

2015

Secondary School Choral Teachers' Perceptions of Quality Professional Development

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Raymond West

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

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by

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MSED, Walden University, 2012

BS, Regents College, 1995

AA, Saint Leo University, 1993

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2015

Abstract

Quality professional development is essential to enhance and sustain teacher efficacy. In a Southeastern school district, content-based, job-embedded professional development was not practiced or available for secondary school choral teachers. The purpose of this research was to discover the perceptions that choral teachers possess about what constitutes quality professional development. Guided by Bruner's constructivist approach, Knowles' concept of andragogy, and DuFour's professional development practices, this study examined the connection between these 3 ideas and supplied the foundation for the development of a professional development program. Using a case study design, data were collected through interviews and lesson plan documents from 9 secondary school choral teachers. The data were coded by hand and analyzed using an inductive approach. The key results were that the secondary school choral teachers desire quality professional development, characterized by content-based subject matter and collaborative delivery methods. A project of customized content-based choral music was constructed using teacher collaboration and mentoring as critical components of the delivery system. This study has implications for positive social change by providing professional development that addresses the needs and desires of the educators and increases their knowledge and skills. The project can perform as a prototype for professional development in other academic disciplines.

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Dedication

This Doctoral Project Study is dedicated to my mother, Jackie Cramer, for her unwavering support and encouragement through life and this entire Doctoral Project Study process, to my daughter, Jesica West, as she is following in my footsteps by completing her undergraduate degree in Music Education, to my sons Daniel and James West, whom I am very proud of, and to my six grandchildren.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Professional development for teachers is fundamental for teacher success and it is a key component for increasing student achievement (Bayar, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Dash, De Kramer, O'Dwyer, Masters, & Russell, 2012; Guskey, 1994; Shymansky, Wang, Annetta, Yore, & Everett, 2012; Telese, 2012). Professional development that is content-based must be job-embedded and part of school daily operations (Danielson, 2006, p 80). By providing job-embedded, content-based professional development teachers will be able to stay current and relevant in preparing students with the skills needed for the 21st century (Knight, 2009; West, 2009).

The purpose of this research was to discover the secondary school choral teacher's perceptions of quality professional development and to examine the effects of the current standardized professional development offered in a Southeastern school district. Subsequently, this research could be utilized to make significant changes to the district's choral program by facilitating changes to the current professional development activities experienced by all secondary school choral teachers. For this qualitative case study, interviews were conducted to discover the choral teacher's perceptions of quality professional development and the effect that the current standardized professional development has had on teacher efficacy. In addition, documents such as lesson plans were used to determine changes, if any, in teaching strategies as presented in the standardized professional development. In this first section of the study I provide a

detailed explanation of the problem, rationale, definitions, significance, guiding research questions, and a literature review.

Definition of the Problem

This study has developed from the professional development practices of the secondary schools in a local school district in the Southeastern portion of the United States. Most subject area instructional departments in the district to be studied are provided with content specific professional opportunities throughout the school year. However, noncore content subjects are not offered the same opportunities. This study will focus on one of the noncore departments – choral music. Not offering content specific professional development opportunities throughout the school year may lead to professional dissatisfaction (Eros, 2013). Causes that could be attributed to the problem include a lack of choral specific professional development emphasis placed by the administration. Administrative support is crucial to an effective professional development program (Yager, Pedersen, Yager, & Noppe, 2011). Other causes could be inadequate quality professional development time, and a lack of funding for adequate professional development resources. According to Robinson and Bryce (2013) one of the problems throughout the history of professional development has been underfunding and scarce resources. Additionally, choral teachers in a Southeastern school district teach in isolation from other choral teachers. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) argue that learning for teachers depends on occasions for teachers to work collectively to further instruction for the students in their schools. Collaborative professional development configurations provide music educators chances to partake in strong and meaningful, professional

learning with others; this teamwork and collaboration is absent from numerous professional development program ideas (Stanley, Snell, & Edgar, 2014). There is generally one chorus teacher per secondary school (District Website, 2015). Although there are other music teachers at the secondary school level, for example band and orchestra directors, specific content and classroom related professional development given by other on-site choral teachers is not available or practiced.

In the Southeastern school district that was studied there are 65 public schools. Of these 65 public schools 12 are high schools and 16 are middle schools. This study focused on the secondary schools, which are the 12 high schools and 16 middle schools. Each secondary school has a fine arts department. However, not every school has a choral teacher. There are 16 secondary school choral teachers employed by the Southeastern school district of which 10 teach at the high school level and 6 teach at the middle school level (District Website, 2015). The district is listed as a Title I district in which 90% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. The requirement for a school to be listed as a Title 1 school is 40% of its students must be underprivileged (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The district's student population is predominantly minority with over 70% being African American. There is a large Asian student population with Hispanic and Caucasian students composing the remaining demographic.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

In the Southeastern school district that was studied, content-based job-embedded professional development for choral teachers is not available or practiced. This problem

is important because teacher professional development is directly associated with the achievement of students (Bayar, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2012; Guskey, 1994). Previously, professional development has consisted of educators convening in the media center or cafeteria after school to view a professional development movie or listen while a facilitator reads a PowerPoint presentation (Fine arts department chair, personal conversation, 2014). At times there were group activities, however the delivery of professional development has generally been a standardized approach (School instructional facilitator, personal conversation, 2015). In recent years, at the school district that was studied, two choral teachers from two different high schools unexpectedly left their positions. The district choral department chair indicated that the reasons the two teachers gave for walking off the job were that they lacked the specific job-related knowledge such as how to manage student discipline, working with the counseling department for correct student placement, and administrative support (District choral department chair, personal conversation, 2013). Researchers have indicated that causes for poor teacher retention are: a lack of resilience dealing with issues concerning the discipline of students, an absence of support from the administration, and collegiality (Doney, 2013; Hughes, 2012; Shaw & Newton, 2014). Other choral teachers have not renewed their contracts at the end of recent school years. The various reasons that these choral teachers gave for not renewing their contracts did not exclusively have to do with the lack of professional development. However, they did include managing student discipline, working with the counseling department for correct student placement, and soliciting administrative support as reasons for leaving the job. These issues could have

been addressed with professional development (District choral department chair, personal conversation, 2014).

In addition to poor teacher retention, student participation in extra individual choral activities has been declining. During the 2013 – 2014 school year only 25 students from three of the nine high school choral programs participated in a larger district honors chorus festival (Fine arts coordinator, personal conversation, 2014). In the previous five years 50 – 100 students from the district per year have participated in the annual event. In addition to individual participation, choral group participation in music activities has been waning in recent years. It is a mandatory requirement for all choral programs in the district to send at least one group to the district's large group performance evaluation. In 2014 only three of the county's nine high school choral programs participated (District choral department chair, personal conversation, 2014). In the previous five years students from all secondary school choral programs participated (Fine arts coordinator, personal conversation, 2014).

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) brought about the initiative that all teachers would receive content and pedagogical professional development. "Professional development includes activities that improve and increase teachers' knowledge of the academic subjects the teachers teach, and enable teachers to become highly qualified" (NCLB, Section 9101). Further, Section 1119 of the NCLB states that schools receiving assistance under Title 1 shall confirm that all educators are highly qualified. In addition, Subpart 15, Section 5551, of the same NCLB Act includes fine arts as being made up of a

group of important subjects that would receive the same attention as any other core subject. In a Southeastern school district, for classes in which a state mandated end-of-course test is not required to be administered, teachers must administer Student Learning Objective (SLO) tests in order to measure student growth and achievement (Georgia Department of Education, 2014). Choral classes fall into the SLO test category. The music SLO examinations are taken directly from the national music performance standards. Chorus is not just about singing, but the class includes the teaching and learning of all of the nine performance standards (National Association for Music Education, 2015).

Choral teachers in the district, just as every other teacher, possess a need to have the opportunity to participate in content-based professional development with other choral teachers (Conway, 2011; Eros 2013). “Ideas and new information do not happen on the individual level alone, but to a large extent from collaboration, interaction, and conversations with other professionals” (Chiou-hui, 2011, p. 421). Linda Darling-Hammond (2012) suggested that the achievement of students is precisely interconnected to the quality of the teacher. “Professional development in an era of accountability requires a fundamental change in a teacher’s practice that leads to increases in student learning in the classroom” (Center for Public Education, 2013). Because of a significant gap in the practice of providing content-specific professional development opportunities for choral teachers in a Southeastern school district, this study focused on what the choral teachers perceive to be quality professional development. “The profession must encourage arts teachers and those providing professional development to study their

programs to fill in the gaps of what we know from research about arts education professional development” (Conway, 2011, p. 57).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research was to understand the perceptions that choral teachers possess about what constitutes quality professional development. By understanding choral teachers’ perceptions of quality professional development, steps could be taken to facilitate their desires through the ideas and suggestions that surface from interview data collection. If the district’s leadership could follow and implement changes pursuant to the ideas that choral teachers possess about what constitutes quality professional development, it would serve to alleviate problems that have stemmed from content-based, job-embedded professional development not being offered. “To think of professional development as an intrinsic motivator for, and contributor to, growth and improvement we need to reposition it as part of the political charge for a culture of change in music education” (Schmidt & Robbins, 2011, p. 102).

Definitions

Andragogy: The word Andragogy has been defined as a group of principles, a philosophy, assumptions, and the theory of the way that adults learn. However, for the intention of this project study, Andragogy will be identified as, “a set of core adult learning principles that apply to all adult learning situations” (Knowles et al., 2012, p. 2).

Coaching: Educational Coaching is an authentic, differentiated approach to professional development that provides reflection time for teachers, a chance to discuss,

explore, and time to practice new methods of instruction. Coaching puts individualized teacher needs at the center of professional learning (Knight, 2009).

Noncore content subject: A noncore content subject can be defined as any subject that is not English language arts, mathematics, social studies, or science (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Professional development: For the intent of this project study, professional development is defined as teacher participation in courses or programs designed to expand teachers' knowledge to motivate students, train students to reflect critically, think creatively and to promote higher levels of learning in schools (Cannon, Tenuto, & Kitchel, 2013; Danielson, 2006). Responsive and personalized professional development that is embedded is an effective tool for changing teacher practice (Francis-Poscente & Jacobsen, 2013).

Professional learning community: "A Professional Learning Community is a collaborative team whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of learning for all" (Dufour et al., 2006, p. 3). A PLC is a place where teachers get together to talk about what matters to teachers for the purpose of student achievement.

Student learning objectives (SLO): Student learning objectives are specific state mandated tests that are in alignment with the state performance standards. The SLO tests are also a tool utilized as a student growth measurement, teacher efficacy, and are provided to students enrolled in academic, noncore subjects that do not require a state mandated End of Course Test.

Significance

All teachers should have the opportunity to participate in content-based professional development (NCLB, 2002). The essential objective of professional development is commonly to influence student learning and in a larger sense, the classroom (Duzor, 2012). The key benefactors in this study are the secondary school choral teachers. There has been much empirical evidence gathered to show that the achievement of students is directly connected to the excellence of the teacher (Bayar, 2014; Meister, 2010; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Guskey (1994) suggested that it is impossible to enhance schools without improving the competences of the educators within them. The indirect beneficiaries of this study are the choral students. Obtaining the input of the choral teachers as to what constitutes quality professional development, their experiences, and ideas could help shape an effective program that is constructed from research-based and field-tested approaches and strategies. Music education scholars are attracted to exactly what makes professional development fulfilling and effective for music teachers, and the opinions of those educators have been instrumental in discovering the positive qualities of professional development (Eros, 2011; Stanley, et al., 2014). At this time job-embedded, content-based professional development for choral teachers is not available through the Southeastern school district that was studied. Many aspects of teaching and learning music are consistent across the spectrum of music education as evidenced by undergraduate music educator programs that give music education students a broad exposure to all music disciplines (Hesterman, 2012). Offering content-based, job-embedded professional development could not only positively affect

the choral teachers' efficacy and student achievement; it could positively affect other content area music students and teachers as well. There is an equal need for content-based, job-embedded professional development for band and orchestra directors; however this study focusses specifically on choral teachers. By focusing on improving teacher learning, student achievement will improve (DuFour, 2014). Improving choral teacher efficacy may foster an improved district-wide choral music climate that would promote high-quality teaching and learning. In addition, this project study augments the limited research previously conducted in choral specific professional development by learning what choral teachers' perceptions are of quality professional development.

Guiding/Research Questions

In alignment with the research problem and purpose, this research study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the secondary school choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development?
2. How has the standardized professional development in the district affected the secondary school choral teachers' efficacy?

Recently, in a Southeastern public school district there have been many issues in the choral department as it pertains to the lack of content-based, job-embedded professional development. Looking at professional development from a broader standpoint there has been an ample amount of research conducted (Cannon, Tenuto, & Kitchel, 2013; Chiou-hui, 2011; DuFour et al., 2006; Hord, Roussin, & Sommers, 2010; Knight, 2009). On the contrary, there has been little research conducted as it pertains to

fine arts teacher professional development and more specifically, choral teacher professional development. In a Southeastern school district content-based professional development is not available or practiced for choral teachers. Understanding their perceptions of quality professional development was paramount to address this problem. To address the first question, interviews with the choral teachers were used to discover the teachers' perceptions of quality professional development. To address the second research question, interviews and a detailed analysis of choral music lesson plans were utilized to pinpoint how the standardized professional development provided by the district has affected the secondary school choral teachers' efficacy.

Review of the Literature

The literature review for this study focusses on professional development as self-reflection, coaching, and professional learning communities. In addition, the review includes music education and standardized professional development. The literature review was conducted utilizing the Walden University online library. The online library contains several different search engines with which to conduct research. The search engines that I used for this literature review were: Educational Research Complete, ProQuest, ERIC, SAGE, Thoreau, and Google Scholar. When conducting the research I used several different search terms. Those terms include but are not limited to: *self-reflection, professional learning community, online learning community, online professional development, and teacher professional development, professional education, Andragogy, teacher education, shared values and vision, standardized professional development, coaching, cognitive coaching, constructivism, music, music education, fine*

arts education, choral music, cognitive benefits, and fine arts professional development.

Andragogy was used as a search term because it is the theory of how adults learn (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). The combination of terms used in the search provided hundreds of articles and resources from which to draw. For the first section, the three recurring themes are: self-reflection, coaching, and professional learning communities. By focusing on these three areas of professional development, it left room for other themes to emerge during data collection and analysis phase. The second section of the literature review concerns music education. The third section of the literature review is in regards to standardized professional development.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is built on the integration of constructivism, Andragogy, and professional development practices. Constructivism is the manner of constructing knowledge through experiences. Andragogy is the term given for the way in which adults learn and professional development; the participation in teacher improvement programs.

Constructivism originated from the 18th century through the creation of the philosopher Giambattista Vico (Glaserfeld, 1989; Ültanir, 2012). Vico claimed that individuals can comprehend no more than what they have themselves created. Constructivism is the process by which knowledge is created through internal representations rather than from experiences in the surrounding world (Bruner, 1960; Yoders, 2014). Schunk (2012) exclaimed that constructivism assumes that all knowledge is created and constructed from prior experiences. The learner chooses and transforms

information, builds assumptions, and makes decisions, trusting on an intellectual structure to do so. This theory still relates to education in that teachers, when introducing a new topic, help the students to connect with prior knowledge to allow them to build a strong foundation upon which to construct new meanings. Within the constructivist model, the emphasis is on the learner rather than the educator. It is the learners who interact with their surroundings and therefore gain a perception of its features and attributes. With the teacher acting as facilitator the learners construct their own conceptualisation and reach their own explanations for problems, mastering independence and autonomy.

A constructivist view will benefit professional development for choral teachers. Discovering what choral teachers view as quality professional development, based on prior experiences, may guide to help the development of a professional development program that best serves the choral teacher. Just as a teacher serves as a facilitator for students to construct their own knowledge based on prior experiences, a professional development facilitator can connect with prior learning and experiences of teachers in order to facilitate the best possible adult learning experiences (Dobozy, 2012; Gash, 2014).

Malcolm Knowles is recognized as the father of Andragogy. Andragogy simply stated is the theory of adult learning (Knowles et al., 2012). Because this study is in the genre of adult professional development, the way that adults learn will also be utilized as a portion of the framework. Knowles stated, in the third principle of Andragogy that knowledge construction relies on the prior experience of the adult learner. This third

principle of andragogy parallels that of constructivism in that adults utilize prior knowledge when constructing new knowledge. Lindeman (1926) a seminal andragogy theorist, identified several key assumptions about adult learning. The third of these assumptions was that experience is the most beneficial resource for adult learning. From this standpoint it is logical to assume that teachers, through daily experiences in the classroom, are able to know what they would need concerning professional development with the intention of furthering teaching skills, improving student achievement, and significantly adding to job satisfaction. Additionally, adults possess the need to be self-directing. Adults tend to feel accountable for their own education. Subsequently they do not want others to impose their will by stating what will be taught and how learning will take place (Knowles et al., 2012). Eros (2013) performed work that suggested music teachers know what they want and need in the way of professional development through self-reflection. Eros (2013) discovered that beginning teachers could need help with classroom management for example, whereas teachers with many years of experience do not need that same assistance. According to Eros, more experienced teachers may want and need training, instruction, and experience with new technology, while younger teachers are able to utilize technology to its fullest.

This study will also be framed and informed by research previously performed in the area of professional development. Professional development areas considered will include self-reflection, coaching and the professional learning community (DuFour et al., 2006; Eros, 2011; Hord, Roussin, & Sommers, 2010; Knight, 2009). For the development of the professional development portion of this paper, Eros (2011) notion that through

self-reflection teachers know what they want and need in the way of professional development, Knight (2009) assertion that coaching offers differentiated support for professional learning, and DuFour et al. (2006), and Hord et al. (2010) idea of collaborative learning that takes the resemblance of professional learning communities will be used. The data that were collected could be related to one of the aforementioned areas; however the scope of professional development is so large, I decided to focus on these three areas as a means to begin the study. Since qualitative research is inductive in nature, I have left room for other types of professional development to emerge from the data and be discussed in the findings section.

The conceptual framework for this study is the nexus among constructivism, Andragogy, and professional development practices. Together, these three concepts will merge to form a foundation that will guide this study.

Professional Development

Self-Reflection

The growth of teachers is seen as natural and the teachers are agents of their own professional growth (Liljedahl, 2014). Soleimani and Khaliliyan (2012) stated that teachers know what they need in terms of professional development. Teachers must recognize the necessity to analyze their own particular professional development needs (Eros, 2011). In order to analyze one's self as to what is needed for professional development, self-reflection must be practiced. Reflection is a key and important aspect of professional development. It provides an opportunity for teachers to think about their teaching (Nasser & Romanowski, 2011). Many reflections may cause teachers to change

opinions of themselves and their teaching practices. Self-reflection to understand one's specific professional development needs is certainly an option to encourage self-development and improve teacher efficacy (Ambler, 2012). Johnson (2013) encouraged teachers to self-reflect by videotaping a lesson to view at a later time. An example of a self-reflection outcome would be that a more experienced teacher may feel comfortable with the classroom management skills that have been developed during their career; however the same teacher may feel the need to obtain help with use of the latest classroom technology. Transformational professional development through self-reflection encourages teachers and leaders to examine their own practices in order to facilitate change in philosophy, school environment, or themselves. Self-reflection could cause a teacher or leader to become motivated to be a better professional. Further, the same type of self-reflection could cause a teacher or leader to move on from their current assignment realizing that the profession is too difficult and not worth it (Miranda, 2012).

Conversely, Beswick (2014) stated that although teachers may know what they want and need, there are several reasons why teachers may not be willing to divulge what their professional development wants and needs are. Stating that there is a need for training or help is tantamount to revealing vulnerability. Teachers are seen as leaders in the classroom and many times do not want to admit that they are in need of help. In addition, teachers may be skeptical about informing professional development providers of their wants and needs, as they may wonder how much of their input will actually be considered in the designing of professional development. This statement is evidenced in a study conducted to discover teachers' professional development perceptions. Nasser and

Romanowski (2011) concluded that the teachers participating in their study felt alienated and did not feel that they had much involvement in the conceptualization for the development process of professional development programs. In the second principle of Andragogy, adults have the self-concept of being accountable regarding their individual choices in their own lives. There are usually surveys performed upon completion of the professional development to determine the effectiveness of the training, but decisions as to the subject and delivery methods are left up to district level administrators. Knowles et al. (2012) stated that adults dislike and oppose circumstances in which they get the impression that others are enforcing their desire on them. It would seem that the district level administrators are deciding what teachers need in the way of professional development however; teachers are certainly representatives of their individual professional progress knowing the requirements in order for them to be successful.

Coaching

Knight (2009) stated that “there has been an explosion of interest in a form of professional development loosely described as coaching” (p. 1). In addition, school districts and states are implementing content and pedagogical coaching on a large scale. Coaching offers differentiated support for professional learning. In addition, coaching is aligned to Lindeman’s 4th assumption of adult learning in that adults have the need to be self-directing (Knowles et al., 2012). Rather than the coach simply telling the coachee what to do and how to do it, the two are engaged in a process of mutual inquiry. Through observation and asking the right questions the coach can help the coachee figure things out for him or herself. Silver (2008), a noted educational researcher, inferred that when a

person figures something out for themselves, then they own it. As Pike (1989) opined, people do not disbelieve information that they arrive at on their own. People are more inclined to trust information enthusiastically if they come to the view themselves.

Therefore, when teaching adults, utilizing familiar activities that produce the learners' ideas, beliefs, or procedures better facilitates learning than merely presenting them new information to retain.

According to Walpole, McKenna, Uribe-Zarain, and Lamitina (2010), a definition for educational coaching is, “a site-based professional development initiative designed to develop theory and use demonstration, observation, and feedback to improve classroom practice.” (p. 118). In addition, coaching engages teachers in self-reflection about their professional practices, their strengths, and weaknesses (Patti, Holzer, Stern, & Brackett, 2012). Coaching utilizes more of a collaborative approach in which the coach is actively engaged in leaving the teacher to discover the problem and solution for themselves. The concept of coaching can be associated with the process of learning, self-education, assistance offering, and motivation stimulation (Rudzinskiene, 2013).

