effective evaluations. When teachers increase their instructional effectiveness, the academic growth of students will increase, preparing students to become productive in society, which is the ultimate aim for social change.

The findings of this study are also important for student teachers, experienced teachers, school administrators, and stakeholders, as they present how the identification of teacher training and professional development increased teacher and student effectiveness in schools. The participants in this study varied in their years of experience and the number of professional development programs attended. In spite of these differences, the participants were able to share and make specific references to how they perceived their experiences and benefited from them despite inconsistencies. These findings are noteworthy because they reveal how professional development training and evaluation is tantamount to district and school success.

Guskey (2003) indicated that professional development planners must learn how to assess and evaluate what they are doing to assist teachers in becoming better

professionals. The findings also supported usefulness of professional development evaluations to support teacher knowledge of school and curriculum adoption, practices, and strategies that could help and support the environmental climate of knowledge and expertise associated with day-to-day teacher and student knowledge.  Increased effectiveness of teacher evaluations and student assessment could occur on a weekly basis, which could lead to efficient end-of-year evaluations for teachers, which subsequently assist in higher student achievement. For school administrators and policy makers, this study is major in that it helps to focus attention to teacher practice and teacher efficacy leading to higher teaching skills and student intellect. The results revealed are useful for future new teacher training though assisting with implementation of recent school tasks and curriculum development.

<div align="center">**Recommendations for Action**</div>

The age of accountability in teaching and education calls for community action to provide teachers with high quality professional development, increasing the effectiveness of its evaluation system. A focused and data-driven system in teacher training and evaluation results in teachers feeling accepted as professionals and the ability to feel their individualized training is recognized as being valued. School leaders must recognize the results of this study because it revealed qualities necessary for productive professional development evaluations to be effective, while enhancing teacher and student growth.

To the larger education community, this study discloses the viability of evaluations of professional development and teacher training as necessary tools to assist teacher practices and increase teacher efficacy. Through informal sessions with veteran

teachers, this information could be shared to help increase their awareness and the overall role they play in the lives of students. School administrators could share the results of this study with their colleagues to heighten awareness of how workshop evaluation for teachers helps school improvement practice and to gain financial support for practice on a broader scale.

The focus group interviews yielded various types of data, which after being analyzed, cross checked against the literature review, measured against the findings and their interpretations. From the findings, he following recommendations materialized:

1. Allow teachers to input into the professional development planning process by surveying them about the types of professional development programs they prefer.

2. Encourage a network of collaboration within their school of employment especially among grade levels and experienced teachers,

3. Survey teachers for their areas of expertise, professional experience, and specialized knowledge, and utilize this information to help further develop target professional development workshops.

4. School administrators help to foster a healthy learning environment by offering course credit hours or small stipend to attend out of district workshops to increase competition.

5. Create general and personal professional development evaluation parameters applicable to student needs, and increase validity to the adopted state curriculum.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Meeting the professional development needs of teachers in elementary schools is essential for teacher and student success. Identifying measures and processes, and organized pedagogy could take considerable time to become well-structured and purposefully directed. Professional development must be organized and planned to move away from one-day sessions and weaved into the fabric of each teacher's professional career. The development of excellence in teaching begins with teachers having the ability to proactively participate in their learning, as they are the purveyors of information learned in classrooms. School administrators and professional development coordinators must tailor their resources to align with ongoing evaluations that feature the recognition of workshop content, teaching efficacy, and increased time for collegiality. Professional development programs should include research, implementation of instructional strategies, follow-up, and sustained support.

After a review of the findings in this study, it was recommended that school communities work toward creating a culture in which effective teacher professional development is a priority. To create a culture in which teachers are treated and recognized as professionals, the enthusiasm and expectations of the school community must be filled with optimism in which teachers and stakeholders create environments that allow teacher creativity in lesson planning and organization of classrooms. Allow time for the development of professional learning communities in which teachers could help to develop strategies that assist program developers improve the quality of programs, and evaluate for modifications and improvement.

Aligning professional development workshop content to individual adult learning styles and needs, embedding professional development in the school day, and providing time for implementation, help to decrease teacher anxiety and increase overall teaching effectiveness, which is tantamount to student learning. More importantly, the findings from this study showed that having the time for learning, planning, and implementation is relative to the quality of content. However, simply providing more time for professional development is not beneficial if the time is not well spent. Teachers should be allowed to develop an endurance attitude, in which, over a period of time, they are given goals and objectives to sustain their engagement by directly developing their own learning.

The findings in this study also indicated that teacher professional development is a journey and not an on the go process. Teachers are life-long learners and their environments must be created to ensure that the possibilities for teaching and learning, both formal and informal, are endless. Leadership should, therefore, assist teachers by identifying resources that help expand time and funding support for new teaching materials and procedures, and plan and confirm logistics, especially scheduling to assist in implementation help to monitor student success.

