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Priority Schoolteachers' Experiences of Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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2017

Abstract

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MA, New York University, 1988

BA, Virginia Union University, 1969

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

The New Jersey 2011 Adequate Yearly Progress report revealed that 53% (n = 75) of state schools that failed to meet standards were put on a "priority school" list. The 2015 priority school list consisted of 66 schools. In response, New Jersey created Regional Achievement Centers to provide collaborative professional development (PD) for effective instruction in the lowest performing schools. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding experiences with past PD initiatives and PD under the current Elementary and Secondary Education Act flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. The research questions were germane to attempts to address failing schools through PD. The conceptual framework guiding the study was Fullan's educational change theory in which teachers learn by collaborating with other teachers and coaches. Through snowball sampling, 8 priority schoolteachers participated in semistructured in-depth interviews using an online conferencing tool. Data were analyzed by Moustakas' modified version of van Kaam's method. Participants did not perceive that past PD attempts addressed the needs of failing schools. Key findings regarding job-embedded coaching and teacher networks were that support given by coaches strengthened the participants' instructional practice, and teacher networks enabled the participants to collaboratively learn from each other. Positive social change may occur as district and school officials include teachers in PD planning. Adapting PD in this manner may improve implementation of PD initiatives for classroom instruction to increase student achievement.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Under prior federal requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, all United States school districts receiving Title I funds established accountability systems based on the states' academic content standards and reported adequate yearly progress (AYP) of student achievement (New Jersey Department of Education [NJDOE], 2012a). The NCLB goal required100% student proficiency in language arts and mathematics by the year 2014 (NJDOE, 2012). When student proficiency did not reach that goal, schools were labeled failing. Usher (2012) reported that out of 91,618 public schools in the United States, 43,942 failed to meet AYP. More specifically, out of 2,314 schools in New Jersey, 1,235 failed to meet AYP requirements (Usher, 2012).

In order to close the achievement gap and for students to be college or career ready, students need to improve their language arts and mathematics scores (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Government reports and research publications suggest that students in America lack sufficient knowledge needed to solve complex mathematical strategies (Cheung & Slavin, 2013; Jackson & Wilson, 2012; Richland, Stigler, & Holyoak, 2012). Furthermore, researchers indicate that students lack the literacy skills needed for reading comprehension (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011; Enright, 2010; Haskins, Murnane, Sawhill, & Snow, 2012).

In September 2011, as a result of the failing school reports, the secretary of the Department of Education issued a letter to all states, offering them the opportunity to waive NCLB requirements (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The waiver relieved the states of the 2014 requirement of having 100% student proficiency in language arts and mathematics, and allowed states to develop rigorous plans to improve student

outcomes, close achievement gaps, increase equity for all students, and improve classroom instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The rigorous plans for improvement in the quality of instruction were designed to improve the educational outcomes of students in language arts and mathematics in failing schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The waiver also allowed states to recognize students' academic growth in relation to their peers as a measure in student achievement and school progress, rather than one yearly test to indicate adequate yearly progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a).

The flexibility waiver indicated that student growth models should begin in first grade to identify students at risk of failing to achieve the college and/or career readiness goals (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). First, measures of students' attendance would identify potential early warning signs for students at risk of failure to achieve the college and/or career readiness goal. Second, when third grade testing began, student proficiency would be monitored at fourth through eighth grades and eleventh grade. Third, in fourth grade, measurement of students' growth would begin and carry through the eighth grade. Students' academic growth would be measured in relation to their peers, as a measure in student achievement and school progress, rather than the one yearly test for adequate yearly progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). Monitored data would be used to determine students' growth in becoming proficient in taught curriculum (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a).

New Jersey state officials applied for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver in November 2011, and received approval in February of 2012 (NJDOE, 2011a; U.S. Department of Education, 2012b). With the approval of the

flexibility waiver, New Jersey began to develop strategies to address student academic failure in 75 priority schools, defined as "the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state over the past three years, or any nonTitle I school that would otherwise have met the same criteria" (NJDOE, 2012a, para. 8). Educational officials identified elementary and middle schools as "priority" schools based on their performance on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge instrument administered over the 2008–2011school years (NJDOE, 2012c). High schools were identified as "priority" schools based on the school-wide High School Proficiency Assessment administered over the 2008–2011 school years (Technical Guidance, 2011).

As the flexibility waiver provides initiatives to improve students' academic achievement in failing schools, professional development (PD) is noted as one way to improve teachers' instructional practices for students' academic achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). Since the ESEA flexibility waiver (2012a) indicated that "educators have significant and lasting effects on student learning" (p. 6), PD for all teachers was mandated. Professional development needs were guided by data on student growth and student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). Experts suggest that there is a correlation between PD and student achievement (Breffni, 2011; Hough, 2011; Lumpe, Czerniak, Haney & Beltyukova, 2012; Zepeda, 2012). Furthermore, experts found that the duration of PD increases teacher self-efficacy in content instruction (Lumpe et al., 2012) and increases teachers' ability to instruct for students' cognitive skills development (Sailors & Price, 2010).

Acknowledging the relationship between PD and student achievement, the NJDOE (2011a) stated, "[T]he development of model curriculum, assessments, and

interventions cannot drive the instructional changes necessary to improve student achievement without quality ongoing professional development" (p. 22). With New Jersey's focus on the lowest-achieving schools, the NJDOE (2011a) created regional achievement centers (RACs) to provide PD for teachers and principals on all eight turnaround principles. To improve school performance, RACs planned PD for all priority schoolteachers (NJDOE, 2011a). The NJDOE (2011a) emphasized that school improvement plans should align themselves with the eight federal turnaround principles: (a) school climate and culture, (b) school leadership, (c) standards aligned curriculum, assessment and intervention system, (d) instruction, (e) use of time, (f) use of data, (g) staffing practices, and (h) family and community engagement. The turnaround principle addressed in the study is instruction, Principle d.

Under the New Jersey waiver, priority schoolteachers underwent PD starting in September 2012. The PD program addressed all of the eight federal turnaround principles, except for Principle b, which involves school leaders (NJDOE, 2011a). With the renewal of the New Jersey flexibility waiver in 2015, PD continued in priority schools through the 2016-2017 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Of the eight turnaround principles, the current study focused on Principle d, a model of PD that includes two collaborative approaches, job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. The rationale for the focus on PD was to explore priority schoolteachers' descriptions and perceptions of the PD training for student achievement. Previous PD initiatives were included in the priority schoolteachers' interviews to provide background for the study.

The NJDOE (n.d.a) defined PD as professional learning opportunities that include teachers collaboratively networking, and job-embedded coaching for the purpose of transferring new knowledge and skills to teachers' instructional practices. Additionally, PD is identified as learning opportunities aligned with student learning and educator development needs (NJDOE, n.d.a). The waiver stipulates that a minimum of 20 hours per year of PD are required for all teachers (NJDOE, n.d.b). Based on the definition of PD by the state of New Jersey, priority schoolteachers' lived experiences under the current model of PD that incorporates collaborative job-embedded coaching and teacher networking approaches, as well as their experiences under previous and failed district attempts at PD, was chosen for this research study. Section 2 provides further discussion.

Problem Statement

The problem examined in this transcendental phenomenological study was that significant PD efforts have made little or no change in students' academic achievement in a school district in New Jersey. Aimed at executing effective PD, the district in this study followed state regulations for school-level PD based on collaborative professional learning for the purpose of improving teachers' instructional skills for better student outcomes (NJDOE, n.d.a). In the 2010–2011 New Jersey PD directive for all school districts, teacher teams along with principals and outside experts focused on coaching, peer observations, and mentoring as professional learning activities (NJDOE, n.d.a).

Prior to New Jersey's ESEA flexibility waiver in 2009, the New Jersey Education Association adopted the definition of PD as "a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improve teachers and administrators in raising student achievement"

(NJDOE, n.d.a, para. 1). However, during the 2010–2011 school years, approximately 1,235 out of 2,314 schools in New Jersey still failed to meet AYP (Usher, 2012). These data suggest that only three out of 10 (29%) students were proficient in English language arts and mathematics (NJDOE, n.d.c).

Although all teachers participated in PD prior to the ESEA flexibility waiver, the waiver strengthened previous strategies by establishing RACs, specifically for the purpose of increasing student achievement in their regions (NJDOE, 2011a). To accomplish the goal of increasing student academic achievement, the RACs' roles included providing direct support for PD for effective instruction for regular and special needs priority schoolteachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). In preparation for the 2012–2013 school years, results from the quality school reviews determined each school's needs and provided guidance for specific differentiated interventions to turn schools around in New Jersey (NJDOE, 2012c). The quality school review assessed the schools based on (a) principals' ability to lead schools' turnaround effort; (b) school environment that supports the social, emotional, and learning needs of the students; (c) teachers' use of research based effective instruction to meet the needs of all students; (d) documents and instructional materials to teach the adopted college- and career-ready standards; (e) practices to recruit, retain, and develop effective teachers; (f) use of data focused on improving teaching and learning; (g) effective use of time for teachers' and students' learning needs, and collaborative time for improving teaching and learning; and (h) academic engagement of family and community (NJDOE, n.d.d). New Jersey state educational officials used federal turnaround principles and differentiated interventions for priority schools (NJDOE, n.d.d). In support of the focus on PD, researchers indicated

that to initiate change during the accountability era of NCLB, PD for effective instruction plays a crucial role in improving teachers' knowledge and skills (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). In addition effective instruction would then lead to measurable increases in students' content knowledge, problem solving skills, and higher order thinking (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). Researchers found that collaborative PD assists teachers in developing an understanding of the subject matter and provides for the exchange of ideas for effective classroom instruction (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2010).

Researchers also found that teachers perceive that mandated PD reforms often narrow the curriculum to a "teach to the test" function and limit teachers' professional knowledge and knowledge of students' needs (Avila, Zacher, Griffo, & Pearson, 2011; Menken, 2010). Additionally, teachers perceive that politically-driven PD devoted to reform efforts (a) impedes instructional time in the classroom, (b) neglects recognition of diversity in student populations, and (c) adds additional burdensome roles and decision making to their present roles as teachers (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). Other research findings demonstrate that teachers resist political efforts to change instructional practices (Olsen & Sexton, 2009; Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). Results from studies reveal that educational reform efforts tend to have a negative impact on the perceptions of teachers (Bantwini, 2010; Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Ng, 2011). This study addressed a gap in the literature regarding how priority schoolteachers describe their PD experiences, focusing primarily on the current collaborative approach associated with the ESEA waiver. I also explored priority schoolteachers' lived experiences of previous attempts to address New Jersey's failing schools through PD training to find if teachers perceive PD

under the waiver as similar or different from previous PD training. Therefore, the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena of previous PD initiatives and PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks.

Nature of the Study and Research Questions

This transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena previous PD initiatives and PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver, focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. Phenomenological researchers seek meaning of lived experiences of a phenomenon from several individuals (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1990). Additionally, in phenomenological research, the emphasis is placed on participants' words and not the researchers' interpretation (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). In the present study, this was critical for a deeper examination into how priority schoolteachers experienced PD attempts before the flexibility waiver and under the ESEA flexibility waiver's collaborative PD. The data gave a first-hand account of the teachers' experiences. Additionally, the data may inform administrators in the study's district of teachers' perceptions of the phenomena of previous PD and the ESEA PD. The data may also give insight for future PD planning.

Two approaches to analyze phenomenological research include hermeneutic and transcendental (Moustakas, 1994). The hermeneutic approach to analyze phenomenology focuses on reflective interpretation of text, how a person interprets the text (van Manen, 1990). In hermeneutics, it is "the art of reading the text so that the intention and meaning

behind appearances are understood" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 9). However, in transcendental phenomenology the description of the lived experience by the individual is the focus and not the interpretation of the text (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). The specific phenomenological approach for this study was transcendental phenomenology because the study focused on participants' description of experiences of PD before the ESEA flexibility waiver and after the ESEA flexibility waiver PD began to assist New Jersey's failing schools.

Moustakas recognized Husserl as the founder of the philosophical school of phenomenology and followed Husserl's transcendental phenomenology for the study of lived experiences of individuals (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology is a scientific inquiry of how a phenomenon appears in the consciousness of an individual; therefore, there is a connection between the person and the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In transcendental phenomenology, suspension of prejudgment occurs in the "epoche" process (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). The "epoche" process involves the researcher setting aside knowledge, biases, and prejudices about the phenomena, thereby entering the research with an attitude of not knowing anything about the phenomenon (Bernet, Kern, & Marbach, 1993; Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). In order to view the phenomenon as new, researchers "bracket" their biases, knowledge, prejudices, and prejudgments (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

In qualitative research, the process of bracketing throughout each phase of the study enables deeper reflection of the researcher as to selection of the topic, research participants, interview design, collection and interpretation of data (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2012). In other words, bracketing happens more than once

and allows the researcher to monitor biases and preconceptions throughout the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2012). For the current study, I bracketed in a reflective journal when (a) developing questions, (b) seeking diverse representation of participants, (c) writing observations during interviews, (d) analyzing participant responses without thought to personal experiences, and (e) writing findings according to participants' lived experiences (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

The data collection in this study consisted of semistructured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenological research, multiple interviews are performed with each participant (Moustakas, 1994). In contrast to the use of large sample sizes in quantitative research, qualitative researchers seek understanding on a topic by using smaller numbers of participants in order to obtain detailed data, as defined by the depth (amount) and nature of responses (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2014; Patton, 2002). Sample size is also dependent on what the researcher seeks to understand, the purpose of the study, and the usefulness of the data (Patton, 2002). As phenomenological studies seek depth, researchers suggest small sample sizes for a range interview participants; from six to 10 (Padgett, 2008); up to 10 (Creswell, 1998); and four to 10 interviews (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In alignment with these suggestions for the number of interview participants in phenomenological studies, I sought eight participants for this study. However, interviews were to continue until saturation of data, defined as when no new information is acquired (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The semistructured in-depth interviews consisted of a primary interview and two follow-up interviews with each of the eight participants using the WebEx online conferencing platform. In addition to lengthy primary interviews, follow-up interviews

were conducted for additional information or corrections to be made (Moustakas, 1994). Semistructured interviews were from 60–90 minutes long and the follow-up interviews were approximately 30 minutes. Phenomenological data were analyzed using Moustakas' modified version of van Kaam's method of analyzing phenomenological data (Moustakas, 1994) and NVivo 10 (2012). Evidence of reliability was established in the analysis process through member checking. During the member checking process, data were checked for accuracy, with participants' given the opportunity to suggest revisions (Hatch, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). Reliability was also accomplished by an audit trail that described how data were collected (Merriam & Associates, 2002). See Section 3 for further discussion.

In the current transcendental phenomenological study, eight priority schoolteachers were recruited by snowball strategy through a priority school in southeastern New Jersey. Snowball sampling is a type of purposeful sampling where researchers seek participants with "rich information" on the topic of interest (Patton, 2002). The process began with a request from a knowledgeable person on the study for names of others who might be familiar with the study's topic (Patton, 2002). (See Section 3 for further discussion.)

The current model of PD includes two collaborative approaches, job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. As the research instrument, I made final determinations of interview participants based on variation of schools, years of teaching in New Jersey and priority schools, grades taught, gender, knowledge shown about the topic during the first telephone contact, and willingness to sit for an audiotaped interview, Participants were selected on their teacher participation with PD before the ESEA waiver and the

ESEA PD model with the collaborative approaches that occurred during the 2012-2013 school years and/or 2013-2014 school years. Previous PD experience consisted of any years before the flexibility waiver.

The research questions in this study focused on deep exploration of the phenomenon PD. The primary research questions for this study were:

RQ1: How do priority schoolteachers describe their experiences with attempts to address failing schools through PD before the ESEA flexibility waiver?

RQ2: How do priority schoolteachers describe their experiences with the ESEA flexibility waiver attempt to address failing schools through a model of PD that includes two collaborative approaches: job-embedded coaching and teacher networks?

Probing questions that involve "how" can allow the researcher to go deeper into participants' responses (Patton, 2002). For example, priority schoolteachers were asked "how" they describe their experiences with previous and ESEA flexibility waiver professional development attempts for New Jersey's failing schools. The questions sought qualitative rather than quantitative factors of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The interview guide is included in Appendix E.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena of previous PD initiatives and PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. PD prior to the ESEA flexibility waiver consisted of teacher teams along with principals and outside

experts focusing on coaching, peer observations, and mentoring as professional learning activities (NJDOE, n.d.a). However, in 2011, New Jersey state and local educational officials identified academic failure in 75 priority schools, defined as "the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state over the past three years, or any nonTitle I school that would otherwise have met the same criteria" (NJDOE, 2012a, para. 83). The intent of the study was to provide understanding of how teachers in one New Jersey RAC region described their perceptions of previous PD initiatives regarding failed schools and of the ESEA flexibility waiver PD attempt, specifically, the two collaborative approaches of job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. This study may contribute to social change by providing the district administrators in one RAC district with information regarding teachers' described experiences of their PD in their schools. Teacher perceived lived experiences may influence how PD is offered. Another potential benefit is that this study may give teachers the opportunity to voice concerns they may be experiencing with their previous and current ESEA flexibility waiver PD.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study is that of educational change theory. Fullan (2007) described educational change as a sociopolitical process that involves interaction among individuals, classrooms and schools, local, regional, and national factors. Within the educational change framework, Fullan discussed interactive issues affecting implementation of change for a group of stakeholders comprised of teachers, principals, students, district administrators, consultants, parents, and communities. Collaborative interactions of stakeholders for the purpose of questioning and developing shared meaning about what is to be changed and how to change it affects implementation

of change (Fullan, 2007). However, because of possible confrontations among stakeholders, successful collaboration requires time and staff development that includes parents, teachers, administrators, and community representatives (Pink & Borman, 1994).

Acknowledging the importance of collaboration in the change process, Tyack and Cuban (1995) also believed that reforms introduced as principles instead of "ready made plans" enable teachers and policy promoters to collaborate and support each other during implementation and assessment stages, which improve schools better than imposed mandates. The factors of shared experiences and flexibility in implementation are important in school improvement (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Fullan (2007) also recognized the role of subjective realities in teachers' daily activities involved in the implementation of objective realities such as new materials and new teaching approaches and beliefs in the success or lack of success of educational change. Fullan explained that successful implementation of reforms involves "reculturing" of teachers wherein teachers pose questions about the reform in respect to what happens in practice.

Coburn (2003) argued that investigation of teachers' beliefs should move beyond knowing how they feel about new materials or new teaching approaches. Exploration of teachers' beliefs involve finding teachers' beliefs about how students learn, the nature of subject matter, and their conceptions of effective instruction (Coburn, 2003). Effective change requires many factors including recognition of all stakeholders, their interrelationships, and their relationships inside and outside the system (Ellsworth, 2000; Pink & Borman, 1994). In other words, effective change happens when all people involved in the process relate to one another in their roles as policy makers, educational officials, teachers, parents, and community either inside the school or outside the school

setting. For educational change to occur, Ellsworth (2000) suggested that initiators of change need effective communication strategies and knowledge of related theories associated with innovations in educational change.

Rogers (1995) suggested that during change, attributes of (a) relative advantage, (b) compatibility, (c) complexity, (d) trial-ability, and (e) observe-ability contribute to the rate of adoption of an innovation. In a different manner, Reigeluth and Garfinkle (1994) examined change from the perspective of the relations of participants in a system, participants' relationships with other parts of the system, and the relationships of the subsystems to the whole system. When deciding on a theory or approach for change, Ellsworth (2000) argued that it is the reason for change that dictates which theory or approach to use during the change process.

Ellsworth (2000) also considered the use of questions regarding specificities in the change process. For example, Ellsworth suggested that guiding questions that examine attributes of the innovation and implications for the organizational stakeholders and the potential for resistance help in providing focus for the change process. Ellsworth suggested that the use of a combination of theories and collaborative contributions of people working in the organization best guide the change process.

My study, which is based on educational change theory, focused on a mandated PD initiative to improve students' academic achievement. I explored the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena of previous PD initiatives and PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks.

As related to change, Ellsworth (2000) asserted that ignoring the perceptions and experiences of an innovation may prove disastrous to implementation, and indications of resistance may highlight ineffective areas of an innovation. In this study, descriptions of lived experiences of previous and current PD attempts were gained through in-depth questions and prompts during individual semistructured interviews with priority schoolteachers. In considering success in educational change, teachers' perceived feelings and teacher experience are important factors (Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009). When teachers' experiences are ignored, teachers may attempt to implement a new reform but resort to old teaching practices or become disillusioned because of lack of support for reform implementation (Mohammed & Harlech-Jones, 2008). In alignment with Fullan's (2007) conception of educational change as a sociopolitical process, this current study connected with the tenet that all the individuals in the process should share the vision for school improvement.

When negativity is displayed toward a reform, resistance may appear as an individual or collective response (Hynds, 2010; Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). In the context of how teachers accept and perceive changes in educational practices, research findings suggest that teachers demonstrate resistance because they perceive that the reform interferes with classroom instructional time, lack of administrative support, or that new initiatives add responsibilities to their teaching roles (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). As priority schoolteachers engage in mandated professional development for effective instruction, forms of resistance may occur. Further details of the conceptual framework are discussed in Section 2.

Definition of Terms

Academic writing requires defining key terms specialized to a study that appear frequently, terms having particular meaning in a field of study, and terms that unclear because of various writers defining and using the terms differently (Murray & Hughes, 2008). The following terms are defined for further clarity in this current study.

Adequate yearly progress: "A measure of year-to-year student achievement on statewide assessments" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a, p. 1).

Educational change: "A sociopolitical process involving all kinds of individual, classroom, school, local, regional, and national factors at work in interactive ways" (Fullan, 2007, p. 9).

Local educational agency (LEA): A "local agency overseeing schools, typically a district or county" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a, p. 1).

Priority school: "A school that has been identified as among the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state over the past three years, or any nonTitle I school would otherwise have met the same criteria" (NJDOE, 2012a, para. 4).

Professional development: Professional learning opportunities for the purpose of transferring new knowledge and skills to teachers' instructional practices (NHDOE, n.d.a.)

Regional achievement center: "A new system of seven field-based centers that will be charged with driving improvement in New Jersey's Priority and Focus Schools" (NJDOE, n.d.c, p. 5).

State educational agency (SEA): "Typically the state department of education or the department of public instruction" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a, p. 1).

Assumptions

It is assumed that all participants honestly described their perceived experiences when answering the interview questions. It is also assumed that the interview participants gave significant data to answer the research questions. Another assumption is that if one participant recommended another to participate in the study the recommender kept the recommended person's anonymity. Hoy (2010) stated that "an assumption is a statement that is taken for granted or accepted as true" (p. 121).

Limitations

Limitations in research identify potential weaknesses of the research study (Creswell, 2003). Findings that pertain only to certain individuals are a limitation (Munhall & Chenail, 2008); therefore, a potential weakness to this study is that findings may only pertain to teachers in a single New Jersey RAC region. A limitation to this study is that because the researcher lives in New Mexico and the participants live in New Jersey, face-to-face interviews are not possible. The limitation of no video conferencing presents the inability to observe body movements. To address this limitation, the researcher used participants' voice tone and audio expressions to assist in interview analysis (Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009). Another limitation is that this study takes place during the fourth year of the New Jersey mandate for PD and findings are reliant on participants' memories.

To address the limitation of reliance of participant's memories, in the Letter of Invitation (see Appendix C) and the Initial telephone contact session (see Appendix D) the purpose of the study informed the participant of the need to remember their experiences on the topic. Through the telephone discussion, I was able to determine the

depth of knowledge the potential participant has on professional development before and after the ESEA waiver. To address limitations of the small size of eight to ten interview participants, findings from the in-depth interviews were expressed in rich description to allow readers to find similarities and differences in participants in the study (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

A limitation that arose from the execution of the study was that conducting the study at the end of the school year, teachers were not in school, and the snowball strategy for accessing participants was slower than expected. To address the limitation of slow access to participants, I interviewed participants while waiting for one to ask another; snowball strategy. Another limitation was that there were no male volunteers; therefore, there was a lack of gender diversity.

Scope and Delimitation

Clarification of boundaries and the narrowing of the study provide the delimitations and scope for the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Therefore, this transcendental phenomenological study was confined to teachers working in a RAC region priority school in New Jersey. Selected interview participants represented teachers in elementary, and middle. The exact numbers of schools were not determined until participant selection was completed through the snowball process. Teachers in other schools in New Jersey did not participate in this study because their experiences with previous and the current PD model of job-embedded coaching and teacher networks were beyond the scope of this current study.

This study confined itself to semistructured in-depth interviews. Although the current study represents a small sample of eight priority schoolteachers in New Jersey

with a focus on only one of the eight principles, readers may associate findings applicable to their schools. Through assistance of the principal of the selected K-8 priority school, flyers were distributed to potential participants. Through the potential participants' email, and my initial telephone contact with potential participants, I made final participant selections to represent different grades and other demographic information.

Significance of the Study

The study explored the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena previous PD initiatives, and PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. Researchers observed that teachers' PD is essential to students' academic achievement (Breffni, 2011; Hough, 2011; Lumpe et al., 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2011; Zepeda, 2012). Professional development under the New Jersey ESEA flexibility waiver is different from previous PD initiatives because RACs are now specifically assigned to priority schools to supervise the PD programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a).

As this mandated PD is an educational change initiative, it is important for the priority schoolteachers to be able to express how they perceive instructional strategies discussed in PD sessions (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007). Teachers' beliefs in a new initiative have an impact on the success or failure of the initiative (Fullan, 2007). Therefore, the present study is significant because it may add to the body of literature on implementation of new PD initiatives. The study also gave the priority schoolteacher participants a voice in telling their lived experiences with the PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver.

The present study may support positive social change by adapting PD to teachers' needs. Results from teachers' descriptions of PD training may assist district officials in the study's region and other school districts in how to collaboratively plan for meaningful teachers' PD. Altogether, students may benefit from instructional practices teachers learn though effective professional development.

Transition Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena previous PD initiatives and PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. Section 1 provided information concerning approximately 53% of New Jersey's public schools failing to meet 2010–11 AYP under NCLB's requirements and approval from the U.S. Department of Education to New Jersey for an ESEA flexibility waiver. With the intent to increase student achievement, the ESEA flexibility waiver mandated PD for all teachers in low-performing schools designated as priority schools. The data on failing schools and the mandated PD influenced the exploration of priority schoolteachers' perceptions of the new mandate. Section 1 also discussed the problem of ineffective PD prior to the ESEA flexibility waiver, the nature of the study, the purpose of the study, conceptual framework, definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, and scope and delimitations of the study.

The literature review in Section 2 includes relevant information regarding search engines, library databases, and search terms used. In addition, Section 2 contains information on the conceptual framework, and PD before the ESEA flexibility waiver.

Studies on educational change related to previous PD attempts and the current study's collaborative job-embedded coaching and teacher networks are addressed. Section 3 describes the study's research design; lists the research questions; describes the context of the study; explains procedures for ethical protection of participants; explains my role as the researcher and criteria for selecting participants; explains data collection procedures and data analysis; and explains the procedures for establishing reliability and validity, generalizability, and confirmability of the study. Section 4 reports findings from semistructured, in-depth interviews and theme development. Section 5 presents an overview of the study with recommendations and implications for positive social change.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena of previous PD initiatives and PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. Priority schools are defined as "the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state over the past 3 years, or any nonTitle I school that would otherwise have met the same criteria" (NJDOE, 2012a, para. 8). The United States Department of Education (2013) offered state educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools the opportunity to apply for a waiver allowing for flexibility regarding NCLB. New Jersey schools that were approved for flexibility waivers adopted eight research-based turnaround principles (NJDOE, 2012a). Principle d, a model of PD that includes two collaborative approaches, job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks served as the focus for this study.