Coaching offers effective differentiation in the area of professional development for teachers (Gill, Kostiw, & Stone, 2010). Both beginning and advanced music educators regularly report seclusion and an absence of accessibility to direct subject-specific professional development in music as a significant problem often experienced (Stanley, 2011). Throughout the course of a teaching career, professional development needs of the teacher will change. Beginning teachers will most likely require something completely different than the teacher who is at the 20 or 30 year career mark (Eros, 2011). There is a

need for content and pedagogical professional development in the form of coaching that is specifically constructed to fit the teacher (Mansour, Alshamrani, Aldahmash, & Alqudah, 2013). Content specific professional development is essential in administering quality professional development that works (Albritton & Truscott, 2014).

A form of coaching that is receiving much attention recently is data coaching. More and more teachers are called to use data driven instruction. However, in teacher preparation programs learning how to interpret data is something that is rarely visited. Huguet, Marsh, and Farrell (2014) related the results of 6 comparative case studies involving low performing schools. The schools were committed to using data driven instruction for one school year. An interesting note in the findings was that teachers who reported significant gains were coached by coaches that had the teachers' specific content experience. English teachers were better served with coaches whose background was in teaching English. Math teachers were better served with coaches whose background was in teaching Math. The results of the study also demonstrated that coaches at times need to model, teach, and observe the coachees in order to get best results. In addition, coaches need to have the ability to point teachers to the correct resources in order to support their teaching.

Huguet, Marsh, and Farrell (2014) stated that the more inexperienced coach may be able to direct the teachers through modeling data usage strategies; however they were unsure how to implement and model the teaching strategies associated with the data. Another interesting aspect that was discovered in this study was that content strength effected the teacher's perceptions of the coach's credibility. Although many pedagogical

skills apply to every classroom it would seem to be that teachers do not perceive coaches with different content skills as experts. One teacher in this study stated that they would not go to Coach X for language arts skills that would go to her for math in a heartbeat.

The various roles and responsibilities of coaching are numerous. Coaches must be familiar with how to interpret instructional data, be a resource provider, a curriculum and instructional specialist, an education catalyst, a school leader, and a spark for transformation (Killion, 2009). Smith (2012) stated that coaching is a means to affect positive teacher change, however, the process of coaching can be difficult due to several aspects. Relationships matter (Heineke, 2013). It is very challenging to create a relationship linking coach and educators. But once the relationship is established coaching becomes much more easily beneficial and can attain greater heights. Coaches need to be responsive. Being responsive has to do with being sensitive to the needs of the teacher by responding to each question and being consistently affirming to each of the teacher's questions. To be effective, teachers and coaches must build relationships. Relationship building can take time and can be a difficult and complex process. Smith (2012) went on to state that working within the complex structures in a school can be challenging as time is difficult to find within the school day. Utilizing coaches gives schools and districts the autonomy to implement as needs arise (Mangin, 2014). Through coaching, leaders have the opportunity to assert their interests and ideology into the staff by means of coaching. Although the premises that coaching improves instruction and student achievement the actual implementation of coaching depends on the interests of the leadership and their perceived needs assessment in the district or school building.

Pedagogical coaching refers to an essential function of professional development that is to enhance educators' knowledge of successful teaching in their content area (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011). It is not enough for a teacher to know the subject, but it is essential that the teacher know how to effectively engage students in that subject. For example, a chorus teacher may know how to sing, however if they do not know how to teach someone else to sing or know how to direct and lead a chorus, then the pedagogical skill as it relates to the content needs to be addressed. Coaching that consists of subject-specific knowledge aligned with teachers' abilities connected with the instruction of standards-based pedagogies is instrumental in improving teachers efficacy and student achievement (Polly, 2012). It is not just acceptable to know one's subject but it is imperative to understand how to successfully instruct that subject considering all of the different learning styles students possess, and being able to differentiate instruction to fit those styles.

Elder and Padover (2011) performed an investigation to determine the success of peer coaching. Seven coaches were assigned to 18 teachers in a northern Pennsylvania secondary school with the purpose of making a coaching program a part of the continual improvement cycle of the school. The researchers concluded that peer coaching is cost effective way to implement a coaching system in schools. One interesting aspect is that coaches declared that they learn more regarding their teaching by coaching someone else. It was stated that 58% of teachers indicated that he or coaching changed their teaching practices. All of the coaches that participated in the study stated that they would strongly endorse peer coaching to a coworker. When peer coaching is added as a source of

professional development activities new teaching strategy implementation rate is 95%. Jewett and MacPhee (2012) described peer coaching as two people being co-learners. To the idea of co-learners, this is what some teachers feel like because they do not want to be perceived as coming into a coaching relationship perceived as trying to be a subject matter expert. Teachers want to create a positive working relationship putting on the persona of learning together. In addition, teachers also want to create a reciprocal relationship where both teachers can learn from each other.

Another vehicle for the delivery of coaching is by means of e-coaching (Warner, 2012). The e-coaching approach utilizes pedagogical instructors or avatars as the coach who offers inquiries to the coachee and then provides answers constructed on the coachee's entries or choices. The researcher stated that e-coaching may not be right for every situation; however it may be a good alternative for employees or teachers with the intention of receiving coaching at any given time. Obviously there are drawbacks, however if the person is self-motivated then e-coaching may be the way to go.

A substantial and continued investment in effective teaching is the logical first step provided the eventual objective of professional development is to convert every classroom into a successful setting for learning. As the degree of educator efficacy increases the lesser succeeding students are the first to advance. Coaching predicated as professional development over a sustained length of time is the vehicle to achieve this objective (Spelman, & Rohlwing, 2013).

Professional Learning Communities

DuFour et al. (2006) presented the idea that a professional learning community is in reality a shift in the traditional sense of professional development. Considering the DuFour model, a professional learning community shifts traditional professional development from workshops, presentations, listening, and individual learning to job-embedded learning, learning collectively by working together, team-based action research and learning by doing. Strongly rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) idea of the communal disposition of learning revealed via his theory of zone of proximal development, learning collaborative takes place when individuals are energetically involved in a group where learning happens due to cooperative efforts.

A professional learning community is the most promising strategy to ensure that teachers are helping students to achieve and learn at high levels. Creating and maintaining professional learning communities is vital (Hord, Roussin, & Sommers, 2010). Professional learning communities are communities in which educators work cooperatively to consider their teaching method, study evidence concerning the connection involving teaching and student achievement, adjust instruction to enhance learning outcomes for their students (Kagle, 2014). Statistical evidence has been found to support the claim that professional learning communities increase student achievement. By virtue of the implementation of district wide professional learning communities in an urban Texas school district, the mean of the state reading test scores increased .33% for elementary students, .75% for middle school students, and .67% for high school students (Williams, 2012). The professional learning community, also called collaborative

professional development, can possess an influence on teaching practice and help to provide instructional support for students. Kyounghe and You-Kyung (2012) reported that teacher satisfaction is in direct correlation with the professional learning community and collaboration. In addition, the professional learning community will support the teacher's ability to foster higher level thinking and cognitive development in students (Poekert, 2012). The professional learning community is "composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of learning for all" (DuFour et al., 2006, p. 3). Professional learning communities encompass the idea of peer collaboration and are embedded in school reform (Riveros, Newton, & Burgess, 2012). Peer collaboration is instituted with the ultimate goal of improving teacher practice which will in turn increase student achievement.

Hord (1997) and Ying (2013) Stated that there are five distinct attributes to a professional learning community. Those attributes are: supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice. Dufour and Eaker (1998) found that there are similar attributes that can be associated with the learning community. Those attributes are: shared mission, vision, and values, collective inquiry, collaborative teams, action orientation and experimentation, continuous improvement, and results orientation. Kruse, Louis, and Byrk (1994) developed similar attributes to a professional learning community. These attributes are: focus on student learning, shared values and norms, reflective dialogue among teachers to consider and assess their methods, delineation of practice that encourages teachers to share their practice and to make their practice public, and

collaboration among teachers, administration, and staff. This type of professional development helps to ensure that teachers no longer teach in isolation but are supported in their efforts. After reviewing alternate descriptions of a professional learning community and the elements that appear in them, it would seem that the researchers have three common attributes or elements that make up a professional learning community. Those common attributes are: shared vision and values, shared leadership, and collaboration.

In the initial stages of developing a professional learning community it is imperative for the group to determine a shared vision. The vision can be defined as the place, in terms of student achievement, that the group aspires to see the professional learning community after a certain length of time. Student achievement is the primary reason for the existence of a professional learning community (Huffman, 2011). In addition, defining the values that support the vision is equally important. For a PLC to be successful the vision and values are collaboratively developed. In general, the members of the team must adhere to the same values and be united by a common vision (Betz, 2011). When all teachers associated with a professional learning community feel that they possess a part in the establishment of the vision and the values that support the vision they become stakeholders. They are more willing to work to the success of the PLC.

Shared leadership is not the leadership of the professional learning community by the principal per se, but the leadership that is shared by the principal, the staff, and teachers (Marzano, 2003). For the PLC to be successful the principal must relinquish

some of the control and allow teachers to assume the leadership roles. All teachers are classroom leaders as they have ultimate classroom domain. In essence, the principal serves as the leader of leaders.

Although professional learning communities are a promising vehicle for meaningful professional development, they take time to build (Abilock, Harada, & Fontichiaro, 2013). Being involved in a professional learning community, like participating in action research, one is engaging in a cyclical process whereby problems are identified, a review of literature is performed, a suggested plan of action is tailored to fit the problem, the plan is implemented, results and review are accomplished, necessary changes are made if there are any to be made, and then the process begins again.

Professional learning communities can take forms other than the traditional professional learning community setting. Common planning time is a distinct time in which a professional learning community can operate (Dever & Lash, 2013). Common planning time is an option when teachers are unwilling or unable to give before or after school time to collaborate with other teachers. Dever and Lash went on to state that a professional learning community that is conducted during common planning time lends to a more productive session. A positive benefit of conducting a PLC during common planning time is that teachers possess quality time to collaborate alongside their colleagues. Quality time is that time allotted during the school day, or what some have deemed to be the contractual eight hour day, when teachers have the ability to meet. In addition, collaboration and conducting a PLC during common planning time is connected

with improved student achievement as evidenced by standardized tests (Haverback & Mee, 2013).

Yet another option for a professional learning community is through the Internet. An online environment is a viable option when meeting in person is impossible (Francis-Poscente & Jacobsen, 2013). During the recent advent of social networking it seems only natural that the Internet, moreover online technologies, are utilized in a way to allow teacher to participate in professional learning communities without having to leave the confines of their own classroom or home. The on-line format allows teachers to apply what they have learned in the classroom then discuss with their peers. It is an appealing option to face-to-face instruction (Holmes, 2013). King (2011) discovered that incorporating a virtual learning community could give teachers the chance to be in continuous dialogue with other professionals. New teachers as well as experienced could benefit by participating in continual contact without having to wait for an annual in-service to connect with each other. Engaging in this sort of activity could alleviate some of the stress and burdens of teaching in total isolation. Strong professional learning communities are a prerequisite for quality teaching. The optimal model for educators must include collegial exchange, not seclusion. A new groundwork for America's Schools must ideally be developed through building blocks that include communities of learners (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003).

Music Education

History

Early music education history can be traced to the early Egyptian and Asian civilizations (Svalina & Bognar, 2013). It was those cultures that influenced the music education in the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations. In the Greek and Roman civilization music education was integrated into the curriculum that was taught to the younger children. In Greece the music entered the general system of education. Unlike the Asian nations where music was performed most often by slaves (usually as professional musicians) and free people just listen, the Greeks were of the opinion that every free citizen should have instruction in singing and playing the lyre (Svalina & Bognar, 2013).

During the late 1800s and early 1900s music that was taught included: site singing, proper tone, musical taste, and emotional and expressive singing (Heller, 2011). The common consensus was that classical music was to be taught regardless of the student's ethnicity or background. A full array of musical genre was taught separately, however some music curriculum writers included folk music into the curriculum of classical music (Hardesty, 2011). Francis Louise Clark (1860 – 1958) was instrumental in early 20th century music education. She worked for the Victor Company and helped record music lessons for students of that era. In the early 1900s and the 1910s the Victor Company made sure that most affluent classrooms had a record player along with recordings of the classical music. The Victor Company, inventor of the Victrola, was

instrumental in revolutionizing the music education classroom. Technology advances during that time were the Victrola and the player piano.

During the advent of band classes as a result of the First World War became more popular music appreciation classes enrollment declined. Following the First World War, radio music stood as an example of how technology increased in the music classroom during the 1930s and 1940s. Programs were broadcast that incorporated music theory, listening, and singing patriotic music as this was during World War II (Heller, 2011).

The next generation saw the integration of African American teachers and White teachers in the music education classroom. There were many advantages to integrating each other's type of music. Students became more socially aware and cognizant of different music styles. In today's music education classes the same principles are taught as were taught in the late 1800s. Students are still taught to sight read. According to Nichols (2012), 89.5% of middle school choral teachers teach sight-reading in the choral classroom. The average time spent was from 5 to 15 minutes daily. The teachers who did not report teaching sight-reading stated that it was due to lack of time and or resources. Music students are still taught classical music as well. In addition, although choral teachers sometimes struggle to include technology, technology advances cannot be ignored as students learn differently than they did a century ago (Hardesty, 2011; Heller, 2011).

To be a successful music teacher one has to get their students to a 98% or higher success rate. A B+ student will get 11 out of 100 answers incorrect (Goodhart, 2014). That rate is not acceptable for music performers and for music teachers. Students today

have very little interest in learning how to play the piano violin or flute. They have less interest in Opera or classical music. Today's students also do not have the time or the interest to develop strong performance skills on such instruments or in the choral area. The challenge that music teachers face is making the music instruction culturally relevant (Hedgecoth & Fischer, 2014).

Cognition

As part of the process to prepare students for lifelong learning, participating in music education can change a student's brain (Curtis & Fallin, 2014). Cole (2011) reported on a conference that was held at Harvard University in 2009 in which professors and brain-based researchers converged to give evidence that arts and music education does in fact enhance the cognitive functions of the brain. Arts education in whatever form strengthens the brain's attention system which in turn improves cognition (Goodhart, 2014). Specifically, subject areas that were seen to improve for students were geometrical skills, reading fluency among children and memorization skills, and the ability to learn a second language. In addition, music education helps to alter the structure of the brain in the sections that are responsible for motor and auditory function. Students who are taught music participate in learning metacognition. Metacognition simply stated is learning how to learn (Greer, 2013). When students learn how to learn, the process can be applied to any subject whether it is music, math, science, social studies, or language arts. Research shows that when students are playing or performing memorized music or participating in sight-reading exercises the left side of the brain is engaged. When a student is improvising, or creating music instantaneously, the right side of the brain is engaged

(Beckstead, 2013). Students that are taught how to read music and improvised simultaneously then they use both sides of the brain. This is a higher cognitive function that takes time to master (Curtis & Fallin, 2014).

Conversely, a report of several studies suggested that there is no evidence to support cognitive benefits in music education. Students were given an IQ test and they participated in music lessons for a period of one year. At the conclusion of that year the IQ test was given again with only a 2.9% increase. Another test was performed to measure cognitive processes and again statistical difference was not enough to be significant. The report concluded that being involved in music education, more specifically music lessons did not increase the students IQ or cognitive process. This report is contrary to the studies performed by noted brain-based researchers (No cognitive benefits of music lessons, 2013).

The Music Classroom

Music educators differentiate for students in the classroom on a daily basis as a natural part of rehearsal. However, planning and knowing students, with pre-assessment, are the keys to differentiating lessons for students in the music classroom (Standerfer, 2011). Although music teachers differentiate instruction regularly, different methods must take place for students with disabilities (Darrow, 2015). The areas for differentiation are: content, process, and product. Vanweelden and Whipple (2014) performed a study concerning the presence of students with disabilities in the music classroom. More than 95% of respondents reported that all students with learning disabilities were involved in organized music class at the elementary level. Those students also possessed the chance

to pursue music ensembles, either choral or instrumental, at the secondary school level. In addition, some research participants opined that unique music classes were provided by the music educator for all students with disabilities within self-contained classes. Some of the pupils with special needs received music instruction within self-contained classes. Additionally, a music therapist delivered education in music to most or all students with disabilities. The majority of the respondents also stated that students with disabilities' requirements were being met in the music education classroom and that their inclusion was successful.

One of the most difficult aspects of the music education classroom is ensuring that instruction is culturally relevant (Abril, 2013; Hedgecoth & Fischer, 2014). Students today have very little interest in learning how to play the piano violin or flute. They have less interest in singing Opera or classical music. Students today also do not have the time or the interest to develop strong performance skills on such instruments or in the choral area. The challenge that music teachers face is making the music instruction culturally relevant.

Another aspect of the music education classroom is the support given by administration. In a survey of Ohio principals, 93% indicated that music education was perceived in a positive light, yet 71% of principals placed music education last as compared to other disciplines (Abril & Bannerman, 2015). Overland (2014) stated that the "music educator is often misunderstood by the administration." Music teachers suggested bringing in content specialist to aid in their evaluation. Measures of student achievement and standardized test scores, teacher quality, and evaluation by observation

teacher evaluation procedures are possible areas for the music education specialist to assist with.

Elpus (2014) performed a quantitative study designed to evaluate the effect that the no child left behind act has had on music course enrollments in the United States. It was determined that about 34% of students in grades nine through 12 had a least one music course throughout high school from 1982 to 2009 and during that time the enrollments stayed about the same. The researcher noted that enrollments for music in the Hispanic, ELL, and IEP categories had decreased significantly over the same period. Over the same period of time the high-stakes test scores of the same students have decreased indicating that there could be a correlation between music education and high-stakes test scores. Music educators from the same study perceived that the NCLB 2002 has been harmful for music education due to the results mentioned here.

Education in music can be an influential motivation for good and/or evil. We therefore need to keep our minds focused on the essential question, what is music education for? An associated research matter is the desire to chart the discipline effectively in order to detect and comprehend changes pursuant to the possibility that music education has to effect positive or negative social change (Dyndahl, Karlsen, & Wright, 2014). Music education can be viewed as the sociology of democracy and cooperation (Wright, 2014). It is about teaching students the difference between listening and hearing. Hearing involves finite aspects of music whereas the art of listening takes into account imagination (Abramo, 2014). What seems important in music education is that we build upon the best writings and ideas that are available. Music education

philosophy might be building on democratic values that could include the positive aspects of artistic citizenship (Colwell, 2014).

Standardized Professional Development

One of the most difficult tasks for teachers is to differentiate instruction with the purpose of meeting all of the different styles of student learning. In the same manor, differentiating professional development to fit the needs of the teacher is an equally difficult task for any school or school system. It is a much simpler task for the district or school to conduct professional development in a standardized delivery method. Standing in stark contrast to the professional development forms discussed thus far is the standardized form of professional development. The standardized form of professional development is commonly used (McQuiggan, 2012). Professional development for teachers is seen as taking the standardized approach when it is prepared and delivered no matter the context of their teaching, their backgrounds, their learning styles, or the ethnicity of their students, is taken into account. The standards are in high contrast with what teachers are taught. Teachers are taught to design their instruction based on a students' nationality, background experience, learning style, and individual education plan if the student possesses one. Many times professional development does not take into account the principle of teachers as learners (Petrie & McGee, 2012). This may explain why professional development programs delivered in schools reflected a district, state, or nationally standardized model, as opposed to a planned program that addressed the unique needs of schools and individual teachers. It is not unusual to hear of school districts that provide the identical professional development opportunities for every grade

levels. While particular educational practices and learning theories could be applicable across-the-board, a standardized approach, has been proven ineffective (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004).

Atweh and Abadi (2012) stated that a professional development program cannot be a universal standardized method in changing teacher's beliefs and teaching habits. It would follow that individual teachers create their own beliefs from prior schooling and experiences in the classroom. Wing and Hoi (2013) concurred by stating that the training conducted in their study was beneficial in increasing teacher content knowledge, however it did not do anything to increase their beliefs or change their beliefs about teaching. The findings suggest that the usual standardized strategy does not appear to work and that a more teacher-based training model is deemed necessary to engage all teachers.

Professional development and teacher's learning must take the local context into account. McHatton, Smith, Brown, and Curtis (2013) stated the standardized approach in being culturally relevant may not be appropriate for some teachers. Teachers come from different backgrounds and have different professional development requirements in order to provide culturally relevant instruction. In addition, many teachers do not reflect the students they teach. It is very common in my district to see a Caucasian teacher in a class that is made up entirely of African American, Hispanic, and Asian students. Nieto and Bode (2008) opined that race is a social construction. There is only one race, the human race. However, students come from all different backgrounds and experiences. Just as this should be considered when creating classroom instruction, it must be considered during the designing process of professional development.

The standardized professional development program is inherently contrary to the principles of Andragogy. Andragogy is the name given to the study of the process by which adults learn. Adults' having the self-concept of being accountable for their own choices in their own lives is encapsulated in the second principle of Andragogy. This concept holds true for learning as well as other aspects of adult lives. Knowles et al. (2012) stated that adults dislike and oppose circumstances in which they believe others are enforcing their will on them. Standardized professional development programs are thrust upon teachers without teacher's input. This creates an adversarial atmosphere in which teachers sit back, fold their arms, and revert back to childhood and wait for a facilitator to teach rather than the teacher to facilitate learning. These byproducts of standardized professional development program contradict the second principle of Andragogy. The third principle of Andragogy references the adult learners bring to the educational process through life experiences. Adult learners come into an educational activity with a large amount of experiences much greater than that of young people. Because there are so many differences in background, learning style, incentives, requirements, concerns, and objectives greater importance in adult education should be positioned on individualization. A standardized strategy for adult education is not consistent with the third principle. Adults are driven to learn to the degree that they recognize that learning will assist them to achieve goals or handle issues encountered in their life circumstances. This concept is contained in the fifth principle of Andragogy (Knowles et al., 2012). Although in some situations the standardized professional

development may benefit some teachers, however others may not benefit from the same training as they may not be facing the same life or teaching situations.

