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Teacher Morale in a Turnaround School

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Louis Lane

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Teacher Morale in a Turnaround School

by

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MS, Walden University, 2014

BS, Trinity International University, 2011

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Teacher turnover has a significant effect on the overall success of schools. The use of comprehensive turnaround strategies such as the conservatorship process created a problem for a small Southeastern high school by affecting teacher retention rate. A qualitative approach was used to investigate how aspects of turnaround strategies influenced teacher morale, which may have contributed to the small Southeastern high school's lower than average teacher retention rate. Bandura's self-efficacy theory provided the conceptual framework for this qualitative case study. The research question addressed teachers' perspectives of morale as well as their views and experiences with the conservatorship process. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 8 teachers who were actively employed at the school before the conservatorship process and were retained by the district. After coding each interview, 6 themes emerged relating to factors that influence teachers' perspectives of morale: (a) powerlessness, (b) excessive visitations, (c) loss of confidence, (d) ineffective instructional practices, (e) stress and burnout, and (f) ineffective professional development opportunities. As a result, a professional development project was created to train administrative leaders and teachers on the benefits of the distributed leadership framework, including how to use teachers' experiences and expertise in school reform efforts. The impact of this study is the potential to affect teacher morale positively and promote positive social change in the high school by fostering an environment in which stakeholders work collaboratively to increase the teacher retention rate, furthering the success of this small Southeastern high school.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The practice of using comprehensive turnaround strategies, such as the conservatorship process, has created a problem for a small Southeastern high school by adversely affecting its teacher retention rate. During the 2014–2015 school year, the local school district used turnaround strategies as part of a comprehensive school reform effort. These strategies, such as the conservatorship process, are similar to those listed in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, (Peck & Reitzug, 2014). Under the ESSA, the school district under study was permitted to apply comprehensive accountability systems to a chronically failing high school to improve student educational achievement and school performance during the 2014–2015 school year (Mass Insight, 2010). Peck and Reitzug (2014) stated one of these comprehensive accountability systems was the provision of blanket turnaround strategies, such as the turnaround model, which requires school districts to replace school administrators as well as a minimum of half of teachers and to implement a new curriculum program.

The state department of education advised the district to turn the daily operation of a local high school over to conservatorship, reflecting the need to address the high school's low academic performance (State Department of Education, 2015). Heissel and Ladd (2017) reported that similar districts' use of turnaround strategies had lowered teacher morale in various school districts. Mader (2014) stated teachers in the high school under study perceived conservatorship as a method that encourages nepotism and favoritism, as well as a system used to harass and intimidate teachers. There has been no

research in the district to clarify the influence of teacher morale on teacher retention rates in relation to turnaround strategies associated with accountability measures contained in the district's ESSA policy (State Office of Educational Accountability Bureau of Public Reporting, 2017). The district does not conduct surveys on teacher morale or how teachers perceive the conservatorship process (Conservator of the study site, personal communication, April 10, 2017). Thus, it is not apparent how teacher morale affects teacher retention rates or how turnaround strategies associated with accountability measures contained in the district's ESSA policy affect teacher retention rates in the high school under study. However, Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, Harrington (2014), and Morgan (2016) have studied the relationship between teacher morale, teacher retention rates, and turnaround strategies associated with accountability measures in other schools and school districts.

In this study, I used a qualitative approach to investigate teacher morale as a possible contributing factor in the lower than average teacher retention rate at this small Southeastern high school. Between the school years 2014-2017, the State Department of Education (2017) teacher turnover data showed declining teacher retention rates each year following the conservatorship process (see Table 1).

Table 1

Teacher Retention Data 2014–2017

District #	District name	School #	School name	Year	New teachers	Returning teachers	Total teachers	% return
7100	Abstract School District	008	High school under study	2014–2015	13	33	46	72%
7100	Abstract School District	008	High school under study	2015–2016	14	28	42	67%
7100	Abstract School District	008	High school under study	2016–2017	18	23	41	56%

Note. Retrieved and adapted from State Department of Education Reported Teacher Turnover Data (State Department of Education, 2017).