The literature review for the study focused on previous PD initiatives that included traditional one-day workshops led by experts as well as the current job-embedded approaches that included job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. With the research questions in mind, I reviewed relevant literature on previous PD attempts for improving classroom instruction and the current attempt that focuses on job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. I began the review by searching databases for general literature on the topics of NCLB, PD, ESEA flexibility waivers, AYP reports, job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks. Then my focus narrowed to key factors of

change reform as it relates to previous PD, teachers' perceptions of change and professional development, job-embedded coaching and teacher networks, and qualitative literature.

Keywords in the literature search included *academic achievement, adequate yearly progress, change and PD for teacher change, change resistance, effective PD, ESEA flexibility waiver, job-embedded coaching, No Child Left Behind, PD for effective instruction, teacher networks, teacher perceptions regarding reforms, turnaround principles,* and *school reforms.* Strategies for using keywords to find relevant literature included use of quotation marks around the desired phrases; Boolean search operators AND, NOT, and OR; and the use of the"*" to obtain plural and nonplural forms of a word. To expand keyword results, I used a thesaurus to find other terms.

EBSCO databases used in the literature search included Academic Search Premier, Educational Resource Information Center, Sage Journals Online, ScienceDirect, SocINDEX, and Walden University's ProQuest Central subscription. The keyword search strategies were used when searching the databases for relevant information. Limiters of literature between 2009–2015, full text, peer reviewed, and English languages were applied. To further reduce literature result numbers, I used the *select a field drop down* options. When examining potential literature, I also reviewed the reference lists and citations to lead me to other research on the topic. The literature review was divided into seven sections: the conceptual framework, the New Jersey ESEA flexibility waiver including the RACs, and the Turnaround Principles, background of previous PD attempts, resistance to PD, job-embedded PD, job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods peer-reviewed literature on the topic was

obtained from scholarly journals, books, government documents, and the Walden library. The following criteria were used to select literature: (a) teachers in grades K–8; (b) educational change related to NCLB PD for effective instruction; (c) teachers' perceptions about the PD; (d) job-embedded coaching and teaching networks; (e) qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodologies; (f) peer reviewed; and (g) research published between 2009–2015. Studies were rejected if they focused on broad topics of professional development for effective instruction or were position papers.

Conceptual Framework

Educational change theory was the conceptual framework for this study. Fullan (2007) acknowledged educational change as a sociopolitical process with individuals interacting in a social setting. In schools, the sociopolitical process entails collaboration between all teachers involved in educating students with the purpose of establishing an understanding of what needs changing and how to implement the change. This sociopolitical process includes governmental, district, parent, and community groups involved in the educational process, and all teachers in the educational institution (Fullan, 2007). In addition, Priestley, Edwards, and Priestly (2012) noted the importance of interactive dialogue among teachers, policy makers, and schools as coconstructors of the meaning of the innovation.

Providing a meaning to educational change, whether imposed or voluntary, involves recognition of subjective and objective realities involved in the educational change (Fullan, 2007). Subjective reality in educational change takes in the day-to-day realities of teachers' experience (Fullan, 2007; Kelchtermans, 2009); whereas objective realities take into account new programs or new innovations for change (Fullan, 2007).

Educational change and its success is dependent on the melding of the development of new knowledge, skills, and understandings as related to teachers' subjective realities and the objective realities represented by new programs or innovations (Fullan, 2007).

In support of the interactivity between subjective and objective realities in the educational change process, Wendell (2009) viewed the educational change process as interactions of many individuals in various contexts where teachers cross boundaries during different stages of the process. The stages of the educational change process consist of initiation, implementation, and continuation (Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009). During the initiation stage, the need for change and plans for dissemination are discussed (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009). During the planning stage, the innovators consider funding and how policy makers will investigate the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of the people in the context of the change is determined (Wendell, 2009). The process of diffusing information to others about an innovation depends on how individuals communicate knowledge of the innovation to others with less knowledge about the innovation (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2009; Rogers, 1995).

While an innovation is in the initiation stage, plans for implementation and continuation simultaneously occur; therefore, the three stages are not approached in isolation (Fullan, 2009). The implementation stage relies on peoples' practices of the innovation and communication between the innovator and stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of the innovation (Fullan, 2009). As initiation is connected to implementation, knowledgeable planning by the innovator should include possible adjustments and needed support during implementation (Wendell, 2009). Implementation also requires attention to (a) training and timetables for training, (b)

training materials, and (c) collaborative opportunities for those being trained (Fullan, 2009; Wendell, 2009). The continuance of a reform reverts to dependency on the planning and initiation demonstrated in the implementation stage (Coffey & Horner, 2012; Fullan, 2009). Factors associated with the continuation of an innovation include (a) staff buy-in and shared vision, (b) administrative support in providing necessary resources and opportunities for implementation feedback, (c) involvement of practitioner leadership, (d) technical support through coaching and training, (e) decisions made according to data, and (f) regeneration by revisiting the outcomes of the implemented practices and making adjustments for continued movement toward desired outcomes (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Taken as a whole, Ellsworth (2000) described the change process as an innovation communicated from a change agent to an adopter of the innovation with interactions through the change environment. This study viewed the State of New Jersey as the change agent and priority schoolteachers' as the adopters of past innovations of professional development attempts and current attempts that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks.

Fullan's (2007) educational change process indicates the need for teachers to adopt an all-encompassing attitude toward educational change. Educational change heavily relies on teachers' perceptions of the change initiative and recognition that teachers' daily pressures influence the approval or resistance to change efforts (Bantwini, 2010; Fullan, 2007; Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). Suggested educational change moves teachers from isolation to learning from others (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009). Additionally, through the development of teacher networks, teachers come together for support, to collaborate and share instructional ideas (Baker-Doyle & Yoon,

2011). However, researchers also suggested that teachers resist change (Avila et al., 2011; Hynds, 2010; Maloney & Konza, 2011; Olsen & Sexton, 2009). The theory of educational change is appropriate for this study because the ESEA flexibility waiver requires that priority schoolteachers are mandated to participate in PD that includes collaborative approaches of job-embedded coaching and teacher networks for student achievement. Descriptions of the mandated PD were explored as well as previous experiences with PD.

New Jersey ESEA Flexibility Waiver

In November 2011, New Jersey applied for an ESEA flexibility waiver (NJDOE, 2011a). Guidelines for the waiver specified that states should show support for effective instruction and leadership (NJDOE, 2011a). When New Jersey applied for the flexibility waiver, 2010–2011 school reports showed that 50% of New Jersey schools—1,123 schools out of 2,228—failed to meet AYP (Usher, 2010). An updated version of the New Jersey school reports indicated that actually 1,235 out of 2,314 schools failed to meet AYP for the 2010–2011 school years (Usher, 2012). When the ESEA flexibility waiver took effect, 75 schools were identified as priority schools (NJDOE, 2012a). As of September 2015, 66 New Jersey schools were identified as priority schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2015); "the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state over the past three years, or any nonTitle I school that would otherwise have met the same criteria" (NJDOE, 2012a, para. 8).

As part of the flexibility request, the U.S. Department of Education (2011) hired outside peer reviewers to provide comments and recommendations for submitted requests. New Jersey received approval for an ESEA flexibility waiver February, 2012,

which waived 10 requirements under NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a). Waivers allowed New Jersey to (a) develop ambitious measureable objectives (AMOs) in language arts and mathematics and LEAs, schools, and subgroups; (b) no longer label schools for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring; (c) use funds under the Small, Rural School Achievement and Rural and Low-Income School programs for authorized purposes regardless of meeting AYP; and (d) use of funds for priority and focus schools regardless of the poverty percentage of the school (NJDOE, 2011a). Furthermore, allowances under the waiver included (f) allocation of funds to states' priority and focus schools; (g) rewarding any state schools whether a Title I school or not; (h) development and implementation of evaluation and support systems; (i) release from limitations on fund transfers from certain ESEA programs to Title I, Part A; and (j) funding school improvement grants to implement one of four models in priority schools (NJDOE, 2011a).

In the area of effective instruction, the waiver required PD for teachers in priority schools (NJDOE, 2011a). Professional development in the waiver focused on providing teachers with sessions appropriate to grade level and content areas taught, and instructional materials for classroom implementation (NJDOE, 2011a). The NJDOE (2012a) created seven field-based RACs to provide direct support for priority schoolteachers' PD for improved student achievement. The RAC's are expert educators trained in the implementation of the turnaround principles (NJDOE, 2012d). RAC's began to support priority schools in September 2012, to continue through 2014 (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). With the renewal of the New Jersey flexibility waiver,

RAC support continued in priority schools from September 2015-2018 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

During the spring of 2012, the RACs performed quality school reviews (QSRs) to evaluate schools' performances and school needs aligned with the eight turnaround principles (NJDOE, 2012d). The eight turnaround principles to occur concurrently in all priority schools included (a) school climate and culture; (b) school leadership; (c) standards aligned curriculum, assessment and intervention system; (d) instruction; (e) use of time; (f) use of data; (g) staffing practices; and (h) family and community engagement (NJDOE, 2011a). RACs' responsibilities included PD for effective instruction and intervention strategies (NJDOE, 2011a). The QSR reports enabled RACs to develop school improvement and PD plans in collaboration with school and district officials for (NJDOE, 2012d). The literature review encompasses research on resistance to PD, job-embedded PD, job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks. The literature review connected to the current study because PD under the flexibility waiver proposed to engage teachers in instructional learning from one another; job-embedded PD is different from traditional one-day workshops. Furthermore, the current study added to PD literature by exploring the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding previous PD initiatives and current collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks.

Professional Development Background

The federal, state, and local governments played a role in the evolution of PD for teachers (McDonnell, 2005; Sunderman, 2010). The focus of these governmental agencies has been and still is to provide an equitable education for all children, hence, the

NCLB Act of 2002 (Sunderman, 2010). However, there have been many changes in the roles of the federal, state, and local agencies. For example, the federal government enacted the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) (McDonnell, 2005; Sunderman, 2010). ESEA (1965) was enacted under President Lyndon B. Johnson to provide federal funds to schools with disadvantaged students (Sunderman, 2010). However, in the beginning of Title I's enactment, districts and schools misused federal funds categorically set for programs to assist underprivileged children (Borman, 2000; McDonnell, 2005; Thomas & Brady, 2005).

Through the years, shifts in educational policy came with various reauthorizations (DeBray-Pelot & McGuinn, 2009; Thomas & Brady, 2005), and because of misappropriation of Title I funds, the federal government became more involved with the fiscal management of Title I, but not involved in school academics (McDonnell, 2005). With inquiry into the effectiveness of Title I, expansion in governmental involvement shifted from the periphery to interest in academic achievement or educational excellence (McDonnell, 2005; Rebell, 2012; Wong & Sunderman, 2007). In the present study, through the governments' initiation of the ESEA flexibility waiver, priority schools identified as the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state over three consecutive years, received PD support from RACs (NJDOE, 2012a). The aim of PD in this study was to improve instructional practices for student achievement (NJDOE, 2012a).

As the federal government shifted its focus to academic achievement, low-achievement schools were held accountable for student achievement through state requirements of setting specific achievement goals with assessment using standardized

tests (Dee & Jacob, 2011; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Murnane & Papay, 2010). In an effort to ensure educational opportunities for students living in poverty and to close achievement gaps between poor students and the more advantaged students, the federal government gave funds to local school agencies for teacher's PD (Borman, 2000; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; McDonnell, 2009; Sunderman, 2010). In the era of accountability, the desire to increase teachers' knowledge in subjects taught, and improve instructional practices, researchers stated that PD should recognize teachers' existing knowledge, educational beliefs, and understandings of mandated reform (Fullan, 2007; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010).

Researchers deemed the following elements important for effective PD: (a) content focus (subject matter), (b) active learning (teacher engagement), (c) coherence (builds on previous activities and aligned with state and district standards), (d) duration (contact hours spent on an activity), and (e) collective participation (teacher interaction on grade or department levels) (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Additionally, Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) stated that whole school reform is effective when PD connects with curriculum content and pedagogies, designed for teacher engagement, sustained and continuous, and supported by coaching, modeling, observation, and feedback. These researchers also believed that state and federal governments should consider implementation of effective PD a main concern (Wei et al., 2009).

In spite of the body of literature on effective PD characteristics, researchers asserted that ineffective forms of PD still exist (Flint, Zisook, & Fisher, 2011; McLeskey,

2011; Roseler & Dentzau, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). For example, the expert-centered, one-day teacher workshops operate in a manner that delivers information without teacher participation (Flint et al., 2011). Therefore, traditional, short one-day workshops are not effective in changing teachers' practices for student achievement (Joyce & Showers, 2002, McLeskey, 2011; Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010).

Lack of change in instructional practices is linked to experts depositing "surface level knowledge" that is insubstantial for sustained use in the classroom (McLeskey, 2011), leaving teachers uninterested in taking ownership in the PD presentation (Stover, Kissel, Haag, & Shoniker, 2011). Contrary to the characteristics of effective PD, models that focus on high-stakes testing or curriculum mandates (Stover et al., 2013), or traditional top-down workshops (Roseler & Dentzau, 2013), ignore teachers' knowledge and teachers' needs (Timperley, Parr & Bertanees, 2009). Traditional PD also situates teachers in passive roles, thereby, disregarding teacher diversity (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012). Furthermore, because of the lack of dialogue among teachers during traditional PD, the purpose of teachers gaining the content knowledge and skills needed to change practices for student achievement is defeated (Vernon-Dotson & Floyd, 2012).

Professional development, defined as "content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation" (Desimone, 2009, p. 185), is different from expert-centered, one-day workshops, because expert-centered, one-day workshops impede teachers' opportunities to collaborate and gain new knowledge through learning communities (Wei et al., 2009). Furthermore, expert-centered, one-day workshops do not account for teachers' prior knowledge or teachers' and students' needs (Flint et al., 2011; McLeskey, 2011; Roseler & Dentzau, 2013). Evidence of traditional PD models'

ineffectiveness for providing teachers with the knowledge and skills needed for instructional changes for student achievement (Wei et al., 2009; Flint et al., 2011; McLeskey, 2011; Roseler & Dentzau, 2013; Stover et al., 2013), led researchers to suggest job-embedded learning through PD for teachers (Wei et al., 2009; Desimone, 2009; Wei et al., 2010; Zepeda, 2012).

Several researchers suggest that job-embedded PD is more effective than traditional PD because it provides ongoing support at the classroom level, allows teachers to express their understandings and beliefs during PD sessions, and is focused on instructional changes for student achievement (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Strieker, Logan, & Kuhel, 2012; Wendell, 2009). Strieker et al. (2012) explored the efficacy of a Job-Embedded Professional Development (JEPD) model in six schools (urban, suburban, and rural). Four schools were elementary (two suburban, one rural, and one urban), and two were middle schools (one rural, and one urban). The model was designed to assist teachers and administrators in moving special needs students from traditional special education classes to inclusive general education classrooms for core academic subjects.

In the Strieker et al. (2012) three-year study, with Year 1 as the baseline, the six schools made a commitment to include students with significant disabilities in general education core curriculum classes (Strieker et al., 2012). The sample of students (N = 338) had disabilities that encompassed autism (5%), emotional behavior disorders (14%), learning disabled (59%), other health impaired (11%), mildly intellectually disabled (23%), mildly intellectually disabled, moderately intellectually disabled (3%), and severely intellectually disabled (3%) (Strieker et al., 2012). The effective JEPD elements for the study were based on best practices to (a) focus on students achieving

learning goals and support students' needs, (b) provide collaborative opportunities for teacher and administrative planning and implementing the PD, (c) perform as a school-based job-embedded initiative, (d) commit long-term to the PD program, (e) provide differentiated learning, and (f) align learning with district goals.

Although the schools differed in action plans, common factors were that the plans were comprehensive and strategic, and incorporated approximately 100 hours of JEPD every year (Strieker et al., 2012). To reach the goal of moving special needs students from traditional special education classes to inclusive general education, an inclusion consultant collaborated and participated in developing school action plans (Strieker et al., 2012). The inclusion consultant also trained, modeled, and coached teachers on topics related to co-teaching differentiated instruction, and behavior management (Strieker et al., 2012). Other duties of the inclusion consultant consisted of classroom observations; facilitation of teacher study groups; advising administrators on program implementation; and evaluated the school action plan (Strieker et al., 2012).

The different types of JEPD for general and special education teachers, use of student individualized education programs, service providers, and engagement of paraprofessionals and parents in the six schools led to a significant increase of students with disabilities taught in core academic classes (+26% overall gain, $p = .001$) (Strieker et al., 2012). There was also an increase of disabled students in co-teaching only classes from 12% to 67%, and an increase of disabled students in co-teaching plus resource from 13% to 61%. The researchers found that JEPD supported the change in moving disabled students from the traditional self-contained and resource rooms to cotaught general education content classes. The researchers stated that their study is important for all

teachers because 10% of school-aged children need special education services, and of those students 96% of these students are in general education classes 80% of the time.

The Strieker et al. (2012) study is relevant to the current study because both studies explore PD for instructional strategies that recognize all students' academic needs. In the current study, general and special education priority schoolteachers collaborate during the mandated PD, thereby learning instructional strategies for mainstreamed students and or students in special education classes who will be included in the New Jersey academic assessment tests. Having general and special education teachers attend the same PD sessions provides instructional continuity for students who are enrolled in both classes. Furthermore, the inclusion consultant support in the Strieker et al. (2012) study is similar to the current study's RACs support because they are instrumental in developing school action plans for student achievement.

As part of PD, researchers also considered other needed elements. Stolk, Jong, Bulte, and Pilot (2010) explained that instructional change occurs when attention is paid to the change processes in teachers during PD programs. The change processes occur as teachers move from the initial introduction to an innovation to actually feeling confident enough to implement the innovation (Stolk et al., 2010). In agreement, Flint et al. (2011) expanded on recognition of teachers' instructional change as a process to include interactions of teachers with an "ethic of care." The researchers considered inclusion of the needs of others (ethic of care) as an element when desiring to attain the goal of transforming teachers' instructional practices (Flint et al, 2011). Effective PD brings teachers out of isolation into an area where other factors may affect their level of participation, acceptance, and implementation of PD recommendations (Ellsworth, 2000;

Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009). However, teachers' resistance is a factor that sometimes evolves and is linked to the success or failure of PD for instructional change (Buczynski & Hansen, 2010; Musanti & Pence, 2010; Olsen & Sexton, 2009; Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). Tensions that arise during the PD process may be seen as resistance; however, there are PD factors that contribute to teachers becoming resistant (Fullan, 2007; Maloney & Konza, 2011).

Resistance to Professional Development

Teachers' cognitions, emotions and willingness are important in the PD process for instructional changes for student achievement (Avalos, 2011). Additionally, there is a need for reformers to garner teachers' perceptions and understandings of the projected PD to address potential resistance issues before the PD begins (Bantwini, 2010; Hynds, 2010; Olsen & Sexton (2009). Perceptions of relevance in terms of the need for change (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011), and commitment to change (Ellsworth, 2000; Evans, Whitehouse, & Gooch, 2012; Fullan, 2007) add to resistance to change in the change environment. Understanding the complication that resistance adds to successful initiation of educational change, Fullan (2007), Johnson and Fargo (2010), and Zepeda (2012) contended that teachers need a PD practice where they collaboratively explore daily practices within schools and with other schools in the district. Professional development in practice develops when teachers engage in educational discourse for improvement in instruction (Fullan, 2007; Pella, 2011; Pop, Dixon, & Grove, 2010).

On the topic of resistance, Thornburg and Mungai (2011) used a phenomenological approach to examine reasons for teachers' views and beliefs about school reform in the context of PD and collaboration. Interviews were held with 42

volunteer teachers in elementary and secondary schools in five New York City districts. The researchers formed a team consisting of teachers, administrators, and community members to discuss areas of concerns as viewed by the district. Professional development was used to implement five district initiatives to improve student achievement. In respect to PD to implement reforms, Thornburg and Mungai (2011) found teachers' perceived new reforms as intrusive to instructional time with students. Teachers also indicated that the reform neglected strategies on how to implement with diverse student populations. Additionally, the researchers found that teachers perceived new reforms as a recycling of previously failed or abandoned reforms. Additional resistance came from teachers' disapproval of reforms from outside authorities directing the PD. The researchers used the findings of the lived experiences of the teacher volunteers to provide information for future PD for the schools. Thornburg and Mungai stated that teachers' voiced concerns were not resistance to be ignored, rather information that initiators of new reforms may consider when planning new initiatives. Having knowledge of teachers' perceptions about new reforms may influence initiators to collaborate with teachers in the planning stage to alleviate some areas of resistance (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011).

In another study related to resistance, Hofman, Jansen, and Spijkerboer (2011) used a questionnaire to investigate hindrances to implementation of new innovations. The questionnaire was developed based on the researchers' literature review. The sample of teachers (N = 178) and school leaders (N = 58) in the lower grades of 69 secondary schools in the Netherlands indicated how they perceived hindrances. The two sample groups perceived hindrances on four questionnaire items differently. Hofman et al.

(2011) found three areas where the two sample groups perceived implementation hindrances differently.

First, Hofman et al. found that 33.6% of teachers and 13% of school leaders identified lack of sufficient support to implement the plan a hindrance. Second, 29.5% of teachers and 10.9% of school leaders viewed lack of proper educational tools a hindrance. Third, 24.7% of teachers and 8.7% of school leaders indicated the innovation did not fit the organizational structure of the school. Finally, 26.7% of teachers and 6.5% of school leaders identified lack of teacher expertise and input in the innovation process as a hindrance. The responses on the questionnaire were "yes" or "no" answers with no spaces for explanations. The researchers concluded that because teachers are in the classroom more than school leaders, perceptions differed (Hofman et al., 2011).

Bantwini (2010) studied 14 teachers of grades 1-6 on PD for the implementation of a mandated reform. Through semistructured in-depth interviews, Bantwini found that the teachers resisted PD initiatives because issues of teachers' workloads and lack of understanding of the reform, insufficient in-service time for PD, and student diversity were not considered during the planning stages of the PD. Based on the findings, Bantwini suggested that innovators of new reforms include teachers in initial plans, and provide continuous PD. The continuous process of evaluating and monitoring of teachers' implementation of initiatives will assist in knowing when and where to provide guided support for challenges teachers experience (Bantwini, 2010). The continuous process of evaluation aligns with Coffey and Horner's (2012) belief that results of implemented practices should be reviewed for needed adjustments for desired outcomes.

In a study with similar results to Bantwini (2010), Bambara, Goh, Kern, and Caskle (2012) surveyed teachers, school administrators, and support specialists in five states regarding barriers to PD initiatives for implementation of an intervention program for challenged students. A total of 293 participants were surveyed on domains that affect PD. The findings revealed that 91.7% of the staff believed that the principles and practices of the desired PD initiatives were not understood, and 91.6% of the staff reported limited training. The survey also indicated that 86.5% of the staff resisted change in instructional practices. As in the Bantwini (2010) study, Bambara et al. (2012) recommended continual support and guidance for change in practices, and the need to recognize diversity in schools, thereby, aligning PD strategies to school needs.

Resistance to PD and willingness to participate is also associated with teachers' attitudes toward learning change during various stages of their careers (Maskit, 2011; Richter, Kunter, Klusmann, Lüdtke, & Baumert, 2011). In a mixed-methods study with 520 primary, junior high and high schoolteachers, Maskit (2011) examined teacher attitudes to PD at different stages of their teaching careers. The researcher chronologically defined teaching stages as induction, competency building, enthusiasm and growth, stability, career frustration, and career wind down. Maskit found that teachers in competency building (receptive to new ideas) and enthusiasm and growth (satisfied with their jobs and seek ways to improve) stages of their careers were eager to face challenges, desire to increase intellectual and practical knowledge and welcome change. Thereby, teachers in the competency building and enthusiasm and growth stages willingly participated in PD. However, teachers in the stages of career "frustration" (wondering why stay in the profession) and career "wind down" (preparing to leave the

profession) lacked motivation, and showed a decrease in willingness to participate in PD for new practices.

In another study related to PD and teaching careers, Richter et al., 2011) surveyed teachers' interest in PD opportunities across teaching careers. From a national sample of 1,939 German secondary teachers, the researchers found that the average participation in in-service courses begin at a low level for new teachers (2.89 courses in the 2-year period surveyed), increasing during midcareer (3.72 courses), and decreasing with more years of experience (1.58 courses). Richter et al. (2011) further found that teachers considered to be experienced resist PD and prefer other media for their knowledge. When planning for PD, it is suggested that policy makers map career stages of school personnel and plan PD that is relevant for teachers in all career stages (Maskit, 2011; Richter et al., 2011; Zepeda, 2012). In addition, Richter et al. (2011) recommended that in the PD design, experienced teachers should be given opportunities to share their teaching knowledge.

Whereas, Richter et al. (2011) and Maskit (2011) focused on particular stages of teachers' careers as predictors of levels of reform implementation, Evans et al., (2012) examined barriers to reform implementation from a whole-school perspective. Evans et al. found that teacher perceptions of the reform, top-down approach, and influences of teachers with resistant perceptions on other teachers contributed to reform rejection. Furthermore, lack of commitment and ownership, lack of knowledge of the reform, and difficulty of getting teachers to buy-in added to barriers to successful reform (Evans et al., 2012). Conflict in views of priority, and lack of collaboration during the process also added to resistance to the reform (Evans et al., 2012).

What happens in the context of the school also influences the acceptance or resistance to educational change (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009). For example, Musanti and Pence (2010) used narrative inquiry for a longitudinal qualitative study of a federally-funded program to address the needs of English language learners. Experienced bilingual or English as a second language teachers were trained as to be the cofacilitators. These cofacilitators worked with novice English as a second language (ESL) teachers in learning pedagogical strategies (Musanti & Pence, 2010). The cofacilitator's used their classrooms as models and for peer observation.

In the course of the project, the cofacilitators displayed anxiety and apprehension in opening up their classrooms to other cofacilitators for peer observations. Anxiety existed because cofacilitators felt the peer observations were evaluative, and a method of exposing what they did not know, rather than using the information to collaborate for new knowledge and teacher's growth in instructional practices. In the final analysis, teachers' voiced expressions of resistance influenced Musanti and Pence (2010) to conclude that collaborative PD requires relationship building, creating trusting spaces for teacher interaction, and ongoing collaboration for shifts in teachers' identity for changes in practices. Other researchers also observed and recommended that during periods of educational reforms where educational change focuses on student achievement, PD should support teacher learning through job-embedded ongoing collaborative activities (Fullan, 2007; Johnson & Fargo, 2010; Zepeda, 2012).

Job-Embedded Professional Development

When we look at the body of literature on job-embedded PD, researchers are in agreement that the aspects of collaboration, reflection, and supportive feedback are

required for PD to be effective (Wei et al., 2009; Fullan, 2007; van Nieuwerburg, 2012; Zepeda, 2012). Although there is no agreed upon definition of job-embedded PD, a number of researchers have described the integral characteristics of job-embedded PD (Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, & Goe, 2011; Coggshall, Rasmussen, Colton, Milton & Jacques, 2012; Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, & Killion, 2010). First, Coggshall et al. (2012) described the characteristics of high-quality job-embedded PD as:

1. Learner-centered to assist teachers in analyzing students' work for potential instructional changes.
2. Knowledge-centered to assist teachers in deepening content understandings in order to teach diverse student populations.
3. Community-centered to provide collaborative opportunities for teachers to share ideas.
4. Assessment-centered to revise lessons according to observations, teacher reflections on student learning, and coaching and peer feedback.