Implications

The results from the collected data and analysis could lead to professional development that is relative to the specific desires and beneficial to the secondary school choral teachers could be implemented by the district. It may be possible for other disciplines within the fine arts department to use this research as a basis to design effective professional development opportunities for their teachers. Those disciplines include band, orchestra, and group instrumental lessons. All teachers should have job-embedded quality professional development (The No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). The implementation of such professional development would help to close the loop in compliance with federal law. Implementing such professional development may result in promoting high-quality teaching and learning in all areas of the fine arts that would better serve its students and challenge their abilities in every area of the school. Teachers of performing groups within the fine arts could better prepare students to perform in the community. In addition to bringing listening and social enjoyment, performing in the community would aid in promoting a relationship that is positive amid the community stakeholders and the school.

Summary

Education professionals in the 21st century have the need for job-embedded professional development. In this Southeastern school district, job-embedded, content-based professional development for secondary school choral teachers is neither available

nor practiced. The NCLB (2002) clearly indicates that all teachers will have the opportunity for professional development. That same NCLB (2002) stated that the fine arts are to be treated as any other content area class. Significant negative results have come in the district choral department because there is no available job-embedded professional development. The teacher retention rate, teacher morale, and student fine arts achievement has suffered in recent years in part due to the lack of job-embedded professional development. To facilitate teachers successfully teaching the necessary skills for students to achieve in choral music, the feeling of isolation commonly reported must be overcome. A literature review was conducted that encompassed different areas and styles of professional development. Areas discussed included: self-reflection, professional learning communities, content coaching, and the standardized form of professional development.

The purpose of section 1 was to provide an overview of the problem, the rationale for choosing the problem which included evidence from the local setting, evidence the problem exists in professional literature, the study's significance, the conceptual framework, the review of literature, and the implications for the possible use of the research by the choral teachers, the fine arts department, and the district leadership.

In section 2 the qualitative case study design methodology will be discussed. In addition, participant sampling, and in particular the measures taken for protection of participants' rights, confidentiality, informed consent, and protection from harm will be discussed. Also, data collection and analysis procedures will be thoroughly visited. And lastly, the findings and analysis of data will be discussed.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover secondary school choral teachers' perceptions about quality professional development. The research design for this study was a qualitative case study (Stake, 1995). The choice of a qualitative case study was the most suitable research design to investigate secondary school choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development. A qualitative method was chosen because, "It is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2009, p.4). In this case, the problem is that there is no job-embedded, content-based professional development for choral teachers in a Southeastern school district. Probing into the choral teacher's perceptions of quality professional development through in-depth interviews and analyzing lesson plans and district public documents aided in developing an understanding of, and a solution to the problem. Therefore, considering the problem, and the data that was required to study the problem, the following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. What are the secondary school choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development?
2. How has the standardized professional development in the district affected the secondary school choral teachers' efficacy?

For this study the qualitative case study design was chosen to be used because it is intended for the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of an event, phenomenon, or a complex issue through detailed and descriptive analysis. Merriam (2009) explained

that “a case study is a choice of what is to be studied” (p. 40). In this instance the what is the bounded system of the district secondary school choral teachers. Merriam further stated that the unit of analysis constitutes a case study, not the topic of investigation. However, since this study was concerning one specific unit or group, a specific Southeastern school district’s secondary school choral teachers, a case study design was appropriate. Moreover, the case study design can be used when studying a broad topic in order to narrow examples to more manageable and easily researchable items (Anastas, 1999; Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). In this instance the broader topic of this study was professional development. The narrow example of the professional development and easily researchable topic was the perceptions of quality professional development that secondary school choral teachers in a specific Southeastern school district possess.

The case study was chosen over the other major qualitative research designs because it best fit the research questions. The research questions were constructed as to perform an in-depth inquiry of a program, in this case, professional development (Stake, 1995). Additionally, the research questions were designed to fit a single bounded group of people, a Southeastern school-district’s secondary school choral teachers.

Because this study was of one particular group of people that are bounded together in a single system, and the goal of this study was to gain a deep understanding into the perceptions that group of people possess, a case study was appropriate (Merriam, 2009).

In this case study I examined the choral teacher's perceptions of what constitutes quality professional development. In addition, I examined what their opinions were of the standardized professional development offered by the district and insights into how it has affected their efficacy as choral teachers. By examining data and identifying themes I was able to discover their common views. This information was useful in identifying choral teacher's ideas of the existing professional development and their concept of quality professional development.

Participants

In the school district where this study took place there were 16 choral teachers serving in 23 different secondary schools. Since I was counted in that number, 15 choral teachers comprised the participant pool. A homogenous purposeful sampling of participants was used to make up as many of the 15 choral teachers that were willing to volunteer (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) stated, "In homogenous sampling the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics" (p. 208). Participating in a research study is completely voluntary. Participants cannot be forced or coerced in any way to take part in a study. All of the participants met the criteria of holding an assigned position as a choral music teacher in the Southeastern school district that was studied. An appropriate number of participants to gain an understanding of the perceptions that secondary school choral teachers possess of quality professional development would be 8 – 15. Mason (2010) opined that PhD students tend to stop qualitative interviews at multiples of 10. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) inferred that for interviews in a homogeneous group, 12

would be sufficient to reach saturation of information. Therefore, 8 – 15 participants would be appropriate for this study.

Participant Access Procedures

There were specific procedures mandated by the Southeastern school district that was studied and by Walden University that were followed in order to gain access to participants. Preceding any contact of the participant pool the following requirements were met. First, an ethical treatment of participants training was completed through the National Institute of Health, certification number 1338866. The Southeastern school district required that a researcher attend a webinar that explains the process of performing research in the school district. Once the webinar was attended, specific forms were completed and provided to the Research Review Board of the Southeastern school district. An approval to conduct research letter from the district was received on February 11, 2015. A Local Site Research Support form (Appendix E) was signed by each principal of each school where the research took place. An application was also sent to the Institutional Review Board for Walden University for research approval. The Walden IRB approval number is 04-14-0252505.

To obtain participants I sent an invitation (Appendix F) through email to the 15 secondary school choral teacher population. For this case study nine of the 15 choral teachers responded positively and participated.

Researcher-Participant Relationship Methods

In reference to this study it was easy to establish a positive researcher-participant working relationship. I have worked in the district that was studied for 10 years. I was

more familiar with some of the participants than others; however we had something in common in that we are all secondary school choral teachers. Additionally, a method that I used to develop a good working relationship with the participants was to guarantee that their confidentiality would be maintained. Confidentiality can be achieved by doing the following things: collect identifying data only if it is pertinent to the research question, modify identifying data so it cannot be connected to an individual respondent, control access to the sensitive files if any exist, and keep recorded interviews in a secure location (Lodico et al., 2010).

Ethical Protection Measures

There are three basic federal guidelines for participant protection. These principles are: fair distribution of risks and benefits, maximizing good outcomes while minimizing risks, and protecting autonomy and ensuring voluntary, well-informed participation (Creswell, 2012). For this study there were minimal risks to the participants. Some of those risks included the following: (a) being identified as a participant in the study by something said in the interview, (b) experiencing slight discomfort when participating in the interviews, (c) participants may feel like they are being critiqued when providing lesson plans for analysis, (d) if the interview takes place at a school, interruptions could potentially occur. Possible benefits for this study included the following: (a) having district sponsored job-embedded, content-based professional development provided as a result of this study, (b) choral teachers being able to accurately reflect on their own needs for professional development and how it could improve student achievement, (c) choral teachers feeling that their voice would be heard

through a rich descriptive account of their opinions of what constitutes quality professional development, (d) choral teachers being able to reflect on their own teaching in order to improve student achievement. Since the participants for this study came from several different secondary schools, each principal of those schools was asked to sign a Local Site Research Support form (Appendix E). After the Local Site Support Forms were signed and received the participants were asked to sign a Teacher Consent Form (Appendix D).

Creswell (2012) explained that the ethical protection of participants should include being informed of the purpose of the study, using ethical interview strategies, maintaining confidentiality, and allowing participants to review the interview also called member checking (Creswell, 2012). Prior to signing the Teacher Consent Form (Appendix D), I ensured that the participants understood that they had the right to withdraw from the study or leave an interview at any time. The participants were also asked to provide the most convenient time and place in which to conduct the interviews. An additional protection measure was that any collected and analyzed data would be kept in a secure location for a period of 5 years.

The number of participants for this study was particularly small, as the total participant pool/population was 15. The nine participants who agreed to take part in the study were randomly assigned a number and were referred to in that way for the purpose of this research. There was no mention of demographic, education level, or years of experience, as that information was not pertinent to the study. Additionally, referring to the participants in a numeric fashion helped to maintain confidentiality.

Data Collection

Data are those bits and pieces of rough material that can be found in and gathered from the environment (Bodgan & Bilken, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Data can be concrete items such as documents, photographs, or personal diaries. Data can be numbers that others have gathered for example, a census, disciplinary numbers from schools, demographic information from public websites, or test scores. Data can be numbers that the researchers gather for themselves for example from a Likert type survey. Other forms of data could include the actions of participants that are observed and collected by researchers. In addition, data can be an intangible substance that is harder to gather to include: emotions or feelings. Data are the substance that forms the basis of a study. The type of study, the information needed, and the research questions determine what types of data are to be collected.

For this qualitative case study three sources of data were used. The selected data collection methods were based on the purpose of the research and the selected research design. The appropriate forms of data collection for this case study were interviews, and two forms of documents (Creswell, 2012). Interviews from the participants were used to facilitate the gathering of data that is appropriate to the first research question, “What are secondary school choral teachers’ perceptions of quality professional development?” Participant interviews and document analyses, specifically lesson plans and data gleaned from the district’s website pertaining to Standardized Professional Development were used to answer the second research question, “How has the standardized professional development in the district affected the secondary school choral teachers’ efficacy?”

Upon receiving RRB approval from my school district and IRB approval from Walden University data collection began. I obtained a signed Teacher Consent Form (Appendix D) from each participant and a Local Site Support Form (Appendix E) from each principal at the school where each participant teaches. I ensured that each participant and each principal received a copy of the appropriate forms.

Interviews

Stake (1995) stated that interviews are utilized to fill in the blanks of what researchers cannot glean from observations or the data collected by looking at documents. Additionally, Merriam (2009) explained that there are three basic types of interviews. Those interview types include, highly structured or standardized, structured, and unstructured or informal. The highly structured or standardized interviews leave no room for open ended questions, follow-up questions, or requests for the interviewee to clarify. Unstructured or informal interviews consist of open-ended questions that are more like a conversation, are flexible and exploratory in nature, and used when the researcher does not know enough about the subject to formulate structured questions.

For this study, a semi structured interview protocol was used (Appendix B). The interview questions were structured so they allowed for probes and contained enough flexibility so that I was able to obtain the data required to answer the research questions. Each face to face interview took place over a 3 week period and lasted approximately 20 to 25 minutes. Each interview occurred at the most convenient time and location for participants; however the interviews were not conducted during instructional time. The

interview time, location, and design allowed for the participants to express their thoughts and experiences without distress.

Lesson Plan and Public Documents

To help answer the second research question, documents in the form of lesson plans were gathered to help discover to what extent, if any, the standardized professional development has affected choral teacher efficacy. Efficacy was determined by how the lesson plan reflected the strategies that were included in the district's standardized professional development. Characteristics of effective or quality professional development should help build pedagogical skills and content knowledge, be aligned with local, state, and national standards and link to state and district initiatives (Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 1998; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). Evidence of these characteristics should be found in lesson plans of teachers that attend professional development. The planning of classroom instruction should reflect the standardized professional development. Since it was impossible to look at all of the lesson plans of nine different choral teachers for the past two years, prior to the time of the interview I asked each choral teacher to email three lesson plans from each of the past two years. Some of the participants were not able to provide the lesson plans asked for either because of being a first year teacher or not keeping lesson plans from previous years. In either case a total of six lesson plans were received from each participant via email during a one week period of time.

In addition to the lesson plans, public documents from the district's website that contain the standardized professional development calendar and the subject agenda was

used as a benchmark for lesson plan analysis. The public document from the district website is the Instructional Support Professional Learning Plan.

Processes

The interviews were recorded on an iPhone 5C and then downloaded to an HP Pavilion G7 series laptop computer which is kept at my residence. The recordings were then downloaded to a password protected flash/thumb drive and will be kept secure at my residence in a locked cabinet for five years.

The lesson plans were downloaded from email to the HP Pavilion G7 series laptop, transferred to the password protected flash/thumb drive and then deleted from email. The documents from the district's website were downloaded to the HP Pavilion G7 series laptop located at my residence.

System for Keeping Track of Data

The type of data analysis that I used was inductive in nature. Inductive analysis works best when the data being collected is largely through interviews and documents and there is a large amount of data to analyze (Hatch, 2002). Hatch further opined that a small amount of data is 500 pages or less. For the interview transcriptions there were 81 pages for the nine different participants. There were 63 pages of lesson plans and two separate district documents to analyze. The inductive data analysis was performed because there were no predetermined themes. I thought about what types of information that could be gleaned from the collected data; however I expected there to be many more that I had not previously considered. After gathering the interview data and downloading it to the HP Pavilion G7 series laptop computer I used the Dragon Naturally Speaking

software in order to transcribe the interviews verbatim into word documents. Each transcription was safeguarded with Carbonite and the word documents were copied and pasted to a password protected SanDisk flash/thumb drive. I coded the qualitative data by hand and began the process of analyzing the collected data. I made a copy of all of the data so that I would have an original copy and a working copy. I kept track of the data by assigning number codes and using “track changes” in Microsoft Word. The themes that emerged were electronically copied and pasted into a new word document with the appropriate theme heading. I added enough surrounding text so that the contextual meaning was not lost (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition to the inductive method for analyzing interviews, lesson plans were analyzed to discover if the planning of teaching has reflected the standardized professional development. This particular professional development has been instituted in the district over the past two years. Data was kept track of in the same manner as the interview data. Additionally, lesson plans that were submitted electronically will be subject to the same protection procedures as the interview data. Hard copy lesson plans were locked in a file cabinet at my residence.

Researcher’s Role

I have been a colleague of many of the potential participants for close to 10 years. Although we are colleagues we do not work at the same school, talk on a regular basis, or socialize. I did not have any authority or power over any of the participants; therefore the participants were able to speak freely. No questions were asked that would cause insecurity in their position and no answers were or ever will be shared with administration and if they are the identity of the respondents will be kept confidential. In

addition, it was important for me as the researcher to enter the data gathering phase without any preconceived notions or ideas as to what the interviewee should say in response to the interview questions. Prior to the research taking place I did have definite ideas about what constitutes quality professional development for choral teachers; however prior to conducting the interviews I wrote down my own answers to the research questions and fully disclose them in a reflective journal so as not to bias the data collected. This method is recognized as *Epoche*, a Greek word signifying to abstain from judgment. (Merriam, 2009, p.25)

Another role of the researcher is to ensure validity. Creswell (2009) advised that the researchers used several different types of validity strategies to convince the reader of the accuracy of the findings. Creswell suggested that the researcher triangulate by using different data sources, employing member checking, and peer debriefing. Triangulation simply means for the researcher to use different types of data sources to answer the research question. Member checking ensures the accuracy of the transcription and finished product of the research (Creswell, 2012, p.259). Member checking is supplying each study participant with a copy of the researcher's findings (along with the transcript) and having each participant review those findings. Each should then be provided an opportunity to discuss those findings and validate their transcripts. The process of peer debriefing involves having a trusted colleague review the work and ask questions to ensure accuracy. This method overall enhances the validity of a qualitative study (Creswell, 2009).

For this study I used triangulation and member checking as a means of ensuring validity. The three data sources (triangulation) that I will use to answer the research questions are interviews, lesson plans, and district documents. Triangulation is also the method of substantiating evidence from separate individuals. In this study I gathered information from nine participants. For member checking I provided each of the research participants an opportunity to read the transcription of their interviews to ensure that what they said is accurately reflected in the transcription and analysis. I also provided an opportunity for them to ask clarifying questions.

Data Analysis

The data analysis step includes stages for organizing and transcribing data to discover emerging themes. Qualitative data analysis is inductive in nature. Analyzing data of a qualitative nature is a systematic approach to finding meaning (Hatch, 2002). Additionally, it is a way to communicate that meaning to others. Analyzing data is an ongoing process and should begin close to the time that data is being collected (Creswell, 2009). The data collected for this study was analyzed in a way that helped to answer the overarching research questions.

For this qualitative case study I analyzed the data by hand coding (Merriam, 2009). According to (Merriam, 2009) the critical purpose of coding data is to acquire developing themes that are consistent throughout the gathered data in order to deliver a comprehensive explanation of the data. Creswell (2012) inferred that analyzing by hand works well when the researcher is unfamiliar with a computer program for analyzing qualitative data. Each participant was assigned a number in order to keep track of the

data. As soon as an interview was completed and transcribed, coding and analysis began. I used a word document to transcribe each interview, verbatim using Dragon speech recognition software. Once a transcript was complete I listened to the interview again and corrected any mistakes that I made. I checked and rechecked the transcription against the recorded data for accuracy. Keeping the overarching research questions in mind I began coding by looking for ideas that remotely fit into the larger scheme of answering the research questions. To code the first interview I used the “track changes” function in Microsoft Word. To keep track of the codes I wrote each code number and code description in a composition notebook. For the second interview I coded in the same manner; however I assigned different code numbers. For the third interview once again I coded by using track changes and an open coding system. Themes began to emerge as the respondents gave some similar answers to the interview questions. I used my composition notebook to create an organizing chart in order to keep track of the themes that arose. As I continued to conduct the interviews, I reflected on what I had learned and my confidence in interviewing skills became more evident. However, I was cautious to not lead the respondents in the direction towards the themes of the previous interviews. Once data analysis was complete all interviews and transcriptions were downloaded to a password-protected SanDisk flash drive.

After I analyzed the data from the transcribed interviews I emailed the transcriptions and findings to each of the respondents so they could check on the accuracy of the transcriptions and ensure that the findings accurately reflected their intentions and their perceptions. I requested a 3 day turn around. All but two of the

respondents emailed me to say that from their perspective the transcriptions and findings were accurate.

The method for analyzing the lesson plans was similar to that of the interviews. A lesson plan checklist (Appendix C) was used to first discover if the lesson plans incorporated strategies delivered in the standardized professional development. I took notes on the lesson plan checklist that answered each of the questions. I then used the lesson plan checklist to write additional notes that would help me discover to what extent each of the checklist items were achieved on the lesson plans. For example, if learning targets were used I wrote down in my notes how they were used in the wording that the respondents used to identify the learning targets. Then, themes that emerged from the extent to which the topics were implemented were numerically coded and separated into emerging categories. The themes again included similarities in design and format, unexpected information, codes that possessed the most substantiated evidence, and supplementary information I anticipated finding upon further research. The district documents were analyzed to discover the professional development topics that have been delivered during the past two years.

Findings

In this section of the study, I will discuss the findings that came from the transcriptions and data analysis of the interviews, the lesson plans, and the district documents. Creswell (2012) stated that, “the primary form for representing and reporting findings in qualitative research is a narrative discussion” (p. 254). Moreover, this findings section will contain a discussion of themes that emerged as they relate to the research

questions. I will present the themes in the order of the research questions. They will come in the form of major findings and minor themes.

This study resulted from the problem that exists in a Southeastern school district. The problem that I investigated was that job-embedded, content-based professional development is not available or practiced for secondary school choral teachers. The research questions were designed in a way that would help me to discover what the secondary school choral teachers perceive as quality professional development and to what extent the standardized professional development offered by the district has affected their efficacy. The two overarching research questions for this qualitative case study are the following:

1. What are secondary school choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development?
2. How has the standardized professional development in the district affected the secondary school choral teachers' efficacy?

These research questions formed the foundation for the interview questions and for the development of a lesson plan checklist, as evidence of quality professional development should show up in the planning of instruction. The findings listed below are presented in the order of the research questions and the data collection methods.

Finding 1: Secondary school choral teachers perceive that quality professional development should be content-based, transferable to classroom practices and should be tailored as a result of a needs assessment. A common theme that emerged from the interview data was content-based professional development. Most

of the respondents in this study stated that quality professional development should be based on choral music content. In addition, many of the respondents stated that professional development should contain knowledge that they could take back to their classrooms and use on a daily basis.

Theme 1: Content-based, classroom transferable professional development.

Seven of nine respondents stated that sight-reading or sight-reading techniques were important content-based elements that should be included in quality professional development. Warm-ups or new warm-up techniques were mentioned four times during the interviews. Dealing with the changing male voice was offered as an important professional development topic along with choosing choral repertoire. Recruiting chorus members, especially boys, as well as technology integration were mentioned two times. Each was noted as an important topic for quality professional development. Most of the respondents indicated that professional development needed to be aligned toward choral music content. One respondent said, “Quality professional development to me allows you to increase knowledge in your specialty. Whether your specialty is band or chorus, professional development classes should be aimed toward your specific content.” In addition, the professional development should be strategies that could be taken back to the classroom. These strategies should be designed to improve student achievement and to better service the needs of the students. One study participant responded in this fashion:

To keep it short and simple quality professional development contains strategies that will be effective. It contains knowledge that I can take back and use in my

classroom. It is information I can use that relates to chorus. It might be sight-singing, intonation exercises, or how to get a better blend.

Another respondent stated that he would like to see professional development as being knowledge that, “I could use to help my students develop as musicians and singers or any information that is given to me that I can use to better my program.” A different respondent opined, “From the professional development experience I can take back the resources to my classroom.” The classroom practices that respondents referred to that were not necessarily related to choral music content were classroom management, and technology integration.