A possible contributing factor in the teacher retention rate of the high school under study was teacher morale. An administrator from the high school acknowledged that teacher morale was lower in the school due to accountability measures associated with the conservatorship process (School administrator, personal communication, May 18, 2017). Clark (2015) reported that surveyed teachers in the school revealed low teacher morale. During the 2014–2015 academic year, over half of the teachers employed at the high school organized a protest in opposition to school management and took unscheduled leaves of absences due to illness (Clarion Ledger, 2015). The school district considered the unscheduled leaves of absences as false illnesses and subsequently labeled the false illnesses as the “green flu” (Memphis Reporter, 2015).

During the conservatorship process, the district terminated some of the teachers and administrators of the school, akin to the turnaround strategies used nationwide (State Department of Education, 2015). Although the federally mandated accountability measures contained in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 expired in 2014, similar accountability measures such as annual reading and math assessments and high school graduation rates exist through individual state departments of education as detailed in the ESSA (Ferguson, 2016; No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001). Educator Advocates (2015) reported various similarities between NCLB and ESSA accountability measures when comparing the two acts. The necessary accountability measures have resulted in a decrease in teacher morale (Vernaza, 2012).

Rationale

In this era of accountability, attempts to improve education using intervention strategies and educational reform initiatives have been the goal of school administrators at both national and local school levels (Reyes & Garcia, 2014). As stated, broad educational reform initiatives such as turnaround intervention strategies were used at the small Southeastern high school under study to improve academic performance (Corbett, 2014). Under the ESSA, the school district was permitted to apply comprehensive accountability reforms to the chronically failing high school with the intent of improving student academic achievement during the 2014–2015 academic year (Mass Insight, 2010). Although the ESSA does not specify school improvement strategies and leaves such strategies to the discretion of local education agencies, school districts must identify

and create a corrective action plan for improving low-performing schools through similar accountability measures (Educator Advocates, 2015).

The state department of education identifies the success or failure of the high school under study through students' standardized assessment results (State Department of Education, 2015). The state department of education (2012) analyzed data from the high school's standardized assessment results and determined the high school was persistently underperforming and later declared a state of emergency. Research from Grissom et al. (2014), and Morgan (2016) have studied the relationship between teacher morale, teacher retention rates, and turnaround strategies associated with accountability measures in other schools and school districts was used to contextualize teacher morale at the high school under study.

Grissom et al. (2014) reported that the accountability measures allowed by current educational reform initiatives and intervention strategies had withered teacher morale, leading to higher than average teacher turnover rates. Grissom et al. further stated teachers feel accountability measures allow school district officials to pass judgment unfairly without the consideration of students' socioeconomic status and chronic absenteeism, which are circumstances beyond the teachers' realm of influence. In a study of various schools with disadvantaged students in the United States, Morgan (2016) stated the use of standardized assessments was the leading method used to assess a school's academic yearly progress and teachers' instructional practices. Morgan argued the reliance on standardized assessments lead to ethical problems and is ineffective and damaging to the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. Morgan further

reported teachers encounter daily pressure to improve standardized assessment scores for disadvantaged students who commonly underachieve on statewide and district-wide standardized assessments.

According to the State Department of Education (2016) the high school under study has a student population of 536 students, where 100% of students are economically disadvantaged and receive free or reduced lunch prices. The State Department of Education Association of School Superintendents (2015) stated it is typical that students in the high school under study receive standardized tests in the amount of 35 to 45 days during a 180-day school year. Mausethagen (2013) reported that student testing, standardized testing, and analysis of performance measures have changed teacher-student relationships and decreased teachers' ability to develop caring connections with students.

According to the Mississippi Department of Education (2012), the high school under study did not meet the district's growth expectations. The high school possessed low proficiency in reading and mathematics and low graduation rates, as determined by results on standardized assessments (State Department of Education, 2016). The state department of education reported the graduation rate of the school as ranging between 59.7–73.8% from 2012–2016 (see Table 2; State Department of Education, 2017). The school district considers graduation rates and academic achievement data a reflection of students' classroom performance in addition to students' standardized assessment scores (State Department of Education, 2013).