Archibald et al. (2011) described characteristics of job-embedded professional development as being: (a) aligned with school goals, state and district standards and assessments; (b) focused on content and teaching strategies; (c) active; (d) collaborative; and (e) followed up with continuous feedback.

Coggshall et al.'s (2010) characteristics align with Archibald et al. (2011); however, Coggshall et al. (2012) included the characteristic of recognizing student diversity. Coggshall et al. specified that knowledge-centered PD helps teachers analyze students' learning for needed modifications in teaching curriculum content, thereby recognizing students' diverse needs. Coggshall et al. (2010) recognized that all students

do not learn the same way, therefore, the researchers state that through deepening of curriculum content, and knowing how to provide differentiated instruction based on analysis of students' work, teachers will be able to provide a variety of learning experiences for all students. In this manner, all students will have the opportunity to learn and achieve.

Finally, Croft et al. (2010) characterized job-embedded PD as being day-to-day teacher learning for instruction of content knowledge. Additionally, job-embedded PD is school or classroom based for ongoing collaboration of teachers, schools, districts, and state leaders, for finding solutions to instructional problems. Assessment of students' work and PD in alignment with state standards for student achievement is part of the process in job-embedded professional development.

In the final analysis, job-embedded PD should be day-to-day school and classroom based teacher learning that incorporates factors of shared ongoing inquiry with teacher involvement for enhancement of teachers' content-specific instructional practices (Croft et al., 2010). The relevancy to teachers' needs with built-in feedback adds to job-embedded learning for the purpose of transference of new skills into instructional practice (Zepeda, 2012). Since teachers no longer work in isolation, a safe environment is necessary to encourage teacher activity in job-embedded PD (Zepeda, 2014). The process involved in job-embedded PD promotes collegiality where teachers and principals collaborate (Zepeda, 2012). Additionally, the iterative process of sharing ideas, practicing shared ideas, gaining feedback on tried practices and revisiting the practice for refinement, allows for daily opportunities for teachers to learn (Coggshall et al., 2012; Zepeda, 2012). Although many researchers have studied job-embedded PD and

teachers' perspectives of job-embedded PD, none have explored in depth the perceptions of the priority schoolteachers' lived experiences about PD under the New Jersey ESEA flexibility waiver.

In order to provide teachers with the collaborative support needed to change instructional practices for student achievement, researchers regard coaching as an effective PD model (Knight, 2009; Sailors & Shanklin, 2010; van Nieuwerburg, 2012). Coaching offers teacher support for improvement of instructional practices by providing one-to-one teacher and coach meetings for collaborative lesson planning, exploration of curriculum content, and implementation of new practices (Knight, 2009). Likewise, through coaching, teachers have qualified, knowledgeable persons to model research based instructional strategies using the classroom students (Sailors & Shanklin, 2010). Coaches facilitate in the process of teachers' self-directed learning (van Nieuwerburg, 2012).

Job-Embedded Coaching

Job-embedded coaching for PD is defined as sustained development and provides some form of teacher observation by coaches for instructional feedback and development of effective teaching practices (Denton & Hasbrock, 2009). van Nieuwerburg (2012) further defined coaching as:

> a one-on-one conversation focused on the enhancement of learning and development through increasing self-awareness and a sense of personal responsibility, where the coach facilitates the self-directed learning of the coachee through questioning, active listening, and appropriate challenge in a supportive and encouraging climate. (p. 17)

When researchers explore job-embedded coaching, they recognize that there are a number of different models. Coaching to support teachers' improvement of instructional practices for student achievement may be found in coaching models such as (a) cognitive, (b) differentiated, (c) literacy, (e) instructional, and (f) collegial (Zepeda, 2012). The different purposes for each of the coaching models consist of (a) cognitive coaching that leads teachers to reflect on their teaching, learn about their teacher thinking, decision-making and problem solving; (b) differentiated coaching that focuses on needs of the teachers, and adjusting the coaching style to those needs; (c) literacy coaching that focuses on improving instructional practices in content areas; (d) instructional coaching that focuses on PD for teachers' implementation of innovations; and (e) collegial coaching that focuses on collaborative processes to develop teacher relations in order to share knowledge, reflect on instructional practices and coach each other.

Coaching Commonalities

Even though the coaching models (a) literacy, (b) cognitive, and (c) instructional (Zepeda, 2012) exhibit different purposes, these models have certain commonalities (Knight, 2009). Knight (2009) asserted that common elements of coaching are that they are (a) job-embedded, (b) ongoing, (c) grounded in partnership, (d) dialogical, (e) nonevaluative, (f) confidential, and (g) respectful. In addition to Knight's observation, Zepeda (2012) suggested that all coaching models should develop teachers' critical thinking, increase instructional performance through the codevelopment of solutions for instructional problems, and provide feedback for needed changes to move closer to a desired goal. Though there are different perspectives, overall, there is agreement regarding the collaborative process that involves the coach and teachers in the

improvement of instructional practices for student achievement (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Knight, 2009; Zepeda, 2012).

Instructional Coaching

Three studies utilized the instructional coaching model (onsite PD) for teachers' ability to implement innovations. Hough (2011) used instructional coaching for a character education program to improve student behavior for students' academic achievement. Sailors and Price (2010), on the other hand, examined the effectiveness of two models of PD (one with and one without instructional coaching) for the improvement of instructional practices in teaching students cognitive reading strategies. In another study, Lumpe et al. (2012) used coaching to improve science instructional practices.

In a longitudinal study with 2,300 teachers in 241 schools across 25 states in the United States, Hough (2011) collected data from preexisting program attendance records, web-based school demographic and descriptive data, survey questionnaires, state data files, and focus group interviews. The findings indicate that teachers with coaching and training used 66% or more of instructional strategies learned during workshop training, with 86% of the schools (n = 241) achieving AYP when 75% or more teachers completed both the PD training for two or more years. Hough (2011) noted three factors that contributed to teachers' change in instructional practices and student achievement: (a) sustained PD for at least two years, (b) classroom implementation for more than 1.5 years, and (c) at least 75% teacher participation in the professional development program. These three factors are in agreement with Desimone (2009), Knight (2009), and Zepeda's (2012) suggestion that duration is important in the success of PD initiatives.

Sailors and Price's (2010) study of 44 teachers took place in central and southeastern Texas. The researchers collected data from group reading assessment and diagnostic evaluation (GRADE) results and teacher observations. The full intervention group attended a two-day PD workshop and received classroom support from reading teachers. The partial intervention group only attended the two-day workshop.

The results revealed that the teachers supported by coaching changed their instructional practices to knowing how and when to engage students in cognitive reading strategies. The findings showed that students in classes with coaches scored 11.2 points higher on the GRADE posttest than students without coaches. Specifically, coaches provided demonstration lessons 50% of the time, and cotaught 25% of the time. The coaches also devoted 25% of coaching session time for reflective feedback. In contrast, teachers without coaching were left on their on to implement the PD reading strategies associated with the workshop objective to inform teachers how to engage students in developing inference skills for reading text. The Sailors and Price (2010) study has implications for the present study on job-embedded coaching for teachers in New Jersey priority schools because the suggested reading strategies will improve classroom instruction for teaching students how to use inferences skills on state assessments. Students' knowledge of inferential skills will increase academic achievement.

Finally, Lumpe et al.'s (2012) science research project with 450 elementary schoolteachers, 580 fourth-grade students, and 1,369 sixth-grade students was performed to assess teacher self-efficacy after science PD. The collaborative project was conducted between a large urban school district and a smaller suburban district, and two large universities in Ohio, USA. Classroom teachers attended six, 2-week long summer

programs that focused on inquiry-based instruction, science content knowledge, and the science process taken from the districts' curriculum.

Lumpe et al.'s PD program included Desimone's (2009) principles of effective PD. Lumpe et al.'s program encompassed (a) district curriculum (content focused), (b) lesson planning with reflection (active learning), (c) local community meetings (coherence), (d) over 100 hours professional development (duration) and principals, teachers, coaching support staff, parent and community leaders (collective participation). Coaching sessions included biweekly visits to give science teaching strategies, modelled science lessons, supplied materials and background information, and assisted with performance-based assessments. Data collection for this study consisted of teacher questionnaires measuring their science teaching efficacy beliefs, and teachers' beliefs about professional development support. Questionnaires were administered to the teachers once before and once after the professional development. Student achievement was measured by the science state achievement.

Lumpe et al. (2012) found that teachers who participated in 100 annual hours of PD increased in their science teaching self-efficacy. Although exact student scores were not indicated, the researchers found that students in classes with teachers participating in the PD improved on the Ohio state mandated science test. The researchers suggest that the principles of effective PD used in this study (i.e., content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation) are used by developers and providers of PD. The PD presented in the Hough (2011), Lumpe et al. (2012), and Sailors and Price (2010) studies may be used as guides for evaluating PD strategies for student

achievement in the current study focused on job-embedded PD for New Jersey priority schoolteachers.

Literacy Coaching

Literacy coaching focuses on improving instructional practices in in the content areas (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Knight, 2009; Zepeda, 2012). According to Toll (2009), literacy coaching is a category of instructional coaching focused on teacher training that recognizes (a) teachers' needs, (b) interests, (c) questions, (d) reflection, and (e) gathered data. Toll also acknowledged the subjectivity involved when using the term literacy coaching. For example, confusion exists in deciding if a literacy coach works with teachers or students (Toll, 2009), or works only with teachers (van Nieuwerburg, 2012). In spite of the confusion, the general characteristics of literacy coaching are that literacy coaching is job-embedded and PD for improvement of teachers' reflective thinking on student learning (Toll, 2014). Likewise, literacy coaching provides teacher support through a knowledgeable person who helps (a) teachers plan lessons, (b) develop manageable classrooms, (c) deliver effective instruction, (d) fosters a collaborative safe environment, (e) promotes reflective thinking, and (f) uses data to guide instructional decisions (Mraz, Algozzine, & Kissel, 2009).

Carlisle and Berebitsky (2011) and Diaconu, Radigan, Suskavcevic, and Nichol (2011) used literacy coaches to improve student literacy learning. Carlisle and Berebitsky (2011) focused on reading, and examined teachers' attitudes toward PD, their instruction, and student outcomes in classrooms with or without PD coaches (PD Coach or PD No Coach) in Michigan. During the first year of the two year study, 43 teachers from 23 schools across five districts who were participating in the Read First program

received PD literacy coaches. Thirty-three teachers from four other districts participated in the PD program with no PD literacy coaches. Because of participant attrition in the second year of the study, 34 teachers with PD coaches and 20 teachers with no PD coaches took part in the Read First literacy program.

Carlisle and Berebitsky (2011) found that 86% of teachers with literacy coaches perceived changes in teaching practices. Only 70% of teachers without teaching coaches perceived changes in teaching practices. In terms of at-risk students, the researchers found that 46% of students with classroom coaches moved into the low-risk category, whereas only 11% of students moved to low risk in classrooms without classroom coaches. No differences were found between teachers with and without PD coaches in the areas of attitudes toward PD, support of their principals, or opportunities to collaborate.

In the Diaconu et al. (2011) four-year study, the researchers explored PD training through use of the Rice Elementary Model Science Lab (REMSL). The REMSL PD program began in 2006 for teacher PD. After the two years of success in one school district, from 2008-2009 the program expanded to 14 urban districts. District partnerships with Rice University continued to expand and from 2009-2010 the program serviced 26 school districts. The program serves elementary schoolteachers in large urban areas with high-needs school districts. Professional development through this program was for in-service teacher training to develop teachers' knowledge, skills, and confidence in elementary science instruction.

In 2008-2009, 64 teachers were randomly assigned to the Treatment group and 30 to the Control group. From 2009-2010, 61 teachers were randomly assigned to the

Treatment group and 38 teachers assigned to the Control group (Diaconu et al., 2011). All participants were volunteers. The researchers used quantitative (teacher science content test, surveys and questionnaires), and qualitative (teacher observations, and participant interviews) assessment instruments to measure changes in knowledge, skills, and confidence as a result of the PD intervention.

Using a combined evaluation and quasi-experimental design, Diaconu et al., (2012) examined the effect of REMSL on teachers' content knowledge, use of inquiry-based teaching practices and leadership skills. With scientists and educators as coaches, teachers in the treatment group participated in morning sessions devoted to content inquiry-based science lessons, and afternoon sessions focused on pedagogy where teachers planned lessons. The Control group continued to teach as they normally taught; without any coaching support. As the Treatment group used what was learned in the REMSL sessions and returned to the lab to share and evaluate classroom experiences, portfolios were used to record pedagogical growth, content mastery, leadership growth, and attitudinal changes toward science. The Treatment and Control groups were tested, surveyed, observed, and interviewed at the beginning and end of the school year for program evaluative purposes.

The results of Diaconu et al.'s (2012) study demonstrated that teachers in a Treatment group increased their use of content instruction from 57% to 73%, whereas teachers in the Control group increased from 56% to 57% (Diaconu et al., 2012). Results at the conclusion of the study also documented that 96% of the Treatment group perceived themselves as leaders at their schools. In contrast, only 68% of teachers in the Control group perceived themselves as leaders. Furthermore, teacher interviews from the

Treatment group revealed that instruction changed from structured information giving to inquiry-based instruction.

Carlisle and Berebitsky (2011) and the Diaconu et al. (2012) studies addressed literacy coaching for disadvantaged students in large urban schools. The coaches in Carlisle and Berebitsky (2011) cited the areas of working one-on-one with teachers, modeling lessons, and serving as resources as important. Whereas, Diaconu et al. (2012) used a laboratory concept where teachers were able to collaborate about student's work, evaluate instructional experiences, and use of teaching videos. Additionally, Diaconu et al. used portfolios that documented teaching growth, science content mastery and leadership growth. The aspect of growth in teacher leadership is an important outcome in professional development for the purpose of teachers sharing their gained knowledge with other teachers. A purpose of job-embedded PD is to increase teacher sharing in a collaborative environment.

Another researcher examined literacy coaching as a means to increase teachers' content knowledge and instructional skills for student learning (Biancarosa et al., 2010). Coaches in Biancarosa et al. (2010) received a full year of PD rather than a few days of training before becoming school-based coaches. The researchers believed that the amount of training coaches receive has an effect on teachers' instructional practices. Biancarosa et al. noted the need for coaches to be knowledgeable in instructional practices because of the responsibility of explaining theory behind instructional practices and content of literacy learning. Coaches also need to know how to develop instructional theory through site-based PD. The researchers also stated that coaching success is

dependent on the school context, the amount of coaching a teacher receives, and the expertise of the coach.

Relational Trust in Job-Embedded Coaching

Building positive relationships during change reforms requires relational trust involving teachers, principals, and coaches (Cerit, 2013; Cranston, 2011; Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009). Additionally, coaches who provide nonevaluative supports need communication skills to effectively engage teachers in for instructional improvement (Gallucci, Van Lare Yoon & Boatright, 2010). In essence, principals lead the way in PD by providing opportunities for collaboration through teacher sharing of ideas, use of in-house expertise and external support, and job-embedded PD (Zepeda, 2012). With focus on relationships, trust, and the role of the principal in collaborative communities, Cranston (2011) chose to interview principals to explore relational trust between teachers, and between teachers and principals.

Cranston (2011) placed principals in the middle of change reform initiatives. Cranston viewed principals as the metaphorical glue that binds faculty and principals in the development of collaborative learning communities. Through focus group interviews conducted with principals, five major themes developed regarding relational trust in professional learning communities. The themes from the Cranston (2011) study were: (a) trust develops as teachers are in relationship; (b) relational trust requires establishing group norms around risk taking and change orientation in order to foster a safe, comfortable climate for professional growth; (c) relational trust supports effective collaboration; (d) the principal is central in establishing a climate of trust; and (e) faculty requisite trust of the principal is paramount. (p. 67)

Additionally, Kaplan and Owings (2015) articulated that relational trust is "positively related to school climate, to productive communication, to shared decision making, and teachers' willingness to 'go the extra mile' to help colleagues and students" (para. 4). Specifically, the principal is vital in school improvement efforts and educational change because principals play a role in setting a school climate conducive for PD practices (Cranston, 2011; Fullan, 2009). When principals use their role to build trust between themselves and teachers, and teachers and teachers, they place themselves in the middle, thereby creating a collective body in the educational community. Finally, as faculty observe principals' behaviors, it is important for principals to be consistent in what they say and do with daily interaction with the faculty (Cranston, 2011).

In a study on responsive and directive coaching, Ippolito (2010) explored coaching strategies used to manage ways to support individual teachers' goals while fostering the district and school sanctioned practices. The study was conducted in an urban, East Coast public school in the United States (Ippolito, 2010). Responsive coaching is for development of teachers' self-reflection, and directive coaching is for the implementation of particular practices. When directive and responsive coaching are used in one coaching session, it becomes balanced coaching. The researcher investigated whether directive, responsive or balance coaching is effective for improvement of teachers' instructional practices. Focus groups, interviews, and observations were used as data collected from coaches. The focus group consisted of 15 coaches, follow-up semistructured interviews were held with 12 coaches, and observations were performed with eight of the 12 interviewed coaches.

The coaches reported a preference of balanced coaching where coaches assumed the role of the expert (directive relationship) and responded to teachers' and students' needs (responsive relationship) in a session. Therefore, the coaches chose balanced coaching over using just directive or responsive coaching in a session. The coaches explained their balanced coaching consisted of (a) shifting between responsive and directive coaching in a single session, (b) using protocols for individual and group sessions, and (c) sharing leadership roles that aligned with the goals of the teachers, coaches and administrator. The coaches stated that the balanced coaching provided the relational stance needed for collaborative learning (Ippolito, 2010).

Although the coaches expressed success using balanced coaching, there were instances where tension between principals and coaches existed and efforts to create collaborative relationships were hindered (Ippolito, 2010). Uninterested and uninvolved principals in the study contributed to the thwarted collaborative efforts. Conversely, the supportive principal who participated in coaching sessions and instructional activities demonstrated instructional and shared leadership with teachers. Principal support also provided a climate for coach, teacher, and administrative relationship to development. Establishing a protocol for meetings also added to a clear direction of the flow of meetings. The findings from Ippolito's (2010) study are congruent with the results of Cranston's (2010) study that identifies principals' leadership important in developing relations among faculty for shared professional learning.

Other researchers examined the effects of relational trust on attempts to improve teachers' instructional practices. For example, with 299 elementary schoolteachers at 19 schools in Turkey, Cerit (2013) explored extra effort and trust between teachers, and trust

between teachers and principals. The researcher used collaboration as the mediating factor (Cerit, 2013). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

Cerit defined extra effort as a teacher's willingness to go above and beyond to reach curriculum reforms. Survey results were that trust in colleagues had a direct and indirect effect on teachers' extra effort in implementing curriculum reforms (Cerit, 2013). Meaning, when teachers trust other colleagues during reforms, this counts as extra effort because they will be willing engage in the mediating factor of collaboration. Trust in colleagues and collaboration with colleagues, and collaboration for extra effort is the indirect effect. The survey also revealed that trust in the principal had an effect on extra effort through the mediating factor of collaboration.

In a case study, Strahan, Geitner, and Lodico (2010) examined how literacy coaches used dynamics of collaboration in PD to develop group collaboration across a two-year period. During the first year, 10 ninth-grade teachers were provided support for developing literacy strategies. The second year, the coach worked with 49 teachers; twenty-two received in-class support, 19 received out-of-class support, 41 participated in workshops, and, 20 received support in identifying or developing materials for lessons. Data were analyzed through case reports, field notes, and interview transcripts. The literacy coach started by developing trusting relationships with individual teachers rather than taking the position of an expert. As teachers developed reading strategies through literacy coaching, they began to plan lessons in small teams. With the principal's permission, the literacy coach changed the coaching style from one-to-one coaching to small teams to the creation of formal working groups (Strahan et al., 2010). The teachers

who participated the first year became resources for teachers in the second year, thereby developing teachers' leadership skills. The literacy coaches' actions in Strahan et al. (2010) are in agreement with a theme found in Cranston's (2011) qualitative study indicating the importance of relational trust in establishing group norms for professional growth.

Relational trust is a significant factor in building collaborative environments to improve of teachers' instructional practices. The themes of principal involvement (Cranston, 2011; Fullan, 2007; Ippolito, 2010; Strahan, et al., 2010), effective coaching strategies (Ippolito, 2010), and faculty trust (Cerit, 2013; Ippolito, 2010) are found in the relational trust research. In addition, Ippolito (2010) recommended significant training for coaches to establish coach-teacher relationships. As teachers participate in collaborative activities, they become aware of expertise of colleagues which leads to formal and informal interactions to improve instructional practices (Penuel, Riel, Krausse, & Frank, 2009).

Teacher Networks

Teachers who come together to collaborate on student achievement issues is described as teacher networks (Baker-Doyle &Yoon, 2011; Daly et al., 2010; Moolenaar, Sleegers, & Daly, 2012). Findings from teacher network studies reveal that through teacher networks, teachers learn that colleagues have certain expertise (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011), and that social teacher networks can impact the depth of reform implementation (Daly et al., 2010). In connection with teacher networks, the social network theory explains how teachers' relationships provide support for the achievement of reform goals (Daly et al., 2010; Moolenaar et al., 2012). Research on the distribution

of expertise and resources, and interrelationships in teacher networks, will enable schools to use the knowledge to understand how formal and informal teacher networks contribute to or inhibit the collaborative process needed to improve instructional practices (Daly et al., 2010; Penuel et al., 2009).

When examining teacher networks in the school context, Penuel et al. (2009) described similarities between two schools using networks for the dissemination of knowledge and resources for instructional change. The similarities included principal commitment, levels of resources, and external funding, and underperforming student population. However, it was the manner in which the schools used the intervention resources that differentiated the level of success. Through comparative case and network analysis of interviews and questionnaires, the researchers found that the principal of the unsuccessful school sought outside expertise to lead the reform, with grade meetings devoted to focusing on measures to meet accountability and not instruction. In contrast the principal of the successful school selected an experienced teacher in the school to take the role of coach, thereby, recognizing teacher expertise. Although both schools experienced district pressure to improve student achievement, the successful schools' principal placed trust in the teachers to achieve district goals based on grade level networks, instead of holding individual classroom teachers accountable for student success; as in the unsuccessful (Penuel et al., 2009).

Penuel et al.'s (2009) findings revealed that certain operational characteristics enabled one school to be more successful than the other. For example, the principal in the successful school exhibited trustworthiness through showing faith and trust in the faculty; shared leadership responsibilities by having teachers assist in the hiring

additional personnel. The successful school's principal also used internal expertise to choose an expert teacher and a literacy coach to develop the reform model (Penuel et al., 2009). However, the unsuccessful school's principal developed an instructional template considered irrelevant by teachers. In the unsuccessful school, the flow of information came from top-down, and the principal relied on outside expertise and resources. Furthermore, teachers in the unsuccessful school felt isolated and lacked knowledge of information discussed in principal and grade chair meetings. There was a low level of faculty trust at the unsuccessful school (Penuel et al., 2009).

The collaborative process essential to improvement of instructional practices was established in the successful school by placing emphasis on developing faculty comradery, and the sharing of teacher experience (Penuel et al., 2009). Teachers discussed resources for students' needs, rather than meeting accountability requirements. In the unsuccessful school, literacy meetings were held in workshop form disconnected from the classroom context, and lacked collaboration, hands-on materials, or small group activities. Furthermore, the unsuccessful school's grade meetings were specifically devoted to accountability requirements. There was a low level of faculty trust at the unsuccessful school. To motivate teachers in the successful school, the principal used previous assessments, and the literacy coach monitored progress, collected data, and facilitated transference of instructional practices from one class to another (Penuel et al., 2009).

Researchers suggest that teacher networks provide the needed element for collaborative PD that fosters collective efficacy in the sharing of knowledge for changes in instructional practices (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011; Daly et al., 2010; Moolenaar et

al., 2012; Penuel et al., 2009). Evidence suggests that through networks, teachers learn about the expertise of colleagues (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011), and that teacher networks can influence the depth of reform implementation (Daly et al., 2010). Elements such as density of networks (Daly et al., 2010; Moolenaar et al., 2012), and the centrality of a person/s (Moolenaar et al., 2012) also influence the effectiveness of teacher networks.

Dense networks are places where people have frequent interactions and are connected to one another. Due to the close relations in a dense network, information and resources move quickly to network members. Collaboration for decision making is also active in dense networks (Daly et al., 2010). In contrast, sparse networks are places where people have few interactions with others and have little to no in-put in decision making. In networks, the person others come to for information on regular bases is the person of centrality (Moolenaar et al., 2012).

Upon exploring the impact of a system-wide reform on five underperforming schools in one district, through surveys and individual interviews, Daly et al. (2010) found that densely connected grade teacher networks helped implement the literacy reform at a deeper level than sparsely connected grade school networks. The networks under examination were lesson planning, reading comprehension and recognition (Daly et al., 2010). The frequency of interactions between teachers determined the denseness or sparseness of networks. For example, more teacher interactions were observed in the area of lesson planning ($M = 0.47$, $SD = 0.29$) than in the areas of reading comprehension ($M = 0.14$, $SD = 0.19$) (Daly et al., 2010). In another area, interactions between principals and support staff, and within grade levels, teachers interacted more frequently within their grade levels than with principals or support staff. There was also

a significant correlation between interactions of the dense network and collective satisfaction based on collaborative work on the reform (0.54, $p < 0.05$).

The densely connected grade level teachers participated in lesson sharing, peer observations, lesson development for higher order thinking, refining instructional practices, and reflective feedback (Daly et al., 2010). The densely connected teachers also frequently used student data for instructional purposes, and co-developed curriculum assessments. Teachers in the dense networks collectively developed meeting agendas and had input into reform discussions. The sparsely connected grade level teachers functioned more as individuals to implement the reform, with less focus on practices related to the reform (Daly et al., 2010). Teachers in sparsely connected grade levels expressed a feeling of isolation where they received rigid agenda with no room for their input. Teachers in the sparsely connected category expressed a lack of safety in groups and being able to manage grade level politics.

Four themes emerged from the Daly et al. (2010) study around leadership in reform, relational linkage in reform, depth of reform, and using social network data in reform. First, principals were the main instrument for the diffusion information, with influence on how teachers received and perceived new reforms. Second, relational linkage in reform should be addressed along with technical aspects of a reform. Positive outcomes of implementation of reform were dependent on recognizing and promoting existing teacher networks (Daly et al., 2010). Third, depth of reform related to the amount of time, content and focus placed on the reform. Grade levels that spend more time on the administrative piece of the reform forego the benefits of interactions and relationships where grade levels collectively coconstruct parts of the reform and gain

knowledge and instructional strategies. Fourth, social network data may highlight strategic persons for the transmission of knowledge and instructional practice. Principals and coaches may use social network data to make reform decisions and to provide differentiated teacher support (Daly et al., 2010). The Daly et al. (2010) study is important to the current study on priority schoolteachers and job-embedded teacher networks because the findings highlight how to use teacher networks as a tool for bringing staff together to effectively implement mandated reforms. The Daly et al. study also points to needed relationships for collaborative interactions for reform implementation.