In contrast to the notion of choral content alignment, Ruocco and Varvarigou stated, “When it comes to singing activities, teachers complained that they received limited ideas from singing specialists. The ideas from singing specialists included repertoire, new warm-ups, and games” (as cited in Varvarigou, Creech, & Hallam, 2012, p. 149). These professional development topics were not structured around strategies that would improve teaching practices over time. This finding is in stark contrast to the content-based ideas presented by the choral teachers in this study. The choral teachers in this study stated that new ideas for warm-ups and ideas for new repertoire were important topics for professional development, however unless they are structured around sound teaching strategies, they would not improve teaching practice over time.

Theme 2: Needs assessment. A different theme that emerged from the interview data was needs assessment. Three respondents indicated that quality professional development should be that professional development which results from a needs

assessment. Guskey (2000) stated that, “well designed needs assessments are considered essential in planning well-targeted and highly efficient professional development programs and activities” (p. 57). It is essential that professional development programming be geared towards the ever changing needs of the faculty (Elliot, Rhoades, Jackson, & Mandernach, 2015). The three respondents indicated that there is a need to perform professional development that is tailored to the specific needs of the teacher. This idea reflects the notion that teachers actually know what they want and need in the way of professional development (Eros, 2011). The three respondents also inferred that a teacher’s needs may be different depending on their experience level or level of expertise. One of the respondents was very adamant about this idea. The respondent stated:

Different chorus teachers in different situations need different training. So, the best professional development is professional development that gives strategies for chorus teachers in a variety of different and difficult choral teaching situations. Professional development provides teachers with the knowledge and skills to develop improved delivery approaches. Professional development needs to be tailored so that it helps teachers build a repertoire of strategies and tools that will empower everyone in those teaching situations. A needs assessment study has to be performed before professional development is designed.

Other respondents stated that quality professional development “meets the needs” of the choral teacher. One respondent suggested that someone from the district’s professional learning department, “talk one-on-one” with the individual choral teacher to find out exactly what is needed in the way of professional development. In contrast, Cannon et al.

(2013) implied that the instructional leader of the organization is the principal. In addition, that the principle is responsible for determining the professional development needs of the faculty.

Finding 2: Quality professional development should take the form of collaboration, mentoring, or conferences. During the interviews each of the respondents indicated the type of delivery method that they believed would constitute quality professional development. The responses came from across the interview data, not just from the first interview question. The answers varied between the interviews but could be placed into three different themes.

Theme 1: Collaboration. Respondents had much to say about the type of delivery in which professional development should be given to produce a quality program. Collaboration was the recursive response from the respondents to the question, “What is your idea of quality professional development?” Jao and McDougall (2015) agreed that teachers who have the opportunity to collaborate benefit in many different ways. One respondent stated it this way, “Collaboration is so important. That probably is the most efficient way to do professional development. Most teachers are just glad to be able to work in concert with other teachers to solve problems.” Many of the respondents shared that it was helpful when the choral teachers met at the beginning of the school year. It was helpful to share ideas and talk about choral music. To support this notion one respondent stated it this way:

I really enjoyed when we got together during pre-planning. We had the opportunity to get our high school directors together to exchange ideas. In five

minutes I learned so much more than I did in the district's standardized professional development sessions.

The idea of collaboration can be loosely compared with professional learning communities. Collaboration is an essential aspect of the professional learning community. Educators should be arranged in the structures that allow them to participate in significant collaboration that is advantageous for them and beneficial for their students (Dufour et al., 2006). One respondent stated, "When you think of professional development, you think of small learning communities where you get together and crosstalk." The respondent clarified, "Cross talking is simply collaboration among parties within the circle." Another term, "talking with colleagues" was used by others in stating that it is always good to come together with colleagues and talk about solving problems together. The respondent stated it this way:

Talking with colleagues would actually help me tailor my program. Quality professional development is not necessarily in just going to a conference.

Sometimes it is just having a conversation with colleagues to find out what they are doing in their classrooms.

Another respondent stated that collaboration offered an opportunity to share ideas:

Collaboration can be an outlet. Sometimes you think that you are the only teacher going through certain things. When we all get together and start sharing, it unlocks certain things inside of you. I would love to see that happen more often. It would be nice in order to just bounce ideas back and forth and to share techniques that work.

One respondent declared that collaboration is a “cost effective” way to engage in professional development. The respondent stated, “One suggestion would be to put in time for teacher to teacher collaboration under the umbrella of professional development. Many times collaboration is not recognized as professional development, but it is very cost effective.” The best educational experiences will most likely come from collaboration with others (Kennette & Hanzuk, 2014).

Theme 2: Mentoring. According to three of the respondents, another medium in which professional development could be performed is through a mentorship program or having a mentor. The three respondents indicated that having a mentor would provide that one-on-one professional development in which the mentor could focus on the specific needs of the mentee. Klute (2013) stated that, “professional development efforts are more effective when they also focus on an application of knowledge or practice, and mentoring is a practical method to accomplish that” (p. 64). In addition, mentoring is a viable way to promote growth and impact development (McAleer & Bangert, 2011; Ramnarain & Ramaila, 2012). One respondent put it this way:

I had a mentor. The time that we spent together one-on-one was helpful. And I would consider that professional development. That is what I want, that is what I need. I do not want to teach my students wrong methods of how to sing. I really do not want to do that.

Another respondent that indicated she had a mentor stated that, “Having a mentor is having someone that can help you that has been in the game a little bit longer. By using mentors I think we would see teacher efficacy and teacher involvement improve.”

Theme 3: Conference. The conference form of professional development was the delivery method that many respondents thought was quality and stated that they have participated in. Morthorpe (2011) stated that, “Conferences are a wonderful place to charge your batteries and to remind you why you teach” (p. 26). Eight of the nine respondents stated that they have attended the Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA) annual in-service conference. The Georgia Music Educators Association in-service conference is an event that occurs over a three day weekend during the month of January. The conference includes concerts, sight-reading sessions, convention style booths where products and merchandise are sold, different classes, and mingling with like-minded professionals. One respondent described his GMEA experience:

I have been to the Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA) conference. I think for me, going to the different sessions included in the conference empowers me to keep moving forward and to keep striving to make my teaching better than what it is now.

Other respondents presented comments about their experiences at the annual GMEA conference. “The professional development I have gone to with the GMEA conference gives me ideas. It is more focused on content, so that helps a little bit.” Another respondent stated, “Going to the GMEA conference gives me a chance to choose the sessions that I want to attend. I can get the professional development that I need most.”

On the heels of the Georgia Music Educators Association conference there is the American Choral Directors Association national conference. One respondent that participated in the ACDA stated, “I go to the ADCA conference every year. It is like the

GMEA conference but has more nationally recognized conductors and composers to work with.” This was the only respondent that mentioned ADCA during the interviews.

Although some of the respondents mentioned collaboration as the best form of quality, there was no mention of the term professional learning community. However, one respondent did reference small learning communities. The professional learning community falls under the umbrella of collaboration (Dufour et al., 2006). Professional Learning Communities cause teachers to examine what they are doing in the classroom, how is it that what they are doing could improve student achievement, and possibly challenge commonly held assumptions about teaching (Prytula & Wyman, 2012). An equally interesting observation is that none of the respondents mentioned Action Research or Inquiry as best practices in professional development. Action research can be performed by a single teacher or it can be performed in a collaborative group (Ado, 2013). This type of professional development is predicated on the belief that upon examining their own practice teachers can better serve their students. Specifically, examining practice by considering methods to improve and ways to address challenges that exist. Action research or Inquiry can be viewed as best practices in professional development (Stern, 2014).

Finding 3: The standardized professional development had a minimal influence on secondary school choral teacher efficacy. The second research question was, “How has the standardized professional development in the district affected the secondary school choral teachers’ efficacy?” To assist in answering the second research question, questions were inserted in the interview protocol with the intent of discovering

the opinion of the choral teachers concerning the standardized professional development and how it has influenced choral teacher efficacy. This particular professional development has been implemented by the district over the past two years. There were varied opinions of the standardized professional development. The opinions ranged from, a missed opportunity, preferring an alternate approach, to wanting content area professional development included in the current format.

The opinion of all nine respondents was that the standardized professional development possessed little to no benefit to them and had minimal influence on efficacy. A professional development program cannot be a universal standardized method in changing teacher's beliefs and teaching habits (Atweh & Abadi, 2012). Six of the nine respondents concurred that the standardized professional development may be helpful for general education teachers, "It is good for the generalist" or as another respondent put it, "It may be helpful for general education," but all nine respondents implied that the standardized professional development really had nothing to do with fine arts. "It fosters good teaching practices but it does not necessarily touch the content of things that I do in my class."

Theme 1: Missed opportunity. The respondents expressed that their time is extremely valuable. Five were happy that the district provided the time during contractual hours for professional development but expressed that the topics and training received were not as beneficial as they could have been if the professional development had been directed toward music. The expression "missed opportunity" was used by the respondents numerous times. A respondent stated, "The kind of quality professional development that

we have really has very little to do with improving teaching in the classroom. So, to be honest it has been a missed opportunity.” A different respondent stated:

For me, I think it was a missed opportunity. I’ve told other colleagues, I think that if you are going to do standardized professional development it should be aligned with what you teach. If you teach music, it should be about music.

Yet another respondent stated, “It has been a wasted opportunity. I understand the need to deliver district initiatives, however I need strategies that are going to help me become a better choral director.” Another respondent put it a different way, “I do not see any value in it other than delivering a district mandate on lesson plans. It does not help me that much.” A different respondent summed up her opinions in the following manner:

To me what is important is being able to be effective as a teacher. Just because you wrote a great lesson plan does not make you a great teacher. Lesson plans are supposed to be a teacher’s guide. I know what I am teaching and I know what comes next. I just do not think writing a perfect lesson plan is that important.

One of the nine respondents provided a somewhat different opinion about the standardized professional development. That respondent stated:

I like it. However, what I wish that they would let us have is some department time in order to get with your actual content. Our instructional facilitator is wonderful at explaining things, coming up with activities, and trying to make it as interesting as possible. And, she really includes the fine arts department and helps us to break down learning targets so we can see how it looks for us.

Theme 2: Alternate approach. The idea of the standardized professional development is that everyone receives the same training and all teachers are required to apply it to their own specific discipline (McQuiggan, 2012). The training is given to all content areas simultaneously in the same location. According to the “instructional support professional learning plan” which can be found on the district website, the standardized professional development provided in the 2014 – 2015 school year focused on instructional planning, more specifically, the professional development sessions demonstrated how learning targets are used to focus the performance standards into small easily digestible units of study. A theme that surfaced from the interviews was that the respondents preferred an alternate, more individualized approach to the standardized approach. One respondent stated, “I do not particularly favor a standardized approach to lesson plans.” Another commonality among the respondents was that writing lesson plans for a core subject is not the same as writing for music class, or more specifically, a choral class. One respondent stated, “Chorus is not a standardized lesson planning subject. An alternative approach is needed” And finally, a respondent stated, “I think the district’s professional learning department is at the point where it tries to put everybody in this standardized professional development box. It does not work for teachers, especially in the music field.”

Theme 3: Content area. The most popular response, aside from a missed opportunity, from the respondents was that they would have preferred that the standardized professional development was done more on a content-based platform. This theme was first noticed as the respondents answered the first interview question, “What

do you consider to be quality professional development?” One respondent noted, “What I wish that the district would let choral teachers have is some departmental time in order to get with your actual content.” Or, as another respondent stated, “I feel that if we were separated into groups based on our content area it will be very helpful.” A different respondent stated, “It was good to the point of writing a lesson plan. It made me think a little bit of how I am writing a lesson plan but it really had little to do with the daily interactions in my classroom.” Another respondent put it this way:

I think it was good that we had the professional development and that we were able to use part of our school time to do it. But once again, it was primarily academic-based. There was nothing in there to really give us an idea on how to work our music classes. So, I’m just going on what I do, period.

In response to this question one respondent answered by asking his own question concerning content area professional development.

When you use the standardized approach, how does that help the individual content area? I think that is where you get to a gray area. Every content area is different and it has its own specialty. This standardized professional development only has the general foundation.

Most of the teachers stated that the standardized professional development possessed some redeeming qualities. Whether they appreciated the facilitator, they liked the implementation during contractual hours, or it kept the teachers informed on district initiatives, the majority wanted a more content-based approach.

Finding 4: Lesson Planning shows evidence of the standardized professional development. To support and assist in answering the second research question documents were taken from the district website that contain the standardized professional development schedule and topics that were covered. In addition, lesson plans were gathered and analyzed to discover if evidence of the standardized professional development was contained in them.

The topics that were scheduled and taught concerning the planning and execution of instruction were: literacy across the curriculum, explicit instruction, formative instructional plan, and learning targets. This information can be found on the “instructional support professional learning plan” and the “early release day proposal to improve student achievement” in the County public schools. To report the findings of this section of the study the participants will be referred to as Respondent 1, Respondent 2, Respondent 3, etc.

Lesson plans were analyzed to discover whether the concept of literacy across the curriculum, that was taught in the 2013 – 2014 school year district standardized professional development, was included in the lesson plans. Respondents 4, 6, 7, and 8 identified vocabulary words as part of the standard. This is in alignment with the literacy across the curriculum concept. Only Respondent 5 had a writing assignment contained within the lesson plans. Respondents 1, 2, 3, and 9 did not incorporate the literacy across the curriculum concepts in any of the lesson plans that were submitted for this study.

The lesson plans were analyzed to check for the frequency of the formative instructional procedures (FIP). The FIP incorporates principles of explicit instruction, and

learning targets. Explicit instruction is the process of informing students what will be learned, teacher demonstration, followed by guided practice, then individual practice, and concluding with some type of assessment. Each of the nine respondents utilized the explicit instruction lesson plan template. This template is provided by the county and incorporates each step in the explicit instruction model. Respondent 6 utilized a form of the explicit lesson plan template, however it was not the template provided by the county. In addition, Respondent 3 submitted a rehearsal plan that was not in keeping with the explicit instruction model.

Table 1.

Components of the Lesson Plan Checklist

Respondents	Component of the Lesson Plan	How Used
4, 6, 7, 8	Literacy Across the curriculum	Vocabulary Words Identified
5	Literacy Across the curriculum	Writing Assignment
1 – 9	Explicit Lesson Plan	All respondents used the Explicit Lesson Plan

The most frequent standardized professional development topic for the 2014 – 2015 school year was learning targets, as evidenced in the instructional support professional learning plan. Learning targets are those smaller bits of knowledge that fit together to form a performance standard. Learning targets can also be used to break down

a standard into small units that students can easily learn, comprehend, and retain.

Learning targets are constructed to describe precisely how teachers expect students to learn the lesson target. Additionally, learning targets describe how students will be asked to display that learning (Moss, Brookhart, & Long, 2011). It was expressed during the standardized professional development that learning targets should be identified in the lesson plan by the term, "I can." During further review of the submitted lesson plans I discovered that the concepts of learning targets were generally used. However, there was no standard format in which the learning targets were written. Respondents 1 and 2 prefaced the learning target in their lesson plans with, "Students will be able to say that they can...." Respondent 2 also used the preface that was taught during the standardized professional development, "I can...." as a means to identify the learning target. This response was used after the beginning of the learning target professional development. Respondent 3 stated, "Students should know the following...." as a means to preface the learning target. Respondent 4 used, "Students will be able to...." to identify the learning target. Respondents 5 and 6 used, "Students will...." to preface the learning target. Respondents 7, 8, and 9 presented lesson plans where no clear learning targets as presented by the district's standardized professional development were evident.

Table 2.

Level and Extent to which Learning Targets Were Used.

Respondents	Uses leaning Targets	Learning Target Narrative
1	Yes/Not Standardized	Students will be able to say that they can.....
2	Yes/Standardized	Students will be able to say that they can...../I can...
3	Yes/Not Standardized	Students should know the following.....
4	Yes/Not Standardized	Students will be able to.....
5	Yes/Not Standardized	Students will....
6	Yes/Not Standardized	Students will....
7	No	Learning targets not present
8	No	Learning targets not present
9	No	Learning targets not present

In general the learning targets were listed on the lesson plans submitted by the respondents. I noted that those respondents who provided lesson plans from two different school years had not changed the manner in which the lesson plans were written in order to include learning targets. The term “learning targets” appeared to be added to the direct explanation section of the lesson plan. The learning targets for some of the respondents did not change over the different dates of the lesson plan. One respondent used the same learning target in the month of August, November, and March of the next year. The data gathered through lesson plans tends to be somewhat contrary to the evidence revealed

through the interview data. The interview data revealed that the respondents considered the standardized professional development to be a missed opportunity and that it did little to improve teacher efficacy. Providing evidence to the contrary, learning targets were used to some degree in the lesson plans gathered for analysis. The participants stated that the training had no effect but applied the training to some degree.

Evidence of Quality

There are several procedures to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative research. One method I used to ensure reliability in the study was to check the transcripts against the recordings in order to ensure there were no mistakes during the transcribing procedure. Another procedure that I used to ensuring reliability was to write down memos concerning each code, their definition, and ensure the data that was placed in those codes did not vary across transcripts. Member checking was used to ensure reliability. Creswell (2012) stated that “member checking is a process in which the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account” (p. 259). Each respondent that participated in this study was provided a copy of the report of findings to ensure accuracy. Of the nine respondents, seven returned the email and stated that there were no blatant mistakes found and that they thought that the findings accurately expressed their opinions.

Validity in qualitative research is centered on the ideas of trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility. The validity procedure that I used to ensure credibility was triangulation (Creswell, 2012). Triangulation occurs when more than one data collection instrument and method are used to collect data. For this qualitative study I used

interviews and documents. A 20 to 30 minute interview, lesson plans, and a district professional development schedule/agenda taken from the district website were used as a means to collect data. Another means of triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals. Nine respondents were interviewed using the same interview protocol. In addition, lesson plans were gathered from those nine participants, along with website professional development benchmark evidence. This ensured that I had the information necessary to develop a report that was both accurate and credible. I compared the data received through the interviews against the data that was collected from the lesson plans. In addition, I compared the data from the lesson plans with the data taken from documents that are available through the district's website. And finally, I clarified my bias by writing down my own answers to the research questions and I fully disclosed them in a reflective journal. This was done in order to not bias the data that was collected, and by describing how my analysis of the data could have been shaped by my background as a choral teacher and a colleague of the participants.

For this study I interviewed nine respondents. I began by giving each respondent the choice of where to conduct the interviews. I did this because I wanted each of the respondents to feel comfortable, at ease, and be at a location where they felt they could give their best uninhibited response to the interview questions. Three of the respondents chose to conduct their interviews in their classrooms, three preferred to participate in the interviews in their particular office, two respondents preferred to take part in their interviews in a conference room of the district's Performing Arts Center, and one decided to take part in the interview at a Dunkin' Donuts seated at a table. I recorded each

interview and immediately upon returning to my residence began the process of transcribing. It took me several times to make sure that the transcriptions were exactly accurate and representative of what the respondent said. I then begin the process of coding the transcriptions and immediately noticed some themes that started emerging. During the third interview I found myself leading the respondent in the direction that the previous themes were going. I was able to catch myself during the interview and turn away from such behavior. I found that the less than I said the more data I could collect. A phrase that I have heard before in conducting interviews is for the interviewer to “embrace the silence.” Once I started embracing the silence the respondents spoke very freely and openly. Giving them additional time to search for an answer helped to obtain a more thick and rich description. I also discovered that facial expressions can lead an interviewee in one certain direction or another. I gave a conscious effort to keep a blank expression and not affirm or discourage any response that was being given by nodding my head, smiling, or lifting my eyebrows. This allowed the respondents to give a more complete and unbiased response to each question.

Each of the respondents was asked to submit six lesson plans for analysis. I did not tell the respondents what I was looking for. This method assured a true random sample of lesson plans with no bias or tampering. There was much data contained in the lesson plans, however I restricted my analysis to align with the lesson plan checklist (Appendix C) and data that was directly related to the research question.

Discrepant Cases

During the coding and analysis of the data in this case study there was a discrepancy in the data. Although each respondent's answers to the interview questions varied slightly, the answers given were close enough that outliers could not be found across the interview data. The respondents stated that the standardized professional development was a missed opportunity and that it did not assist in becoming better choral teachers. However, after reviewing the lesson plans, I discovered that there was evidence of the standardized professional development present. All of the respondents used the explicit lesson plan format and most of the respondents incorporated literacy across the curriculum and learning targets to some degree. The lesson plan analysis is contrary to the data obtained from the interviews concerning the standardized professional development and can be considered a discrepant case. In addition, there was one respondent that possessed an opinion that was contrary to the rest of the respondents concerning the standardized professional development. While eight respondents considered the standardized professional development a missed or wasted opportunity, one respondent stated that she liked it and that the standardized professional development facilitator made the training meaningful, interesting, and beneficial though it did lack a music content component.

Being open and honest during all facets of a research study is of utmost importance (Walden faculty, personal communication, 2014). For security purposes all interview recordings, data transcriptions, lesson plans, and memos and notes concerning

the analysis of raw data will be kept in a secure location at my home for a period of five years from the completion of this project study.

Summary of Findings

A summary of findings that emerged after the data was collected, coded, and analyzed are as follows. The first research question was, “What are the secondary school choral teachers’ perceptions of quality professional development?” From the data analyzed the first finding was that secondary school choral teachers perceive that quality professional development should be content-based, transferable to classroom practices and should be tailored as a result of a needs assessment. This quality professional development should be delivered in the form of collaboration, mentoring, or conferencing. Additionally, the content specific areas that the choral teachers deemed essential for quality professional development were sight-reading techniques, warm-up techniques, technology integration, and choosing repertoire.

The second research question was, “How has the standardized professional development in the district affected the secondary school choral teachers’ efficacy?” Responses to interview questions were analyzed and the finding was that the standardized professional development had a minimal influence on secondary school choral teacher efficacy. The common theme was that for the secondary school choral teacher it was a missed or wasted opportunity. Lesson plans were then analyzed to obtain a more thorough representation of the opinions of the secondary school choral teachers as it correlates to the second research question. The rationale for this approach was that evidence of quality professional development should be reflected in the planning of

instruction (Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 1998; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). The findings were slightly contrary to the choral teacher's opinions of the efficacy acquired from the standardized professional development. During the interviews the respondents stated that the standardized professional development had little effect on teacher efficacy. The finding from the lesson plan analysis was that the secondary school choral teacher lesson planning does show evidence of the standardized professional development, therefore influencing efficacy. Learning targets were generally identified even though a standardized format was not used. Additionally, the choral teachers expressed that the standardized professional development was not content specific to the fine arts, more specifically, the choral teacher. The choral teachers stated that they would like more content specific professional development to be considered by the district's professional learning department.