Table 2

School Report Card Data 2012–2016

Year	District	Official grade	Reading proficiency	Math proficiency	Reading Growth	Math growth	Graduation rate
2015–2016	TCD	C	28%	28.2%	68.2	77.4%	73.8%
2014–2015	TCD	D	29.5%	25%	63.6	58.2	68%
2013–2014	TCD	D	39.6%	63.3%	47.4	69.4	57.3%
2012–2013	TCD	F	28%	58%	Not Met	Not Met	59.7%

Note. Graduation rate and academic achievement of the high school under study, 2012–2016 (State Department of Education, 2017).

Vernaza (2012) documented teachers' perceptions related to pressures to improve student achievement on state and district mandated assessments. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2016) revealed teachers' perceptions of stressors might be a factor in altering teachers' perceptions of morale in immediate and ancillary environments. The local education agency used the assessment results of the high school under study to determine whether the district would subject the school to comprehensive turnaround strategies. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how aspects of turnaround strategies influenced teacher morale, which contribute to the small Southeastern high school's lower than average teacher retention rate.

Definition of Terms

Chronically low-performing schools: Chronically low-performing schools are schools whose students did not meet adequate yearly progress levels for 5 or more years (Great Schools Partnerships, 2015). School districts that list schools in the lower 10% of overall schools in a state based on academic performance are also known as low-performing schools.

Conservatorship: When the governor declares a school district as being in a state of emergency, the State Board of Education may appoint an intervening conservator to the local school district who will supervise day-to-day activities (State Department of Education, 2012).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): The ESSA is a reauthorization of the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; Educator Advocates, 2015). The ESSA is a recommitment to equal opportunity for students. It seeks to ensure academic achievement by requiring school districts to expose students to quality academic guidelines that prepare learners for academic success, college, and careers (Educator Advocates, 2015).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): No Child Left Behind was an education reform act between 2002 and 2015 created to improve student academic achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). NCLB was a reapplication of the ESEA, which affected education from primary school through high school, and expired in 2015 with the adoption of the ESSA (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is defined as a person's conceptualization about their capability to perform at determined levels of performance (Bandura, 1989). These designated levels of performance affect other events in the individual's life. Self-efficacy viewpoints regulate how people perceive events, reason about events, and motivate themselves when events become challenging.

Standardized assessment: A standardized assessment involves students answering similar questions from common repositories of questions the same way (Great Schools Partnerships, 2015). Standardized assessments are scored in a "standard" manner, making results of assessments and relative achievement performance of individual students or groups comparable to a baseline achievement level or other students or groups taking similar assessments (Great Schools Partnerships, 2015).

State interventions: States officials appoint designees whose actions directly impact chronically low-performing schools, often requiring school districts to take over the schools with the intent to improve their performance (Great Schools Partnerships, 2015).

Transformational leadership style: Transformational leadership is a management approach that inspires change in individuals and social constructs (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013). The transformational leadership style creates positive change with the intent of developing future leadership by encouraging and empowering workers to create change in an organization.

Turnaround model: A turnaround model is where local school districts replace school administration and grant newly appointed school administration the operational

flexibility to enact wide-ranging approaches to improve student academic achievement and increase graduation rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Significance of the Study

The small Southeastern high school under study experienced the conservatorship process in 2014. In each subsequent year, the school has experienced a decline in teacher retention. An administrator at the school reported a decline in teacher morale since the onset of the conservatorship process (School administrator, personal communication, May 18, 2017). A study of teacher morale as a possible contributing factor in the lower than average teacher retention rate may increase administrators' understanding of teachers as influential partners in school reform. A study of teacher morale may provide insights to administrators in their effort to support positive social change in the school by fostering an environment where stakeholders work collaboratively to increase teacher morale, which may lead to an increase in teacher retention rates. By reviewing the data acquired through interviewing teachers who have experienced the conservatorship process and identifying concerns related to teacher morale, administrators may share these insights with those who support and guide teachers. Providing such support may better enable the school to increase the teacher retention rate and therefore provide high-quality educational experiences for their students. An increased teacher retention rate will influence the academic achievement ratings of the high school and its students (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013).

Research Question

I used the research question to guide the interview process, to focus the study on teacher morale, and to serve as the foundation for this study. I also used subquestions to further categorize teachers' perceptions of the different aspects of the conservatorship process. The high school under study underwent the conservatorship process during the 2014–2015 school year (State Department of Education, 2015). Due to the lowered teacher retention rate in the high school there was a need to investigate teacher morale as a possible contributing factor in this rate. The research study question was:

RQ: What are teachers' perceptions of morale in a small Southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process?