Moolenaar et al. (2012) examined the relationship between teacher networks and student achievement and the mediating role of teachers' collective efficacy beliefs on a larger scale than what was conducted in the Daly et al. (2010) study. The researchers surveyed teachers in 53 elementary schools concerning instrumental networks (work related advice) and expressive networks (personal advice) (Moolenaar et al., 2012). The multiple regression analysis indicated that student achievement was not predicted by instrumental and expressive networks. However, the researchers found that teachers perceived they held collective efficacy in assisting and motivating students in dense networks with a person(s) as advice givers (Moolenaar et al., 2012). With the instrumental and expressive networks' variables as significant predictors of collective efficacy ($\beta = .31$, $p < .05$, and $\beta = .32$, $p < .01$, respectively), Moolenaar et al. (2012) concluded that the collective efficacy experienced in the dense network inspired teachers to use teaching practices to increase student learning.

In the same context of teaching networks, Baker-Doyle, and Yoon (2011) examined informal networks in respect to persons sought for content and pedagogical knowledge. With the goal of developing methods and tools to understand advice-seeking behavior, survey analysis indicated that teachers sought knowledge from teachers considered friendly rather than knowledgeable. Furthermore, teachers who perceived themselves to be experienced tended to associate with similar teachers. Teacher networks add to teacher support, collaboration, sharing of experiences for effective instructional practices. Baker-Doyle and Yoon (2011), Daly et al. (2010), and Moolenaar et al. (2010) all indicated possible ways teacher networks collaborate and gain support and knowledge through collaboration for teaching practices for student achievement. However, it is important for developers of teacher networks to help teachers understand the theoretical aspects of teacher networks and to reveal what kinds of expertise are found in each network (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011).

Based on the aforementioned research on teacher resistance to PD, teachers' resist initiatives when there is a lack of understanding of the underpinnings of the initiative (Fullan, 2007; Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). Therefore, it is important for PD sessions to include time for teachers to ask questions to get acquainted with the development of new reforms (Fullan, 2007). Teachers also resist professional development initiatives when their knowledge and skills are ignored (Hofman et al., 2011; Penuel et al., 2009). Acknowledgement of the need for teachers to be knowledgeable about and involved in the PD process in important to the success or failure of reform implementation (Fullan, 2007; Maloney & Konza, 2011).

Summary

Section 2 provides information about search strategies, keywords, and databases used to review the literature on the conceptual framework Educational change theory, the New Jersey ESEA flexibility waiver, and previous professional development attempts. Additionally, topics of resistance to PD, job-embedded PD, job-embedded coaching and teacher networks were discussed.

Educational change theory focuses on an interactive process directed at teachers' instructional improvement for student achievement (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009). Teachers, governmental agencies, school districts, parents, and community groups form a collaborative unit to discuss educational initiatives (Coffey & Horner, 2012; Fullan, 2007; Ellsworth, 2000). Fullan (2007) identifies the collaborative unit as engaging in a sociopolitical process. With a focus on improvement of teachers' instructional practices for student achievement, researchers recommend job-embedded PD (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Zepeda, 2014). Elements of effective PD consist of (a) content focus, (b) active learning, (c) coherence, (d) duration, and (e) collective participation (Garet et al., 2001; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

While under ESEA (1965), federal, state and local governmental agencies played roles in ways to provide PD to improve the education of disadvantaged children (McDonnell, 2005; Sunderman, 2010). In spite of this effort, funds were misappropriated (Borman, 2000; McDonnell, 2005; Thomas & Brady, 2005). Also, efforts to close the achievement gap under NCLB (2002) with expert-led PD proved to be unsuccessful (Flint et al., 2011; McLeskey, 2011; Roseler & Dentzau, 2013; Wei et al., 2009). As a

result, researchers recommended job-embedded PD rather than expert facilitated workshops (Wei et al., 2009; Desimone, 2009; Wei et al., 2010; Zepeda, 2012). It is suggested that job-embedded PD allows teachers to collaborate and learn from each other; breaking teacher isolation (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009). There are however instances where teachers resist PD because of their lack of knowledge of the reform, and lack of inclusion in the PD process (Fullan, 2007; Maloney & Konza, 2011).

A few of themes related to resistance to PD included (a) professional development for new reforms intrude on teaching time (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011), (b) influences of teacher perceptions of relevance of the need for change (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011), and (c) need for commitment to change (Ellsworth, 2000; Evans et al., 2012; Fullan, 2007). Other themes related to teachers' resistance to PD encompassed (d) lack of understanding of reforms, (e) insufficient PD, (f) student diversity not considered in planning (Bantwini, 2010), (g) lack of collaboration (Timperley et al., 2009), and (h) disregard for teachers' experience and knowledge, and teachers' and students' needs (Flint et al., 2011; Fullan, 2007; McLeskey, 2011).

Researchers noted that instructional and literacy coaching contribute to changes in instructional practices (Hough, 2011; Lumpe et al., 2012; Sailors & Price, 2010), and duration is an indicator in effective PD (Desimone, 2009; Lumpe et al., 2012). Literacy coaching considered as a category of instructional coaching recognizes teachers' needs, interests, questions, reflection, and gathered data (Toll, 2009). In order for PD to be effective and collaborative, support from principals and coaches is needed in a nonevaluative manner (Cerit, 2013; Cranston, 2011; Fullan, 2007; Ellsworth, 2000). Additionally, principal leadership impacts student achievement by establishing

collaborative learning communities to change teacher instruction (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Penuel et al., 2009).

Reasons for New Jersey applying for an ESEA flexibility waiver centered on the annual report that 50% of the public schools failed AYP (Usher, 2012). New Jersey governmental officials chose to follow the eight federal turnaround principles with PD for effective instruction as a mandate for all teachers (NJDOE, 2011). Failing schools were identified as priority schools and teachers as priority schoolteachers (NJDOE, 2011). Seven field-based RACs were assigned to the priority schools specifically to oversee the PD (NJDOE, 2012a). The number of failing schools in New Jersey indicates a need for more effective PD. Accordingly, the present study explored in depth the phenomenon of the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding previous PD attempts, and current collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks.

In the literature review, only one study employed a phenomenological approach (e.g., Thornburg & Mungai, 2011), whereas most of the others were quantitative (e.g., Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011; Bambara et al. 2012; Biancarosa et al., 2010; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Cerit, 2013; Daly et al., 2010; Diaconu et al., 2012; Evans et al., 2012; Hofman et al., 2011; Johnson & Fargo, 2012; Lumpe et al., 2012; Moolenaar et al., 2012; Sailors & Price, 2010; Strieker et al., 2012). Fewer of the studies were qualitative (e.g., Bantwini, 2010; Cerit, 2013; Cranston, 2011; Ippolito, 2010; Musanti & Pence, 2010; Penuel et al., 2009; Strahan et al., 2010). Therefore, the present study first adds to phenomenological research on mandated job-embedded PD. Second, the study may

contribute to social change by redesigning how PD training is conducted. Furthermore, teachers will be able to voice their experiences by describing their PD in depth.

Section 3 explains methodological steps taken for this transcendental phenomenological study. The purpose of the study, the research design, and the context of the study are discussed. Participant selection, ethical protection for participants, and data collection procedures will also be discussed. My role in the research study and disclosure of my biases are included. Procedures for data analysis and procedures for establishing reliability and validity, generalizability, and confirmability of the study are also explained.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena previous PD initiatives, and PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. This study is transcendental because of the deep examination of the participants' experiences through semistructured interviews regarding the phenomenon, and the focus on the participants' words and not my interpretation of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, application of the "epoche" process of setting aside knowledge, biases, and prejudices about the phenomenon makes the study transcendental (Bernet et al., 1993; Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994).

Prior to the ESEA Flexibility Waiver (2012), the PD definition placed emphasis on a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach (NJDOE, n.d.a). To satisfy the NCLB PD requirements, in 2010–2011, New Jersey schools designed PD initiatives that promote the use of coaching, peer observations, and mentoring activities (NJDOE, n.d.a). Despite the implementation of the PD programs, the three year averages of state assessment data from 2009-2011 indicated only 29% of New Jersey students were proficient in English language arts and mathematics (NJDOE, 2011b).

During the 2010-11 school years, approximately 50% (N = 1,234) of New Jersey schools failed to meet AYP (Usher, 2012). To address school failure, educational officials mandated that the lowest-performing schools, identified as priority schools, implement federal turnaround principles (NJDOE, 2011a). The focus of this study was

on previous PD initiatives and the current NJDOE's Principle d, a model of PD that includes two collaborative approaches, job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. The goal of this study was to understand priority schoolteachers' lived experiences of the previous PD and the current PD model. The nature of the local problem in southeast New Jersey lends itself to exploration by qualitative phenomenology through semistructured in-depth interviews using WebEx online conferencing. The semistructured interviews captured participants' experiences with the previous and current PD initiatives.

In-depth interviews were a good means for capturing original data from individuals' experiences in regard to the local problem (Denscombe, 2009). The rationale for using in-depth interviews was that they allowed participants to express in their words how they viewed the world, their perceptions, and their experiences on previous and current PD (Patton, 2002). In agreement with Patton (2002), Hatch (2002) believed that rich description of experiences and perceptions of interview participants provided understanding of the participants' worlds. The WebEx online conferencing platform allowed me to connect with participants for audio interviewing. Participants who experienced previous attempts at PD and the current collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks described their lived experiences.

Research Design

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena of previous PD initiatives and PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. A qualitative

research design was used because it facilitated the garnering of rich, descriptive information from the participants' perspectives, with the researcher as the data collection instrument (Creswell, 1998; Seidman, 2013). When qualitative researchers seek understanding on a topic from small numbers of participants, the researchers seek depth in responses (Patton, 2002). Additionally, qualitative inquiry focuses on in-depth meanings of experiences rather than measurements (Moustakas, 1994).

In contrast, quantitative researchers seek understanding using standardized questions with limited responses and a large amount of data (Patton, 2002). Quantitative research design uses experiments or surveys for data collection with statistical data as results for the purpose of making generalizations leading to predictions (Creswell, 1994). Mixed-methods designs involve collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data with the assumption that multiple forms of data provide a better understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative research design is chosen over quantitative or mixed-methods design because of the intent to explore participant perceptions in depth for theme development (van Manen, 1990). In addition, a qualitative design is chosen to seek understanding of the world from the people living in it (Hatch, 2002; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002).

The specific qualitative approach for this study was transcendental phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenology is an approach that focuses on descriptions of an experience of a phenomenon with a "fresh view" (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The "fresh view" is established through the concept of epoche and bracketing, where the researchers' experiences with the phenomenon are set aside and the focus is placed on the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

In each phase of the research study, preconceptions, biases, and prior experiences are set aside (Chan et al., 2013). In order to achieve epoche, the researcher attends to bracketing in order to see the phenomenon as "new," without previous knowledge (Chan et al., 2013; Moustakas, 1994). For example, during the process of question development, selection of participants, data collection, and analysis, the researcher constantly reflects on bracketed items to avoid interference with participants' descriptions of lived experiences (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

Procedures involved in performing transcendental phenomenological research include identifying a phenomenon to study, and collecting data from several participants who experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, analysis procedures include listing all statements pertaining to the phenomenon, finding relevant and overlapping statements, clustering relevant statements into themes, and writing a description of "what" participants experienced and "how" they experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Analyzing the "what" provides the textual description, and the "how" provides the structural description; when combined, they provide an overall description of the lived experience (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenological inquiry was chosen over ethnography because ethnographies focus on the "behaviors of a culture-sharing group" (Creswell, 1998, p. 39), and require long periods of time spent with cultural groups (Hatch, 2002). Description of norms, rules, symbols, values, traditions and rituals characterize ethnographic research (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The proposed study focused on priority schoolteachers' perceptions regarding previous attempts at PD and the ESEA flexibility waiver PD that includes

collaborative job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. Therefore, this study's focus eliminated an ethnographic approach.

The phenomenological inquiry for the present study focused on gathering data through in-depth interviews of lived experiences with a phenomenon. When examining biographies as a possible method of inquiry, biographies were disregarded as a choice because biographies gather data in the form of stories of an individual, or individuals, with data in the form of stories (Creswell, 1998; Hatch, 2002). Use of grounded theory focuses on generating or discovering a theory that is grounded in the data, with constant comparison of data (Creswell, 1998). The present study's focus was not to develop a theory. The foci of ethnography, biography, and grounded theory designs influenced their rejection as inappropriate for this study.

Research Questions

The objective of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore New Jersey priority schoolteachers' experiences of the phenomenon of previous PD initiatives and to explore current collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. Characteristics of qualitative research questions consist of a "grand tour" question or questions, with narrowed subquestions related to the grand tour questions (Creswell, 1994). "Grand tour" questions are broadly stated questions that focus on the general issue of the study (Creswell, 1994; Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, no more than one or two questions should be included as "grand tour" questions (Creswell, 1994). Additional characteristics of qualitative questions are that they are open-ended, use nondirectional language, use exploratory verbs signifying an emerging design, and begin with the words "what" or "how" (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Likewise, in studies where interviews compose the primary data, researcher's base questions on the research purpose, participants' knowledge, and researchers' ideas about the area being explored (Hatch, 2002).

As maintained by Hatch (2002), "The overall pattern is to move from general to specific discussions based on guiding questions and participant responses" (p.111). In the proposed study, emergent questions originated from participants' responses to the following questions:

> RQ1: How do priority schoolteachers describe their experiences with attempts to address failing schools through PD before the ESEA flexibility waiver? RQ2: How do priority schoolteachers describe their experiences with the ESEA flexibility waiver attempt to address failing schools through a model of PD that includes two collaborative approaches: job-embedded coaching and teacher networks?

The interview guide is found in Appendix E.

Context of the Study

The context of the study is New Jersey priority schoolteachers in one southeastern region of New Jersey. Participants who teach in K–8th grades were recruited using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling allows for the selection of cases that will give rich information to the study (Patton, 2002). Through purposeful sampling, different perspectives on the problem may be obtained (Creswell, 1998). The type of purposeful sampling used in this study was snowball sampling. Usually, snowball sampling is for a population difficult to find (Rubin & Babbie, 2010).

The population sought for this study falls into the category of one that is difficult to find. As a preliminary inquiry, I mailed requests for telephone conferences to four districts with priority schoolteachers. The preliminary inquiry request was to gain information regarding the ESEA waiver in terms of PD plans and introduce my proposal as to what I would like to do after receiving IRB approval. The four districts either denied the request or did not respond at all. Therefore, I e-mailed an assistance request (see Appendix A) to a principal of a priority K–8 school in southeastern New Jersey, and received acceptance for flyers to be distributed in that school, thereby starting the snowball process (see Appendix B).

After receiving IRB approval to begin my study, and the snowball process began, I made participant selection based on the criteria of years of teaching in New Jersey and priority schools, grades taught, gender, knowledge shown about the topic during the first telephone contact and willingness to sit for an online audio taped interview. I made the final participant selection on the above criteria because of my interest in participants with rich information and diverse representation. Moustakas (1994) suggested that the essential criteria for selecting phenomenological interview participants is that the participant has experienced the phenomenon and is willing to participate in audio taping of a lengthy interview and follow-up interviews. Even though I used snowballing to access potential participants, my making the final selections on specific criteria eliminated the bias of friends recommending friends with similar beliefs, reducing the limitation that may shape the entire sample, and allowing for a variety of perspectives on the issue.

In the state of New Jersey, 75 schools qualify as priority schools defined as the lowest-performing five percent of Title 1 schools over three years, or a nonTitle 1 school meeting the same criteria (NJDOE, 2012a). Low-performance pertains to absolute achievement or graduation outcomes (Technical Guidance, 2011). Title 1 funds service schools where at least 40 percent of the children come from low-income households and are in need of supplemental services to meet state academic standards (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.b).

Students in New Jersey's priority schools are attending Title 1 schools that are receiving funds to increase student achievement for failing students. Reports indicated that 50 percent or 1,123 schools in New Jersey failed to meet AYP (Usher, 2012). In 2015, 66 schools remained on the priority list (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). One initiative on which New Jersey governmental officials focused was PD for quality instruction to move student achievement to levels that meet AYP (NJDOE, 2009). Therefore, the current study focused on New Jersey priority schoolteachers' perceptions of previous PD attempts and the current collaborative approaches, job-embedded coaching and teacher networks.

Ethical Protection of Participants

Ethical protection of participants is necessary for in-depth interviews because shared information is personal and lets the researcher into the real world of people (Patton, 2002). Specifically, in qualitative research, participants are asked to trust, reveal information, and commit a certain amount of time (Hatch, 2002). The researcher is obligated to gain informed consent that protects participants from harm, and protects their privacy and confidentiality (Yin, 2014).

The current study was conducted long distance, as I relocated from New Jersey to Santa Fe, New Mexico during the research process. The factor of distance between a researcher and interview participant may not allow for face-to-face interviews, thereby requiring the use of electronic exchange via the internet (Glassmeyer & Dibbs, 2012; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009; Seidman, 2013; Sullivan, 2013). In addition, the use of audio-teleconferencing tools such as WebEx or Skype in phenomenological inquiry research is not without precedence for interviewing participants scattered across geographical locations (Ford, Branch, & Moore, 2008; Friesen, 2004; Friesen & Irwin, 2014). Therefore, because of the distance between the researcher and participant and the aforementioned researchers support of audio-conferencing technology as a viable data collection method, audio files of the semistructured interviews will be stored on the WebEx conferencing platform. At the conclusion of the study, files stored on WebEx were downloaded onto my password protected personal computer.

Macnee and McCabe (2008) articulated that rigor in qualitative research is realized by a strict process in data collection and data analysis. More specifically, rigor is established trustworthiness, confirmability, transferability, and credibility (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Macnee & McCabe, 2008; Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Rigor was established in the current study through my account of reliability, validity, credibility for trustworthiness of this study, confirmability, and transferability. These aspects of rigor are discussed in detail in the reliability and validity sections. Downloaded information was backed up and transferred to an external hard drive. Data collection and analysis was secured in NVivo files. Audio tapes and interview transcriptions will be kept for five years (Grove, Burns, & Gray, 2013).

After receiving IRB approval to conduct my research (#05-19-16-0054870), flyers were distributed at the consenting Priority school. As potential participants contacted me, Letters of Invitation explaining the research study were e-mailed to them (See Appendix C). Next, I contacted potential participants with a follow up phone call. I used a telephone protocol (see Appendix D) to give information regarding the study: the purpose of the study, procedures for conducting the study, participant criteria, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. Further, risks and benefits of the study were discussed. If the contact was interested in participating in the study, an informed consent form e-mailed to them. As suggested, the informed consent form included the purpose of the study, procedures, voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits, compensation, confidentiality and anonymity, and contact numbers if questions arise (Patton, 2002).

More specifically, in reference to confidentiality and anonymity, participants were informed that information is not used for any purposes outside of the research study. Pseudonyms will be used for participant's names or reference to people mentioned in interview responses. Potential participants consented to the interview by e-mailing the words "I consent" to me. Potential participants kept a copy of the informed consent form. Daymon and Holloway (2002) stated that researchers can send informed consent forms through email, and Sullivan (2013) stated that consent may be given by e-mail. After receipt of the signed consent form, the participant and I set a time for the interview.

Role of the Researcher

I entered the setting of the study with no previous or current roles in the RAC region mentioned in the study. Additionally, I have no past or current professional

relationships with the participants. Prior to this study, I worked in the New York City school system for thirty years. The schools where I was employed included predominately low-achieving, high minority student populations.

I also headed a charter school in New Jersey for one year. In the positions of teacher, dean-guidance counselor, and assistant principal, I had opportunities to develop perceptions about student achievement, and family-environmental influences effecting student success. In addition, I have been involved in professional development for effective instruction where district personnel conducted the training and the facilitator lacked knowledge of the diverse student population, or lacked sufficient teaching experience to identify factors impeding implementation of PD initiatives. Although I possess biases as to how professional development is delivered, as in phenomenological research, I bracketed my preconceptions, biases, and prior knowledge regarding professional development throughout the research process (Chan et al., 2013; Moustakas, 1994). While I entered the study with knowledge of the study's topic and personal biases exist, self-reflection assisted in avoidance of inappropriate leading questionings (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I kept a reflective journal that described inner thoughts about the research process, perceptions about participants, and my thoughts during the interviews (Hatch, 2002). Janesick (2004) explained that journals act as data where the researcher keeps a personal record of issues that transpire during the research process. At the time of this study, I am not employed in the New York City or New Jersey school systems.

When participants responded to the Letter of Invitation (see Appendix C), I established a researcher-participant working relationship during our telephone conversation (see Appendix D). For example, I informed the participants of why they

were selected, the purpose of the study, how the study will be conducted, length of time for the initial and follow-up interviews, and that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers (Hatch, 2002). It is suggested that explanation of the research process helps participants prepare for the interview, and gives them an opportunity to ask questions (Hatch, 2002). If participants agreed to participate, an informed consent form was e-mailed to them and a time was set for the interview. Participants were given a timeframe to return the consent form.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

Phenomenological research seeks to describe lived experiences of a phenomenon from several individuals (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1990). Therefore, it is suggested that criteria for participant selection include persons with knowledge of the phenomenon, who show interest in the study, willing to participate in multiple interviews, and willing to be audio recorded (Moustakas, 1994).

The criteria for selecting interview participants for this transcendental phenomenological study was that general and special education teachers have had PD training in New Jersey prior to the ESEA waiver, and were employed in a New Jersey Priority K-8th grade school for 2012-2013 school year and/or 2013-2015 school year of the ESEA flexibility waiver. Further criteria were employment in a New Jersey school for at least five years. I kept a record of demographic information: teaching experience in New Jersey, teaching in a priority school, total teaching experience, present grade teaching, other grades taught, number of past and current professional development training sessions. It is suggested that maintaining a record of potential participants assists in obtaining those with characteristics best for the study (Seidman, 2013).

With in-depth experiences and a range of teachers' representative of the population of priority schoolteachers in the studied region, I attempted a cross-section of teachers in the study's region. Specifically, teachers in special education were sought from self-contained and resource classrooms, and teachers from general education from grades K-8. The demographic record of potential participants assisted in obtaining a cross-section of teachers.

Eight teachers participated in multiple in-depth semistructured interviews. The number of eight participants was dependent on level of information saturation; the point at which no new information is gleaned from teachers regarding their lived previous and current professional development experiences that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks (Creswell, 1998; Rubin & Rubin 2005). Saturation actually occurred after the sixth participant, however, I continued to interview until the eighth interview. Researchers may not be able to indicate specific number of participants because it is not known how many participants will be needed for saturation (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach & Richardson, 2005). However, researchers estimate the number of participants early in a study, "the question of how many participants to recruit is 'until you reach saturation'" (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011, p. 89). Additionally, the researcher of a study gives a range of participants rather than indicating a fixed number of participants (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 89).

In phenomenological research, multiple interviews are performed with each participant (Moustakas, 1994). In contrast to the use of large sample sizes in quantitative research, qualitative researchers seek understanding on a topic by using smaller numbers of participants in order to obtain detailed data, as defined by the depth (amount) and

nature of responses (Jones et al., 2014; Patton, 2002). Since phenomenological studies seek detailed depth (Jones et al., 2014; Patton, 2002), and multiple interviews with each participant (Moustakas, 1994), researchers suggest a range of participants; from six to 10 (Padgett, 2008); up to 10 (Creswell, 1998); and four to 10 interviews (Smith et al., 2009). I used a range of eight to ten participants. I made final choices based on the participants who showed most knowledge during the first telephone contact and willing to sit for audio taped interviews. Essential criteria in participant selection in phenomenological research include participant's knowledge of the phenomenon and participants' willingness to participate in lengthy interviews and follow-up interviews (Moustakas, 1994).

Data Collection Procedures

In qualitative research, researchers use the term "methods of data collection" instead of the term "instrumentation" as in quantitative research (Lodico & Voegtle, 2010). As a qualitative researcher, I am the data collection instrument and data collection instrumentation consists of semistructured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions. The questions are developed according to the topic of interest, phenomenological question development protocol, and a literature review connected to the research topic and questions. When assessing relevant literature, distinguishing between various designs and methodologies, the research review narrows the topic of interest for more precise framing of the research questions (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenological research, the topic and questions investigate a topic of social meaning (Moustakas, 1994). The topic of interest for the current study was New Jersey priority

schoolteachers' description of PD experiences before and after the New Jersey ESEA waiver.

The interview questions for the study were constructed out of an interest in the description of experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding PD before and after the ESEA waiver. The questions sought qualitative rather than quantitative factors of the experience because the intent was to explore descriptions and not measurements, ratings or scores (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, the questions were developed to capture experiences of participants through open-ended questions that illuminate comprehensive descriptions, and vivid and accurate depictions of experiences (Lodico et al., 2010; Moustakas, 1994).

Following a phenomenological protocol for the development of credible and reliable phenomenological questions, two broad, research questions were created (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The two broad research questions for the present study were: (1) How do Priority Schoolteachers describe their experiences with attempts to address failing schools through PD before the ESEA flexibility waiver? and (2) How do Priority Schoolteachers describe their experiences with the ESEA flexibility waiver attempt to address failing schools through a model of PD that includes two collaborative approaches: job-embedded coaching and teacher networks?

In order to collect data that goes deeper into PD before and after the ESEA flexibility waiver, the first broad question is broken down into seven follow-up questions with probes. Since the second broad question includes job-embedded coaching and teacher networks, the questions reflect PD in the two areas. Job-embedded coaching questions have seven follow-up questions with probes, and teacher networks have nine

follow-up questions with probes. To eliminate researcher bias during interviews, the researcher acknowledges biases regarding the phenomena (Lodico et al., 2010; Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, I discussed my biases regarding the phenomena in the Role of the Researcher section.

With the aim of developing questions that participants understand as well as questions that address the purpose of the study, it is suggested that experts in the field review the questions for revisions, additions, or deletions (Laws, Harper, Jones, & Marcus, 2013). With each revision of my proposal, the interview protocol was inspected vis-à-vis their rigor and credibility by my two doctoral committee members. The questions were also reviewed and discussed with Dr. Carol Philips, an expert in both PD and qualitative research.

After review of the questions, Dr. Philips suggested adding two questions to the follow-up questions for broad research question one: How did past professional development assist you in your classroom instruction, if at all? and How did you perceive that previous professional development addressed failing schools? Two specific probes were also added for the follow-up question in job-embedded coaching in case information is not covered in question one; How would you describe how the job-embedded coaching was administered? and, in what role was the individual who provided your coaching? As in the follow-up questions for broad question one, Dr. Philips suggested adding the same questions to teaching networks: How did teacher network assist you in your classroom instruction, if at all? and How did you perceive that teaching networks addressed failing schools?

After question development with Dr. Philips, I e-mailed the vetted interview protocol by Dr. Philips to a second person who is employed in the area of the study. As suggested, it is helpful to have persons who work in the context of the study review interview questions (Laws, Harper, Jones, & Marcus, 2013). The contact person agreed to review the interview protocol with other teachers who are experienced with PD in New Jersey's failing schools. She and four teachers reviewed and approved the vetted questions; however, they were concerned that priority schoolteachers may not even know much about the ESEA waiver. Therefore, the teachers wanted to add the question, How were you informed that your school is a failing school? and a question regarding how much teacher input was there in the selected PD for the school. The interview protocol includes additions and revisions as per the expert panel review (see Appendix E).