The conceptual framework for this study is built on the integration of constructivism, Andragogy, and professional development practices. The findings were consistent with the conceptual framework. The findings are supported by the second, third, and fourth principle of Andragogy (Knowles et al., 2012). Those principles are: adults want to be responsible for their own learning, adults tend to want greater individualization in their learning, and adults want to learn to the extent that the learning is perceived to be useful. Creating knowledge through experiences is the process of constructivism (Schunk, 2012). From past experiences the respondents in this study

have indicated the best professional development practices that would benefit them. Those professional development practices are: collaboration, mentoring, and conferences.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study investigated secondary school choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development. This study was prompted from the problem of no content-based job-embedded professional development available or practiced for secondary school choral teachers in a Southeastern school district. To obtain a better understanding, a homogeneous purposeful sampling method was used to select participants to take part in this study. Nine participants volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews and provide six lesson plans from the past two years. The interviews were transcribed, hand coded, and analyzed for reoccurring themes to help answer the two overarching research questions. A system and procedure for the ethical protection of participants were employed. The different methods utilized was informing the participants of the purpose of the study, using ethical interview strategies, and maintaining confidentiality. I assigned each respondent a number as a method to maintain confidentiality and keep track of data. In addition, there was no mention of any demographic information. To ensure research validity I utilized triangulation and member checking.

The findings that emerged from the data after coding and analyzing were complete are as follows:

Finding 1: Secondary school choral teachers perceive that quality professional development should be content-based, transferable to classroom practices and should be tailored as a result of a needs assessment.

Finding 2: Quality professional development should take the form of collaboration, mentoring, or conferences.

Finding 3: The standardized professional development had a minimal influence on secondary school choral teacher efficacy.

Finding 4: Lesson Planning shows evidence of the standardized professional development.

Based on the findings a project was designed that addressed the problem and the concerns of the choral teachers. The findings indicated that the choral teachers perceive that quality professional development should be predominantly content-based and is delivered in the form of collaboration, mentoring, and conferences. Additionally, during this study I discovered that choral teachers saw the standardized professional development as a missed opportunity because it did not focus on choral music content. I created a project directed at secondary school choral teachers to help them develop and improve the skills necessary to collaborate and serve as mentors in a way that is job-embedded. In addition, I focused part of the project on developing choral teachers' skills in incorporating content-based learning targets into the lesson plans. I conducted a thorough review of current literature that supported the findings of this study and that assisted in creating the project.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In this section I provide an introduction to the proposed project. I created this professional development project to provide the secondary school choral teachers with strategies on implementing and maintaining a purposeful collaboration program. The professional development includes instruction on how to be a mentor, and contains guidance on how to construct learning targets with choral music as the focused content. After collecting and analyzing data I discovered that the study participants expressed a need to be able to collaborate and exchange ideas with their colleagues. In addition, the choral teachers stated that mentoring was a professional development method that was valuable and expressed a need for a mentoring program. Additionally, the study participants expressed a desire that more content-based professional development be made available within the district. This section contains a description of the goals of the project, a rationale for choosing this project, and a literature review that explains why this project is an appropriate response to the findings. Additionally, this section contains an implementation plan for the project and a proposed project evaluation. Implications and possibilities for positive social change will be discussed.

Description and Goals

This study examined the perceptions of secondary school choral teachers regarding quality professional development. The current standardized professional development in the district was established to disseminate district initiatives such as, literacy across the curriculum, explicit lesson planning, and learning targets. This project

was developed as a possible alternative approach to the district's implemented standardized professional development. The project, if implemented, may assist in providing content-based, job-embedded professional development to all secondary school choral teachers in the Southeastern school district. Adults desire greater individualization in their learning (Knowles et al., 2012). To illustrate this point the respondents in this study stated that they perceived quality professional development as primarily choral content-based. And, that this quality professional development should be delivered in the form of collaboration, mentoring, and conferencing.

Since the district provides one in-service day at the beginning of the school year it would be convenient to schedule the first day of the project during that time. The remaining two days of professional development will be scheduled within the first 9 weeks of the school year. During the in-service day, collaboration will be the focus of the training. During the next professional development day the topic of mentoring will be presented. And finally, during the last professional development day guidance on how to construct learning targets that are based on choral music performance standards will be the focus. The goal of this project is to provide an alternate approach to the current standardized professional development format provided by the district. Additionally, this project will address the findings of the study participants that were expressed through data collection. Following the first day of training, teachers will be asked to collaborate weekly. This collaboration will be accomplished through the use of technology. Choral teachers from across the district will gather on a video conferencing site to exchange ideas and to discuss topics. The lead choral teacher in the district will be responsible for

leading the discussion. A portion of the first day of the professional development will be devoted to the use of technology; more specifically, Skype and ooVoo.

Rationale

Collaboration is an efficient learning procedure particularly for adult learners (Morel, 2014). Moreover, collaboration requires mutual goals. When pairs or teams operate mutually the established purposes should be meaningful and the expectancies should be high (Morel, 2014). An important element of professional development is the fashion in which the subject matter is presented (Burkman, 2012). Based on the responses from the participants in this study, I chose collaboration and mentoring as topics for the professional development. Additionally, technology was added as an essential component to this project study to facilitate choral teachers' job-embedded collaboration.

Technology was mentioned during the interviews as an important professional development topic. By providing instruction to the choral teachers on the crucial elements of collaboration through the use of technology, they will be able to effectively collaborate in a job-embedded manner even though isolation and distance exists between them. Collaboration through the use of technology may also provide the choral teachers that additional and ongoing support that they require in order to enhance teaching skills. In addition, it will allow them to draw on the experiences of other choral teachers. This will assist in increasing their content-based teaching strategies possibly resulting in enhanced student achievement.

Researchers agree that collaboration serves to enhance teachers' efficacy and strengthens the general ability of the school to pursue advances in teaching and

encourage lifelong learning (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Dufour et al., 2006). For teachers to continue in the pursuit of lifelong learning they must be involved in some sort of professional development. This project will serve to assist the secondary school choral teachers in improving their teaching skills through collaboration and mentoring as a form of professional development. Teachers who are involved in collaboration and mentoring will ultimately benefit each other by sharing ideas and teaching practices from experiences in a job-embedded manner (Danielowich, 2012). In addition, this project will also help choral teachers to better understand the district implementation of the standardized professional development associated with learning targets, but as it relates to choral music content.

In alignment with the existing evidence of the problem in the Southeastern school district, and the findings from this study, the district needs to improve its professional development practices by providing that content-based, job-embedded which will improve teacher efficacy. The existing evidence is that teachers have unexpectedly left the job, there has been a decline in extracurricular choral activities participation, and that there has been an absence of job-embedded professional development. This project will address the local problem by implementing a cost effective job-embedded approach to professional development for choral teachers through collaboration and external mentoring through the means of technology. By implementing the project steps can be taken to possibly improve choral teacher morale, retention, and job satisfaction. In addition, this program will provide the choral teachers with the opportunity to participate in professional learning with other choral teachers. It will provide the resources of

experience from senior choral teachers and facilitate the improvement of overall teaching skills that may improve student achievement.

Review of the Literature

I conducted a review of the literature that is directly related to professional development as it pertains to the findings of this study. In addition, the literature review is directed towards assisting choral teachers in developing a job-embedded, content-based professional development program that has the potential of meeting their needs. To conduct the literature review I accessed different search engines and databases within the Walden University library. Those search engines and databases include: ProQuest, Eric, education research complete, EBSCO, and personal copies of the Music Educators Journal published by the National Association for Music Education. The terms that I used in conducting the review include: *professional learning, professional development, collaboration and collaboration types, college, university, mentor, mentoring as professional development, content, content-based professional development, music, choral music, fine arts, learning targets, professional development types, virtual learning, Skype, secondary school and online learning*. This literature review will include the topics of collaboration, mentoring, technology, and learning targets.

Collaboration

Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, and Tollefson (2006) described collaboration as the supportive fashion that two or more individuals work together towards a mutual objective. Characteristics of collaboration include cooperating, coexisting, communicating, coordinating, and partnering (Devlin-Scherer & Sardone, 2013).

Collaborative professional development structures provide music educators opportunities to take part in meaningful, professional learning with others; this collaboration is absent from several professional development proposals (Stanley et al., 2014). Collaboration allows teachers to draw from a deep pool of experiences from others and it is a powerful tool for meaningful professional development (Attwood, 2011). Collaboration is associated with enhanced job satisfaction, and it is a successful learning method, especially for adult students. Collaboration requires the establishment of meaningful goals. When teachers work together, goals that are established should be worthwhile, and the expectations should be high (Morel, 2014). Effective collaboration can result in an increase of teacher effectiveness as evidenced through student achievement. Reasons for this might be in the fact that traditional professional development programs are embedded with assumptions of what teachers actually need. Collaboration allows the occasion for educators to cultivate more sophisticated understandings of their own manner of teaching (Danielowich, 2012; McNicholl, 2013). In addition, effective collaboration contains clarity of purpose, accountability, some type of team structure, and trust (Sparks, 2013).

The goal of the music educator's practice should be to overcome challenges and improve results. Each teacher possesses different teaching tools (Eros, 2013). Some may be useful in some situation where others may not. It is important to agree upon, through discussion and collaboration, what the curricular action ideas are. Action ideas are positive visions that guide practical actions in desirable directions (Regelski, 2014). These directions can be agreed upon through discussions with peers, collaboration and personal reflection on practice. A respondent in this study echoed Regelski when she

stated, “Collaboration is so important. That probably is the most efficient way to do professional development. Most teachers are just glad to be able to work in concert with other teachers to solve problems.” Collaborating with other educators, particularly other music teachers, is equally valuable (Hesterman, 2012). Anderson and Denson (2015) agreed by stating that, “music educators should stay in an ongoing dialogue with other veteran music teachers in order to stay abreast of current and successful techniques.” (p. 37).

Although the respondents in this study did not mention collaboration with university choral music professors, collaboration should also exist between secondary school teachers and university professors (Nordgren, 2011). There is an ongoing opportunity to learn from the expertise of the university professor (Martinovic et al., 2012). Hunter (2011) stated that, “The focus on collaboration in the pursuit of professional growth makes school-university partnerships an optimal environment to provide support for in-service music teachers.” (p. 138). It would follow that collaboration between choral teachers in the district and the directors of choral music activities at the local university would serve to benefit professional growth. Hunter (2011) also communicated that school visits from university music professors would help to establish that collaboration and discover what is needed. Partnerships between universities and secondary school music departments are becoming commonplace and are an integral part of music teacher growth and development (Brophy, 2011; Burton & Greher, 2011). However, scheduling for those collaborative partnerships can be a problem as university students are scheduled at the same time as secondary school

students for music education classes. This inhibits the collaboration of professors and secondary school music teachers. An additional form of collaboration that serves to enhance professional development for beginning and mid-career stage teachers is mentoring.

Mentoring

Some of the respondents in my study communicated that a form of collaboration that they thought to be beneficial was mentoring. Bryant-Shanklin and Brumage (2011) defined mentoring as a practice in which two or more people cooperate to advance the professions and proficiencies of all members. The ability to have generous contact with a mentor provides teachers with a knowledgeable teammate who can offer his or her experiences of successful and unsuccessful classroom methods (Vaill & Testori, 2012). Mentoring programs help to socialize beginning stage teachers, improve their self-confidence, increase their perception of fitting, and reduce attrition (Kane & Francis, 2013). Mentoring is a vital aspect of the development of teachers in their beginning stages of teaching. Teachers in their first years of teaching should be paired with formal top-down mentors who possess a distinct understanding of the content, pedagogy, and have a positive and responsive communication style (McDonald & Flint, 2011). Chambers et al. (2012) agreed by opining that mentor teachers should be selected based on suitability. Some of the benefits of being mentored, especially as novice teachers are: decreased feelings of isolation, improved certainty and self-esteem, career progress, and enhanced self-reflection and problem solving competences (Canter, Kessler, Odar, Aylward, & Roberts, 2012). Some of the respondents in this study indicated that having a

mentor would provide that one-on-one professional development in which the mentor could focus on the specific needs of the mentee. In addition, mentoring should be built on a strong foundation of trust and on establishing relationships (Newby & Heide, 2013). The process of mentoring should be such that even when teachers make mistakes they have no fear of being penalized. Mentoring must be valued as a common practice in the field of education. Mentoring takes time to impact teaching and enhance learning, therefore the context for mentoring must include clear communication and an extended timetable for collaboration (Efron, Winter, & Bressman, 2012).

Jones (2013) communicated that there are four different stages during the formal mentoring process. Those stages are: preparing, negotiating, enabling and closing the relationship. The initiation/preparing phase typically involves the mentor and mentee getting to know each other and discussing the expectations of the relationship. Langdon, Alexander, Dinsmore, and Ryde (2012) found that mentors should be given an adequate amount of time to get to know and support the beginning teachers. The cultivation/negotiating phase is where mentors meet with mentees to clarify and to agree on goals. Santora, Mason, and Sheahan (2013) agree that mentors should conduct a lengthy meeting with the mentee to establish and settle upon goals and objectives. The separation/enabling phase occurs as the mentor challenges the mentee towards being more autonomous. It is important to give a gradual release to the mentee so that they can build confidence in their abilities in the classroom (Russell & Russell, 2011). Jones (2013) concluded by communicating that the final redefinition/closing stage is involved

in giving/receiving feedback to review progress and bringing the formal relationship to an end allowing the mentee full autonomy in the classroom.

Mentoring can be divided into internal mentoring and external mentoring. Internal mentoring takes place with participants within the same building. External mentoring occurs where participants are located in different places (Haines & Popovich, 2014). Peer mentoring happens as a mentor of the relatively same experience level serves a mentee (Bichy & O'Brien, 2014). The traditional type and style of mentor is when a mentor is usually someone in the same work environment that is senior or has more experience in the job and perhaps more education (Law et al., 2014). To be a mentor one must have experience. Experience is the predominant factor in determining or making judgments about appropriateness of actions or procedures. The idea of mentoring is that it is based on experience rather than theory (Clarke, Killeavy, & Moloney, 2013). There are formal and informal mentoring relationships. Law et al. (2014) communicated that only about 25% of the post-secondary schools in the country utilize formal mentoring. The choral teachers in this study serve at different schools across the district; therefore the type that would be appropriate for the choral teachers in this study to participate in is external informal/peer mentoring.

Many times fine arts teachers, including choral teachers, teach in building isolation away from other colleagues at the end of the gym. Often the closest same subject teacher is miles away at another school. External informal/peer mentoring in this sense is two people working collectively in a mutual partnership rather than a top-down control position where one person is in charge of the relationship and each is at different

buildings. Most commonly peer mentoring is associated with the goal of increased student achievement (Tollefson-Hall, 2015). Pruitt and Wallace (2012) provided empirical evidence that student achievement on test scores increased as a result of a statewide mentoring program. It was interesting to note that in the same study economically disadvantaged students with teachers in the statewide mentoring program had the largest increase in test scores. Mentoring and collaboration through the use of technology will be discussed in the following section of the literature review. The respondents in this study did not mention collaboration and mentoring through technology as a means for professional development. However, to facilitate the job-embedded aspect of the problem, and honor the forms of professional development that the respondents deemed to be quality, the creation of an online synchronous environment is warranted as a delivery vehicle for professional development.

Technology

In today's world of technology, engaging professional development from a distance is a commonplace occurrence. "Enhanced connectivity and technological expansion have led to richer media being offered for educational communications, and the affordances of the communication tools now used enable substantial social presence" (Cunningham, 2014, p. 41). The online idiom applied by educators can be utilized to collaborate, increase and acquire new capabilities that are significantly imperative to the enrichment of their knowledge, and increase educational inventory (Kabilan, Adlina, & Embi, 2011). A structure of online educator collaboration is teacher-to-teacher online peer support. Educators communicate their uncertainties, apprehensions

or difficulties within an online group. This idea is aligned with the concept of external peer mentoring as discussed in the previous section. Additionally, Internet technology has permitted educators to collaborate in an online environment that is unrestricted from the limitations of place and time (Kyounghe & You-Kyung, 2013).

The concept of eMentoring, like other forms of mentoring, requires clear goals and the establishment of relationships even more so than in a face-to-face mentoring relationship. Participants also need to be carefully selected and be committed to the program. A well-constructed program has the potential to provide powerful professional development when supported by the training, resources and most importantly, people (Bullock & Ferrier-Kerr, 2014). McAleer and Bangert (2011) opined that the majority of the time teachers are at the school, they are with their students leaving little time to interact and work with professionals from the same teaching discipline. Because an online environment leaves flexibility, participating in an online program promotes more time and better coherence with teachers' professional goals. Stanley et al. (2014) related a story about a teacher who was able to provide string lessons (violin, viola, and cello) to a colleague across several states via Skype. Skype is a simple and effective educational technology tool to use to facilitate remote presentations or professional development opportunities (Hussain, 2014; Michels & Ching-Wen, 2011). Additionally, presentations, mentoring sessions, or collaborative meetings can be recorded for later viewing through Skype. The chat and video features included in Skype are very similar to common networking social sites like Facebook (Blankenship & Kim, 2012). A study of two people that took part in a virtual professional learning and development course stated that they

developed a sense of self-efficacy that motivated them to try alternative approaches, and to initiate an interactive cycle of trial, error, and improvement (Owen, 2014).

Learning Targets

Sound teaching starts with clear student centered learning targets. From those learning targets, teachers choose applicable instructional activities and measurements that help ascertain improvements that students have achieved (Moss & Brookhart, 2012). A learning target unpacks a chunk of information or amount of learning that the students will be required to master during a single lesson. A learning target must communicate to the students what the lesson for the day represents to them. Students who do not comprehend the purpose of a lesson consume valuable time and energy attempting to discern what their teachers require them to discover (Moss, Brookhart, & Long, 2011).

An effectual learning target affords the students and the teacher with a clear perception of the piece or chunk of knowledge to be learned (Marzano, 2009). The process of using Learning Targets is also called “Chunking” (Swiderski, 2011). Chunking is a classroom strategy used so that students can learn small bits of information to easily remember and recall at a later time. “Chunks” is a technique for the educator to support students in exemplifying this knowledge in a fashion that can be more effectively retained when it is originally learned and more easily recovered when it is ultimately required.

The research presented in this section is consistent with the findings of this study. Most of the respondents in my study indicated that collaboration or mentoring was a missing part of the existing professional development in the district. The respondents stated that they would like to have the opportunity to assemble, discuss problems, and

find solutions in a collaborative environment with other choral teachers. By encouraging the secondary school choral teachers to participate in an online synchronous environment, they would be able to receive immediate feedback from their colleagues in an external informal peer or collaborative relationship. Students would benefit from this type of collaboration as choral teachers from across the district could look into any choral classroom, give real time comments or suggestions during chorus rehearsals, and provide valuable feedback that would ultimately improve teaching and learning. The idea of professional development is preparing teachers to improve student achievement. By utilizing this type of professional learning environment, students would also benefit by having the ability to hear other groups without having to leave the classroom. A proposed professional development project will be based on this information and it will present a possible solution for the absence of content-based, job-embedded professional development. This type of professional development program would help to minimize the problem of the lack of job-embedded, content-based professional development.

Project Description and Implementation

The proposed project will be comprised of a 3-day professional development seminar that incorporates collaboration, mentoring, technology (Skype and ooVoo), and choral music content learning targets. There is generally only one choral teacher per secondary school. Therefore, mentoring and collaboration with other choral teachers as a job-embedded function can only be possible through the use of technology. To facilitate this professional development I will serve as the facilitator. To address the problem of the absence of job-embedded professional development the choral teachers will be asked to

participate in a one day seminar/workshop on collaboration and the incorporation of Skype/ooVoo as a medium. During the interviews it was noted that most of the teachers considered collaboration as just talking to one another. For this professional development day the participants will engage in research based methods on how to effectively collaborate. During the first day of the professional development a local university music professor will deliver a brief presentation on the collaborative activities that are available between the university and secondary school choral programs. In addition, there will be a one day seminar/workshop on mentoring. Participants will have the opportunity to mentor each other in person and through technology. Skype will be utilized as the mentoring medium when the teachers are asked to use technology, as Skype technology allows for one-on-one video conferencing. The final day of the project will be to provide guidance on how to create learning targets that would relate specifically to the choral teacher and choral music standards. More specifically, the learning will be constructed on how to devise learning targets from choral music performance standards. This would help to address the lack of content specific professional development which is a concern of the choral teachers. A participant evaluation will be included at the end of the third day of the professional development project. The evaluation can be found included at the end of Appendix A of this study.

The training will take place during professional learning days that are provided by the district. Support will be required from the district fine arts coordinator to ensure that this professional learning takes place. One day is already set aside at the beginning of the school year for district-wide in-service professional development. The additional two

days can be added during the first nine weeks of school with support from the fine arts coordinator. Just as students require that instruction be presented to facilitate different learning styles, this training will consist of different strategies to meet the different adult learning styles. There will be hands-on activities, PowerPoint presentations, think-pair-share activities, and group discussions. There will also be practical exercises concerning mentoring and collaboration. The rationale of this project is that it will meet the description of what the secondary school choral teachers deemed to be quality professional development. Additionally, it will address the problem that job-embedded content-based professional development is not available or practiced for secondary school choral teachers in the particular Southeastern school district.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The resources that are required for this project are currently in existence in the school district. However, because the project will require two additional professional learning days that are not already scheduled, substitute teachers will be required to accommodate the choral teachers attending the two nonscheduled professional development days. The approximate cost for substitute teachers for 15 secondary school choral teachers for two days is \$2500. The district fine arts department has the funds set aside for professional learning (Fine arts coordinator, personal conversation, July 22, 2015). Funding will be requested in advance so that budgeting for this project can be accommodated. The conference room at the county Performing Arts Center will be reserved for second and third day of the professional development. The choral teachers will be required to bring their district provided laptop and a copy of the choral music

performance standards. The choral music performance standards can be found on the state Department of Education website. To prevent inconveniencing other district professionals, I will serve as the facilitator for the three professional development days.