The three subquestions were as follows:

SQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process?

SQ2: What are teachers' experiences with the conservatorship process?

SQ3: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process's effect on their levels of morale?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

Bandura's self-efficacy theory provided the conceptual background for this qualitative study. Bandura stated individuals base their expectations of self-efficacy on information received from various sources and events: performance events, second-hand experiences, verbal influence, and psychological events. With a heightened sense of self-efficacy of ability, an individual will possess a firm sense of commitment to achieving

organizational goals as well as personal goals (Bandura, 1989). Bandura explained the stronger an individual's impression of their self-efficacy, the more likely individuals will strive for conceived and personal goals beyond their capability. Bandura stated that when an individual has a decreased sense of self-efficacy, a firm sense of commitment to completing a goal is less likely to occur. Bandura further stated a person's perception of self-efficacy influences and creates anticipatory scenarios, which may be positive and provide a valuable guide for performance or may be failure scenarios that compromise the individual's performance. According to Bandura, when encountering complex events or circumstances, a lowered sense of self-efficacy lessens individuals' efforts, abruptly aborting their attempts or leading them to settle for unexceptional solutions to complex events or circumstances. A person with heightened perceptions of self-efficacy expends a more significant amount of effort to overcome and master complex events or circumstances (Bandura, 1989). An individual's morale, suggested Bandura, directly influences behavior choices, how much effort an individual exerts, and how long an individual persists in a challenging task. According to Bandura, individuals process response consequences, whether articulated or unarticulated, as consequences that provide punishing or beneficial outcomes. Bandura posits that perceived response consequences affect an individual's behavioral patterns through the influence of thought, where beneficial outcomes act as reinforcements and punishing outcomes serve as deterrents. Once established, an individual's perceived sense of morale is shared or generalized to similar situations and activities (Bandura, 1989). I investigated how

teachers' views of self-efficacy and morale contributed to the teacher retention rate in the high school under study between the 2014 - 2017 academic years.

Logical connections. Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, and Malone (2006) stated teachers with heightened perceptions of self-efficacy have a significant influence on students' academic achievement. According to Caprara et al., teachers possessing positive perceptions of self-efficacy tend to employ innovative educational practices throughout the school environment as opposed to teachers possessing negative perceptions of self-efficacy. Enriching teachers' levels of morale may provide an effective means to strengthen teachers' sense of self-efficacy and, therefore, teacher retention (Chestnut & Burley, 2015). I used Bandura's (1989) self-efficacy theory as the conceptual framework for this project study to investigate teacher morale as well as their views and experiences with the conservatorship process. Administrators can use the self-efficacy theory to develop strategies to affect teacher morale positively and cultivate an environment where administrative leaders and teachers work collaboratively to raise the teacher retention rates. This study focused on teacher morale to determine if it has a significant influence on teacher retention rates. This qualitative study complements the existing body of knowledge used in developing and sustaining methods intended to improve teacher morale.

Review of the Broader Problem

Overview of topics covered and search terms. I completed the search for relevant literature using the following databases: Google Scholar, ProQuest, Elsevier, and ERIC. I searched to locate articles that were relevant to this qualitative study using

keywords and terms such as *morale, self-efficacy, state interventions, chronically low-performing schools, turnaround models, conservatorship, transformational leadership style, NCLB, ESSA, job satisfaction, and standardized assessments*. The inclusion of relevant literature added a depth of understanding about teacher morale in relation to turnaround strategies. I restricted the literature search to peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and dissertations published between the years of 2013 and 2018.

Review of self-efficacy. A wide range of educational literature exists linking academic performance and self-efficacy beliefs. Lambersky (2016) used the national School and Staffing Survey database to substantiate the findings that teacher discontent is the leading cause of turnover. Lambersky stated that when morale or self-efficacy is low, performance suffers, and when morale or self-efficacy is high, performance improves. Lambersky further stated that teachers' perceptions of morale and self-efficacy mediate all aspects of instructional practice and behavior in the educational environment.