Eight participant interviews was the method used to collect data for this transcendental phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Data were collected through semistructured interviews lasting from 60-90 minutes. The interviews took place in a six-week period, and data were collected at scheduled interview dates and times. Participants decided the time for their WebEx online conferencing interview. In-depth individual interviews seeking deep understandings of the participants' experiences (Hatch, 2002), and use of guiding questions and probes for deeper understanding (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002) assisted in exploring New Jersey priority schoolteachers' perceptions of previous PD attempts and the current collaborative approaches: job-embedded coaching and teacher networks.

The purpose of phenomenological in-depth interviews was to "have the participant reconstruct his or her experience with the topic of the study" (Seidman, 2013,

p. 14). To encourage participants to elaborate on the topic, the researcher used probes (Morris, 2015). Therefore, when interviewing participants, participants were encouraged to describe their experiences with probes such as "would you give me an example of, can you elaborate, or would you explain what you mean."

When qualitative researchers seek understanding on a topic, small numbers of participants are selected for detailed data, representing depth in responses (Patton, 2002). Quantitative researchers seek understanding using standardized questions with limited responses, and large amount of data thereby, representing less breadth and depth (Patton, 2002). Therefore, in this phenomenological study, a balance of depth and breadth was realized by interviewing a small number of participants using open-ended questions for depth, and a continuance of interviews until data saturation occurs representing breadth. Snowball strategy was used to continue seeking participants with "rich information" on the topic of interest (Patton, 2002). The snowball process where persons are found through knowledgeable persons recommending others who might fit the study's criteria was to provide participants for continuance of interviews needed for data saturation. Data saturation was established when there was thematic repetition across participant responses (Creswell, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Although face-to-face conferencing was the preferred approach for interview data collection, the distance between the researcher and the participants necessitated use of an online medium (Morris, 2015; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009; Seidman, 2013; Sullivan, 2013). As the researcher, I live in Santa Fe, New Mexico and the participants live in New Jersey. Rapport between the participant and me was built during the initial telephone contact and discussion about the study. During that time, participants were

able to ask questions about the nature of the study. From the time researchers contacted potential participants, a foundation for an interview relationship began (Seidman, 2013). WebEx online conferencing allowed for audio recording. Participants were asked main, follow-up, and probing questions to collect "rich" descriptions of the phenomenon (Appendix E; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). While probing questions were not planned before the interviews, open-ended probes emerged from the in-depth questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interview protocol provided significant data to address the research questions of the study (see Appendix E).

Audio recordings provided data from the initial and two follow-up interviews. In phenomenological research, member checking of interviews serves as data where participants respond to the accuracy of my interpretations and allows participants to add to or make corrections in the transcription (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Brenner (2006) stated that member checks at the simplest level allow the researcher to share interview transcripts with participants for accuracy. Furthermore, during member checks, participants may add or elaborate more on their transcripts as they reflect on what was said during the interview (Brenner, 2006). The interviews were audio taped and transcribed immediately after each interview. Transcriptions, analysis, and storage of documentation were secured by WebEx online conferencing system and NVivo 10, and downloaded to my home personal computer. Backup copies were stored on an external drive and stored in a fireproof file cabinet for a period of five years then destroyed (Grove et al., 2013).

Data Analysis

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena previous PD initiatives, and PD under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. In transcendental phenomenology the emphasis of the analysis is on description rather than interpretation of the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; van Manen, 1990). Data analysis began after transcription as the researcher begins to read and reread each transcript (Moustakas, 1994).

Analysis followed Moustakas' modified version of van Kaam's method using a seven step process (Moustakas, 1994). As a transcendental phenomenological study, I first executed "epoche" where my preconceptions, biases, and knowledge of past professional development attempts, and the current attempts are bracketed. An important element of phenomenological research is "epoche" so the phenomenon may be seen as "new" and "fresh" (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

The first step of analysis began by reading each transcript to implement "horizonalization" by listing all statements related to the experiences of first previous PD attempts and second current job-embedded and teacher network attempts. Codes were assigned to each statement as it related to each question (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Colors were applied to each code and corresponding statements. Second, all statements were reread to reduce the list to the important statements that described a moment of the experience. The third step was to make a cluster of the important statements into units or themes. Fourth, the themes were examined next to each transcript for validation. If the

themes were not significant to what the participant experienced, they were removed. After themes are validated, the fifth step was to describe "what" the participants experienced. The "what" represented textual description. In the sixth step, a written description of "how" the participants experienced the phenomenon representing the structural description. The final step involved merging the textual and structural descriptions to write a composite description of the phenomenon of past PD attempts and the current attempt that includes job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. Separate composite descriptions were written for past PD attempts and the current attempt that includes job-embedded coaching and teacher networks.

Another platform I used to analyze data were NVivo 10 (2012) qualitative data analysis to assist in interview coding. After interviews were imported into NVivo, I explored the interviews to code by important statements related to questions, find patterns, and keep track of how many times particular themes are repeated across participants. NVivo 10 (2012) also afforded me the opportunity to identify word frequencies. Although a data analysis tool was used to gather, store, code, and assist in finding patterns, I examined both my manual analysis and computer analysis to find the data to describe teachers' lived experiences of the previous and current PD attempts. Any discrepancies found in the interviews were discussed with the participant. Decisions regarding rewording of a portion of the interview, or complete deletion were made according to the participants' wishes. Discrepant case(s) were included in the analysis to allow for a different perception on the PD phenomenon.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Strategies I used to represent reliability of the study were an audit trail detailing the processes of data collection, category development, and data analysis (Long & Johnson, 2000; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Shenton, 2004). As part of my reflective journal, I included notes about data collection, any changes in the research design, and steps for data analysis. The audit trail documented steps taken in developing the study to steps for analysis, and findings (Long & Johnson, 2000; Merriam & Associates, 2002).

As part of the audit trail, participant transcripts, and data analysis procedures from the beginning of the study to the end of the study were kept in NVivo files. In addition, actual audio interviews were secured in WebEx online conferencing files. Notes bracketing my biases, observations during interviews, challenges, personal thoughts, and thoughts on the analysis were documented in a researcher's reflective journal. Journaling reveals the position of the researcher in the research study (Merriam & Associates, 2002), and allows the researcher to express feelings during the research process (Hatch, 2002). NVivo 10 was used as another method to check reliability of my manual coding.

Validity

A strategy to ensure validity in this study was verification strategies by gathering data from priority teachers situated in various teaching roles. Both special education teachers and general education teachers who teach in K-8 participated. Merriam and Associates (2002) suggested that maximum variation or diversity of the sampling selection adds to variety in the findings. In agreement, Shenton (2004) believed that comparisons of views from a range of participants helps in attaining powerful pictures of

attitudes, needs and behaviors toward what is being studied. Establishing credibility is part of the trustworthiness of a study (Shenton, 2004).

Evidence of credibility for trustworthiness of this study was gained through the use of member checking. Member checking allows the researcher to share the transcript to verify that what the participant said is correctly represented in the text (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Hatch, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). The process of member checking also allows the participant to further elaborate if more information comes to mind through reflection (Brenner, 2006). After interview transcription, I engaged participants in follow-up member check interviews for verification of the analysis and findings from what had been said. For member checks, participants were e-mailed transcriptions for review through WebEx conferencing. The participant and I reviewed the e-mailed transcript together. If discrepant cases were found, the participant and I discussed the discrepancy to decide on the revision. If rewording was not an option, the questionable part of the interview was deleted.

Providing rich, thick description from interview transcripts was another strategy to establish credibility. Participant responses about their lived experiences with previous professional development attempts and current attempts including job-embedded coaching and teacher networks, and highlights of participants' descriptions were recorded in the findings. Thick description gives insight into the reasoning in the interpretation (Patton, 2002). Words and not numbers evoke trustworthiness in the findings (Merriam and Associates, 2002). To gather rich thick description, I read and reread transcripts line by line (Hatch, 2002).

Generalizability

Researchers agree that qualitative studies with small numbers of participants do not yield findings suitable for generalizations to larger populations (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Shenton, 2004). Therefore, the purpose of transferability is to describe the study in such a way that readers will be able to cautiously relate findings in the study's context to similar situations in their environments (Creswell, 1998; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Shenton, 2004). Participant responses about their lived experiences with previous PD attempts and current attempts including job-embedded coaching and teacher networks, and highlighted descriptions were recorded in the findings.

Thick description gives insight into the reasoning in the interpretation (Patton, 2002). Words and not numbers evoke trustworthiness in the findings (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Through rich thick description of portions of the interview transcripts related previous PD and job-embedded coaching and teacher networks, and the context of priority schools, readers may be able to compare the results of the study to teachers who share similar backgrounds.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research addresses steps taken to ensure objectivity in researchers' written reports of findings (Shenton, 2004). Throughout the research process, reflective journals, and audit trails assist in limiting researcher bias (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). With access to diverse participants through the snowball strategy, different experiences, beliefs, and perceptions extended information rich possibilities (Merriam & Associates, 2002). In addition, my reflective journal and disclosure of my role as researcher made my beliefs, decision-making, and connection to

the study open to the reader. Another form of confirmability was my recording of decisions made in the study's development. This audit trail, reviewed by a doctoral writing professional, allows for the reader to follow how the data emerged from the study's primary questions (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Summary

Section 3 provided methods used for this transcendental phenomenological study exploring priority schoolteachers' lived experiences of both previous PD initiatives as well as the current collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks. Phenomenological study was chosen over other approaches because of the research purpose to describe lived experiences. Section 3 also included selection of participants, ethical considerations to protect the participants, and steps for conducting the interviews. Manual and computer-assisted steps for data analysis including transcription of interviews, reading and highlighting transcribed data, categorization, theme development and coding for interpretation were discussed in Section 3.

Section 4 explains the process of data collection and procedures for data analysis. Further, how data were tracked and how use of reflectivity minimized researchers bias is described. Findings are discussed in reference to participant interviews related to the research question, and how discrepant cases were handled. Supporting data is presented for emergent patterns and themes. Steps for quality assurance through reliability and validity for data accuracy are included in Section 4.

Section 4: Results

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding experiences with past PD initiatives and with PD under the current ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. The research questions in this study focused on deep exploration of the phenomenon of PD. The research questions for this study were:

RQ1: How do priority schoolteachers describe their experiences with attempts to address failing schools through PD before the ESEA flexibility waiver?

RQ2: How do priority schoolteachers describe their experiences with the ESEA flexibility waiver attempt to address failing schools through a model of PD that includes two collaborative approaches: job-embedded coaching and teacher networks?

Section 4 is organized into six headings: (a) setting, (b) data collection, (c) data analysis, (d) results, and (e) evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

The setting for this study was one or more K–8 priority school(s) in southeastern New Jersey. The flyers were distributed at one school, and as attrition began, the snowball strategy was used. Therefore, there was the possibility that participants came from more than one priority school. A priority school is defined as "the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state over the past three years, or any nonTitle I school that would otherwise have met the same criteria" (NJDOE, 2012a, para. 83).

There were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced participants or their experience at the time of the study.

The demographic data in Table 1 includes grade taught, years teaching this grade, other grades taught, years of experience, and years teaching in a priority school. The average teaching experience was 13.8 years, and the average teaching in a priority school was 12 years. Teachers with more than 4 years in a priority school indicated that in prior years they taught in schools considered low-performing schools. Only one teacher taught in a content area.

Table 1

Teacher Demographics

Teachers	Grade taught	Years teaching this grade	Other grades taught	Years of experience	Years in a Priority School
Ms. A	7th Math	6	5th Math	7	2
Ms. B	6th	1	2nd, K-8 media	5	2
Ms. C	6th	3	5th, 7th, 8th	21+	21
Ms. D	4th	6	1st, 3rd	15	15
Ms. E	5th	4 ½	2nd, 3rd, 4th	12	10
Ms. G	3rd	13	1st, 2nd	17	13
Ms. H	Special Education	5	Pre-school, 2nd, self-contained 4th, 5th	8	8
Ms. I	1st	9	K, 3rd	25	25

Participants

Participant Profiles

The following profiles give an overview of each participant's position, and involvement in a priority school. The profile also gives an overview of each participants'

involvement with past PD, job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks. As shown in the table, the participants taught on different grade levels, with experience in other grades. The profiles also indicate that six of the participants taught in priority schools for more than five years.

Ms. A. Ms. A is a seventh grade math teacher who taught this grade for six years. She also taught fifth grade math for one year. Out of the seven years of teaching, Ms. A taught in a priority school for two years.

Past professional development. Ms. A experienced past PD in a setting where all teachers sat in one room for the PD session. Ms. A felt that when PD days occurred, they were not very effective because no one ever checked to see if what was presented was implemented. She stated, "It was great to hear how things could be introduced in the classroom, but no one really checked in to see if it were occurring. So we had a PD that day and nothing else was done after that." Ms. A indicated that teachers eventually stopped implementing presented strategies.

There was a time when Ms. A and a group of teachers were invited to present information on a given topic during a PD session. Ms. A also indicated she attended PD sessions where teacher leaders and outside facilitators provided different teaching strategies to improve instruction for student achievement. The administration was supportive in PD sessions. Ms. A thought these sessions should be smaller, not so repetitive, and suited to "teachers' and students' needs." Ms. A also said that PD "kind of slipped through the cracks." She concluded, "Professional development has to be centered around the demographics of the students who are present in the building." Ms.

A did not perceive that past PD addressed failing students because they didn't consider the students' needs.

Coaching. Ms. A had a coach who was her assistant principal. She met with her coach weekly to discuss classroom strategies. There were feedback conversations between Ms. A and her coach regarding observations made by the coach. They discussed action steps to be achieved, and these action steps were maintained until there was improvement in those areas.

Ms. A was engaged in the coaching process, and she was receptive to the feedback. Ms. A received responsive (balanced) coaching. She described her relationship with her coach by stating, "I would say our relationship was pretty solid and I was receptive to her feedback." She further remarked, "Conversations with my coach enabled me to figure out the best ways to implement the different strategies." Ms. A said coaching was beneficial because of not "being told what to do." She used her coaching to improve instructional practice to help failing students.

Teacher networks. Ms. A participated in teacher networking where the teachers discussed lesson plans and the district curriculum. However, Ms. A indicated that teacher networking did not occur the entire year. Ms. A said, "There wasn't a set time for us to meet. It was more so that if something came up, or if we had questions, we would meet as a planning group." Ms. A further explained that "it happened for a brief period of time, but it didn't happen consistently."

Along with teacher networking in her school, Ms. A participated once a month in networking outside the district. She stated that after the monthly meeting, "I would meet with my principal and assistant principal, and meet with other teachers in my school."

From these meetings, Ms. A said, "I would come back to the school and try to implement some of the things we talked about."

Ms. A also indicated that through trustful teacher networking, "we were able to go into each other's classroom**s,** and observe each other and give each other feedback. This was helpful." The discussions in the teacher network assisted Ms. A in classroom instruction. She believed that teacher networking could lead to some adjustments that would help failing students. Ms. A explained, "I think there needs to be more opportunities for teacher networking and demonstrations of how that looks in the schools."

Ms. B. Ms. B is a sixth grade teacher who has taught for five years. This is her first year teaching sixth grade. Ms. B previously taught second grade, and has been media specialist for preK–8. This is her second year teaching in a priority school.

Past professional development. Ms. B's experience with past PD included guided reading instruction for students at low and above levels. Her PD training involved hands on training with step by step learning for teachers, staff, and paraprofessionals. Sessions were teacher directed, administrative directed, and outside expert directed. Regarding past professional development, Ms. B said, "Honestly, I feel that the professional development was a little unrealistic. It didn't necessarily meet the specific needs, the goals of the students we were teaching." She also added, "I think what I found least effective in almost all of the training was that we'll get trained in a program utilizing the program and then the program changes the next year. So we get well-versed in a program and they change the program in September." Ms. B considered the constant

changing as "confusing" to the teachers and students because there was no "follow-up" to see what was working.

Ms. B also suggested providing PD that recognized the "social level on a psychological level" of students. She remarked that "by meeting the needs of the whole student emotionally and physically, we are better capable of getting to them and reaching them academically." To enhance PD, Ms. B considered open dialogue among administrators and teachers important throughout the year. She said, "Don't just talk to me at the beginning of the year, October and November. We have to keep that dialogue open." Even though Ms. B found past PD lacking in meeting failing students' academic needs, she used some of what she learned to increase rigor in her classroom instruction.

Coaching. Ms. B received coaching from her principal. Coaching was conducted every Thursday. Some sessions were formal and some informal observations. Although coaching was scheduled for every Thursday, Ms. B reflected on times she needed to meet with her coach and her coach was unavailable. She explained, "I think that because my school was so big, there were so many other teachers, there were times when I needed to get to my principal that I wasn't always allotted that time."

After the sessions, Ms. B and her coach discussed her strengths and weaknesses. She pointed out that her relationship with her coach was "very open, very honest. She was very flexible. She had a wealth of knowledge and she was really, really there for the students." Ms. B was able to try different things to improve her classroom instruction.

Ms. B described her coaching as responsive (balanced) coaching that enabled her to do things in her classroom that helped students realize their progress. Ms. B exclaimed, "I appreciated the fact that the coaching came from not [from] that I am a

leader, I'm the principal, but it came from trial and error." She indicated that her coaching came from a person who understood inner-city students. Ms. B also stated that her coach showed her "how things needed to be posted around the classroom and not so much to beautify the classroom, but to show students how to track progress on their own."

Coaching enabled Ms. B to become aware of effective instructional practices. Ms. B perceived that the coaching she received addressed the failing schools because her coaches had taught in failing schools, "so who better to coach other teachers."

Teacher networks. Ms. B participated in teacher networks that focused on grade teams that went out to seek PD opportunities to bring the information back to the school. Times were allotted in the school schedule for teacher networking. She stated:

> We set aside one Thursday out of a week to collaborate, kind of like a debriefing session, where we would meet with one another. We would talk about things we were working on, and some of the things the students were struggling with and some of the things we struggled with.

Ms. B indicated that sometimes teachers would meet on their own. She also shared:

> We also had many opportunities where say a sixth grade teacher would collaborate with a seventh grade teacher in an effort to figure out what is it that the sixth grade students need [to] know in order to be sufficient in the seventh grade.

Additionally, Ms. B participated in outside teacher networking where adopting a sister school was established to exchange ideas and resources. Ms. B said that "in terms of environment, our environment was more urban, their environment was more suburban;

however, the demographics of the students were similar. So we kind of partnered with them." Ms. B described working with the adopted schools as a way to "see how what worked with them, what maybe didn't work so well and vice versa." She stated that "we kind of used them as a resource." There was also a time when each school visited the other to shadow each other's networking process.

Ms. B expressed that the aspect of trust was very important when working with other teachers. When working as a team, Ms. B clarified that "we worked very closely with as a team and when an issue rose about academics, we just figured it out. We worked very closely with each other and we trusted each other." She further expressed the importance of trust as the ability "to trust that I don't have the answers. To trust when I don't have the answer, but if we're a team one of us will find the answer."

Ms. B perceived teacher networking could be helpful in addressing failing. Ms. B stated, "The teachers are in the schools, are with the students for so many hours of the day, before and after school, so the teachers know what is needed." She articulated the benefits of teacher networking as "when it came to assessment, curriculum, when it even came to providing us with contacts, people we could reach out to in the event that we needed information."

Ms. C. Ms. C is a sixth grade teacher who has taught for over 21 years. Ms. C also taught fifth, seventh, and eighth grades, and has functioned as a Literacy Coach. She taught in low-performing schools, now identified as Priority schools, for her entire teaching career.

Past professional development. In the beginning, Ms. C received monthly professional development from her supervisor, because at that time teachers taught

separate subjects. Ms. C appreciated these PD's because of the opportunity to meet other teachers. From Ms. C's 4th year into her 11th year, the district changed, and so did PD; it became quick with no follow-up.

Ms. C believed it was better when teachers met as a group for PD, where they could exchange best practices for classroom instruction. She also believed that before the district changed, the supervisors made sure teachers had needed materials, and were available to give assistance and answer questions. Ms. C stated that she could not really say if past PD helped failing schools because "you were just told about a particular product you had to implement, and you just did it. We didn't have enough follow-up to make sure the program was implemented properly."

Coaching. Ms. C's coaching was administered by a lead educator; however, Ms. C was not sure if the visits from the lead educator were formal or informal observations. Since 2012, Ms. C received very little coaching feedback, and the feedback was related to the use of student centers. She reported, "I think from 2012 to this year, I would say I received two feedbacks."

Emphasis was on implementation of guided reading during the scheduled blocks. Ms. C also noted, "last year they had staff coaching focusing on PD sessions on Lemov's (2010) *Teach on the Champions*". Ms. C described the relationship with her coach as "I was the teacher and she was my coach." She also said that "it's kind of hard to establish a relationship when you aren't sure it you are talking to an evaluator, or talking to a coach."

Ms. C found some benefits in the coaching process. She commented, "There were some strategies I did use and I found very successful." Ms. C explained that

classroom management strategies enabled her to improve in the area of classroom instruction. Ms. C perceived coaching beneficial in assisting failing students when you know "whether you are actually engaged with coaching or if you are being observed."

Teacher networks. Ms. C's common planning time for networking with teachers was scheduled on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and on Thursdays, as needed. These meetings were after 2:50 PM when students were dismissed. To indicate the flexibility in the networking, Ms. C indicated that "you had that time allotted and you could also meet with your committee at your common planning during your prep. So there was flexibility in the schedule."

The teachers discussed how to implement guided reading, data assessment, and best teaching practices. There was also the opportunity to network outside the school. Ms. C remarked, "We had committees that partnered with various companies, and other people in the community, so we have partnerships throughout the community." Ms. C added that once the fourth grade networked with another school.

Ms. C believed the aspect of trust was 90% of the teacher networking process. Trust was important to Ms. C because of the changes in the district, and not knowing who to go to for certain things. Her perception was that it was difficult to trust people when they do not include you in what's going on; "especially when those who are left out have been contributors to PD." Since Ms. C was once a coach, and was data driven, she used this knowledge to decide what was best for her students, rather than focusing on skills discussed in networking that did not apply to her students' abilities. Ms. C did not know how well networking was going to address failing. She explained, "Under the current

infrastructure, I don't see how it can help. Not under the current, because they have abolished too many positions, and they have not made it clear the assignments."

Ms. D. Ms. D is a fourth grade teacher, and has taught this grade for six years. She has also taught first and third grades. Ms. D has taught for fifteen years, and all of her teaching has been in low-performing school; known today as priority schools.

Past professional development. Ms. D experienced past PD in the form of in-service days when the district was initiating new strategies and the staff, or an outside vendor presented. Ms. D described the sessions as only interactive when acting out scenarios that students would have to act out. Modeling was done only on certain topics. Ms. D said that "the other times you had to figure out how to implement the strategies." Ms. D also had concerns that after working on implementation of a program, "how long the district would keep it."

Another concern Ms. D had was that some PD sessions were not relevant. She stated, "We need something that looks like our children. Something that is realistic. They tried to create these scenarios that just didn't seem real." Although there was an attempt to address failing schools through past PD, Ms. D was not sure if it helped. Ms. D replied that she was for change, but in terms of curriculum change, "not when it's over and over constantly changing something that wasn't thought out well the first time. That bothers me."

Ms. D commented, "I think there was an attempt, and I think the intentions were good, whether they were effective, I don't know. Things that were helpful, they took away." Another concern Ms. D mentioned was the extreme pressure placed on fourth

grade teachers. She said, "At one time it was a lot of pressure just on the fourth, but I don't know how it really helped our failing students."

Coaching. Ms. D received coaching for two years. The first year, the lead educator provided coaching, and the second year the principal was the coach. The coaching was scheduled for the same day, and time every week. Feedback on what the coach saw consisted of making adjustments in lessons, creating action steps to improve instruction, and discussions on where there was a need for more of something. Ms. D commented, "I think we had a pretty honest relationship, and which is good for me. I'm a learner, so to tell me, show me where I can improve, and how I could make things better, bring up my scores." Ms. D stated that she was engaged in responsive (balanced) coaching. Ms. D appreciated the feedback, however, she desired that the coaching had more modeling, and had been more consistent. She remarked, "I think it wasn't very consistent, it didn't happen all the time. In the beginning it does. They try to be very consistent, then after a while it gets all chaotic, you don't get to do those conferences." Ms. D explained, "You might have a conference in the hallway, informal. You know, it may be a 10 minute conference. It doesn't feel as scheduled and prepared to happen at that moment."

Coaching assisted Ms. D in her questioning techniques during classroom instruction, and it helped her in focusing, and reaching set goals. Ms. D remarked, "I feel like because we are in this direction of being goal oriented, I feel like the reason for having coaches is to focus just on instruction helps us to reach those goal. So we know we have this goal, now we have instructional coaches to help you reach those goals." She considered coaching as a means of helping failing schools because "it's kind of like a

snowball effect; the coaching and the feedback is part of the process for helping us to reach the goals that we set out from the very beginning."

Teacher networks. The fourth grade team functioned as the teacher network, and the grade level chairperson figured out convenient times for teachers to meet. Ms. D explained:

> According to our new contract, grade meetings used to happen during our prep time, but now grade level chairpersons have to figure out a time that works for everyone to meet on that grade level. It could be during your prep time, or it could be after school.

Grade meetings were devoted to academic issues on math, writing, and language. Ms. D articulated:

> Across the board, students need help with writing, answering open-ended questions. They needed help with writing in math, on how they were able to arrive at an answer. That was the main thing in math. That goes back to writing and language. And using your source for support while answering the question.

Ms. D also shared that "we had grade articulation where fourth grade met with fifth grade, fifth grade met with sixth grade to discuss testing data to see what we needed to do."

Ms. D considered trust an important factor in teacher networking because she felt that everyone had something to share and add to teachers' knowledge. She intimated that "by talking about it and realizing that we all have something to share, that we can benefit from each other, it didn't seem so invasive." Ms. D remembered when "everybody wanted to keep everything a secret. Like there wasn't a lot of sharing." When Ms. D

became grade leader, it was the same way, but she stressed that "as a grade we had to pull together." She also explained, "I feel like it's important that you have to build it if there is someone new to the group."

Ms. D emphasized that what was done on the grade was "a team effort". She remarked, "We actually started sharing lesson plans. It was something no one wanted to do. It took us a long time to do that". She also said, "I think that having that attitude, it helped my grade level before it collapsed."

Ms. D believed that through trusting teacher networks, information transfers to other teachers in order to improve instruction, and help failing students. She reasoned that:

> If I'm getting ideas to help my failing students, if you're getting ideas to help your failing students, then we're all getting ideas. We're all trying to get help on how to help these failing student, then how can we fail?

Ms. D perceived teaching networks as a means to assist failing students for student achievement.

Ms. E. Ms. E is a 5th grade teacher who has taught for twelve years. She taught fifth grade for 4 ½ years. Ms. E also taught second, third, and fourth grades. She also has 10 years' experience teaching in Priority schools.

Past professional development. Past PD sessions were district directed with a third party presenting information on new curriculums. These sessions were informational. Even through the sessions were informative, they were also repetitive, and "boring." When there was collaboration, Ms. E felt more invested. Some teachers found the sessions helpful, and others saw the sessions as routine. Ms. E criticized past PD for

"lack of follow up" which leads to uncertainty of how to implement what was presented. She stated, "It was hard to call past professional development beneficial without full practice, so at that point it was just information. It was for familiarity."