An additional potential resource exists at the local university. As part of the professional development I will ask the university choral director to participate in the training by attending either in person or via Skype to inform the district choral teachers of the collaborative services that are available through the university choral department. The district fine arts coordinator will be asked to provide a log and to verify that the choral teachers have attended the training. The district fine arts coordinator will also be asked to submit this log to the district professional learning department so that the choral teachers may receive professional learning credits for attending the three days of professional development.

The district performing arts center conference room already contains a projector mounted from the ceiling and a pull-down view-screen. In the event that there is a technology malfunction during the training, district technology professionals are readily available to support any repairs needed. In the interim, should such malfunction happen, I will provide each choral teacher with a copy of the training via district email so that valuable time will not be wasted. Janitorial teams, performing arts center maintenance staff, and clerical personnel are available during the normal duty hours for any additional required support.

Potential Barriers

There are 3 potential barriers that could impede the implementation of this professional learning project. The first is that 2 days of professional learning will cost \$2500 for substitute teachers so that the district choral teachers can attend the training. The district fine arts coordinator may refuse to provide the funds for this training to take place. Second, teachers may not want to actively engaged in collaboration or participate in a mentoring program. Finally, if there is an illness or a family emergency that would prevent the choral teacher from attending the professional development. In addition, previously scheduled events at one of the schools may interfere with the choral teacher's attendance. If any of these scenarios occur, additional professional development days will be scheduled for the teacher or teachers that must be excused from the first training.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

This professional development project will happen over a 3-day schedule during the first 9 weeks of school. The first day will occur as a prescheduled in-service training day that happens within the first month of school. The topic that will be discussed during the first day will be collaboration and the use of technology, more specifically Skype, as a mode for collaboration. Activities will include: PowerPoint presentations, group activities, think-pair-share activities, and a possible presentation from the local university director of choral activities. During the second day of training mentoring will be the topic of discussion. Choral teachers will be taught principles of mentorship and participate in learning activities and practical exercises that will facilitate a mentoring atmosphere. On the third day of training, learning targets as they pertain to choral music performance

standards will be discussed at length. Once again, activities will include a PowerPoint presentation, group activities, think-pair-share activities, and practical exercises to incorporate music learning targets in the planning of lessons. A complete timetable for the professional learning is included in Appendix A. A short survey will be presented at the end of the training that will assess the effectiveness of the training. In addition at the end of the school year a short survey will be presented to the choral teachers to determine to what extent the implementation of this project has influenced teacher efficacy.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others

As the researcher and the subject matter expert I will work closely with the district lead choral teacher and the district fine arts coordinator to ensure that the programs are effectively implemented. I will serve as a facilitator for the three day professional development workshop. It will be the responsibility of the district fine arts coordinator to make the conference room at the county Performing Arts Center available and to ensure that sign-in logs are provided and delivered to the district professional learning department. It will be the responsibility of each of the participants in the professional development to arrive on time, come with a good professional learning attitude, bring their district provided laptops, bring note taking material, and bring copies of the choral music performance standards. Additionally, it will be the responsibility of the university choral director to ensure that a 30 minute presentation is prepared and presented at the professional development on the scheduled day.

It will be the responsibility of the district choral department lead teacher to ensure that mentoring programs are established and that collaboration through discussion and

rehearsal observations are performed on a regular basis. Teachers hold a vital role in the successful implementation of this program. The choral teachers will need to participate in collaboration, become involved in a mentoring/mentorship program with other choral teachers, and utilize content-based learning targets in the correct way and on a continual basis.

Project Evaluation

A post training formative evaluation in the form of a written survey has been created to assess the effectiveness of the professional learning. The formative evaluation of training will be given after the third day of the professional development. The formative evaluation will be used to identify strengths and weaknesses of the content and presentation of the 3 - day professional development. In addition, the evaluation will be used to modify the professional development sessions based on the secondary school choral teachers' recommendations. The modifications, if any, could be used to enhance the professional development seminar for subsequent presentations. Questions on the formative evaluation survey will include: (1) How will this professional learning serve to improve choral teacher efficacy? (2) What follow-up assistance will be needed to implement this program? (3) What can be done to improve this professional learning? In addition, a Likert type portion will be added to the survey to gain a clearer picture of the professional learning sessions. Croasmun and Ostrom (2011) reported that Likert type scales are useful in reporting the social sciences and gaining opinions. The survey will ask the participants to answer by scoring each statement from 1 to 5 with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 being Strongly Disagree. The Likert survey questions include:

1. The Professional Learning goals were clearly identified and accomplished.
2. The Professional Learning was well organized, well presented, and conducted in an effective manner.
3. The Professional Learning content is important to improve student achievement.
4. The Professional Learning content will be useful in my job as a choral teacher.
5. The Professional Learning materials were relevant, appropriate and well organized.
6. The Professional Learning facilities provided an appropriate environment for learning.

At the end of the school year a subsequent summative evaluation survey will be provided. The end of year summative evaluation will be used to discover to what extent implementation of the project has served to address the problem that prompted this study. The survey will be given to the choral teachers to discover to what extent the implementation of this project has met the needs of the choral teachers and has influenced, improved, or enhanced choral teacher efficacy. The end of year survey will provide an opportunity for the choral teachers to indicate how the implementation of collaboration and mentoring through the use of technology has served to benefit them and how it has served to enhance student achievement. In addition, the survey will provide the choral teachers the opportunity to discuss how the training for the implementation of choral based learning targets has influenced the planning and delivery of instruction.

The stakeholders are the choral teachers, the district administration, and the district fine arts coordinator. Data will be assembled from the end of year survey that will explain how the professional learning and implementation of the collaboration and mentoring programs have influenced or improved choral teacher efficacy. A presentation will be created to inform all of the stakeholders to include the district secondary school choral teachers and the fine arts coordinator. This presentation will happen at the beginning of the next school year.

Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

The implementation of this project may provide positive social change for the secondary school choral teachers. The secondary school choral teachers generally teach in isolation from other choral teachers. The implementation of this project will allow them to collaborate through technology and serve to possibly eliminate the feeling of being isolated from other choral teachers. Additionally, implementing this project will possibly lead to greater job satisfaction and may increase teacher retention. It will allow the choral teachers to exchange ideas and have a job-embedded resource to utilize that will assist in developing a positive environment. The choral students could possibly benefit as they will be able to see and hear through the use of Skype technology how other choral departments in the district sound, look, and perform. Students will be able to socially interact on an educational level during class time. Moreover, as teacher efficacy increases, student achievement may also improve. The administration may benefit in that the choral departments will be better prepared to serve the needs of the school. When

students feel that they sound good they are more willing to perform and do a better job in that performance. The administration may benefit as the choral teachers could possibly be happier, more productive, and willing to serve the school in different capacities.

Additionally, other disciplines within the fine arts could possibly use this project, as they may be experiencing the same problems as previously identified that pertain to the choral department.

This project may also benefit community stake holders as choral departments will be better prepared to perform for various community functions. It is important for the school that the community feels connected to and a part of the education of students. Different choral departments may be able to combine with minimal rehearsal time to perform at PTSA meetings, school board meetings, and local government and civic functions. The combination of these possibilities will serve to promote a positive social change within the local community.

Far-Reaching

This project has implications for the entire state, region, and potentially national levels. It could be used to help other districts that may be experiencing the same problem as the Southeastern school district. It may also be possible for anyone that serves as a choral teacher in any district or any state to collaborate with each other through the use of technology. This project could open possibilities for collaboration that have not been previously realized.

Conclusion

In section 3 I presented a proposed project that will address the problem and will be consistent with the findings that were presented in section 2. I provided a complete description and goals of the project with an implementation schedule and duties and responsibilities of myself as facilitator, the district fine arts coordinator, and the secondary school choral teachers. I discussed the potential resources for the professional development training and implementation of the program along with potential supports and barriers for this project. I provided an in-depth literature review that discussed the topics of collaboration, mentoring, learning targets and the use of technology to accomplish the collaboration and mentoring. The implications for the project and potential social change were discussed. Additionally, I provided an extensive description of project evaluation, presentation to stakeholders, and the timeline for which the project evaluation will be implemented.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

In this project study I investigated the secondary school choral teacher's perceptions of quality professional development. Through data collection and analysis it was discovered that the secondary school choral teachers perceive quality professional development to be content-based, and be in the form of collaboration, mentoring and conferencing. In this section I will include my reflections on the project study and draw conclusions from my experiences. During the discussion I will include strengths and weaknesses and I will offer some recommendations for remediation of limitations. I will give my analysis as a scholar, practitioner and a project developer. This section will also include and conclude with the project's possible impact on social change, its implications, applications, and I will suggest some directions for further research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The project that I developed was a 3 day professional development workshop that included what the choral teachers perceived as quality professional development. The professional development seminar on the first day included one day of an overview of collaboration, professional learning communities, and the use of Skype and ooVoo. During the first day a University choral music professor will present collaboration opportunities that exist between the University choral department and the secondary school choral departments. The second day of the professional development seminar included an overview of mentoring and an opportunity for the choral teacher participants to practice using Skype as a communication and observation tool for mentoring. The third

day of the professional development seminar provided guidance on how to create learning targets that are geared for choral music that is based on the choral music performance standards.

There are several strengths contained in the implementation of this project. (a) The project addresses the problem of the lack of job-embedded, content-based professional development. The choral teachers will be able to collaborate and participate in mentoring programs that occur (during the school day) and that are based on choral content. Participation in collaborative professional development results in enhanced job satisfaction and is a successful learning process for adults (Attwood, 2011; Morel, 2014). (b) This project facilitates the secondary school choral teachers to participate in guidance on developing learning targets that directly relates to choral music content. This portion of the project addresses the secondary school choral teacher's perceptions that the district's standardized professional development was a missed opportunity due to the lack of choral content. (c) This project serves as a model for other fine arts teachers that teach in isolation to facilitate participation in collaboration and mentoring through technology.

There are possible limitations for the implementation of this project. (a) Some choral teachers may not be willing to participate in a collaborative environment. The choral teachers in the district generally serve in isolation, some for many years. It may be difficult for some of the choral teachers to embrace the change of being part of a collaborative community. (b) The project is more of an overview of the general principles of collaboration, mentoring and learning targets than an in-depth study. The project

provides the basic knowledge that will assist in the implementation of effective collaboration and mentorship programs, but does not provide great detail.

Although choral teachers and other fine arts teachers to include band, orchestra and art, teach in isolation from other teachers of like disciplines, they are all fine arts teachers. There are generally three to five fine arts teachers that serve each secondary school. The problem of not providing or practicing content-based job-embedded professional development could have been addressed differently by presenting a project that focused on a multi-discipline Professional Learning Community and how to perform multi discipline collaboration utilizing the band, chorus, orchestra, and art departments.

Scholarship

During the process of completing this project study the term scholarship has taken on a new and more meaningful implication. The process of completing this project study has taught me to research all information. As a scholar, if I perceive that there is a problem in my area I am required to seek information that verifies the existence of the perceived problem. Additionally, I must research what the professional literature states about the problem. The term scholar means to possess much knowledge about a given subject. I now consider myself knowledgeable about the process that is involved in performing a qualitative case study. To complete this project study I was required to execute every step, from start to finish, in the case study methodology. This case study involved performing interviews and reviewing documents. I have learned much from the amount of interviews that I performed. These interviews helped me to collect the data necessary to answer the research questions for this study. From the data gleaned through

interviews, analysis of documents and through much research I have learned much about collaboration, mentoring, and the use of learning targets to guide and improve instruction.

Completing this project study has required many hours of research. I have searched research databases, online resources, libraries and bookstores. Scholarship is not so much possessing knowledge for instant recall, although that is important, it is more about possessing the knowledge of where to find information that is needed for a certain endeavor. Being a scholar means that you are the person that others go to with questions and to seek knowledge. Scholarship is being able to answer those questions or knowing where to find the answer. During the process of completing this project study I have discovered what it means to be a critical thinker. I have taken the words of others and analyzed them to find similarities and differences, to filter and to use those similarities and differences to create a deliverable project that addresses the ideas of the majority of others.

Scholarship also means knowing that one does not know everything. It means that you are humble enough to seek the support and advice from colleagues, superiors in the education field, and people with more experience. During the process of completing this project study I sought the knowledge and counsel of my colleagues and superiors in my educational work environment. I found these people to be a valuable resource for information, help, and encouragement. Seeking knowledge and information, being a critical thinker, and seeking the support and advice of others will facilitate the embodiment of the true meaning of being a scholar.

Project Development

The development of this project required much thought about the best way to deliver the required material and many hours of research to learn exactly what was needed. From the interviews and the data collection it was evident that the choral teachers perceived quality professional development to be more content-based and delivered through collaboration and mentoring, and conferencing. Additionally, the choral teachers stated that the standardized professional development was a missed opportunity and should involve more content-based material. Considering these findings, I developed a project that addressed the original problem that prompted this study and the choral teachers' perceptions. Without technology job-embedded collaboration and mentoring would be impossible since secondary school choral teachers teach in isolation from other choral teachers. A short section on technology was added in order to facilitate the job-embedded requirement of the problem and address interview suggestions concerning technology. This project will give secondary school choral teachers the tools necessary to collaborate with each other and participate in mentoring that will facilitate a more content-based professional development environment in a job-embedded fashion.

Leadership and Change

During the process of completing this project study I have learned that being a leader is someone with enough wisdom to recognize that a problem exists and the courage to inform school and district leadership of the problem. Leadership is also having the knowledge to offer a solution. From performing research, I have discovered that leadership can be that quiet process of having information available upon request making

oneself a reliable scholar. Change does not happen by accepting the status quo. The status quo in this district would be for choral teachers to continue to work in isolation from other choral teachers. I have learned that by introducing a research based solution, working with the department and district leadership to implement this project as a possible solution, change may result. I have learned that leadership for change is recognizing a problem, taking the lead to offer a solution, and then following through to implement that solution with the support of other leaders.

Change can be very difficult. Teachers become complacent and do not desire to implement any new idea that takes them out of their comfort zones. Leadership is the process of obtaining cooperation from others while making them feel that it is their idea. Presenting this project to the choral teachers while showing that it was their idea could prompt them to embrace a change that will foster a new climate of communication, collaboration and cooperation.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

When I analyze myself as a scholar, I realize that there is much left to learn. Moreover, analyzing myself as a scholar makes me recognize that learning and education is a lifelong process. I have also learned that not everyone may see a problem the same way. Because of this, communication with multiple sources gives a more complete and deep understanding of experiences or perceptions (Merriam, 2009). Learning how to conduct this type of communication through interviews has aided in my journey in becoming a scholar. A scholar becomes a resource for others. Colleagues look to a scholar for direction, for proof, and for advice. Learning how to provide such direction,

advice, and proof has been instrumental in helping me become the type of scholar that can assist in making a difference with students, colleagues, the school and community.

After researching the initial problem and then collecting data from the respondents in this study, and analyzing that data, it has made me realize that the choral teachers in this district are not experiencing a unique problem. However, collecting data and researching that data has made the possible solution unique to the situation of the choral teachers in the specific Southeastern district. Experiencing the process of identifying a problem, researching the problem, collecting data, and offering a solution to that problem has made me aware that a scholarly endeavor such as this can be repeated in order to initiate change in other areas of the school and district. Experiencing this project study has made me desire to continue the scholarly course.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

When I analyze myself as a practitioner, I see a person that has learned and experienced the process of being a scholar practitioner. The very term practitioner invokes the vision of someone who practices their art. Therefore, the method in which to become a better practitioner is to practice. This project study gave me the opportunity to practice the skills necessary to continue the search for truth in research, data collection, and empirical evidence. There were processes that I experienced during the completion this project study in which I need continued practice to become more proficient. There were times during the interview process that I found myself leading the interviewee in a direction that previous interviews had gone. I consciously made an effort to be nonbiased and to conduct myself as a researcher. In addition, there were instances during the

interviews that warranted the use of clarifying probes. Although I did use some probes, there were times where other probes were warranted but I neglected to use them.

Research is also an area in which I could use more practice. I consider myself generally proficient at research; however there is always room for improvement.

If I put this project study away upon completion and never take up this process again, I will not be able to consider myself a practitioner. I pledge to make myself available to my administrative and district leadership to serve as a researcher, problem solver, and scholar practitioner. This will help me continue to practice and continue to serve the choral music department, the fine arts department, and education field as a whole.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

When I reflect on being a project developer, I have learned that the most important aspect is being able to listen to the participants of the study. Only by listening can a scholar develop a project that is meaningful and that addresses the needs of the participants. I have learned that at times participants will answer a question by describing what they want, but leave it to the researcher to discern how to effectively address what they said. It is imperative to possess the knowledge of the resources to use to glean ideas that will assist in designing a project. It is critically important to listen to what participants say and then design a project in an innovative way that will gain their interest. As I grow with new experiences and future projects I will certainly develop more tools that will assist in developing projects that will serve the needs of the participants and serve the desires of the administration.

In analyzing myself as a project developer I have learned that it is impossible to make a project work unilaterally. It takes the support of several different levels of personnel to ensure a successful outcome. It is important to solicit that support while developing the project. It is also important to arrange for contingencies in case things do not happen as originally planned. And finally, it is essential when working with people in the development and implementation of a project to be flexible and to constantly be cognizant of their needs.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

This project possesses the potential to impact social change in several ways. First, it provides an instrument for the secondary school choral teachers to be able to collaborate in a job-embedded fashion across the district. Participation in collaboration has the potential to help alleviate some of the feeling of isolation that is experienced by the choral teachers. Second, since teacher professional development impacts student achievement, the choral students' potential achievement in choral music could improve increasing the chances for music scholarships and careers. Third, the project also brings the concept of learning targets as it relates to choral music standards to the forefront. Since good teaching begins with clear and concise learning targets, social change will impact the choral teachers and students by having a clear and focused learning environment. Teachers will communicate the clear and concise learning targets and students will know precisely what they are required to learn and how they will exhibit that learning. Fourth, part of the mission of the secondary school chorus department is to serve as ambassadors of the school by performing concerts in the community and for

various stakeholders. Utilizing the experiences of many choral teachers through the collaboration and mentoring instruments that this project provides will better prepare students participation in community concerts and performances. Fifth, it takes a community to teach a child. This project also has the potential to benefit other disciplines within the fine arts arena. Art, band, and orchestra teachers generally teach in isolation. The project could be utilized across the district with all fine arts disciplines. Additionally, with the emphasis on increased student achievement at every level this project has the potential to affect choral students in a positive way by affording them the opportunity to benefit from the experience of choral teachers across the district. And finally, this project is important because it will potentially impact a positive social change by assisting the local fine arts department, the larger district and beyond in the continual pursuit of excellence through collaboration and mentoring.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Collaboration has been shown to be a critically important part of the job of the teacher. Collaboration activities in all forms such as, professional learning communities, mentoring and coaching programs are being implemented throughout the country. Dufour et al. (2006) stated that, “the very essence of the learning community is a focus on and a commitment to the learning of each student” (p. 3). More importantly, the ability of learning as a community in a job-embedded fashion is paramount to the success of students and the efficacy of choral teachers. The responses from the participants in this doctoral project study indicated that the current standardized professional development is a missed or wasted opportunity in their opinion and that more job-embedded, content

focused professional development is needed. The application of this project study has the potential for major improvements in the professional development program for choral teachers in the Southeastern district. This project describes and advocates for collaboration as a beneficial form of professional development. Core content subject teachers are required to meet and collaborate on a regular basis. This meeting and collaboration emanates under the umbrella of professional development. A similar program for choral teachers could be established from the implementation of this project. This project study could also be applied to other disciplines that are not included in the fine arts field, as other subject area teachers teach in isolation as well.

Although this project study provided a deep and rich understanding of the perceptions that secondary school choral teachers possess as it pertains to quality professional development, further research is needed to understand how the types of quality professional development that the participants indicated has influenced efficacy. A mixed methods research study on teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of the professional development project that was offered here would be warranted. A qualitative portion to discover perceptions combined with a quantitative portion to measure student achievement could take place. John Eros (2013) performed research that discovered music teachers' professional development needs at different career stages. Additional research that mirrors this work could be performed to discover the perceptions that secondary school choral teachers possess in this particular Southeastern school district about quality professional development at different career stages.

Conclusion

During this doctoral project study journey I was given the opportunity to identify a problem, research literature that pertained to the problem, discover what others had to say, and propose a project that would potentially address the problem and improve education for all concerned. It has taught me much about self-reflection, the role of a researcher, and a project developer. This study also adds to the available research about the perceptions secondary school choral teachers possess about what constitutes quality professional development. In addition, this study lends to future research concerning the professional development needs of choral teachers at different career stages.

Performing this project study has renewed my passion as a professional music educator and as an educational leader in my school and district. This process has been a journey of enlightenment, of frustration at times, and of satisfaction to know that the work I have done, with the assistance of others, could make a positive difference in the lives of many. My hope is that this project will be used to improve choral teacher efficacy and choral student achievement for the Southeastern district that was studied, the entire state, and beyond.

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Appendix A: The Project

Introduction

This professional development project has been designed as a result of the data collected and findings in the project study, “Secondary school choral teachers’ perceptions of quality professional development.” This professional development project is aimed at the secondary school choral teachers as a professional development alternative approach to the current standardized professional development offered by the district. Further, it is designed specifically for choral teachers by focusing on choral music content, but can be used by other music disciplines such as band and orchestra. Additionally, it can be tailored to fit any subject matter teacher that teaches in isolation from other teachers of like disciplines.