Rashidi and Moghadam (2014) found teachers' views of self-efficacy serve to monitor, manipulate, and interpret new information and new experiences. Teachers vary in educational environments leading to a range of opinions of self-efficacy (Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014). Rashidi and Moghadam reported that teachers' perceived sense of self-efficacy about their instructional practices, classroom management, and teacher-student relationships affects teachers' input of effort as well as students' academic outcomes. Rashidi and Moghadam suggested that when teachers' instructional practices are affected by turnaround strategies, so is their level of morale, and consequently, students' academic achievement. Zee and Koomen (2016) suggested that the instructional

attitude, practices, and methods teachers use to motivate students' cognitive development are regulated, in part, by teachers' views of self-efficacy.

Mittal and Dhar (2014) reported that to sustain ongoing growth and success, leaders should provide support to experienced and novice teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy by using cooperative learning strategies. Mittal and Dhar suggested leaders should work to support teachers' perceived sense of self-efficacy so that teachers can find productive solutions for complex tasks. Holzberger, Philipp, and Kunter (2013) suggested teachers with heightened perceptions of self-efficacy perform complex tasks through completion, have more input on learning activities, and have more profound persistence than teachers with lower opinions of self-efficacy.

Schiefele and Schaffner (2015) stated teachers' beliefs of their instructional ability motivate teachers to employ influential instructional practices and exert heightened levels of effort in preparing students for academic success. Schiefele and Schaffner stated self-efficacious individuals are confident in their capacity to fulfill academic obligations, prompting these people to have increased levels of encouragement and engagement in accomplishing performance tasks. Schiefele and Schaffner further asserted self-efficacious individuals are also confident in their ability to create positive conditions in academic environments that encourage and grow students' academic achievement. Thus, teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy affect their performance. Holzberger et al. (2013) reported positive associations between teachers' perceived sense of self-efficacy and students' academic achievement, as well as teachers' instructional performance.

School reform. School districts use school reform accountability measures such as standardized assessments and graduation rates to ascertain whether schools are attaining adequate yearly progress. Comprehensive education reform has been motivated, in part, by the rate of students who either do not graduate from high school or graduate lacking the skills and knowledge required for success in college or their careers (Hamilton, Stecher, & Yuan, 2012). Such rates have led to the creation of standards-based accountability policy that develops, measures, and incentivizes student academic performance about performance on standardized assessments (Hamilton et al., 2012).

Noddings (2014) stated educational policymakers use the term *educational accountability* or *educational reform* when referring to problem-solving methods. However, the overuse of the terms can be counterproductive. Noddings suggested policymakers' problem-solving methods deprive teachers of the opportunity to exercise their creativity. According to Noddings, at times teachers' aims are not to produce specific learning required for standardized assessments, but to inspire students to be creative in their understanding. According to Hamilton et al. (2012), various state departments have used *educational accountability* synonymously to *education reform* in their policies; however, *accountability* has a different meaning to those who use the term in educational settings. Hamilton et al. reported that despite such differences, three universal principles exist in its meaning. *Educational accountability* shares a similar meaning to *academic expectations*, as both emphasize academic achievement and mastery for students at different stages in education (Hamilton et al., 2012). Hamilton et al. stated the adoption of academic standards and performance standards are subprinciples

of setting academic expectations for students, which school districts report as determining factors in the varying levels of academic achievement in different content standards. Hamilton et al. noted district administrators who use the term *education accountability* associate its meaning with the use of standardized assessments. Administrator use the term *education accountability* in their evaluation of a school's academic achievement (Hamilton et al., 2012). According to Hamilton et al. (2012), administrators also use the term *education accountability* to align standard school operations to the various mandated-elements in the school. District administrators dictate standardized assessments and state standards and ensure the alignment of these items by presenting each source (i.e., district standardized assessment) comparable to the other (i.e., state assessed standard); (Hamilton et al., 2012). Hamilton et al. reported some teachers who narrow their instruction to mirror assessed content had experienced adverse effects such as the considerable stress of trying to improve test scores and dedicating valuable instructional time to prepare for the test.