Many times the district changed curriculum every few years, but Ms. E believed that "the districts' thought that changing curriculum every few years, that captured the problems, but that didn't necessarily answer the problem." She also believed that PD should consider all of the students; "the socio-emotional aspect of the student." Related to past PD addressing failing students, Ms. E replied, "It's hard for me to say if it totally addressed the areas of failure per se. I don't think it always addressed what were actually the failing aspects at the top."

Coaching. Ms. E was assigned a lead educator as a coach. However, Ms. E considered her coaching came from the teacher leader. She expressed her relationship with her coach as a "really good relationship". Ms. E received responsive (balanced) coaching. She said, "I trusted her, and she provided really good feedback." She also added, "I want to say the collaboration was beneficial. Also the encouragement, the push, you know you're on the right track so push it more."

Coaching also influenced Ms. E to look at data to find where students were struggling. She remarked that "coaching helped me to let students take more ownership in their learning as opposed to jumping in trying to guide all of the information. It definitely helped me with that." Furthermore, Ms. E exclaimed that "I saw that in the math area a lot this year where the coaching lead me to look at data more, and it helped me to look at what students were struggling with a lot more." She said, "I think coaching does address the failing schools, the failing students in that there was greater emphasis on

data information. There is a greater effort to look at results. The results help to guide you a bit more."

While coaching collaboration is beneficial for failing schools, Ms. E felt the coaches should be assigned fewer teachers. She perceived that "too many people are assigned to one coach." She said:

> Like the lead educator might have been seeing a whole host of people. So I don't know how individual you can get when you have so many people you are seeing. And you might miss what a teacher might need to develop.

As Ms. E considered coaching beneficial, she perceived it "too universal and maybe not enough individualized."

Teacher networks. Ms. E participated in teacher networking during prep periods. During these networking sessions, the teachers discussed curriculum mapping, supplies, activities, and lesson planning. Follow-up sessions were held where the grade level chairs reported updates on previous concerns. Although in the past it was an option for teachers to observe each other, it was not practiced this year.

When sharing in teacher networking, Ms. E thought trust was important. She said:

> I mean ultimately you don't want to share something that you think someone is going to run back and tell; just because you were venting or getting something off your chest. It's going to make you seem uncooperative. So trust is very important.

Trusting networks allowed for Ms. E to improve in classroom management.

Ms. E believed teacher networking assisted her in classroom management, and develop strategies for adding incentive pieces for student learning. Ms. E perceived networking for classroom management essential. She exclaimed, "Oh yes, I think it makes it 100% easier to instruct when you've got classroom management." Ms. E gave an example of a fourth grade teacher sharing knowledge about the curriculum. She said, "I've seen her over the past year with such a good development of sharing between the fourth and fifth grade teachers. Sharing the classroom management, or even ideas, or even understanding curriculum in preparation." To express possible benefits of teacher networks, Ms. E said, "I guess ultimately, until schools really start to push for true collegiality, you know, some things will stay the same." However, in respect to networking addressing failing students, Ms. E believed "if done well it will allow for those good discussions to begin to address those issues that are existing in the classroom. It will allow to really push the curriculum, pushing the effort for student outcome." Ms. E believed that something like coaching for networks will also address the failing students.

Ms. G. Ms. G is a third grade inclusion teacher who has taught for 17 years. She has taught the third grade for about 13 years, with inclusion classrooms on and off for five years. Other grades taught were first and second.

Past professional development. Ms. G experienced past PD focused on implementing differentiated instruction. The sessions were administered by outside contractors and teachers who researched a topic to present. Ms. G believed that when the sessions were engaging and relevant they were enjoyed. However, when sessions were

filled with graphs and charts, Ms. G said, "I struggled to focus because I am the type of learner who has to hear, I have to see, I have to touch."

When the outside contractors presented, they did most of the talking. There were a few times when there were hands on activities. Ms. G considered the past PD sessions informative and a bit overwhelming. She was also concerned that "curriculum in the past changed before given a chance to master." Although some of the PD addressed failing schools, Ms. G explained:

> It's so sad that some of the information that can be given could be very beneficial but, it's given at the wrong time. Teachers get so overwhelmed with a plethora of information given on a weekly basis, and it's almost like sheer exhaustion to even think about implementing new material.

Ms. G also expressed a need for PD planners to be more knowledgeable of what teachers face and the responsibilities they have with teaching children.

Coaching. Ms. G received coaching with either the principal or the vice principal. The coaching happened after an observation or a walk through, and was responsive (balanced) coaching. Discussions consisted of what had been done well, and recommendations for improvement. Ms. G also had a children's literacy coach, and a Step Coach. The Step Coach was an online literacy based assessment coach. The children's literacy coach modeled mini lessons with small groups of students, while the Step Coach visited the school to make sure tests were administered correctly, and to answer questions.

Ms. G trusted her coaches because she felt they were very knowledgeable, and the coaches had the same goals. She said, "I definitely would say that I trusted them. They

seemed like they were well informed about what they were doing and what they were trying to share with us." Ms. G shared, "I would have coaching sessions and they gave you fresh new ideas that they would suggest that I never heard of before that, that I could implement in my classroom."

Ms. G was satisfied with the constructive feedback, and her level of engagement in the coaching sessions. She said, "They provided any necessary feedback, and you knew the feedback wasn't to criticize you. It was just ways to help you and to get you to where you were trying to be." For example, Ms. G appreciated that data was reviewed. She stated:

> I believe with the coaching, they take our data, they analyze our data, they share with us different ways to help the children. So I do believe they are trying to figure out ways to help the students achieve their educational goals.

Ms. G also described her comfortability with coaching engagement by saying, "I never felt like I couldn't have a conversation, or I couldn't talk to them. I was very involved and I didn't just sit there and listen to them and say okay." Ms. G did express concern regarding the time aspect with one of her coaches. She said, "One particular coach didn't really have a good grasp on time. Their sessions were very time consuming. That's very difficult when you have a classroom full of students with you." Although Ms. G found the sessions informative, she said, "it's okay to do that for a little while, but when it starts stretching into more than one class period, that's a long time." Ms. G did however find coaching beneficial in assisting failing students because of the "new and fresh ideas that can be suggested." Another beneficial aspect was that the coach "focused on her direct needs and concerns."

Teacher networks. Teacher networks occurred once a week as a grade level meeting. The grade level chairperson shared directives from the principal, and would take back teachers' needs. There were also monthly staff practice meetings where teachers discussed topics in groups, then shared important findings. Ms. G added that "we would come together and share common practices, discuss data. We would converse about ways to think better, and we would even brainstorm with each other about implementation of the curriculum."

Ms. G participated in teacher to teacher observations where teachers would share good instructional practices as "glows" and room for improvement as "grows." Ms. G highlighted that "We had a good group, just looking at them, in my mind, there's not one person I would say I didn't really trust." During the teacher network activities, Ms. G realized that trust helped them to work well, and everyone pitched in with new projects. Ms. G cited an event that she gave at her school. She said that even though she was new, the teachers were "right on board." Trust was shown when Ms. G said, "You know, I would say that I would trust the different things that they said. If there was something that I needed to improve on, I would say, okay, maybe you're right."

The teachers shared to improve instructional practice. Ms. G also participated in outside teacher networking in coteacher seminars in the district. These seminars involved watching a video-taping of one of the teachers teaching, and teachers in the seminar giving feedback. Ms. G explained that "they gave us coplanning time, and they made us think outside the box. Where something we thought we were doing well, they kind of jumbled up the box for us to figure out where how we would do things better."

Teacher networks offered Ms. G opportunities to glean from what others did in their classrooms, and use new ideas to improve her instructional practice. In reference to teacher networks helping failing schools, Ms. G commented, "It's hard for me to say, because our networks haven't had a lot of time to be able to network together in order to get our scores where they need to be." However, Ms. G stated, "given more time, it may help."

Ms. H. Ms. H is a Special Education teacher who has taught this grade for five years. She has also taught Preschool; second grade inclusion, pull out with third and fourth grades, and self-contained fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. Ms. H has taught eight years, all of which are in a priority school.

Past professional development. Ms. H stated that past PD sessions were devoted to regular elementary education students. When she did receive PD, the focus was on how the district was going to score them for evaluations, and Team Building. Later, Ms. H experienced PD that was administrative directed at the beginning of the year. Later in the year, teachers directed PD. When one person presented, the teachers were at tables collaborating and sharing ideas.

Ms. H believed that in beginning of the year, professional development was redundant. She reported that she listened to "this is how we're going to score you, and you have to understand this like two years in a row. I was saying like are there other things?" Ms. H said that other teachers felt the same way. Ms. H nevertheless felt that when teachers presented PDs, they were more instructive. To address failing students, Ms. H wanted more focus on how to use different materials, skills to help her in the classroom, and less on scoring for observations.

Coaching. Ms. H's coaching was administered by her principal, and it was basically on guided reading. When describing her coaching, she said, "To be honest, forceful." To further explain, Ms. H complained, "My coaching was not based on my kids, it was based on how my principal who was my coach wanted it done." She said that "it was his way or the highway."

In terms of level of engagement, Ms. H followed the principal's suggestions, stating that "if I did it the way I wanted to, I would get a low observation score." She pointed out, "I always made sure I paid attention. You know, took his advice, did what he asked me to do because I knew it determined my job." However, Ms. H did not find this type of coaching helpful. She explained, "For me especially, I knew that certain ways worked for certain kids, but I had to teach them that way because that was what he wanted." Describing her relationship with her coach, Ms. H said, "It wasn't that bad of a relationship. It was more, he had his ways. He was very OCD."

The year before, Ms. H found coaching helpful because her coach came to observe for coaching that had nothing to do with evaluations. She said, "So for me coaching was helpful in the sense of someone else was actually watching me, not observing me in the sense of my score. He would just observe me to give me ideas, fix things, so you know."

Her coach gave her ideas to improve her questioning techniques during instruction, and her wait time for students to answer questions. Ms. H also used two Special Education administrators for ideas to keep her students independently learning while she was signing off on other students' work. She said, "I got observed by two

Special Education people, and they both gave me ideas after going through like the post conference."

Ms. H thought coaching could assist failing schools, but not as in her situation where her coach was not flexible. She proposed that, "coaching can be beneficial to teachers, especially younger teachers and even older teachers because it gives them new ideas." Her recommendation was that coaches should "at the beginning you observe, not an actual observation, but you watch and do like a walk through and see how we're actually teaching."

Teacher networks. There was some teacher networking at the beginning of the year, however, as the year progressed, networking was hampered. Ms. H explained:

> As we got further into the school year, teachers like our gym teacher or any of the special teachers would call out, and for me my kids were split, so if one of the special teachers was out for the day, I might still have half of my class, so I didn't get prep. And it got worse near to the end of the school year.

Ms. H said the same thing happened to other teachers.

When Ms. H and others were able to have networking meetings, the grade level chair was the one who helped teachers with academic issues. Ms. H trusted the grade chairperson as being helpful because she said "if they weren't sure of an answer, they might know somebody in our grade level to go to." Since teacher networking was irregular, Ms. H said, "I don't know if I would call it networking, there was a group of girls, and we would always meet on the weekend to do lesson plans and things like that. We did this on our own."

She found the collaboration in the school, and weekend networking beneficial because of the teachers' experiences and knowledge. She added that they trusted each other and "we'd bounce ideas off of each other and so this was really beneficial." Ms. H claimed:

> When teachers actually have the opportunity to meet, I think networking is beneficial because we could say, so and so is having this difficulty, what are your recommendations for helping them? Or, have you had a student like that?

Ms. H believed teacher networking could help failing schools if teachers are allowed to consistently meet and "bounce" ideas off other teachers instead of a principal who is not in the classroom.

Ms. I. Ms. I is a first grade teacher who has taught for twenty-five years. She taught first grade for nine years. Other teaching experience included kindergarten, and third grades. Ms. I taught in Priority Schools for the entire twenty-five years.

Past professional development. Ms. I considered past PD delivered by a presenter as someone just talking at them. The presenter discussed different trends, and new strategies in education. In reference to collaboration during PD, teachers were given scenarios to discuss with other teachers. Past PD was decided on by the district, or the principals with no input from the teachers. At that time, Ms. I attended outside professional development provided by the Reading Council. She did this on her own.

Past PD also included voluntary summer sessions, where teachers could attend sessions regarding new math programs, or new strategies. However, those were voluntary. Referring back to district run PD, Ms. I commented:

> So the past weren't very productive, and they weren't geared to what we really needed, and they sometimes repeated, where they were just giving you something that was exactly the same in a prior PD under a new name. I didn't care for them, but we had to do it.

Ms. I did however like being able to meet other teachers to discuss what was happening in their classrooms. Ms. I assessed what was presented in past PD as a help for her to decide what she would actually teach in her classroom.

Ms. I did not view PD in the last five or six years helpful to the failing schools. She attributed ineffective because of the new superintendent and the governor trying to take over. Ms. I argued that "it's all political." She explained, "You get this PD for a program you only had for a year, so you never really had a chance to get familiar with it." Ms. I considered past PD repetitive and not well "thought out".

Coaching. Ms. I received weekly coaching from a lead educator. There was a set time, and day for coaching sessions. The coach would visit the classroom, and have follow-up meetings to discuss areas where Ms. I was struggling, and positive things seen. She said that the coaching was responsive (balanced). The coach discussed when implementation of initiatives was achieved. Ms. I knew when there was a formal observation and when it was a coaching session. She appreciated the lead educator's knowledge of knowing teacher's strengths and weaknesses, and turning weaknesses into strengths. She said, "It was good because she came into my room, she saw me in action, and she helped me to make sure that improved my teaching." Ms. I was able to collaborate with her coach, and reflect on her classroom instruction. She expressed that

"anytime I needed her, she was there. It was a good relationship. That was something I was happy with because she had me for two years."

Ms. I gave an example of her coach modeling a phonic program. She conveyed "she did do one, because it was a new program, and she had used it prior. She had already used this phonics program. She did come in and model, if I needed it." Ms. I attributed the way coaching was done in her school to the "schools' culture" of helping all teachers to improve classroom instruction for student achievement. When referring to coaching assisting failing students, Ms. I replied, "I think that we are improving because of the way coaching is being implemented, and because they are there to help you."

Teacher networks. Ms. I participated in weekly teacher networking in grade level meetings. Teachers met to discuss where classes were in math, and targets for reading. They also discussed issues to be taken back to the principal. Analyzing data and what was needed for success were part of intergrade networking. Ms. I perceived that "it's also good because you see what the kindergarten is doing, and can you get them to this level because this is where they're to be in first grade." She also said, "Sometimes if we were analyzing the data for the grade level, we were able to talk with the other teachers on the grade level." Ms. I also attended a Reading Council that offered seminars where speakers came for with work sessions.

Ms. I felt that trust was important during teacher networking; especially when new teachers came to the staff. She commented that "when you have the new teachers coming in, I have seen some people a little bit leery in the upper grades." Even though some teachers did not trust the administration because of the many changes in the district,

and the politics in her region, Ms. I stated that "I still trust my colleagues." She also said, "I trust, that's my nature. Let's pull together. And in the end we pulled together."

She also perceived trust important when sharing educational or other matters. For example, Ms. I pointed out:

> Looking at the scores, now you have your fellow teachers and you say, oh I've got to get this up. It's also good because you see what the kindergarten student is doing and you can get them where they should to be in first grade. It helps you become a better teacher.

Ms. I considered familiarity contributes to trusting relationships.

Ms. I remarked that "I think when you have some type of familiarity or relationship with people is good." This enabled her to "talk with other teachers, struggle with other teachers, and become successful with the other teachers." By knowing other teachers' strengths and weakness, teacher networking assisted Ms. I when making class lists for the next year. Ms. I stated that she appreciated networking because of "being able to talk to other educators, there's always something good coming out of it." Ms. I believed that teacher networking assists failing schools.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected from eight participants who consented to take part in audio-taped interviews. Semistructured interviews were the primary data source. Data were generated from a purposeful sampling that incorporated the snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is a type of purposeful sampling where researchers seek participants with "rich information" on the topic of interest (Patton, 2002). This strategy is also used when participants are difficult to find (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). The decision was made

to use the snowball strategy because of difficulty gaining access to potential participants through priority school districts.

Four letters were mailed to priority school districts introducing the study. A request was made for a telephone conference to gain information regarding the ESEA waiver in terms of PD plans, and to discuss the possibility of gaining access to potential interview participants. Three districts did not respond, and one district denied the request. Therefore, I e-mailed an assistance request (see Appendix A) to a principal of a priority K–8 school in southeastern New Jersey, and received acceptance for flyers to be distributed in that school; thereby, starting the snowball process (see Appendix B). The questions for this study focused on priority schoolteachers' experiences with past PD initiatives, and PD under the current ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher network (see Appendix E).

Data collection began after receiving IRB #05-19-16-0054870 approval. Twenty-five flyers were distributed by the designated person at the consenting school, and thirteen potential participants contacted me through e-mail. Potential participants became more familiar with the study through the Letter of Invitation (see Appendix C), and the Telephone Protocol (see Appendix D). Attrition began at the beginning of data collection. Five of the thirteen potential participants indicated they made summer plans reducing the sample to eight participants. Of the remaining eight potential participants, two more potential participants dropped out, citing family responsibilities; leaving six participants. After the first interview, that participant was asked to recommend another. This person was unable to participate, however, she recommended another. The recommended person consented, representing the second interview participant. The

second participant recommended another who consented; bringing the number of participants back to the sample of eight. Each of the recommended persons was given my e-mail information for further information (see Appendix C).

Before interviews began, eight participants consented to be interviewed by e-mailing me the words "I consent", and they determined the day and time for the interview. Interviews took place between June 20, 2016 and July 29, 2016, and data were collected at dates and times as decided by the participant. Each interview lasted from 60-75 minutes. All interviews were recorded on WebEx conferencing and downloaded to my personal password-protected computer. After listening to the interviews several times, all interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Transcriptions were uploaded into NVivo 10 for future analysis. Transcripts were e-mailed to each participant for member checking; for the participants to discuss additions, or amendments to statements in the transcript. In discussion of the transcripts, Ms. B wanted to add the words "to trust when I don't have the answers, but if we're a team, one of us will find the answer" in the teacher network section. She also added in the teacher network section:

> In terms of academically, I think that a lot of things were hidden. I felt like there was competition and because of that, I think professionally we lacked what we needed in terms of cohesiveness. So I would say the middle school department was least helpful.

Ms. C corrected the name of a program to be "*Teach Like a Champion*". She also added words such as "Oh you're going through the same thing" in the past PD section of the interview. Ms. G requested that redundant statements be removed. All requests were

acknowledged on these participants' transcripts. All other transcripts were accepted as written. Participants also had a second opportunity to add or change information in their participant profiles. No additions or amendments were requested. There were no variations in data collection procedures in Section 3, and no unusual circumstances occurred during the data collection.

Data Analysis

At the beginning of my analysis, "epoch" was executed to bracket my preconceptions, biases, and knowledge of past professional development attempts, job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks for student improvement (Moustakas, 1994). Data were analyzed using Moustakas' modification of Van Kaam's method to analyze phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994). The first step of analysis began by reading and rereading each transcript to implement "horizonalization" by listing all statements related to the experiences of first previous PD attempts, and second current job-embedded and teacher network attempts. Codes were assigned to each statement as it related to each question. Colors were applied to each code and corresponding statements.

Second, all statements were read and reread to reduce the list of all statements to the important statements that described a moment of the experience. In this second step, any statements that were not important to the question, repeated, or ambiguous were eliminated. The third step was to make clusters of the important statements into units or themes.

Fourth, the themes were examined next to each transcript for validation. If the themes were not significant to what the participant experienced, they were removed. After themes were validated, the fifth step described "what" the participants experienced.

The "what" represents textual description. In the sixth step, a written description of "how" the participants experienced the phenomenon represented the structural description. The final step involved merging the textual and structural descriptions to write a composite description of the phenomenon of past PD attempts and the current attempt that incudes job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. The research categories were created according to my research questions on past professional development, job-embedded coaching, and teacher networking.

To further assist in the process of finding significant statements, the analytic tool NVivo 10 was used. The same codes developed in the above analysis were used for NVivo analysis. For example, with NVivo, the parent node and child nodes for past PD, coding with codes in parentheses were as follows: past PD experience (Ppd) changing of curriculum (CC), PD unrealistic (UnR), failing schools (Fs). Colors were attached to the phrases. For example, under past PD, the NVivo text query helped me to find a statement representing unnecessary changing curriculum; "The districts thought that changing curriculum every few years, that captured the problems, but that didn't necessarily answer the problem." The themes that emerged in past PD were professional development practicality, curriculum retention, and perceptions of PD addressing failing schools.

As above, parent and child nodes were used to find emerging themes for job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. The themes that emerged for job-embedded coaching were types of coaching/relationships, coaching time, and perceptions of coaching addressing failing schools. Themes for teacher networks were network collaboration, networking trust, and perceptions of teacher networks addressing failing

schools. The NVivo analytic tool was used to upload interview transcripts, to organize and to code data, thereby assisting in finding emerging themes. NVivo also allowed an area for keeping notes about any of the interviews, or about the participants.

Of the eight participants interviewed, one participant represented discrepant qualities from the others. Ms. I was a Special Education teacher, and viewed her past PD experience as one that excluded her needs. This case was factored into the analysis to show a different perception from a teacher not in regular education.

Past Professional Development Findings

Of the eight participants, six experienced past PD with combined efforts of administrators, teachers or outsourced persons from the district. Two participants experienced past PD that were presented by the district, or presented by an outside vendor. Three themes emerged as PD that did not promote professional growth: *professional development practicality, curriculum retention, and perceptions of PDs addressing failing schools*

Professional development practicality. The participants considered past PD helpful in some respects. However, they did not consider past PD helpful in areas needed to help failing students, and to improve instructional practice for student achievement. In the theme of PD practicality, the subthemes that emerged were: *lack of meeting the needs of the school and students*, *follow-up*, and *relevance*.

Lack of meeting the needs of the school and students. Participants in this study indicated that the PDs they experienced were not appropriate and did not meet the needs of their schools. For example, Ms. A commented, "PDs have to be centered around the demographics of the students who are present in the building, and a PD may not apply to

all of teachers." Similarly, Ms. B said, "The professional development was a little 'unrealistic' because it didn't necessarily meet the specific needs and the goals of the students we were teaching."

Another area where teachers perceived past PD not meeting the needs of the school was in the type of scenarios chosen for viewing, or used for role playing. Ms. D explained she worked in a Title 1 school in an urban community, and, "showing me a video of a school in a different location that doesn't look like mine, and how well things are going, doesn't benefit me and my students, or my colleagues." Likewise, Ms. I felt that scenarios were "something that was totally unlike something you would run across in the classroom."

Follow-up. According to participants, PD sessions were lacking in follow-up to provide teachers with necessary tools to implement PD presentations. Ms. A pointed out that PD was helpful on that day but because there wasn't any "follow-up", it kind of "slipped through the cracks." She said:

> It was great to hear how things could be introduced in the classroom but no one really checked in to see if it were occurring so I just felt like we had a PD that day and nothing else was done after that.

Relatedly, Ms. B perceived that there were "holes" and "missing components" in the PD.

She wanted to know "how am I going to take what I've learned here, and apply it to the setting and the population of the students in my classroom." Likewise, as Ms. C stated, "unfortunately there were a lot of questions, we needed a lot of assistance, and there was always lacking of materials to initiate those programs." In another instance of the lack of follow-up causing difficulty in implementation of new strategies, Ms. E

viewed past PD's as just "information for "familiarity." There was inability to be able to implement strategies after PD presentations.

Relevance. Three of the eight participants questioned the relevance of some of the PD sessions. For instance, Ms. G pointed out that presentations with "graphs and such" were irrelevant to her because she did not understand them. She concluded:

> Nobody came out of it any better than they were when it started; it was a waste of time. Sometimes it's like you had PD just to say you had it. It wasn't thought through. That kind of stuff is not helpful to us at all.

Similarly, PD's were irrelevant to Ms. H. She replied that PD sessions were always focused on how teachers were scored on their observations, and that the PD's were redundant. Ms. H explained, "It was something that was heard three or four or five times, and we felt that it was kind of not as important as something else we knew we could have gotten." The factor of PD relevance to all grades was mentioned by Ms. I who commented, "I just think that it wasn't thought out to be geared toward the individual school, or the individual grade level, or the individual person, or the individual class."

Curriculum retention. Five of the eight participants in this study highlighted frequent changes in the curriculum programs as part of the PD sessions. The participants viewed the frequent changes in curriculum taking place too often. For example, Ms. B explained that teachers are trained to use particular programs to incorporate into the curriculum, and the next September, the program changes. She stated:

> That causes a lot of confusion for us but mainly for the students because they have to be taught how to take in the information but we also have to teach ourselves again in a program that is new.

Another participant, Ms. D, described herself as a learner who looked forward to learning new things to improve her practice, but was concerned about the consistent changing of curriculum once she learned it. She replied:

> While I am okay with change, it's when it's over and over constantly changing something that wasn't thought out well the first time that bothers me. After we have put so much time and effort into it, how long are we going to hold onto it, and how long will our children be able to adapt to that something and to see that something before they take it away. I think that's my biggest concern.

In reference to the effects of changing curriculum on students, Ms. E responded, "I think that the districts thought that changing curriculum every few years, that captured the problems, but that didn't necessarily answer the problem." Ms. E was interested in the district considering the "whole child" in the curriculum including "socio-emotional" aspects of the student.

There was also the thought of sticking to a curriculum and making adjustments along the way. Ms. G shared:

> I was just thinking about one thing that needs to be in place is sticking to a curriculum. Like have a curriculum, use it for a number of years so that it can be mastered. When a curriculum stays in place for a while, lessons may be "data driven," with PD correlated to the needs of the staff and students.

From a political point of view, it was thought that changes of curriculum were for political favoritism. Ms. I stated that "it was the politics in education and the big business. If they knew someone, they brought this new program in, because that person

knew someone or was the relative to someone." From Ms. I's perspective, the PD's and changing of curriculum were not "thought out."

Perceptions of PD addressing failing schools. In terms of how past PD helped failing schools, all of the participants felt the past professional development did not address failing schools. For example, Ms. A believed that in order to assist failing schools, the PD should be "tailored" to teachers' needs. With student focus, Ms. B and E considered that PD should be geared to help the total student including social, emotional, physical and psychological needs.

As Ms. C was not knowledgeable of testing data throughout the year, Ms. C expressed that with past PD, the classroom teachers where she was were not able to say if the PD actually helped failing schools because they did not know the data. In alignment with data, because of the pressure that was placed on students because of reported data, Ms. D said she was not able to say if past professional development "really, really" helped failing schools.

As PD was introducing implementation of new programs, Ms. G referenced the timing was "wrong." She indicated that teachers get so "overwhelmed" with a "plethora" of information given on a weekly basis, and it's almost like "sheer exhaustion" to even think about implementing new material. Other instances where past PD did not address the failing schools were in the areas of the top officials not knowing the "actual failing aspects" (Ms. E) and the redundancy of presenting the same PD over and over (Ms. H and Ms. I).