The overarching goal of this project is to provide the secondary school choral teachers the professional development that they deemed to be quality in nature and to provide them with the tools necessary to participate in job-embedded, content-based professional development. This professional development training class will last three full days. The specific objectives of this project are:

- To provide the secondary school choral teachers an overview of collaboration.
- To discuss and practice the key elements of mentoring.
- To introduce Skype and ooVoo technology and provide opportunities for the choral teachers to practice.

- To discuss and implement learning targets as they pertain to choral music performance standards.

A training evaluation survey will be presented at the end of the third day to find out how beneficial the professional development has been for the secondary school choral teachers. At the end of the school year, I will distribute an additional evaluation survey to the professional development participants. The purpose of the survey is to ascertain how the implementation of the various professional development methods has influenced teacher efficacy.

The schedules of the Professional Development Days are as follows:

Table A1.

Professional Development Schedule

Time	Day 1 – Schedule	Day 2 – Schedule	Day 3 – Schedule
	Collaboration & Technology	Mentoring – For Choral Teachers	Learning Targets for Chorus
Session 1 9:00-10:30	Collaboration Overview	Mentoring Overview	Learning Targets Overview
Break 10:30- 10:45	Break	Break	Break
Session 2 10:45 12:15	The PLC as Collaboration	Formal and Informal Mentoring	Understanding and Developing LT

Lunch 12:15-1:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Session 3 1:00 – 2:30	Collaboration – PLC continued	Informal Mentoring	Learning Targets for Chorus
Break 2:30-2:45	Break	Break	Break
Session 4 2:45-3:45	Technology, Skype, ooVoo and Special Guest	Peer Mentoring and Skype Technology Practice	Putting It Together
Closing 3:45-4:00	Closing	Closing	Complete Evaluation

COLLABORATION

FOR THE CHORAL TEACHER

Professional Development Day 1

Professional Development Agenda

- ▣ Session 1: 9:00 – 10:30
- ▣ 10:30 – 10:45 Break
- ▣ Session 2: 10:45 – 12:15
- ▣ 12:15 – 1:00 Lunch Break
- ▣ Session 3: 1:00 – 2:30
- ▣ 2:30 – 2:45 Break
- ▣ Session 4: 2:45 – 3:45
- ▣ 3:45 – 4:00 Closing

Session 1

Collaboration Overview

Activity

Directions

- ❑ Cards are placed in front of you.
- ❑ Look at your numbers on the back of card. All of the 1's in this area, all of the 2's in that area, and so forth.
- ❑ Find balloons and masking tape in front of your group.
- ❑ Your task is: as a team, without talking build a free standing structure using ONLY the balloons and tape.
- ❑ The tallest FREE STANDING structure will win the activity. You have 20 minutes. GO!

*Activity for the participants to discover the importance of communication.

Reflection

- ▣ What did you observe and experience?
- ▣ Discuss your reflections in your group.
- ▣ What worked? What did not work?
- ▣ What was difficult? What was easy?
- ▣ What would have helped you most of all?

15 Minutes

*Participant reflection and sharing activity.

What is collaboration?

- ▣ Collaboration is the cooperative way that two or more entities work together towards a shared goal.
- ▣ Collaboration is to work jointly with others or together, especially in an intellectual endeavor.
- ▣ Think and share what collaboration means to you.

5 Minutes

*Reflective and sharing activity for the participants.

Excerpt from a teacher's story

At the summer institute, I heard teachers brainstorming about how to connect upper-level, high school math instruction with real-world problems. I watched art specialists work with English teachers to find common ground where their disciplines overlap. I listened to educators brainstorm strategies for managing project-learning instruction so that students will make the most of learning opportunities. I watched teachers explore Web 2.0 tools and evaluate the classroom potential of new technologies.

A teacher's story cont...

And although they took their work seriously, it was easy to see they were enjoying the extended time to talk through ideas and learn from each other. Such intensive, ongoing, and collaborative professional development is exactly what research shows to be most effective for improving both teachers' practice and student learning. Yet for most teachers, this remains a rare experience. The United States is far behind in providing public school teachers with opportunities to participate in extended learning opportunities and productive collaborative communities.

*Story to emphasize the importance of collaboration.

Characteristics of Collaboration

- ▣ Cooperating
- ▣ Coexisting
- ▣ Communicating
- ▣ Coordinating
- ▣ Partnering

Which characteristic was missing from the activity? Would you say that it is the most important characteristic? Why?

Communication in Collaboration

Communication is the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs.

Open communication is the #1 component of successful collaboration.

Collaboration = Teamwork

- ❑ Open communication
- ❑ Non-punitive environment
- ❑ Clear direction
- ❑ Clear and known roles and tasks for team members
- ❑ Respectful atmosphere
- ❑ Shared responsibility for team success

Collaboration applied to choral teaching.

- ❑ Because of different scheduling, finding the time for collaboration with choral teachers is difficult.
- ❑ It is possible to schedule group activities and events such as concerts together. In addition, sharing music lesson plans is a form of collaboration.
- ❑ There is another way that choral teachers can collaborate that we will discuss this afternoon.
- ❑ Discuss other means of choral teacher collaboration that you can think of.

10 Minutes

*Reflection and sharing activity to discuss choral teacher collaboration.

Group Time

Please share your choral teacher
collaboration ideas with the entire
class!

10 Minutes

End of Session 1
15 Minute Break

*Continuation of sharing and learning from each other the collaboration ideas that can relate to choral teaching.

Session 2

The Professional Learning Community
as Collaboration

What is a Professional Learning Community?

A Professional Learning Community is:

- ❑ A collaborative team whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals. (Dufour et al., 2006, p. 3).
- ❑ A PLC is a place where teachers get together to talk about what matters to teachers for the purpose of student achievement.

What can a P. L. C. do for choral teachers?

- ❑ Shifts traditional professional development from workshops, presentations, listening, and individual learning.
- ❑ Shifts to job-embedded learning, team-based action research, learning by doing, and learning collectively by working together.

P. L. C. Attributes

- ▣ Supportive and shared leadership,
- ▣ Shared values and vision,
- ▣ Collective learning and application,
- ▣ Supportive conditions,
- ▣ Shared personal practice.

PLC Attributes for choral teachers

SUPPORTIVE

- ▣ Going to the another teacher's concerts.
- ▣ Having time to listen when a teacher calls
- ▣ Be willing to cover for a teacher in time of need
- ▣ Be an encourager

SHARED

- ▣ Share time
- ▣ Share resources/ music library
- ▣ Share talents by accompanying when appropriate
- ▣ Work with the other teacher's different vocal sections

Group Time

What other ways can choral teachers support and share with each other?

7 Minutes

Share your ideas with the whole group.

8 minutes

*Reflection and sharing activity of PLC benefits to choral teachers.

Establishing a PLC

The four pillars of a PLC are:

- ▣ Mission – Why do we exist? What is our fundamental purpose? This will clarify priorities and sharpen the focus.
- ▣ Vision – What must we become as a PLC to achieve our fundamental purpose?

Establishing a PLC

- ▣ Values – How must the members of the organization behave to achieve the purpose? What commitments must be made to achieve the purpose?
- ▣ Goals – Clarify specific goals, targets and timelines. The PLC group should work interdependently to achieve the common goals.

Group Time

- ▣ In your groups of four discuss and compose tangible responses to the four pillars of a Professional Learning Community. Mission, Vision, Values and Goals.
- ▣ Please write your responses on the chart paper provided and post your responses on the wall behind you.

20 Minutes

*After creating learning groups, the groups will discuss and create a mission, vision, values and goals for the choral teacher PLC. The groups will place their responses on chart paper and place on the wall behind them.

Professional Learning Community

- ▣ After the Mission, Vision, Values and Goals have been established, cyclical reoccurring questions that must be discussed and evaluated are:
- ▣ What is it that we want our students to learn?
- ▣ How will we know when each student has learned it?

Critical Questions

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR CHORAL STUDENTS TO KNOW?

Example

How to use correct body alignment to sing with a clear tone and good intonation.

HOW WILL WE KNOW THAT THEY HAVE LEARNED IT?

Example

Students will demonstrate in class for each other and for music teacher. Students can also describe the procedure.

Group Time

- ▣ In your groups of four compose two critical questions for any element of MHSBC.1 Sing alone or with someone a varied repertoire of music.

15 Minutes

Share your answers please

10 Minutes

*During this activity the groups will incorporate music standards to the PLC.

Learning Targets

- ▣ Answers to these critical questions are used to derive Learning Targets.
- ▣ Teachers are most effective when they are clear about exactly what students must know and be able to do.

We will discuss Learning Targets and how they relate to choral teaching in detail during day three of this Professional Development series.

End of Session 2

Lunch Break

45 Minutes

Session 3

Collaboration – Professional Learning
Community Continued

Morning Session Recap

- ❑ Collaboration is the cooperative way that two or more people work together to achieve a common goal.
- ❑ Most important aspect of collaboration is communication.
- ❑ A Professional Learning Community is a collaborative team that works interdependently to achieve a common goal.
- ❑ The Pillars of a PLC are: Mission, Vision, Values and Goals.

Structuring the Teams

- ❑ Vertical Teams - Teams with teachers that teach the same subject either one step above or below the pertinent grade level.
- ❑ Since the secondary-school choral teachers teach a variety of subjects, care must be taken to organize teams with teachers that teach like subjects.
- ❑ Middle school teachers should team with each other and with the high school teachers as part of a vertical team.

Group Time

- ❑ Write down all of the subjects and grade levels that you teach.
- ❑ Compare your classes for like subjects and levels.
- ❑ Form a potential Professional Learning Community with 5 team members based on your answers.

20 Minutes

Establish the Pillars

- ❑ In your new team derive your mission, vision, values and goals

15 Minutes

- ❑ Using MHSBC.7 - Evaluating music and music performances, decide on two critical questions for element (b) Exhibit commendable performer and audience etiquette. (What do you want them to know and how will you know that they know it)

15 Minutes

*During this block the participants will establish the pillars of a PLC and create examples of critical questions to the music standard number 7.

Structuring the Teams

- ❑ Logical link – Multiple discipline team as a way to help students achieve in all disciplines.
- ❑ As a music teacher, could be a member of a language arts team, for example, to help students that have trouble reading.
- ❑ As a music teacher, you could become a part of an exceptional Ed team to discuss learning strategies.

Group Time

- ❑ Discuss ways that you can become involved in your school by becoming part of a Professional Learning Community of a different discipline that could help your students.

10 Minutes

*Discussion and sharing activity.

Structuring the Team

- ▣ Electronic Teams – Teams that use technology to create powerful teams across the district, state, country and world.
- ▣ After the break we will discuss the use of technology in this district for professional development.

End of Session 3

15 Minute Break

Session 4

Technology – Skype/ooVoo

Special Guest

Technology Rationale

- ▣ Because the secondary-school choral teacher isolation the use of technology to collaborate is paramount.
- ▣ There are several different types of programs, devices and applications (apps) to collaborate with each other and with the group.
- ▣ These technology devices are not new, however become overlooked for educational purposes.

Technology

DEVICES

- ▣ Land line telephone
- ▣ Cellular Phone
- ▣ Computer
- ▣ Tablet
- ▣ Phablet

PROGRAMS AND APPS

- ▣ GoToMeeting.com
- ▣ Edmodo
- ▣ Email
- ▣ Several different video conferencing apps.
- ▣ Skype - 1 on 1
- ▣ ooVoo - up to 12 in video conference at a time

Technology for Collaboration

- ❑ To video conference with up to 12 people at a time download ooVoo onto your laptop, register, add friends (other choral teachers) and begin video conferencing. This program-app is easy to install and use. It can be found and www.ooVoo.com.
- ❑ To video call one-on-one the technology to use would be Skype. Skype allows two choral teachers to talk in private for coaching or mentoring. Skype also allows a peek into the classroom for observations across the miles. It can be found at www.Skype.com.

Group Time

Download ooVoo and Skype to your laptop, create accounts, add each other, and practice using the applications!

45 Minutes

*Have participants download Skype and ooVoo onto their respective laptops and assist where necessary to facilitate completion.

Collaboration with Universities

- ▣ One of the opportunities that secondary-school choral teachers have for collaboration is with the local university choral departments.
- ▣ We have a special guest from the local university that will give a presentation about the collaborative opportunities that are available from XYZ University. Please welcome Dr. ABC.

30 Minutes

Close of Day 1 Professional Development

Thank you all for your attendance and attention today. Please be present and on time for our next professional development day.

Suggested Reading

Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work.

Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker and Thomas Many.

© 2006

Revisiting Professional Learning Communities at Work: New Insights for Improving Schools

Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour and Robert Eaker

© 2008

References

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2006). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Frey, B. B., Lohmeier J. H., Lee, S.W. & Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring collaboration among grant partners. *American Journal of Evaluation* 27:383-92

ON BEING A MENTOR

PROGRAMS FOR CHORAL TEACHERS

Professional Development Day 2

Professional Development Agenda

- ▣ Session 1: 9:00 – 10:30
- ▣ 10:30 – 10:45 Break
- ▣ Session 2: 10:45 – 12:15
- ▣ 12:15 – 1:00 Lunch Break
- ▣ Session 3: 1:00 – 2:30
- ▣ 2:30 – 2:45 Break
- ▣ Session 4: 2:45 – 3:45
- ▣ 3:45 – 4:00 Closing

Session 1

Mentoring Overview

Objectives

- ▣ Participants will understand what mentoring is and the differences between formal, informal, and peer mentoring.
- ▣ Participants will begin to practice a mentoring program by developing a relationship with the mentees and begin the development of goals for the year.
- ▣ Participants will apply their knowledge in determining if a mentorship program is appropriate for the district to address a need expressed in this study.

What is a mentor?

- Write down what you think a mentor is and/or what mentoring is.

5 Minutes

Please share your answers with the group!

5 Minutes

*Reflection and sharing activity on mentoring.

Origin of the term Mentor

- The term “mentor” dates back to the eighth or ninth century BCE.
- The term was coined by Homer in the poem “The Odyssey.”
- Odysseus left his son to his trusted friend Mentor before going on a 10 year journey.
- Mentor was to guide and counsel the son while Odysseus was on his journey.
- From the literary figure, Mentor has come to refer to a wise and faithful counselor.

Mentoring is:

- ▣ According to Bryant-Shanklin and Brumage (2011), mentoring is a process involving two or more individuals working together to develop the careers and abilities of all participants.
- ▣ Mentoring programs help to socialize beginning stage teachers, enhance their self-confidence, increase their sense of belonging, and decrease attrition (Kane & Francis, 2013).

What does a Choral Mentor do?

A mentor helps the beginning choral teacher with:

- ▣ Competence – knowledge, skills and applications.
- ▣ Self-confidence – belief in the ability to make good decisions, be responsible, and in control.
- ▣ Self-direction – the ability to take charge of personal, professional, and career development.
- ▣ Professionalism – responsibilities and ethics of profession.

*Relate the mission of a mentor to the choral teacher needs.

What should a mentor do?

- ▣ Communicate with mentee regularly (e.g., bi-weekly).
- ▣ Assist the mentee with setting career and professional goals.
- ▣ Provide suggestions and advice, and avoid judgmental statements.
- ▣ Encourage the mentee to develop and expand their professional network.
- ▣ Maintain confidentiality.

Discussion

- ▣ With your colleague seated next to you, talk about a time in your careers that you have seen choral teacher improvement through mentoring.
- ▣ Discuss any problems that you have seen or experienced in the in the district for choral teachers that could have been addressed through mentoring.
- ▣ Share your experiences, observations and opinions with the group.

20 Minutes

*Engage in an important discussion of mentoring. Some of the PD participants may have served as mentors before. That experience can be valuable in a sharing and group discussion situation.

Choral Mentor Attributes

- ☐ Be able to establish a relationship.
- ☐ Be a good listener.
- ☐ Be a good communicator.
- ☐ Be sensitive to the needs of the mentee.
- ☐ Be understanding.
- ☐ Be careful not to over judge.
- ☐ Be proficient in choral teaching skills.

Make sure to relate Mentor Attributes to choral teachers.

First and Most Important Step

Establish a Relationship!

The partnership is over before it begins if a good relationship is not established!

Group exercise

- ▣ Teachers that possess 10 or more years of teaching experience, pair up with teachers that have less than 10 years of teaching experience.
- ▣ Talk to each other about things your partner may not know. Share 3 pieces of information.
- ▣ Where you are from
- ▣ What you like to do in your spare time
- ▣ Family

*Give an example to the participants by giving the 3 pieces of information.

End of Session 1

15 Minute Break

Session 2

Formal and Informal Mentoring

The information that presented in session 2 is generic in nature. The process can also be applied to choral teachers.

*Make sure that the participants understand that the information is for overall mentoring but that the specifics can be applied to choral mentoring.

Formal vs. Informal

FORMAL

- ▣ Established goals
- ▣ Measurable outcomes
- ▣ Strategic pairing of mentors and mentees.
- ▣ Mentoring engagements lasting 9-12 months.
- ▣ Expert training and support.
- ▣ Direct organizational benefits

INFORMAL

- ▣ Unspecified goals
- ▣ Unknown outcomes
- ▣ Self-selection of mentors and mentees
- ▣ Long-term mentoring
- ▣ No expert training or support
- ▣ Indirect organizational benefits

Formal Mentoring Phases

- ❑ The early or initiation/preparation phase
- ❑ The middle or cultivation/negotiating phase
- ❑ The later or separation/enabling phase
- ❑ The last or redefinition/closing phase

The Early Phase

- ❑ The mentor and mentee get to know each other and discuss the expectations of the relationship.
- ❑ Mentees must feel comfortable and feel that they will not be negatively judged.

The Middle Phase

- ❑ Mentors meet with mentees to clarify and to agree on goals.
- ❑ The mentor accumulates knowledge about the mentee in order to understand the goals and concerns that the mentee has.
- ❑ This is part of relationship building, partnering and building trust.

Group Exercise

- ❑ With the mentor – mentee partner that you had in the first session, discuss some goals and concerns that you might have in your choral teaching practice.
- ❑ For example: mentees may have a goal of writing no referrals during the first month of school.
- ❑ For example: mentees may have a concern about selecting the right music for their chorus classes.

15 Minutes

*Activity that will emphasize some of the needs of the mentee and how the mentor can help mentee.

The Later Phase

- ❑ The mentor challenges the mentee towards being more autonomous.
- ❑ It is important to give a gradual release to the mentee so that they can build confidence in classroom abilities.

The Last Phase

- ❑ This phase involves giving/receiving feedback to review progress and bringing the formal relationship to an end allowing the mentee full autonomy in the classroom.
- ❑ The mentor motivates the mentee to reflect on goals, and follow through with personal, professional, and career paths.

Do's and Don'ts of Mentoring

DO

- Judge favorably
- Analyze by asking mentee to clarify.
- Question by using open ended questions like how, why, and what.
- Be supportive by being a good listener.

DON'T

- Judge negatively
- Analyze by assuming what mentee means.
- Question by leading or directing mentee's thought.
- Be supportive by telling an upset teacher that all is well when it is not.

Questions?

Session 2 questions?

End of Session 2.

Lunch Break

45 Minutes

Session 3

Informal Mentoring

Recap from morning sessions

- ❑ A mentor is a wise and faithful counselor that leads and guides someone through a developmental stage as in a beginning teacher.
- ❑ Mentoring is a process involving two or more individuals working together to develop the careers and abilities of all participants.
- ❑ The 4 phases of mentoring are: preparing, negotiating, enabling and closing the relationship.
- ❑ Remember the Do's and Don'ts.

Informal Mentoring Characteristics

- ▣ Unspecified goals
- ▣ Unknown outcomes
- ▣ Self-selection of mentors and mentees
- ▣ Long-term mentoring
- ▣ No expert training or support
- ▣ Indirect organizational benefits

*Again, make sure that these characteristics are related to choral teaching.

Informal Mentoring

- ▣ Is a natural component of society, the workplace, social and professional activities.
- ▣ Informal mentoring occurs in a relationship between two people where one gains insight, knowledge, wisdom, friendship, and support from the other.
- ▣ Either person can initiate the relationship. The mentor can initiate to help the mentee, or the mentee can seek the relationship from the mentor.

Informal Mentoring cont.

- ❑ May be more productive than formal mentoring.
- ❑ Mentees tend to be more satisfied with their mentors.
- ❑ The relationship develops usually because the parties identify with one another, either the mentee sees the mentor as a role model or the mentor sees his/her self in the mentee.

Discussion

- ❑ What instances do you see in your current choral teaching situation that might call for an informal mentorship?
- ❑ Do you think that an informal mentorship program would be more beneficial in your profession as a choral teacher than a formal mentorship program? Why?

20 Minutes

*Discussion activity for the participants to discover that an informal mentorship program could be valuable in improving their practice.

What should a Mentee do?

- ❑ Take initiative and contact the mentor regularly.
- ❑ Create an agenda of questions and talking points for each meeting.
- ❑ Listen and consider the mentors suggestions and advice.
- ❑ Maintain confidentiality.

*Make sure these apply to choral teaching situations.

Discussion

What other things should a choral mentee do for choral teachers?

15 Minutes

End of Session 3

15 Minute Break

Session 4

Peer Mentoring

What is Peer Mentoring?

- ▣ An informal collegial process in which two faculty members voluntarily work together to improve or expand their approaches to teaching.
- ▣ Peer mentoring is two-sided as the colleagues may reciprocate in the mentoring process.

A Peer Mentor is:

- ❑ A more experienced individual that encourages and assists a less experienced individual develop his or her potential within a shared area of interest.
- ❑ A reciprocal relationship in which both individuals in the partnership have an opportunity for growth and development.

Peers are:

- ❑ Individuals who share some common characteristics, attributes or circumstances. These may relate to age, ability, interests, etc.
- ❑ Peer mentors are individuals who have more experience within that common area.
- ❑ Some may possess additional training in how to assist another in acquiring skills, knowledge and attitudes to be more successful.

Discussion

What instances in a choral teacher's job performance would necessitate or be appropriate for a peer mentor?

Please share your ideas.