According to Levin and Datnow (2012), one of the tenets of education reform is to measure academic outcomes and processes while managing educational resources to improve academic success for all students. There is an expectation that data from standardized assessments will be of use to teachers and administrative leaders in improving academic achievement as well as in teacher instructional planning (Levin & Datnow, 2012). Assessments serve a dual role in education reform (Levin & Datnow, 2012). First, assessments provide teachers and students with educational feedback on how well students are performing on specific content standards through an analytical

review. Second, they communicate to school administration the effectiveness of teachers' instructional practices through an analysis of students' academic performance in an annual progress report. School administration views data received from assessments as an indicator of how well students demonstrated academic achievement in content-level skills; improved assessment scores are associated with effective teacher instructional practices while assessment scores that show no academic growth or regression of growth are indications of ineffective teacher instructional practices (Levin & Datnow, 2012).

Levin and Datnow (2012) stated the use of data-driven decisions had become a central feature of the educational reform agenda. Although identifying knowledge gaps, attitudes, and educational skills are necessary for success in the 21st century, nonassessable factors such as critical thinking, integrity, and the ability to utilize technology, which teachers teach in schools, often go undetected, unreported, and unacknowledged (Levin & Datnow, 2012). Therefore, Levin and Datnow suggested standardized assessments are only one scale of many from which school districts can assess students' development.

In 2009, President Barak Obama added the Race to the Top Competition (RttT) as a component of NCLB of 2002 (Tanner, 2013). The competitive investment in school reform was federally funded; however, the competitive nature of RttT was intended to encourage states to create comprehensive education reforms (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). NCLB required states to either adopt or create content standards that aligned student academic achievement tests in content subject areas and provided escalating sanction plan to address chronically low-performing schools (Hamilton et al.,

2012). As such, NCLB influenced educational decisions and policies at the state, district, and local levels (Hamilton et al., 2012). Educator Advocates (2015) reported the successor of NCLB is ESSA. Former President Barak Obama signed the ESSA into law in 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Despite the expectations of the educational community that it would offer different accountability reforms, the ESSA mostly maintained a similar focus on standards and standardized assessments as NCLB, continuing many of the ineffective structures and reforms of the NCLB (Educator Advocates, 2015; Mathis & Trujillo, 2016). School-wide improvement plans remain a requirement in ESSA; however, standardized assessment results remain a determining factor in the creation of the improvement plans (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016). The ESSA lessened many of the rigid NCLB guidelines such as the limits on the number of students who could take “alternate” tests and the mandate to adopt Common Core State Standards. However, under the ESSA, states, and districts may employ corrective actions in underperforming schools akin to NCLB, such as turnaround-based layoffs, and punitive measures for low-testing schools remain (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016). A difference between NCLB and ESSA is that with ESSA states and districts may choose which standardized assessments to use for evaluative measures (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016).

Hamilton et al. (2012) stated the standard approach of NCLB and ESSA is education accountability through the promotion of school governance that relies on student academic achievement outcomes using standardized assessments. States and districts, in response to this focus, have adopted different curricular and structural reforms, including purchasing new standardized textbooks, increasing technology

exposure, providing advanced courses, and adopting generic curricula (Hamilton et al., 2012). Lee and Eadens (2014) suggested that school superintendents, school board members, and school governance were influences on a school's performance level beyond customary instructional practices. Lee and Eaden also stated that school superintendents, school board members and school governance hindered meaningful school change due to a discontinuity in their perceptions about school reform efforts. Lee and Eadens further stated school boards in underachieving school systems had diverted less time on instructional issues and plans for relevant academic goals based on district compliance procedures.

Ingersoll, Merrill, and May (2016) stated that NCLB accountability measures had an impact on teacher retention rates. Ingersoll et al. used data from the Schools and Staffing Survey and the Teacher Followup Survey to demonstrate how the use of various aspects of school accountability measures related to lower than average teacher retention rates. Ingersoll et al. reported nearly one-third of participating teachers said they were "slightly" or "intensely" concerned about their teaching position because of students' performance on standardized assessments. Ingersoll et al. reported retention rates at academically successful schools are better than retention rates at academically failing or low-performing schools.

According to Wolters (2015), education is undeniably vital in supporting and promoting advanced society. Wolters asserted educational reform initiatives have not been successful due to reformers' disregard of the complex history of education reform. Wolters argued that teachers' behaviors and classroom management affect student

academic achievement; however, these factors are not exclusive to promoting academic achievement in an educational environment.