A recommendation was that school districts and stakeholders practice their advisory role to evaluate professional development, based on collected evidence and not solely on individual speculation and perception. Districts need to identify whether the gains or losses in such programs are worth the effort to produce and implement. The study reinforced the belief that the absence of an effective evaluation system by school administration weakens the planning of professional development, which deserves better

preparation, planning, and formative and summative assessment purposes in education. Specific documentation should be kept on teachers' efforts and successes with the help of collaborative efforts from peers.

## Conclusions

The teachers indicated that they appreciated participating in the study and showed their interest and willingness to share their opinions about their professional development experiences. Even though they pointed out many negative aspects of professional development experiences they had, I concluded that the positive experiences they had outweighed the negative experiences and their responses were given as ways to show how professional development experiences could be strengthened.  In addition, I concluded that participants' responses exemplified their excitement for teaching as they highlighted their concerns for the students' classroom experiences.  While conducting this study, I wanted to find out how the recognition of adult learning styles and teacher efficacy as it relates to the content, process, format, and nature of professional development evaluations.

As teachers teach, they project the condition of their soul upon their students and their subjects and their way of being together. Lifelong learning is a central part of for many teachers. The study conducted investigated how professional development evaluation included content that could be arranged to allows teachers to learn as adults and increase their teaching efficacy. Teachers want to learn and have professional development that reflects their learning as successful professionals. This includes having a role in what, how, and why it is important for them to learn. Programs presented need to

be up to date, meaningful, and high quality. Time must be appropriated to learn and implement new learning and skills. When school district policies support professional development, accumulation of teachers' skills, talents, and experience it significantly increases student performance and reflect academic achievement. Professional development helped to increase teacher effectiveness and student learning in the classroom.

**Reflection**

A reflection of my experiences while researching this study revealed the need to share several statements. My involvement in professional development began many years ago as an elementary teacher, when the conversation of professional development included other teachers and me as we were seeking answers about professional development content relative to why it was not as effective as we thought it could be. As a teacher with many years of experience, I developed enthusiasm to identify ways in which professional development could serve my colleagues and me more effectively by having us to describe our individual and shared concerns and experiences that influenced our teaching efficacy.

The relationship I had with my coworkers helped me in gaining several measures of trustworthiness relative to professional development training. These methods included the ability collect and to triangulate data from different participants, while verifying themes that emerged from the collected data. Allowing participants to view transcribed interview data enabled me to cross-check the interview results and identify specific themes from the data collected. I also provided participants the opportunity to express

their concerns, and I completed member checking for understanding of unclear responses. Although I found no discrepancies in the transcription of data material, I acknowledged the possibility of some participants who could respond to questions as per what they thought I would have wanted to hear. My familiarity with participants could have been considered as possible inference because of my past attendance in professional development sessions with some of the participants.

Having shared these personal biases, this study was a valuable and informative learning experience. The results of this study authenticate my knowledge, understanding, and belief in the value of professional development, its evaluation system, and support of teacher practices in the classroom. I gained a strong desire to further investigate additional aspects of professional development program evaluation that result in an increase in teacher-led discussions, presentations for improving teacher practice, increased teacher efficacy, collaborative learning and collegiality, and new teacher assistance programs.

My final thought is that professional development program planners could take pattern after medical doctors. Before prescribing a cure for a patient, the doctor inquires about the physical condition by asking the patient about the nature and extent of the pain. Then the doctor diagnoses and prescribes a cure, based on the patient's input, results of the diagnosis, and knowledge of symptoms. Likewise, if professional development training is to be effective, program planners might improve training program by collaborating with teachers and getting their insights about how to forge a closer

connection between professional development programs and the academic needs of

students.

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Appendix A District Superintendent's Letter

January 24, 2014

Dear Mr. Quattlebaum,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Designing Professional Development for Elementary School Teachers within the Plainview, New Jersey City school district. As a part of this study, I authorize you to choose participants from a minimum of three but not more than five elementary schools. Using a random sampling method to diminish the issues of research bias, participants' chosen will be elementary teachers with five or more years of classroom experience.

Researcher will distribute teacher consent forms which will include the researchers background information, purpose and objective of the study, research procedures such as the type of data collected, sample interview questions, voluntary nature of the study, the risks involved, privacy issues, research's contact information, and notification process of results.

The researcher will audio record notes during focus groups and post professional development experience interviews. Respondent validation or member checks will be used to assist in the improvement of validity in the study.

All focus groups and post professional development experiences will be conducted off school premises, as there will be no professional development experience observations and/for audio and video recordings. To anonymously protect participants hey numbering system and a researcher generated school district and school code will be used to protect the privacy of the participants.

Once the study has been completed, all transcriptions will be filled out accordingly on a

separate password encrypted computer in the research position separate from other individual consent forms. All hardcopy information will be stored in a locked file and in a private location in the researchers possession.

Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organizations responsibilities include: The cooperation of the District Professional Development office personnel, School Building Leader cooperation, and Elementary Teachers with five or more years of classroom experience. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at anytime if I was circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to improve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential I may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Superintendent of schools

Appendix B: Principal Permission Response

Letter of Cooperation

Based on my review of Simon Quattlebaum's research proposal, I grant permission to conduct a study entitled designing professional development for elementary school teachers at Wilson Street School in the city school district of Plainview, New Jersey.