10 Minutes

Peer Mentor Occasion

- ▣ New teacher. Peer mentor who just went through some of the experiences of being new to the district and to the choral teaching profession.
- ▣ Senior teacher without a more experienced choral teacher available.
- ▣ Two choral teachers that are of about the same experience level who just want a "second set of eyes" or opinions about each other's classroom/teaching.

Internal vs. External Mentor

- ❑ An internal mentor works or is located in the same building.
- ❑ An external mentor works at a different location.
- ❑ An external mentor would be most appropriate for this group of choral teachers.

Wrapping it up

- ❑ Please discuss if you would be willing to support and participate in a mentoring program designed for choral teachers.
- ❑ Do you think there should be a formal mentoring program, informal program, a peer program, or a combination? Why?
- ❑ Who do you think should be responsible for a district choral teacher mentorship program?

Wrapping it up

For the remainder of your time today please locate a mentoring partner and practice with the Skype app that you downloaded to your laptop during the first day of this professional development series.

*This activity will help the participants become more familiar with the technology and practice mentoring in an online environment.

End of Session 4

Thank you for your participation today!

Suggested Reading

Handbook for the Music Mentor
Colleen M. Conway, Michael V. Smith, and
Thomas M. Hodgman

© 2010

Mentoring, Coaching, and Collaboration, edited
by Corwin Press

© 2008

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Kane, R. G., & Francis, A. (2013). Preparing teachers for professional learning: is there a future for teacher education in new teacher induction? *Teacher Development*, 17(3), 362-379.
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Johnson, K. F. (2008). Working as a Partner With the Adult Learner. In Corwin Press (Ed.) *Mentoring, Coaching, and Collaboration* (pp. 35–53). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

LEARNING TARGETS

FOR CHORAL MUSIC PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Professional development day 3

Professional Development Agenda

- ▣ Session 1: 9:00 – 10:30
- ▣ 10:30 – 10:45 Break
- ▣ Session 2: 10:45 – 12:15
- ▣ 12:15 – 1:00 Lunch Break
- ▣ Session 3: 1:00 – 2:30
- ▣ 2:30 – 2:45 Break
- ▣ Session 4: 2:45 – 3:45
- ▣ 3:45 – 4:00 Closing and Evaluation

Session 1

Learning Targets Overview

Objectives

- ❑ Participants will understand what Learning Targets are, and be able to craft Learning Targets from the performance standards to include in their daily lessons.
- ❑ Participants will design assessment tasks for Learning Targets that will be used as a formative assessment in their classroom.
- ❑ Participants will begin to understand and develop Learning Targets at different levels of difficulty.

Learning Targets Importance

- ❑ Good teaching **Begins** with clear Learning Targets from which teachers select appropriate instructional activities and assessments.
- ❑ Assessments help determine students' progress on Learning Targets.
- ❑ The process of using Learning Targets is also called "Chunking."

Learning Targets

- ▣ Guide learning.
- ▣ Describe the lesson-sized chunk of information, skills, and reasoning processes.
- ▣ Are written from the students point of view in student friendly language.
- ▣ Can be shared throughout the lesson and can be used by students to guide their own learning.

Learning Targets

Answer Three Questions.

- ▣ What will I (the student) be able to do when I have finished the lesson?
- ▣ What idea, topic, or subject is important for me to learn and understand so that I can do this?
- ▣ How will I show that I can do this?
- ▣ The key phrase is "I can....." (student's perspective).

Learning Targets

EFFECT ON TEACHERS

- Plan and implement effective instruction
- Describe what students will learn, know, and do.
- Establish teacher look-fors.
- Translate success criteria to students.

EFFECT ON STUDENTS

- Compare what they do and do not know.
- Set specific goals for what they will accomplish.
- Choose effective strategies.
- Assess and adjust what they are doing.

Objectives vs. Learning Targets

OBJECTIVES

- Objectives guide instruction.
- Objectives are written from a teacher's point of view.
- Objectives come from across several lessons that are too big for one day.

LEARNING TARGETS

- Learning targets guide instruction.
- Learning targets are written from a student's point of view.
- Learning targets are those "Chunks" of information for one day.

Think-Pair-Share

- ▣ Everyone find a partner
- ▣ Think about what an objective might be in your classroom.
- ▣ Together write three objectives that you might have in your classroom.

10 Minutes

- ▣ Volunteers please share your three objectives with the group.

10 Minutes

*Participant activity to think about and share overall choral objectives.

Think-Pair-Share

- ▣ With your partner think about what Learning Target might look like in your classroom based on one objective that you wrote.
- ▣ Write three Learning Targets that you might have based on one objective that you wrote.

10 Minutes

- ▣ Volunteers please share your three Learning Targets with the group.

10 Minutes

End of Session 1

15 Minute Break

Session 2

Understanding and developing
Learning Targets at different levels of
difficulty.

Learning Targets at 4 different Levels

- ❑ Level 1 – Retrieval. Memorization from a list of information to recall at a later time.
- ❑ Level 2 – Comprehension. Understand and describe.
- ❑ Level 3 – Analysis. A student can compare and contrast or break information into smaller parts.
- ❑ Level 4 – Knowledge Utilization. The application of new knowledge.

Level –1 Retrieval Target

- ❑ When you ask your students to be able to Identify the different types of notes. For example:
 - ❑ Whole note
 - ❑ Half note
 - ❑ Quarter note
 - ❑ Eight note
 - ❑ Sixteenth note

*This segment describes the different levels of learning targets as they would relate to teaching music.

Level 2 – Comprehension Target

- ❑ A comprehension target might be used for the student to describe the difference between two concepts. For example:
- ❑ Forte and piano (Loud and Quiet)
- ❑ Allegro and lento (Fast and Slow).

Level 3 – Analysis

- ❑ Breaking into smaller parts of a larger piece of information. Analysis Targets asks students to go beyond what is taught in class. Some of the targets include:
- ❑ Matching
- ❑ Classifying
- ❑ Generalizing
- ❑ Specifying

Level 4 – knowledge Utilization

- Knowledge utilization occurs when students can take the learned knowledge and apply it to any given exercise.
- For example; a student understands the use of a quarter note in music to the point where the student will decide on his own what is the best way to use the quarter note in a composition.

Think-Quartet-Share

Jigsaw Learning Strategy

- Divide into groups of four.
- Each person devise a Learning Target that will fit one of the categories.
- Retrieval
- Comprehension
- Analyzing
- Knowledge Utilization

15 Minutes

*This jigsaw activity will allow the participants to experience the four levels of learning targets as they relate to choral music.

Group Time

One Volunteer from each group please share your three Learning Targets with the class.

15 Minutes

LUNCH BREAK

45 Minutes

Session 3

Learning Targets for Chorus

Recap from morning sessions

- ❑ Good teaching begins with clear Learning Targets.
- ❑ Good Learning Targets describe the lesson sized “Chunk” chunk of information and are written in a student friendly language.
- ❑ The phrase, “I can.....” is used.
- ❑ Different types of Learning targets include, Retrieval, Comprehension, Analyze, and Knowledge Utilization.

Georgia Music Performance Standard

- ▣ MHSBC.1 - Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- ▣ a. Identify vocal anatomy and develops proper body alignment and breathing techniques to support a clear and free tone using accurate intonation.

This is the first performance standard of Beginning High School Chorus with element (a).

Follow-Up Exercise

- ▣ Using MHSBC.1 – Sing alone or with someone else a varied repertoire of music, element (a), devise three Learning Targets. Use three of the four levels that we discussed in the last session. Please begin with the phrase, “I can....”

20 Minutes



*Creating learning targets activity to share with the whole group. Perhaps the group can have a take away of several music learning targets to apply to their individual classrooms.



Constructing activities and assessments.

- ❑ The Learning Targets are the “ends” in the lesson. The activities and assessments are means to the Learning Target ends.
- ❑ It is important when designing an activity or assessment to keep in mind whether the learning target is one that is just information recall or requires student active demonstration or procedural knowledge.
- ❑ Following the development of clear Learning Targets, develop an activity or task to determine if the students have attained the Learning Target.

Activity for Learning Target

- ❑ Learning Target - I can identify the vocal anatomy.
- ❑ Activities suggestions – Create a word search with the vocal anatomy terms contained.
- ❑ Show a vocal anatomy video on YouTube.
- ❑ Play Vocal anatomy Jeopardy.

Assessment for Learning Target

- ❑ This is an Identifying type Learning Target.
- ❑ Create a drawing of the vocal anatomy and have students identify each of the parts of the anatomy.
- ❑ Sinuses, Hard Palate, Soft Palate, Nasal Cavity, Pharynx, Larynx, Vocal Chords, etc.
- ❑ Assess the students' learning and mastery of the Learning Target.

Think-Pair-Share

- ❑ Find a partner and create an activity and assessment for: Developing Proper Body Alignment.
- ❑ Keep in mind the level.

15 Minutes

*In this segment the participants will create an activity that will help the student to master the learning target.

End of Session 3

15 Minute Break

Session 4

Putting It Together

Group Time

Please share your think pair share activity from the end of session 3 with the rest of the class.

15 Minutes

For the last 45 minutes of the day take the knowledge that you have gained and create 3 clear Learning Targets, corresponding activities, and assessments for MHSBC.3 Reading and Notating Music elements (a or b).

*These learning targets and student activities can be copied and shared with the entire group. The participants can leave the PD with a large tool box of learning targets and activities that align with MHSBC.3 Reading and notating music.

Share Learning Targets and complete evaluation

- ❑ One Volunteer share their Learning Targets, activities, and assessments.
- ❑ Thank you for participating in the professional development today. I hope that this training has been beneficial and you have a clear understanding of Learning Targets and how they relate to Choral Music.
- ❑ Please complete the evaluation for the three day Professional Development Series.

Suggested Reading

Learning Targets: Helping Students Aim for Understanding in Today's Lesson. Written by Connie Moss and Susan Brookhart.

© 2012

References

- ▣ Moss, C. M., & Brookhart S. M. (2012). Learning Targets: Helping Students aim for Understanding in Today's Lesson. Alexandria, VA: ASCD
- ▣ Moss, C. M., Brookhart S. M., & Long, B. A., (2011). Knowing your learning target: What students need to learn. *Educational Leadership*. 68(6), (p 66-69).
- ▣ Marzano, R. J. (2009). Designing & Teaching Learning Goals & Objectives. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.

Three Day Professional Development

The End

Professional Learning Evaluation Form

Three day Secondary school choral teachers Professional Development Workshop/Seminar

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement by rating each of the statements from 1 to 5. 1 = disagree – 5 = agree. Then, please give us your opinion on the three subsequent questions so that we may better serve you in the future.

_____ 1. The Professional Learning goals were clearly identified and accomplished.

_____ 2. The Professional Learning was well organized, well presented, and conducted in an effective manner.

_____ 3. The Professional Learning Content is important to improve student achievement.

_____ 4. The Professional Learning Content will be useful in my job as a choral teacher.

_____ 5. The Professional Learning materials were relevant, appropriate and well organized.

_____ 6. The Professional Learning facilities provided an appropriate environment for learning.

Please write a brief comment for each of the following questions.

1. How will this professional learning improve teacher efficacy?

2. What follow-up assistance will be needed to implement this program?

3. What can be done to improve this professional learning in the future?

Professional Learning Evaluation Form

End of School Year

Please write a brief comment for each of the following questions.

1. How has the beginning of the year Professional Development met your needs?
2. To what extent did the training and implementation of collaboration and mentoring enhance your teaching efficacy?
3. To what extent did the training and implementation of collaboration and mentoring enhance student achievement?
4. How did adding the collaboration technology enhance your teaching efficacy?
5. How did the professional development concerning choral based Learning Targets effect your planning and delivery of instruction?
6. Please provide suggestions for further professional development!

Appendix B: Doctoral Project Study Interview Protocol

Date: _____

Time of interview: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Position of interviewee: _____

Thank you for agreeing to participate today. This is an interview for a doctoral project study on the topic of choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. The data collected and the respondent will be held in the highest confidentiality. The interview should take about 45 minutes to an hour and, with the participant's permission, will be recorded. Recording the interview is to ensure a nonbiased approach by the researcher and to accurately depict the responses of the participant. Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

Questions

1. What is your idea of quality professional development? Please give examples.
2. In what ways, if any, do you think professional development improves student achievement?
3. Do you think that professional development servers to improve teacher efficacy?

Please give an example of your answer.

4. What different types of professional development activities did you participate in during the last school year?
 - 4b. How effective were the activities in relation to your work?
5. What is your opinion about the standardized professional development that the district has implemented?
6. What does the district need to consider when offering professional development?
7. How has professional development been useful in your current teaching situation? Please provide example(s).
8. What would you like to see included in professional development workshops/training to meet needs of choral teachers' in your school district?
9. Discuss any additional information that may enhance professional development for teachers in the district.

Once again thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. Is there anything that you would like to add?

The probes will include phrases such as, "I am not sure that I am following you, would you explain that? What did you say then? What were you thinking at the time? Tell me about it or take me through the experience."

Appendix C: Lesson Plan Checklist

The lesson plan incorporates literacy across the curriculum.

- Yes
- No
- Additional notes:

The lesson plan incorporates Formative Instructional Procedures.

- Yes
- No
- Additional notes:

The lesson plan uses learning targets.

- Yes
- No
- Additional notes:

The lesson plan utilizes principles of explicit instruction.

- Yes
- No
- Additional notes:

The lesson plan uses the explicit instruction template.

- Yes
- No
- Additional notes:

The lesson plan uses the “I do, we do, you do” concept.

- Yes
- No
- Additional notes:

Appendix D: Teacher Consent Form

I. Purpose

Mr. Raymond West has received permission from the Research Review Board of the Southeastern School system to conduct the research study entitled, Secondary school choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development.

The purpose of this research is to:

1. Discover secondary school choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development.
2. Discover how the standardized professional development has affected choral teacher efficacy.

II. Participation in the Study

You have been asked to participate in this research study between the dates of March 6, 2015 and May 15, 2015. The manner of your participation will include the following: participation in a 45 minute to one hour semi-structured one-on-one interview that will occur outside of the normal duty day at the discretion of the participant, provide Mr. West with 3 sample lesson plans from each of the last 2 - 3 years, and participate in member checking. Member checking occurs when the participant reviews the result of the study and ensures accuracy pursuant to the interview.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect your performance evaluation. If you decide to withdraw permission after the study begins, please notify the school and Mr. West of your decision.

III. Risks and Discomfort

Minimal risks are anticipated as a result of your participation. You may experience some slight discomfort when participating in the interviews. Care will be taken to make you, the participant, feel at ease. If the interview takes place at a school, interruptions could potentially occur. As a general rule, researchers are not permitted to conduct any studies that will disrupt the order of the typical instructional program found in any Southeastern Public School. Participants in the study will not be identified by demographic information or something said in the interview. Care will be taken to ensure confidentiality. Participants may feel like they are being checked-up on when providing lesson plans for analysis. Again, confidentiality of participants will be maintained at all times.

IV. Benefits

The researcher believes that the information produced from this study will improve the quality of professional development and job satisfaction for choral teachers in the Southeastern Public School district. Potential benefits include: the possibility of having district sponsored job-embedded, content-specific professional development provided

as a result of this study, being able to accurately reflect on your own need for professional development and how it could improve student achievement, having your voice heard through a rich descriptive account of your opinions of what constitutes quality professional development, and reflecting on your own teaching in order to improve student achievement.

V. Confidentiality

All information is confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Confidentiality is assured as your name will not appear in any written reports that stem from data collected by the researcher. Information collected will be stored at the researcher's residence in a secure container until August 2020 (5 years). At that time, all information associated with the present study will be destroyed.

VI. More Information

If you have questions or concerns about this study, please contact Dr. L. Endicott at the Walden University Center for Research Quality, or the student researcher, Raymond West, at 404-992-4392. If you have any questions about the human rights as a research participant, contact the Director of Walden University IRB at 800-925-3368 or by email at IRB@waldenu.edu.

VII. Informed Consent

If you have read and understood the information above and agree to participate in this research, print and sign your name below.

_____	_____
Name of Teacher (Please print)	Name of School
_____	_____
Teacher Signature	Grade Level/Subject

Date	

Appendix E: Local Site Research Support Form

A Local Site Research Support Form must be signed by the School Principal of each school involved in the proposed study. If the research is to be conducted in more than one school, a separate Local Site Research Support Form must also be signed by the appropriate Assistant Superintendent(s). Therefore, research in multiple sites requires one signed form from the Assistant Superintendent(s) and one signed form from each of the principals involved in the study.

NOTE: Signature request(s) are obtained only after final approval of the research application. Attach approval letter when requesting signatures.

Name of School(s) /Site(s):

Name of Researcher: Raymond West

I. Research Project (Researcher must complete sections A, B, C, D, E, and F below)

A. Title:

Secondary school choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development

B. Statement of the Problem:

This study has developed from the professional development practices of the secondary schools in a Southeastern school district. Most subject area instructional departments are provided with content specific professional opportunities throughout the school year. However, non-core content subjects are not offered the same opportunities. This study will focus on one of these departments - choral music. Not offering content-based, job-embedded professional development opportunities throughout the school year has negatively impacted choral teacher efficacy, retention, and student achievement in the area of music. Causes that could be attributed to the problem include: a lack of choral teacher professional development emphasis placed by the administration, inadequate quality professional development time, and a lack of funding for adequate professional development resources. Additionally, choral teachers teach in complete isolation from other choral teachers, as there is generally only one per secondary school. Although there are other music teachers at the secondary school level, for example band and orchestra directors, specific content and classroom related professional development given by other on-site choral teachers is not available or practiced. In recent years the district has implemented a professional development training program that is a standardized model for the purpose of delivering instructional mandates from the district. In order to determine necessary steps forward, rigorous research is needed to help determine what choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development are, as well as the extent

to which the standardized professional development training as been beneficial and effective in improving choral teacher efficacy.

C. Subjects or Population for the Proposed Study:

Secondary school choral teachers

D. Researcher's Purpose in Conducting this Study:

The purpose of this research is to understand the perceptions of choral teachers about what constitutes quality professional development. By understanding choral teachers' perceptions of quality professional development, steps could be taken in order to facilitate those ideas. If the district leadership could follow and implement changes pursuant to the ideas of the choral teachers, it would serve to alleviate some of the issues concerning choral teacher efficacy, retention, and student achievement in the area of music. "To think of professional development as an intrinsic motivator for and contributor to growth and improvement, we need to reposition it as part of the political charge for a culture of change in music education." (Schmidt & Robbins, 2011, p. 102)

E. Dates Research Will be Conducted:

March 6, 2015 to May 15, 2015

F. Description of the time and involvement for all individuals involved in the study (i.e., students, teachers, administrators, etc.)

Participants will be asked to participate in this research study between the dates of March 6, 2015 and May 15, 2015. The manner of participation will include the following: participation in one interview that will last from between 45 minutes to one hour that is outside normal working hours at the participant's classroom, provide a sampling of lesson plans from the past three years, and participate in member checking in order to validate that the information contained in the transcript is what was said in the interviews. Should the prospective participants agree to participate in this study, the researcher will contact the participants via phone or email asking to arrange a convenient time and location for them to be interviewed. The researcher will encourage the participants to choose a neutral location, for example a conference room at the participants school, in order for the participant to feel like he or she can leave at any time. Interviews will be recorded using a digital recording device, an iPhone 5C, to ensure that later transcriptions are correct. In addition to the recording the researcher will also take notes during the interview. Here are some sample questions:

1. What is your idea of quality professional development? Please give examples.

2. In what ways, if any, do you think that professional development improves student achievement?

3. Do you think that professional development servers to improve teacher efficacy? Please give some examples to support your answer

II. All researchers must adhere to the following guidelines:

- A. Protect the rights and welfare of all human subjects.
- B. Inform students, parents, and/or staff members that they have the right to decline participation in the proposed research without penalty or loss of benefits.
- C. Adhere to Board policies and all applicable laws that govern conducting research and the protection of privacy and confidentiality of student and staff records.

III. After the Local Site Administrator signs below, forward this completed signed form with the complete application to the following:

Via CCPS Inter-Office Mail	Via U.S. Mail
Division of Accountability and Assessment	Division of Accountability and Assessment

My signature signifies that I am willing to work with the researcher named above upon receipt of an approval letter. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Signature of Principal

Signature of Assistant Superintendent

Printed Name of Principal

Printed Name of Assistant Superintendent

Date: _____

Appendix F: Invitation to Participate

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Raymond West. I am currently serving as the chorus and piano teacher at a high school here in the district. I am reaching out to you because I am conducting a study on “secondary school choral teachers’ perceptions of quality professional development” as a part of the requirements for my Ed.D. at Walden University. This research is completely separate from my work in the county or in other educational settings.

I am seeking 8 to 15 participants for this study who are currently serving as a secondary school choral teacher in the district. If you choose to volunteer for participation in this research, this study would invite you to participate in a 45 minute to 1-hour face-to-face or telephonic interview. In addition, I am asking that you provide three lesson plans each from the past two years either electronically or hard copy at the time of interview. I am attaching an informed consent form for you to review to better assess your willingness to participate. If you are interested in participating and meet these requirements, please send me an email indicating interest that provides contact information. I need a response by (date). After that date, I will select as many participants from the group that has expressed interest. If you are interested in participating, please keep or print the attached consent form for your records. I will be asking you to return it with an electronic signature should you choose to participate in the study.

In this study, I hope to discover what the secondary school choral teachers’ perceptions of quality professional development consist of. In addition, I am seeking to discover how the standardized professional development in the district has affected choral teacher efficacy. I hope you will consider participating, should you be interested and your schedule permit.

Please send me an email, if you would like to participate, along with your contact information. If you would like to speak with me about any aspect of this project that needs further clarification, please call me at 404-992-4392 or email me at Raymond.West@Waldenu.edu. During school hours, my phone is turned off, but if you leave a message, I will call you back when school is finished. Many thanks for considering collaborating with me on this study as a participant. I am keenly interested in your perceptions and experiences.

Warm regards,

Raymond West