Brezicha, Bergmark, and Mitra (2014) linked school reform results to the relationship between administrative leaders and teachers, and the social aspect of school reform. Brezicha et al. suggested a vital tenet of leadership in school reform efforts is to provide differentiated support throughout the implementation process. Brezicha et al.'s concept of leadership during school reform efforts focused on administrative leaders' understanding and acceptance of teachers' individuality, perceptions, worldview, and ability to develop and maintain social networking throughout the school's social and professional constructs. Brezicha et al. (2014) recommended administrative leaders use Spillane's (2006) enactment zones, which mediates how teachers implement school reform initiatives, to support and include teachers' instructional capacity, determination, and experience in school reform policy efforts. Brezicha et al. further asserted administrative leaders who facilitate a supportive school environment and encourage teachers to develop collegial relationships and partnerships would create an environment that is beneficial to effective school reform efforts.

Teacher retention. Malinen and Savolainen (2016) identified teachers' perceptions of school environment and self-efficacy as contributing factors in how teachers managed their behaviors. These factors further predicted levels of job satisfaction and teacher retention, demonstrating a correlation between teachers' perceived level of job satisfaction, social factors, affective factors, and organizational factors (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016). The authors also found that teachers' perceptions

of constructive working conditions, autonomy, and perceptions of collective efficacy along with self-efficacy were significant predictors of teachers' perceived levels of job satisfaction. Malinen and Savolainen stated school environments that nurture effective teacher-teacher relationships and present teachers with opportunities to engage in school-level decisions relate to teachers' higher job satisfaction.

In contrast, a negative school environment and poor student behavior were significant factors in teachers' perceptions of low job satisfaction (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016). Malinen and Savolainen identified factors such as students' distractive behaviors, administrative leaders, and the mediation of teacher perceptions of self-efficacy as behaviors further affecting teachers' retention rates. The authors also suggested that teachers with a lowered perception of self-efficacy possess apparent risk factors for decreased job satisfaction, which may potentially result in lower than average teacher retention.

Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, and Marinell (2017) examined the teacher retention challenge in urban school districts. Papay et al. stated high teacher turnover rates subject school districts to excessive hiring costs as well as a loss of teacher productivity. Papay et al. suggested exiting teachers are often exchanged with novice teachers, who, at times, are less effective than the experienced teacher they are replacing. Papay et al. compared the cost of retaining teachers to the hiring cost for novice teachers; the approximated cost difference was nearly \$4 million lower to retain teachers than to hire novice teachers. Papay et al. stated lower than average teacher retention negatively influences the foundation of a school's teaching force and lowers students' academic achievement. A

lower than average teacher retention rate also negatively influences students by altering the school's teaching force and disrupting the school's social construct. According to Papay et al., underperforming schools densely populated with African American students were disproportionately affected by high teacher turnover, and students in those schools disproportionately demonstrated lower than average academic achievement. Indeed, Papay et al. reported an elevated teacher turnover rate in urban school districts, where approximately two-thirds of teachers leave in their early years of teaching. More specifically, Papay et al. stated 13–35% of beginning teachers left their teaching position in 3 years, and 44–74% of teachers left their teaching positions in 5 years.

Glennie, Mason, and Edmunds (2016) examined teacher employment data to understand how school reform models may assist in retaining novice teachers. The authors found that a school's location and students' socioeconomic status and academic achievement are factors that potentially increase teachers' retention rates. Unfortunately, these factors are often beyond the school's control. Glennie et al. stated factors such as a school's culture, administrative support, local school policy, teaching load, and professional development opportunities are in a school's control and also increase the likelihood of retaining teachers. Glennie et al. stated teachers report better job satisfaction when they have positive perceptions about school leaders, autonomy, and better professional development opportunities. This job satisfaction is strongly associated with teacher retention (Glennie et al., 2016).