Job-Embedded Coaching Findings

Research Question 2 asked the participants to describe the collaborative approaches of job embedded coaching and teacher networking under the current ESEA flexibility waiver. All participants were made aware by the administration that their school was designated as a priority school, and they were to receive the above collaborative supports. Under the New Jersey mandate, all of the participants were to receive job-embedded coaching. The findings from the interviews showed that all teachers experienced the mandated coaching, and teacher networking. The following emerging themes were: *types of coaching/relationships*, *coaching time, and perceptions of job-embedded coaching addressing failing schools.*

Types of coaching/relationships. Participants received coaching to help them improve their instructional practice for student achievement. However, participants received coaching with different approaches. In the theme of types of coaching/relationships, the subthemes that emerged were: *responsive (balanced) coaching,* and *directive coaching*.

Responsive (balanced) coaching. Participants who received responsive (balanced) coaching revealed that there was active involvement with their coaches. The four participants who received responsive coaching indicated that they received beneficial coaching to help them to improve their classroom instruction. As Ms. A spoke of her coaching, she said that it was "shared," where her coach who was the assistant principal sat with her to "inform instruction based on the students' needs." The responsiveness and good relationship was noted in her statement, "I would say our

relationship was pretty solid, and I was receptive to her feedback." Ms. A appreciated not being "told what to do," but being able to work out best ways to implement strategies.

Other participants expressed positive views toward how they were responsively coached. In areas of being able to reflect on self-improvement, Ms. B and D commended their coaches on allowing them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses. Ms. B remembered how her coach's "flexibility" added to an "open and honest relationship." Her coach was willing to let her try things out, model for her, and discuss observations. The same was noted by Ms. D, who stated that by working with her coach, she was able to bring her scores up. She too referred to an "open and honest relationship" with her coach that was good for her.

The good relationship that Ms. E had with her coach promoted "encouragement" and the "push" that lead her look at the data to see where students were "struggling." She said that she "trusted" her coach, and through collaboration and modeling, it became clearer what she needed to change in some classroom instruction. Because Ms. G was a special education teacher, she received coaching from four people; principal or vice principal, children's' literacy coach, coseminar coach, and step coach. With each coach, Ms. G was engaged in the improvement of instruction. She stated, "I never felt like I couldn't have a conversation, or that I couldn't talk to them." Similar to the other participants receiving responsive coaching, Ms. I had a good relationship with her coach. She characterized her coach as knowledgeable, but someone who didn't "come off as knowing everything."

Directive coaching. The two participants who received directive coaching received no modeling, or constructive guidance. For instance, Ms. C made the following

statement, “My lead educator and I had conferences, but I wasn’t quite sure if that was part of an evaluation, or whether that was part of coaching.” She shared that since 2012 she had “two feedback sessions.” She said the coaching she received last year was on Lemov’s (2010) *Teach Like a Champion*. She and the coach would meet to discuss a specific model, or chapter in the book. In terms of the relationship Ms. C had with her coach, she responded, “I was the teacher, and she was my coach.” Ms. C explained that “it’s kind of hard to establish a relationship when you aren’t sure if you are talking to an evaluator, or talking to a coach.”

Similar to Ms. C, Ms. H received directive coaching where collaboration was limited. She revealed that she didn’t get much coaching this year, and it was “forceful.” When asked to explain what “forceful” meant, she replied that it was the “his way, or the highway.” Ms. H teaches special education students and she said the coaching was not conducive to her students’ needs. She noted, “For me especially, I knew that certain ways worked for certain kids, but I had to teach them that way because that was what he wanted.”

However, because her coach was her principal, she listened to his coaching advice because of job security. In reference to the teacher coaching relationship, she said, “I always made sure I paid attention. You know, took his advice, and did what he asked me to do because I knew it determined my job.”

Coaching time. Each teacher had coaching time built into their schedules. This was a time when the participant met to discuss classroom instruction, based on observations, or new strategies being implemented. While the coaching process did happen, during the interviews, four of the eight participants mentioned some aspect of

time that interfered in their coaching time. Ms. B reflected on how there were times when she wanted to see her coach and couldn't. Ms. B commented:

> I think that because my school was so big there were so many other teachers, there were times when I needed to get to my principal that I wasn't always allotted that time. With the combination of teachers in our school we weren't always able to meet when I needed to.

In the same way, Ms. D described coaching sessions as being "inconsistent." She said that in the beginning of the year, they tried to meet at scheduled times, but later in the year, things got "chaotic." She said, "You might have a conference in the hallway, informal. You know, it may be a 10-minute conference. It doesn't feel as scheduled and prepared to happen at that moment."

In the scheduling of coaches, Ms. E expressed that too many people were consuming the coaches' times. Her example was:

> Like the lead educator might have been seeing a whole host of people. So I don't know how individual you can get when you have so many people you are seeing. And you might miss what a teacher might need to develop.

In a different manner, Ms. G's concern about coaching time was in reference to the length of time one coach spent in her class. As Ms. G teaches Special Education, her coach visits the class while students are there. Although Ms. G has a coteacher, she stated that the coach did not have "grasp on time." Ms. G said that their sessions were very "time consuming," and it was difficult with a room full of children. She further commented, "It's okay to do that for a little while, but when it starts stretching into more than one class period, that's a long time."

Perceptions of coaching addressing failing schools. Participants in this study perceived job-embedded coaching as beneficial in addressing failing schools. The guidance and ability to collaborate with someone regarding their classroom instruction was beneficial. Even the teachers who received directive job-embedded coaching believed that if done in a responsive way, it could address failing schools. Ms. H said that coaching could address failing schools because of the new ideas that are brought to teachers. The aspect of receiving feedback on instructional practices can help teachers correct, and improve how they help students academically improve. Ms. D expressed it as, "Yeah, it's kind of like a snowball effect. The coaching and the feedback is part of the process of helping us reach goals we set from the beginning."

Participants also perceived that having the coaches' help in analyzing data will help in addressing failing schools. Ms. G commented, "They take our data, they analyze our data, they share with us different ways to help children." Ms. H considered coaching good for young and older teachers because the coaches give new ideas. In the final analysis, the participants viewed the collaborative approach of job-embedded coaching as a way to help them become better teachers for student achievement.

Teacher Networks Findings

The second part of Research Question 2 asked the participants to describe the types of teacher networks in their schools. All participants indicated they were part of teacher networking. From the interviews, the following themes emerged: *network collaboration*, *networking trust*, *and perceptions of teacher networks addressing failing schools*.

Network collaboration. Participant's perceived teacher networks a way to collaborate with teachers about classroom instruction, and other grade issues. In the theme of network collaboration, the subthemes that emerged were: frequent networking, and infrequent networking. These subthemes emerged because six of the participants networked with their grades regularly, whereas, two participants networked with their grades sporadically.

Frequent networking. Six of the participants participated in teacher networks that had scheduled times allotted for weekly meetings. The participants met frequently with their grade members. These participants were in teacher networks that had scheduled times allotted for weekly meetings. For instance, Ms. B's group established meeting times for every Thursday, and she stated that sometimes they met on a "whim' to discuss a unit. In a different manner, Ms. C's networking group had a choice of three days to meet after students were dismissed, and Ms. D's group met as the grade level chair found an appropriate time when everyone could meet. Nevertheless, six participants had opportunities to meet with teachers on their grades, and sometimes with teachers on other grades.

Knowledge shared during teacher networking was done with open dialogue. For instance, Ms. D's group met weekly to report what was happening in their classrooms, and to focus on where they were doing in math and reading. In these meeting, teachers collaborated on how to analyze data in order to network with other grades. Ms. D explained that collaboration with other grades enabled them to see what was needed to be taught for students to move to the next grade, and to see where instruction was lacking.

Similarly, Ms. B and Ms. I were involved in intergrade networking. Ms. B shared that sixth grade teachers would collaborate with seventh grade teachers in an effort to figure out what it was that the sixth grade students needed to know in order to be "sufficient" in the seventh grade. Ms. I's network collaborated with the lower grades in her school. In addition, Ms. B disclosed that she participated in outside networking where her school adopted a sister school in the community with students demographically similar. They visited each other's schools and saw what worked and what did not work in each school. Ms. B said, "We kind of used them as a resource." Outside networking was also a part of Ms. I's networking experience.

Teacher networking was viewed as a supportive group activity. Ms. G expressed that in her networking, there was always encouragement. She gave an example that if there were informal teacher to teacher class observations, during follow-up networking, each teacher gave the observed teacher "glows" and "grows." The "glows" represented positive observations and "grows" were areas for improvement. She commented, "We had a good group." Similarly, Ms. I revealed, "Looking at the scores, now you have your fellow teachers, and you say, Oh I've got to get this up. It helps you to be a better teacher." Another supporting comment came when Ms. B said, "We worked very closely with each other as a team and when an issue rose about academics, we just figured it out." Further agreement to the team effort was revealed by Ms. D's statement that, "It was a team effort, and I think that having that attitude, it helped my grade level before it collapsed." While Ms. E was a fifth grade teacher, she commended a fourth grade teacher for her efforts to help her grade understand curriculum.

Infrequent networking. The two participants who fit in the category of infrequent teacher networking were Ms. A and Ms. H. Each participant experienced infrequent school networking for different reasons. Whereas, Ms. A described networking as, "It happened for a brief period of time, but it didn't happen consistently." Ms. H attributed her inability to network to losing prep periods because of staff absenteeism. She stated:

> Teachers like our gym teacher, or any of the special teachers would call out, and for me my kids were split. If one of the special teachers was out for the day, I might still have half of my class, so I didn't get prep.

Even though teacher networking was sporadic, without the formal weekly networking meetings, Ms. A discussed her networking as meetings they "decided to do it on our own," and they discussed lesson plans, and the district curriculum. Additionally, outside networking was a part of Ms. A's experience. She was part of a district monthly networking meeting where she would bring reports back to the administrators, and teachers. Even though infrequent, Ms. A found benefit in being able to participate in teacher to teacher observations, and the feedback sessions.

While not networking on a regular basis, Ms. H became involved in teacher networking with a weekend group of teachers for lesson planning, and the sharing of classroom instruction. She said that "bouncing" ideas off of each other was beneficial." Nevertheless, she emphasized that this networking was "done on her own."

Networking trust. All participants in this study found networking trust very important to the functioning of the group. In the case of Ms. C, where there were "many changes" with personnel in her district, trust was 90% important. Likewise, in relation to

network trust, changes in administration and in the district were referenced by Ms. I. She indicated that trust was important, but when new teachers were transferred to the school, they were "leery." In spite of this, she said, "I trust, that's my nature. Let's pull together. And in the end we pull together."

Meanwhile, networking trust was seen by Ms. D as something that has to be built. She noted that when she came to the fourth grade, people did not want to share "ideas, or materials." However, as time progressed, and when she became grade leader, she talked about the need to share for the benefit of all. Ms. D stated in the end, "We actually started sharing lesson plans. It was something no one wanted to do. It took us a long time to do that. But we finally did it."

Similarly, Ms. B remarked:

> We worked very closely with each other, we trusted each other, and I think that's important. To trust that I don't have the answers. To trust when I don't have the answer, but if we're a team one of us will find the answer.

Citing her group as "a good group," Ms. G commented that "there's not one person I would say I didn't really trust". Additionally, she gave an example of a new project she spearheaded, and even though she was new, "they were right on board." Additionally, she said, "You know, I would say that I would trust the different things that they said. If there was something that I needed to improve on, I would say, okay, maybe you're right. You know that kind of thing." Ms. A, E, and H trusted colleagues in respect to feedback and sharing instructional ideas to help students achieve.

Perceptions of teacher networks addressing failing schools. Participants who perceived that teacher networks address failing schools shared that collaborating with

other teachers enabled them to share instructional strategies that help struggling students. For instance, Ms. B said, "The teachers are in the schools, are with the students for so many hours of the day, before and after school, so the teachers know what is needed." Similarly, Ms. D commented:

> If I'm getting ideas to help my failing students, if you're getting ideas to help your failing students, then we're all getting ideas. We're all trying to get help on how to help these failing student, then how can we fail?

Another participant, Ms. E, described collaborating during networking as "those good discussions to begin to address those issues that exist in the classroom. It will allow us to really push the curriculum, push the effort for student outcome."

As some participated more in teacher networking more than others, those with infrequent networking still voiced hopes for teacher networking to address failing schools. More "opportunities" to network, and how networking "looks" in schools was expressed by Ms. A.

Another comment in support for networking opportunities to assist failing schools was stated by Ms. H who believed that, "When teachers actually have the opportunity to meet, I think it's beneficial because we could say, so and so is having this difficulty, what are your recommendations for helping them? Or have you had a student like that?" She perceived "bouncing ideas off of a co-worker" is important since "we're constantly in the classroom."

Discrepant Case

There were discrepant data in one participant's account of how she experienced past PD, job-embedded coaching, and teacher networking. Ms. H's experiences were

contrary to the other participants. First, when asked about types of past PD training received, Ms. H commented, "There wasn't a lot of professional development that truly helped any of me grow. It was about this is how we're going to score you in the system." Although the other participants had concerns regarding past PD, none of them reported past PD primarily focusing on evaluative scoring.

Second, discrepant data were also realized when Ms. H was asked about experiences with job-embedded coaching. She answered, "To be honest, forceful. It was this way or the highway. My coaching was not based on my kids; it was based on how my principal who was my coach wanted it done." The other participants reported a more collaborative approach to their job-embedded coaching. Third, evidence of discrepant data were in Ms. H's description of her teacher networking opportunities. She explained:

> As we got further into the school year, teachers like our gym teacher or any of the special teachers would call out, and for me my kids were split, so if one of the special teachers was out for the day, I might still have half of my class, so I didn't get a prep. And it got worse near to the end of the school year. So I didn't get many preps this school year to actually collaborate with other teachers. It happened to a lot of other teachers as well.

The other participants recounted incidences of disruption in their networking sessions, but none to the extent like that of Ms. H. Although Ms. H experienced different conditions in past professional development, job-embedded coaching, and teacher networking, additional information in her interview influenced the inclusion of her data into this study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility was established in this study with the process of member checking. After interviews were transcribed, participants and I reviewed the transcripts. Participant profiles were also reviewed with the participants and with me. The participants were allowed to discuss confirmations, amendments, or additions (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Hatch, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). Evidence of credibility for trustworthiness of this study was gained through the use of member checking. The reviewing of the transcripts with the participants allows for verification that what the participant said is correctly represented in the text (Brantlinger et al., 2005; Hatch, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). Member checking also allows the participant to further elaborate if more information comes to mind through reflection (Brenner, 2006).

Any discrepancies were discussed and the transcript was adjusted to agree with the participant's interpretation. For example, Ms. C reviewed her transcript, and she wanted to change "Danielson's *Teach Like a Champion,*" to "Danielson's use of the book *Teach Like a Champion.*" Another example was when Ms. H changed her statement of how she was informed that her school was a priority school to a more concise statement. Her first statement was:

> When I first started teaching, I was at a charter school in Philly. I knew it was a Title 1 school when I applied, so I knew it was a low performing school. When I went to public school, in Vernon, New Jersey it's a district well known for low performing.

During member checking, Ms. H said she wasn't concise with her first statement and she changed her statement to:

> Actually, when we see different results, testing results and we hear from administrators where we are on a scale that lets us know where we stand on the priority scale. So just hearing from the administrators, and just seeing the statistics lets us know where we are.

Transferability

Qualitative studies with small numbers of participants do not yield findings suitable for generalizations to larger populations (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Shenton, 2004). Therefore, for transferability, this study is described in such a way that readers will be able to cautiously relate findings in the study's context to similar situations in their environments (Creswell, 1998; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Shenton, 2004).

This study on priority schoolteachers' perceptions of past professional development, job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks created transferability by the participants' responses that provided the rich, thick description of their lived experiences. Through the participants' responses, readers in other priority schools or in other schools initiating job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks may be able to compare, and relate to the results of this study to their educational environments (Creswell, 1998; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Shenton, 2004). For example, through the description of how teachers are coached, educational officials may ensure that coaches are properly trained. Coaches may be trained in the necessary strategies to understand the importance of teacher's engagement in the coaching process. Furthermore, coaches may be trained to understand teacher and student needs. From the findings of participants' appreciation

for opportunities to network, educational officials may pay attention to the scheduling for consistent networking time.

Dependability

Dependability was indicated throughout this study through documentation of data collection, category development, and data analysis (Long & Johnson, 2000; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Shenton, 2004). An audit trail documenting the steps from the beginning of the study, data analysis, and findings have been included in this study. Furthermore, the research process was reviewed by the committee. To further ensure dependability, the audio interviews were secured in the WebEx online conferencing files, and transferred to a password protected personal computer.

For journaling purposes, a small notepad was kept where personal thoughts could be written. This notepad reflected feelings about the research process, biases, challenges, and analysis. For example journal notations for June 13, 2016 through June 30, 2016 included dates for participant interviews and e-mail information from some participants need to reschedule. These notes were kept in a small notepad so I could carry it wherever I went, and could jot down things that came to mind.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research addresses steps taken to ensure objectivity in researchers' written reports of findings (Shenton, 2004). Objectivity for the purpose of confirmability was established by disclosure of my role as the researcher, my beliefs, decision-making, and connection to the study open to the reader (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). Research bias for this study was also limited by an audit trail.

Additionally, the audit trail for this study was reviewed my committee, and a doctoral writing professional.

The process bracketing was also used to ensure objectivity (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Bracketing happened throughout the study; (a) developing questions, (b) seeking diverse representation of participants, (c) writing observations during interviews, (d) analyzing participant responses without thought to personal experiences, and (e) writing findings according to participants' lived experiences; with member-checking initiated (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Additionally, with the access to diverse participants through the snowball strategy, different experiences, beliefs, and perceptions extended information rich possibilities (Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Summary

Section 4 discussed the setting, data collection, data analysis, results and evidence of trustworthiness of this study. The questions of the study explored the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding experiences with past professional development (PD) initiatives, and PD under the current ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. The research questions explored attempts to address failing schools through PD.

Table 2 below indicates themes and subthemes that emerged during the interviews. The table also shows the number and percent of participants who during the interviews either focused, or did not focus on the theme, or subtheme.

Table 2

Summary of Theme and Subtheme Focus

Themes	Subthemes	No. of participants' focus	% of participants' focus	% of participants' nonfocus
Past Professional Development				
Professional development practicality	Lack of meeting the needs of the school and students	4	50%	50%
	Follow-up	4	50%	50%
	Relevance	3	37.5%	62.5%
Curriculum retention		5	62.5%	37.5%
Perceptions of past PDs addressing failing schools		8	100%	0%
Job-Embedded Coaching				
Types of coaching/relationships	Responsive (balanced) coaching	6	75%	25%
	Directive coaching	2	25%	75%
Coaching time		4	50%	50%
Teacher Networking				
Network collaboration	Frequent networking	6	75%	25%
	Infrequent networking	2	25%	75%
Networking trust		8	100%	0%

For Research Question 1, I asked participants to describe the types of PD training they received prior to the current job-embedded coaching and teacher networking. The three major themes that emerged from past PD were: PD practicality, curriculum retention, and perceptions of PD addressing failing schools. Three subthemes also emerged from the theme professional development practicality: lack of meeting the needs of the school and students, follow-up, and relevance. Participants revealed the past PD did not recognize student demographics, needs of the students, or effective ways to improve classroom instruction for student achievement. Participants also remarked that past PD was at times irrelevant, redundant, and lacked needed follow-up.

For Research Question 2, I first asked the participants to describe the types of job-embedded coaching they experienced at their schools. The three themes that emerged from the interviews for job-embedded coaching were: types of coaching/relationships, coaching time, and perceptions of coaching addressing failing schools. The participants identified job-embedded coaching as a supportive effort to improve classroom instruction. Their belief was that through the collaboration, and guidance of a coach, new strategies could be added to their teaching practices.

In the second half of Question 2, participants were asked to describe the types of teacher networks they had in their schools. The following three themes emerged from the interviews: network collaboration, networking trust, and perceptions of teacher networks addressing failing schools. In the theme of network collaboration, the two subthemes that emerged were: frequent networking, and infrequent networking. Participants in frequent networking appreciated being able to come together as a team to discuss lesson planning, share their expertise, and to understand student data. The two participants who

responded that they infrequently engaged in networking expressed the desire for more opportunities to network with other teachers.

Section 5 interpreted findings in the context of reviewed literature and the conceptual framework. Limitations of the study, and recommendations were also discussed. Section 5 closes with implications for social change, and the conclusion.

Section 5: Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding experiences with past PD initiatives and PD under the current ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. There was a gap in the literature regarding how priority schoolteachers described their PD experiences. Therefore, this study sought a deep exploration as to how priority schoolteachers experienced the phenomenon of PD.

The study was conducted because in 2012, when the ESEA flexibility waiver began in New Jersey, 75 schools were identified as "the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools in the state over the past three years, or any nonTitle I school that would otherwise have met the same criteria" (NJDOE, 2012a, para. 8). In 2015, 66 schools remained on the priority list (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The data from this study may inform administrators in the study's district of teachers' perceptions of the phenomena of previous PD and the ESEA PD. It may also inform districts how to plan for future PD sessions.

Data collection for this transcendental phenomenological study consisted of eight semistructured in-depth interviews with open-ended questions (Moustakas, 1994). The semistructured in-depth interviews consisted of a primary interview and two follow-up interviews with each of the eight participants using the WebEx online conferencing platform. Semistructured interviews were from 60-90 minutes long and the follow-up interviews were approximately 60 minutes.

The key findings from Question 1 asking participants to describe past PD experiences included three major themes. The first was professional development practicality, which had three subthemes: failing to meet the needs of the school and students, follow-up, relevance. The other two major themes were curriculum retention and PD addressing failing schools. Question 2 asked participants to describe their experiences with job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. The three major themes that emerged from job-embedded coaching were types of coaching/relationships, coaching time, and perceptions of coaching addressing failing schools. From the major theme types of coaching/relationships, two subthemes emerged: responsive (balanced) coaching and directive coaching. In teachers' experiences with teacher networking, three major themes emerged: network collaboration, networking trust, and perceptions of teacher networks addressing failing schools. In the theme of network collaboration, the two subthemes that emerged were frequent networking and infrequent networking.

Interpretation of the Findings

The first research question was: How do Priority Schoolteachers describe their experiences with attempts to address failing schools through professional development before the ESEA flexibility waiver? The general responses from the participants on the topic of past PD were consistent with the literature reviewed in Section 2.

Past Professional Development

According to researchers, elements of effective PD consisted of (a) content focus (subject matter), (b) active learning (teacher engagement), (c) coherence (builds on previous activities and is aligned with state and district standards), (d) duration (contact hours spent on an activity), and (e) collective participation (teacher interaction on grade

or department levels; (Garet et al., 2001; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Conversely, traditional expert-centered one-day teacher workshops were considered ineffective to improve classroom instruction for student achievement (Joyce & Showers, 2002, McLeskey, 2011; Wei et al., 2010). Furthermore, the one-day expert-centered PDs ignored teachers' prior knowledge and teachers' and students' needs (Flint et al., 2011; McLeskey, 2011; Roseler & Dentzau, 2013).

Researchers also expressed the need for PD initiators to gain teachers' perceptions and understandings to avoid possible resistance (Bantwini, 2010; Hynds, 2010; Olsen & Sexton, 2009). Additionally, Thornburg and Mungai (2011) found that teachers resist PD reforms because the reforms overlook the needs of diverse student populations, they resent PDs with outside presenters, and they resent recycled reforms. Other reasons for resistance to PD reforms are lack of supportive materials (Hofman et al., 2011) and lack of understanding (Bantwini, 2010). Effective PD provides continual support and guidance for change in practices and needs to recognize diversity in schools, thereby aligning PD strategies to school needs (Bambara et al., 2012).

The general responses of the participants on past PD were consistent with the research literature on resistance to PD. A participant commented that "PDs have to be centered around the demographics of the school," and another remarked that the PDs were "unrealistic" because they did not meet the "specific needs" and the goals of the students "we teach." These perceptions were in concert with findings in studies that reported that PD that ignores school demographics is ineffective (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011; Flint et al., 2011; McLeskey, 2011; Roseler & Dentzau, 2013). Findings in this

study are also similar to Hofman et al. (2011), where participants cited lack of materials and lack of understandings during PD presentations.

Participants in this study described past PDs as not considering teacher responsibilities and coming at the wrong time for new initiatives. The words "overwhelmed", and "sheer exhaustion" were used to explain the feeling. These perspectives were consistent with Bantwini (2010), who asserted that resistance to PD occurs when teacher's workloads are not considered. Furthermore, Flint et al. (2011) contended that with the "ethic of care," the needs of teachers is an element when changing teachers' instructional practices.

Other areas of participants' concerns that were consistent with research were teachers' passive roles during PD and the relevance of constant changing of curriculum. In respect to teacher engagement during PD, researchers proclaimed that teachers needed to collaborate with those in their schools and in the district (Fullan, 2007; Pella, 2011; Pop et al., 2010). Teachers' negative perceptions of the constant changing of curriculum confirmed the belief that perceptions of relevance are important to address resistance to PD (Thornburg & Mungai, 2011).

Job-Embedded Coaching

Participants in this study perceived job-embedded coaching as a means to improve their instructional practice. The beliefs of the participants confirmed researchers' assertions that the collaborative process between coaches and teachers improves instructional practice for student achievement (Biancarosa et al., 2010; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Knight, 2009; Zepeda, 2012). Findings in studies indicated that teachers with coaches used more new strategies, improved their classroom instruction,

and realized increased student achievement (Hough, 2011; Sailors & Price, 2010). Additionally, coaching assists in developing strategies to engage students in their learning. A participant commented that she learned how to involve students by providing them the opportunity to follow their own progress. Another participant explained that her questioning techniques improved her interactions with students.

Researchers found that job-embedded PD is more effective than traditional PD because it provides ongoing support at the classroom level, allows teachers to express their understandings and beliefs during PD sessions, and is focused on instructional changes for student achievement (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Strieker et al., 2012; Wendell, 2009). Furthermore, during periods of educational reforms where educational change focuses on student achievement, PD should support teacher learning through job-embedded ongoing collaborative activities (Fullan, 2007; Johnson & Fargo, 2010; Zepeda, 2012).

The participants in this study received responsive (balanced) coaching or directive. Ippolito (2010) identified balanced coaching as effective in allowing the collaborative and relational growth for teacher learning. Confirmation of this view was noted in participant comments such as that coaching was "back and forth," coach was "flexible," and we "shared." Participants reported that their coaches were "knowledgeable." Biancarosa et al. (2010) stated that coaches need to be knowledgeable in order to explain theory of educational practices.

Some participants received directive coaching where they were given specific ways to conduct classroom instruction. One participant, whose coach was her principal, stated that the coaching was "forceful." She explained that her coach required her to

conduct her classroom instruction exactly as he directed. In the case of this participant with "forceful" coaching, the coach did not follow the ideology that collaborative PD requires relationship building, creating trusting spaces for teacher interaction, and allowing ongoing collaboration for shifts in teacher identity with changes in practices (Musanti & Pence, 2010). Nor does this type of coaching observe the recommendations that for educational reforms in which educational change focuses on student achievement, PD should support teacher learning through collaborative activities (Fullan, 2007; Johnson & Fargo, 2010; Zepeda, 2012).

As participants interacted with their coaches, relationships were of different levels. The participants who received responsive (balanced) coaching remarked that the trusting relationships enhanced the collaborative process. Participants remarked that they trusted their coaches, and the relationships were "good," "solid," "open and honest." These perceptions were in agreement with research that said that relational trust is important in building an environment for improved instructional practices (Cerit, 2013; Ippolito, 2010). Participants who received directive coaching had formal relationships with their coaches. However, while directive coaching assists in improving instructional practices, it should follow research suggestions that coaching should be done in a nonevaluative way, collaboratively engaging the teacher (Gallucci et al., 2010).