As a part of this study, I authorize you to invite members of the teaching staff to participate in the study to work with teachers from the school who have participated in professional development activities within the last five years and be interviewed an audio recording.

I understand the results of the research will be shared with members of the Staff Development Office, the Walden University review board, the participants, and myself.

Teacher participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at anytime if circumstances change.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

*Electronic signature is accepted*

Signature

Title: *Principal*

Date: *2/21/14*

Appendix C**:** Participant Informed Consent

You are invited to take part in a research study of Designing Professional

Development for Elementary School Teachers. The researcher is inviting elementary

teachers within the Plainview City School District with 5 or more years of experience and

has had a minimum of 5 years professional development to be in the study. This form is

part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before

deciding whether to take part.

A researcher named Simon Quattlebaum, who is a Doctoral Student at Walden

University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to assist in-service providers explore the importance
of evaluating professional development to help enhance teacher effectiveness and its
impact on students in the classroom.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
• 	 Participate in data collection 2 times within a 30-60 day period.
• 	 Data collection includes:
o 	 A Focus Group Session (approx. 3 hours)
o 	 An individual post-professional development experience interview
(approx. 2 hours)

Here are some sample questions:
• 	 What professional development activities were you involved in during the
last school year?
• 	 Describe how professional development opportunities have influenced
your classroom.
• 	 Does the professional development content meet your needs as a teacher?
(Participant Learning
• 	 What do you consider your learning style?
• 	 Share some of the challenges you faced in implementation.
Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at the city school district office, your local assigned place of employment, building administrators, other teachers, or local school boards will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this study could pose minimal risk to your mental wellbeing although the researcher will make every effort to conceal your identity and increase confidentiality by keeping all data collected separate from Human Resources and school administration that could place your participation at risk. The identity of your participation and place of employment will be protected through the use of number codes and encrypted names. Focus group and individual meetings with researcher will be held in private where any school personnel will not be privy to conversations and responses.

The benefits of the study will help to identify ways teachers and administrative staff can process, understand and use related initiatives for the implementation of **effective** formative and summative evaluation programs in professional development. Further, and most importantly, the research will benefit teachers' learning styles and increase teacher efficacy in the classroom.

Study's objectives
The objective of this study is to conduct research within the named school district and to offer feedback and offer recommendations to professional development staff for potential improvements of instructional methods that could provide in-service specialists with a clear understanding of professional development evaluation and its impact on student learning.

Payment:
As a thank you for participating in this study, you will be given the choice of 4 education related texts you could add to your personal library to use at your leisure.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information or your place of employment for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data and audio recordings will be stored and kept secure on the researcher's own locked computer using a private encrypted password in researcher's possession. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. The final data results will be shared with you and the district professional development office.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via (cell) XXX or Email: XXX. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.


Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent                                    _____

Participant's Signature                         _____

Researcher's Signature                        _____

                                                            _____

Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement

       1.      I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

       2.      I will not in any way divulge copy, release, sell, and loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.

       3.      I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.

       4.      I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.

       5.      I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.

       6.      I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

       7.      I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

**Signature:**                                       **Date:**

Appendix E: Focus Group Questions

**Participant focus group questions relating to**: **RQ1: Organizational Support and Change**

1.       Has the professional development changed the atmosphere of your school?  If so, how?

2.       Has it affected your way of teaching?  If so, how?  If not, why?

3.       What could be done at the school level to improve the implementation of the PD ideas in your classroom?  Or the classroom experience?

**RQ2: Participant Learning**

1.       Does the PD content meet your needs as a teacher?

2.       What do you consider your learning style?

3.       To what extent did the PD experience match your learning style as a visual, auditory or hands on learner?  Was it effective?

4.       What might make it more effective?

**5.**       During professional development do you consider yourself an active or passive learner? Is this your normal learning style-why or why not?

**RQ3: Participant Use of New Knowledge and Skills**

         As a result of professional development:

1.       What results have you noticed in your classroom?

2.       What skills did you implement to achieve these results?

3.       Share some of the challenges you faced in implementation.

4.       To what extent did these challenges affect or interfere with your implementation?

**RQ4: Participant Reaction**

1.       Does PD affect how you feel about your job as a teacher?

2.       Do you feel comfortable disseminating the lessons to your classroom?

3.       If not, how could it be improved?

Additional Comments

Thank you for your time and input.

Appendix F: Data Coding

**PDPE** – Professional Development Positive Experience

**PDNE** – Professional Development Negative Experience

**PDAA** – Professional Development Administrative Action

**PDLS** – Professional Development Learning Styles

**PDCS** – Professional Development Learning and Sharing

**PDQE** – Professional Development Quality Experience

**PDOS** – Professional Development Organizational Support

**PDPL** – Professional Development Participant Learning

**PDPR** – Professional Development Participant Reaction

**PDNKS** – Professional Development New Knowledge

**PDTE** – Professional Development Teacher Efficacy