Teacher Networks

All participants in this study participated in frequent or infrequent teacher networks. Participants who met weekly expressed the value of sharing their knowledge in an open dialogue. Through collaboration, these teachers were able to discuss lesson planning, assessment of data, and help others with classroom practices for student

achievement. Researchers asserted that in dense networks where teachers have frequent contact, educational information is quickly distributed (Daly et al., 2010). Participants in the frequent and infrequent teacher networks confirmed that teacher networks were beneficial in respect to being able to be a part of "those good discussions to address exiting classroom issues." Penuel et al. (2009) deemed the element of collaboration with staff cooperation essential for instructional improvement.

Frequent networks in this study met to discuss student data for classroom instruction. This is similar to the Daley et al. (2010) study where student data was a part of the networking process. Additionally, dense networks promote collective efficacy beliefs (Moolenaar et al., 2012). For example, one participant said, "If I'm getting ideas to help my failing students, if you're getting help for your failing students, then we're all getting ideas." This statement demonstrates what Moolenaar et al. (2012) call collective efficacy. These researchers found that collective efficacy in regularly meeting networks assists teachers in cooperatively contributing to classroom instruction for student achievement (Moolenaar et al., 2012). Furthermore, teacher networks with collaborative PD fosters collective efficacy in the sharing of knowledge for changes in instructional practices (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011; Daly et al., 2010; Moolenaar et al., 2012; Penuel et al., 2009).

Participants who did not experience frequent networks in their schools did however seek opportunities for networking activities. One participant was involved in a monthly district networking group, and the other person met with a group of teachers on the weekend. A sense of collective efficacy was also noted in the two participants in the infrequent networks in their schools. One participant said that what she learned in the

district network, she brought back to the school and shared the information with her colleagues. The other participant said that the lesson planning, and the sharing of resources was beneficial to the group.

Relational trust related to teacher networks was an important factor with the participants in this study. For instance, one participant said trust was 90% important, and another commented, "We worked closely together, and we trusted each other, and I think that's important." These statements regarding trust in teacher networks confirm Cerit's (2013) belief that when teachers trust their colleagues, extra effort is shown in their willingness to collaborate.

In relation to the mandates of this study, to address the missing collaborative process in past PD, the NJDOE mandated Priority Schoolteachers to be involved with the collaborative approaches: job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks (NJDOE, 2011a). Furthermore, the NJDOE (n.d.a) defined PD as professional learning opportunities that include teachers collaboratively networking, and using job-embedded coaching for the purpose of transferring new knowledge, and skills to teachers' instructional practices. As participants in this study showed willingness to collaborate in coaching, and teacher networks, the intention of the NJDOE was realized.

During teacher networking, the participants became aware of colleagues' expertise. A participant said that another teacher who was helpful to her network was a teacher on another grade who helped them understand curriculum. Another person remarked that the grade team chairperson was most helpful. "She was able to kind of give me a perspective of behaviors I would experience, how to respond to things, what to give, what not to give. We collaborated a lot of time." Penuel et al. (2009) affirmed that

teachers involved in collaborative activities become aware of colleagues' expertise, and whether formal or informal can lead to improved instructional practice.

Conceptual Framework Related to Findings

The conceptual framework for this study is Fullan's (2007) educational change theory. This theory is described as a sociopolitical process that encompasses interactions of individuals involved in the educational process. Along with the involved individuals, classroom and schools, local, regional, and national issues become a part of the sociopolitical process (Fullan, 2007). Additionally, educational change recognizes the daily responsibilities of teachers (Fullan, 2007; Kelchtermans, 2009), and the new innovations for change (Fullan, 2007). Fullan (2007) termed teachers' daily realities as subjective realities, and new innovations and new programs as objective realities. Furthermore, Reigeluth and Garfinkle (1994) examined change from the perspective of the relations of participants in a system, participants' relationships with other parts of the system, and the relationships of the subsystems to the whole system.

Fullan (2007) asserted that the subjective realities of teachers' daily activities while implementing the objective realities of new materials, and new teaching methods are factors that influence the success or lack of success of educational change. Furthermore, Fullan believed that during educational change, the process of "reculturing" of teachers allows them to ask questions about the reform and how it looks in practice. Additionally, Coburn (2003) articulated that exploring teachers' beliefs is more than about new materials and new teaching approaches. The exploration of teachers' beliefs extends to their beliefs about how students learn, the nature of the subject, and their perceptions of effective instruction (Coburn, 2003).

All the participants in this study were asked to describe their experiences with attempts to address failing schools through PD before the New Jersey ESEA flexibility waiver (2012), and with the waiver that includes job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. Through the analysis of the interviews, participants' reflections on past PD indicated that Fullan's (2007) subjective and objective realities were neglected. This neglect was realized in the two major themes of PD practicality, curriculum retention, and the summary of perceptions of PD's addressing failing schools. There was no evidence of the participants being able to provide input for PD topics that addressed the needs of the school, nor was the necessary follow-up or materials. Participants also expressed concern about the constant changes in curriculum.

Fullan's (2007) educational change process expresses the need for teachers to accept the need for change, as change relies on teachers' perceptions about the initiative, and the daily routines that may influence the acceptance, or resistance of the attempts for change (Bantwini, 2010; Fullan, 2007; Thornburg & Mungai, 2011). Moreover, when there is change, there is movement of an innovation from a change agent to an adopter of the innovation (Ellsworth, 2000). Therefore, during the movement from the change agent to the adopter, open dialogue among teachers, policy makers, and schools becomes significant as they become co-constructors of the meaning of the innovation (Priestly et al., 2012). The disseminating of information to others about an innovation depends on how individuals communicate knowledge of the innovation to others with less knowledge about the innovation (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2009; Rogers, 1995).

In this study, the change agent is the State of New Jersey, and the priority schoolteachers are the adopters of past PD attempts to address failing schools, and the

current attempts that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. All participants were informed that their schools were low-performing by school administrators, or district officials. They were also informed of the initiation of job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks to improve instructional practices for student achievement. These procedures were in agreement with Priestly et al. (2012).

When the initiation of an innovation is in the implementation stage, there should be possible adjustments, and needed supports (Wendell, 2009). Factors associated with the continuation of an innovation include (a) staff buy in and shared vision, (b) administrative support in providing necessary resources and opportunities for implementation feedback, (c) involvement of practitioner leadership, (d) technical support through coaching and training, (e) decisions made according to data, and (f) regeneration by revisiting the outcomes of the implemented practices and making adjustments for continued movement toward desired outcomes (Coffey & Horner, 2012). Additionally, researchers suggested that educational change removes teachers from an isolated environment to one where they learn from each other (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009). Likewise, the establishment of teacher networks is recognized as a way for teachers to come together to collaborate and share instructional practices (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011).

Participants in this study were involved in educational change through mandated job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks in priority schools. Each participant experienced these initiatives; some greater than others. However, none of the participants spoke of any resistance.

The present study relates to Fullan's (2007) educational theory because of the sociopolitical process involving interactions of individuals involved in the educational process. Even the discrepant case in this study relates to Fullan's educational theory because during the first year, she explained that she experienced coaching for the collaborative process, and support needed to assist in classroom instruction for student achievement. Even during the second year, where the coach was "forceful," and exact in how he wanted her to teach, the discrepant case still sought instructional advice from special education advisors. While she was unable to participate in schoolteacher networks on a regular basis, the discrepant case involved herself with weekend networking where she was able to exchange ideas, and participate in group lesson planning. Therefore, the participant did experience coaching and teacher networking in a different manner, however, her experience is nonetheless an example supporting Fullan's sociopolitical process in the educational change theory. Additionally, she was removed from being isolated as suggested that educational change moves teachers from isolation to learning from others (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007; Wendell, 2009).

Participants in this study spoke of job-embedded coaching as beneficial in respect to having someone to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and being able to collaborate with someone to suggest strategies for instructional improvement for academic achievement. Participants also perceived that job-embedded coaching helps failing schools, because of the support received, and the non-evaluative observations with feedback. As part of the "reculturing" of teachers, the participants were able to ask questions about suggested strategies in practice. Even the participants who received

coaching in a stringent manner, perceived if changing is made, coaching can help failing schools.

The sociopolitical process of teachers' networks was also perceived as a means to help failing schools. Participants conveyed appreciation of the collaborative process, allowing them to see what was going on in others' classroom. This removal from isolation enabled them to plan and strategize how help each other help failing students. Participants even asked for more opportunities to network.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation that arose from the execution of the study was that the snowball strategy for accessing participants was slower than expected, in part because the study was conducted at the end of the school year. The decision was made to use the snowball strategy because of difficulty gaining access to potential participants through priority school districts another limitation was that there were no male volunteers, thereby there was a lack of gender diversity. These limitations were added to limitations in Section 1.

As stated in Section1, a limitation is that the researcher lives in New Mexico, and the participants live in New Jersey, face-to-face interviews were not possible. The limitation of no video conferencing presented the inability to observe body movements. The researcher used the participants' voice tones, and audio expressions to assist in interview analysis (Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009). In addition, in this phenomenological study, the participants were asked to remember PD before the ESEA flexibility waiver and after the waiver began. A potential weakness is that to answer some questions, the participants were reliant on their memories of their experiences.

Implications for Social Change

This study explored teachers' perceptions of past PD, and the collaborative approaches of job-embedded coaching and teacher networks under the mandated 2012 ESEA flexibility waiver. Research on educational change encourages the inclusion of teachers' perceptions, and beliefs of new initiatives to improve instructional practices for student achievement (Fullan, 2007). Furthermore, researchers assert that student achievement is related to teachers' PD (Breffni, 2011; Hough, 2011; Lumpe et al., 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2011; Zepeda, 2012).

Since the New Jersey ESEA flexibility waiver is a new educational change initiative, it was essential for priority schoolteachers to voice how they perceived implementation of instructional strategies discussed in PD sessions (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2007). This study gave the priority schoolteachers the opportunity to voice their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions regarding the mandated implementation of job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. The study also gave them the opportunity to reflect on PD prior to the ESEA flexibility waiver. Therefore, through this study's findings, positive social change may be realized through the adaptation of PD according to teachers' needs. Adapting PD in this manner may improve classroom instruction that may promote social change in respect to student learning that leads to student achievement.

Additionally, through the sharing of the priority schoolteachers' experiences with the school administration and district officials, positive social change may occur in the planning of PD that includes collaborative input from teachers. Since this study was

explored in one region of southeastern New Jersey positive social change may spread as the findings are shared with other priority school districts.

Fullan (2007) understood that teachers' perceptions and their beliefs in new initiatives have an impact on the success or failure of the initiative. As teachers are able to share their experiences with other priority schoolteachers, administrators and district officials, positive social change in classroom instruction may take place when teachers exert more effort in the implementation of PD strategies for the success of the initiative. This study will add to the body of phenomenological research on mandated job-embedded professional development.

Recommendations for Action

In the educational change framework, Fullan (2007) discussed interactive issues affecting implementation of change comprised of teachers, principals, students, district administrators, consultants, and parents and communities as stakeholders. As a result of the findings on previous PD, and PD under the flexibility, district officials, and administrators may adapt PD initiatives according to teachers' needs; allowing teachers to be a part of the process. More specifically, the findings indicated that participants perceived job-embedded coaching and teacher networking helpful in improving their instructional practices. They expressed an appreciation for the collaborative process with their coaches, and fellow teachers through teacher networking. By listening to the teachers and involving them in PD planning, district officials and school administrators may realize the strengths and weaknesses in their PD and plan accordingly. Participants also perceived scheduling for coaching and teacher networking important. When planning, district officials and school administrators may ensure that coaching and

teacher networking schedules are maintained. After receiving final Walden notification that this study is approved, I will first disseminate the findings to the cooperating principal in the southeastern priority school. I will then disseminate the findings to the eight interviewed priority schoolteachers.

Reports indicated that in order to close the achievement gap and for students to be college or career ready, students need to improve their language arts and mathematics scores (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Therefore, as teachers continue to acquire the needed support for improvement of instructional practices, these improvements may extend to benefit students' learning. As student learning improves, student achievement may improve, thereby, moving toward the goal of being college or career ready.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study on priority schools gained teachers' perspectives of the past PD, and collaborative approaches job-embedded coaching, and teacher networks to address failing schools through semistructured interviews. The following are recommendations for researchers who are interested in following this line of inquiry. First, as the study was conducted with a small population, a recommendation would be to expand the study to a larger population in a priority school region. By expanding the study to a larger population more diverse perspectives may be found.

Second, at the time of this study, the initiatives for job-embedded coaching and teacher networking had been in effect for four years. As in the Thornburg and Mungai (2011) phenomenological study, a recommendation would be for longitudinal researchers to conduct studies on priority schools in various New Jersey areas. The reason for this recommendation would be to allow districts, and schools time to go through the process

of revising, and adjusting how these initiatives are delivered. These recommendations are presented for longitudinal researchers to examine the effects of collaborative PD on student achievement. These researchers might conduct a follow-up study that might last a minimum of nine months (Saldaña, 2003). To obtain wider perspectives on the collaborative approaches to PD, participants in a longitudinal study might consist of teachers and administrators in more than one New Jersey region with priority schools. Furthermore, a longitudinal researcher might examine priority school data from the conception of the ESEA flexibility waiver to the time of the longitudinal study.

In addition, there are also opportunities to investigate these questions using mixed methods. For instance, student achievement scores might also be a part of data collection for correlational purposes. Finally, as participants' teaching experiences were in a range from seven to 25 years, researchers might conduct a mixed-methods study on the collaborative approaches using participants in several age groups. As in the Maskit (2011) study, mixed-methods researchers might explore the different PD perspectives of teachers in different stages of their educational careers.

Summary

My doctoral journey began while I lived in New Jersey, and the interviews were conducted after I relocated to New Mexico. There were few priority schools where I lived in northern New Jersey; however, as I attended school board meetings in my New Jersey district, I interacted with teachers and administrators familiar with the New Jersey ESEA flexibility waiver. As I researched the new waiver, I found that many of the priority schools were located in a southeastern New Jersey county. Because of my thirty

years as an educator in low-performing schools, my interest heightened as I reviewed the PD component of the flexibility waiver.

When I decided to conduct a transcendental phenomenological study, and pursued access to interview participants, it was through guidance at Walden University, that I learned to be persistent in every phase of the doctoral journey. The qualitative research literature afforded me information on how to approach officials for assistance when not employed in the location of the research study. Although I have many years of experience with PD, I learned through transcendental phenomenology to bracket my preconceptions, and biases. I also kept a journal with my personal thoughts about the participants, and things that happened during my doctoral journey. By setting aside my biases and preconceptions, I listened to the interview participants as if I knew nothing about the PD phenomenon (Bernet, Kern, Marbach, & Embree, 1993; Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994).

The knowledge I gained through this doctoral journey has inspired me to continue research on PD in New Mexico. The research skills learned during my years at Walden University will allow me to approach further research with confidence, and an enthusiasm to add to the body of knowledge in PD research. I am especially appreciative to Dr. Fowler, and Dr. Brenda Kennedy, my committee members for their guidance through the researching and writing of this study. I am also indebted to Dr. Kathleen Malinsky, and Dr. Carol Philips of Academic Coaching and Writing an outside agency who provided individualized assistance in developing my doctoral writing skills. As I reflect on the entire doctoral journey, I have developed a deeper interest in research, and the desire to explore other research methodologies.

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding experiences with past PD initiatives and PD under the current ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. Through the semistructured interview, the participants made known their gratitude for the ESEA initiatives, the ability to collaborate with coaches and colleagues, and their desire for more opportunities to continue. These findings confirm that when districts, and schools include teachers in the sociopolitical process of educational change, and provide the necessary supports, teacher willingness, and extra effort might be exerted (Cerit, 2013).

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Appendix A: Assistance Request

April 16, 2016

Dear [redacted],

My name is Joyce G. Wiggins, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am conducting a research study exploring priority schoolteachers' experiences regarding previous professional development initiatives and professional development under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. The title of my study is "Priority Schoolteachers' Experiences of Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement".

I am seeking to interview eight to ten general and special education teachers in grades K-8 who were involved in professional development for effective instruction during the school years 2012-2013 and/or 2013-2015, and have experiences of previous professional development in New Jersey. Recruitment for interview participants may not begin until I receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). At the conclusion of the study, I plan to share the research findings with you.

As you read the particulars below, please note that the interviews will be conducted on personal computers and will not interfere with your daily school schedule.

Background Information:

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding the phenomena previous professional development initiatives and professional development under the ESEA flexibility waiver focusing on collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks.

Procedures:

Participant will:

- Sit for an interview lasting from 60 to 90 minutes using WebEx online conferencing.
- Sit for two follow up interviews using WebEx online conferencing for validity of the summary of the interview and the findings. The follow-up interviews will last approximately 60 minutes.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect decisions of whether or not to participate in the study. If participants decide to join the study, they can change their minds during the study. If they feel stressed during the study, they may stop at any time. They may skip any questions that they feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no known risks and this researcher has considered any possible harm to the participants. Information gained from the interviews will add to how teachers' describe their lived experiences of previous professional development and the current collaborative model that incudes job-embedded coaching and teacher networks.

Compensation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. There is no monetary compensation.

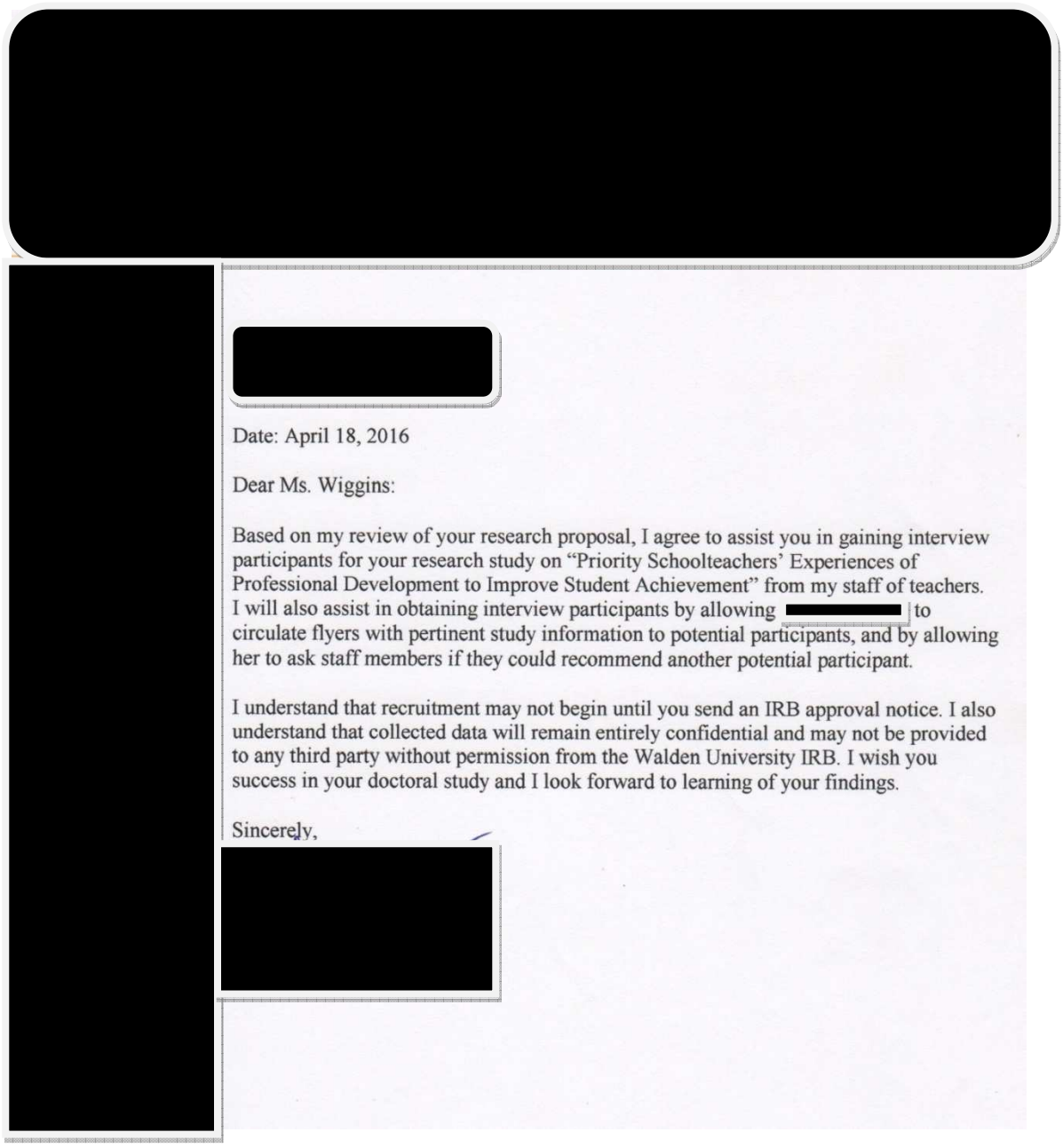
Confidentiality: Any information provided will be kept confidential. I will not use information for any purposes outside of this research study. In addition, I will not include participants' names or anything else that could identify them in any reports of the study.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now, or if you have questions later. You may contact me [redacted] or e-mail at [redacted] If you want to talk privately about your rights in cooperating with this study, you can call [redacted]. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is [redacted]. Walden University's approval number for this study is 05-19-16-0054870 and it expires on May 18, 2017.

Once again thank you for your interest in assisting me in my study.
Sincerely,
Joyce G. Wiggins

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation



[redacted]

[redacted]

Date: April 18, 2016

Dear Ms. Wiggins:

Based on my review of your research proposal, I agree to assist you in gaining interview participants for your research study on "Priority Schoolteachers' Experiences of Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement" from my staff of teachers. I will also assist in obtaining interview participants by allowing [redacted] to circulate flyers with pertinent study information to potential participants, and by allowing her to ask staff members if they could recommend another potential participant.

I understand that recruitment may not begin until you send an IRB approval notice. I also understand that collected data will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to any third party without permission from the Walden University IRB. I wish you success in your doctoral study and I look forward to learning of your findings.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Appendix C: Letter of Invitation

I am a doctoral student enrolled in the Teacher Leadership program at Walden University, and I am inviting priority schoolteachers to interview for my research study entitled "Priority Schoolteachers' Experiences of Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement". You are being invited to participate in this interview study because of your possible interest in the topic and because of your employment in a New Jersey school district with schools identified as priority schools.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of priority schoolteachers regarding previous professional development initiatives and professional development under the ESEA flexibility waiver: job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. I would like for you to take part in an online interview lasting from 60-90 minutes. Information gained from the interviews will add to how teachers' perceive past professional development initiatives and the current collaborative approaches that include job-embedded coaching and teacher networks. Any information you provide will be kept confidential. I will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research study. In addition, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

If you are interested in learning more about the study, please contact me either by telephone or email.

Sincerely,

Joyce G. Wiggins

Appendix D: Telephone Contact Protocol

My name is Joyce Wiggins, and I am a doctoral student enrolled in the Teacher Leadership program at Walden University. As partial doctoral degree requirements, I would like to conduct WebEx online conferencing interviews for my research study entitled "Priority Schoolteachers' Experiences of Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement". I would like to interview 8-10 teachers employed in priority schools in a RAC region in New Jersey. The research study will explore teachers' lived experiences of teachers working in priority schools in response to the following questions:

1. How do priority schoolteachers describe their experiences with attempts to address failing schools through professional development before the ESEA flexibility waiver?
2. How do priority schoolteachers describe their experiences with the ESEA flexibility waiver attempt to address failing schools through a model of professional development that includes two collaborative approaches: job-embedded coaching and teacher networks?

Data will be collected through WebEx online conferencing. The following are ethical protection procedures for all interview participants:

- Voluntary participant participation,
- Participants' freedom to withdraw consent at any time without prejudice,
- All participants' names and responses will be kept confidential,
- No descriptors (names, school) will be used specifically identify participants, and
- Excerpts from the interviews will be part of research dissertation; however, under no circumstances will name and identifying characteristics be included in the final documents.

Particulars to the research include:

- The interview will take no longer than 60 to 90 minutes. All interviews will be audio taped using WebEx online conferencing.
- Two follow-up interviews will take approximately 60 minutes.

All data will be collected by the researcher.

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Study: "Priority Schoolteachers' Experiences of Professional Development to Improve Student Achievement ".

Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Tentative opening conversation:

> Thank you for allowing me to interview you about your experiences of previous and current professional development initiatives. As discussed at the informed consent meeting, this interview is voluntary, will be audio taped lasting from 60 to 90 minutes, and your identity and any person(s) mentioned in the interview will be kept confidential. At this point, do you have any questions? May we now continue with the interview?

Demographic Questions:

Gender:

1. What grade do you teach?
2. How long have you taught this grade?
3. What other grades have you taught?
4. How long have you been teaching?
5. How long have you been teaching in a priority school?
6. How were you informed your school is a failing school?

Guiding Question:
Research question 1:

> How do priority schoolteachers describe their experiences with attempts to address failing schools through professional development before the ESEA flexibility waiver?
>
> 1. What types of professional development training have you had prior to the current job-embedded coaching and teacher networking?
>
> 2. Would you describe in detail how the professional development sessions were presented?
>
> Probe if information is not included in the previous question:

Was the selection of PD teacher directed, administrative directed, administrative directive, or a collaborative effort?

3. What were your feelings/perceptions about the professional development training?
4. What did you find beneficial in the past professional development training?
5. What did you find least beneficial in the past professional development training?
6. How did past professional development assist you in your classroom instruction, if at all?
7. How did you perceive that precious professional development addressed failing schools?

Possible probes:

a. Can you please tell me more about…?
b. For example…
c. How did teachers respond to…?
d. What recommendations would you have given for…?
e. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Research question 2:

How do priority schoolteachers describe their experiences with the ESEA flexibility waiver attempt to address failing schools through a model of professional development that includes two collaborative approaches: job-embedded coaching and teacher network?

A. Job-embedded coaching

8. How would you describe the type of job-embedded coaching you received at your school?

Probes if information is not included in the previous question:

a. How would you describe how the job-embedded coaching was administered?

b. In what role was the individual who provided your coaching?

9. How would you describe the type of relationship you had/have with your coach?

10. How did you feel about the level of your engagement during the job-embedded coaching?

11. What aspects of job-embedded coaching did you find most beneficial?

12. What aspects of job-embedded coaching did you find less beneficial?

13. How did job-embedded coaching assist you in your classroom instruction, if at all?

14. How do you perceive that job-embedded professional development addressed failing schools?

Possible probes:

a. Would you give me an example of…?

b. Can you elaborate?

c. Would you explain what you mean by…?

d. Is there anything else you would like to add?

B. Teacher networks

15. What types of teacher networks were established in your school?

16. What structures were provided to support the success of teaching networks?

17. What were some issues discussed in during your teacher networking sessions?

18. What types of follow-up were there, if any, for the issues discussed?
19. What type of teacher networking, if any, did you participate in outside of networking sessions?
20. In what role were the individuals who were most helpful in the teacher networks?
21. In what role were the individuals who were less helpful in the teacher networks?
22. How did teacher networking assist you in your classroom instruction, if at all?
23. How do you perceive that teacher networks addressed failing schools?

Possible probes:

e. Would you give me an example of…?

f. Can you elaborate?

g. Would you explain what you mean by…?

h. Is there anything else you would like to add?