Turnaround strategy (conservatorship). The turnaround model, according to Trujillo and Renee (2015), comes from the private sector and is based on unjustified

claims. It fails to acknowledge evidence that mass terminations do not improve organizational performance. Turnaround strategies have thus frustrated families, school leaders, and policymakers, and led to limited improvements (Aragon & Workman, 2015). Johnson (2013) explained school districts used the business sector's turnaround strategies with the intent of turning around chronically failing schools, in response to the accountability movement. Districts use comprehensive turnaround strategies to improve a school's performance by focusing on a school's human resources, frequently removing and replacing teachers and administrators, with newly hired teachers and administrators (Strunk, Marsh, Hashim, & Bush-Mecanas, 2016). The turnaround process aims to disrupt the status quo of underachieving schools by offering additional resources such as school grants to support a school turnaround partner in their use of federal guidelines such as tracking the performance of a school (Zimmer, Henry, & Kho, 2017). Zimmer et al. reported researchers had not found a consistent positive association between academic achievement and turnaround schools. However, researchers have found some turnaround schools' academic achievement has been similar in gains and losses compared to nonturnaround schools, despite receiving extra resources and support (Zimmer et al., 2017).

Nie and Lee (2014) suggested that constant turnover rates increase the likelihood that local school systems will suffer damages both academically and professionally. Ronfeldt et al. (2013) examined the correlation between teacher turnover and students' academic achievement on statewide reading and math standardized assessments. Ronfeldt et al. found Pearson correlations were substantial and negative, demonstrating that

schools with higher than average turnover also demonstrated lower than average academic achievement. However, Ronfeldt et al. did not provide wholly indicative evidence of the association between teacher turnover and academic performance, as factors such as inadequate leadership and poverty may have also contributed to poor academic achievement and lower than average retention rates. Ronfeldt et al. stated the assumption of the relationship between turnover and academic achievement was also not indicative of a contributory relationship. Determining a causal relationship between turnover and academic achievement is difficult when the direction of the relationship is unclear: teacher turnover may have caused low academic achievement, or low academic achievement may have caused teacher turnover (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Ronfeldt et al. stated the effect of teacher turnover depends on the effectiveness of teachers who leave and teachers whom the school rehired. Ronfeldt et al. suggested leaders should look to reduce the effect of teacher turnover by searching for equally effective teachers to replace teachers who leave.

Johnson (2013) described the turnaround strategy movement as the marketization of education, as one turnaround model (Restarts) transfers control, close, and reopens the school as either a charter school or a private school. Johnson asserted marketing educational reform involves a broader reform strategy including deregulation, defunding, and promoting the privatizing of public education. Kirshner and Jefferson (2015) claimed school turnaround strategies negatively affect those whom education reforms attempted to service. Turnaround strategies identify, and target schools situated in poverty-stricken neighborhoods with low academic performance. In most cases, school districts used

charter schools as an intervention strategy in the turnaround process, where school districts close traditional schools and private education management organizations open charter schools in their stead (Kirshner & Jefferson, 2015).

Allensworth, de la Torre, Jagesic, Sebastian, and Salmonowicz (2013) suggested the turnaround reform movement affects student and teacher populations as well as student academic achievement. Strunk et al. (2016) claimed the turnaround reform movement produces mixed results in student achievement; however, turnaround reforms may produce adverse and unintended consequences for teachers. Allensworth et al. (2013) reported turnaround schools demonstrated improved testing scores 4 years after the turnaround process due to a change in student population before and after the turnaround process. However, Allensworth et al. contended improved standardized assessment scores could not determine whether academic achievement occurred due to a change in students or teacher, or a combination of both, during the process, leading to an inconclusive conclusion on the performance levels of turnaround models.

Kirshner and Jefferson (2015) cited the Institute for Education Sciences' acknowledgment of weak evidence of turnaround strategies' success, in opposition to Allensworth et al. (2013). Kirshner and Jefferson reported no more than 15% of turnaround schools sustained academic increases beyond 3 years after the turnaround process. Hansen (2012) stated school-level data were unreliable because school dynamics changed from year to year, the data did not adequately address the issue of student mobility, and the data did not account for classroom-level achievement gaps. Allensworth et al. suggested the turnaround model is a process and not an event, opposed to the quick

fixes turnaround models promises. Meyers and Smylie (2017) stated turnaround efforts focused on increasing standardized assessment scores by using standard educational programs and instructional practices that may not be an appropriate solution to the source of lower than average academic performance. According to Meyers and Smylie, the use of generic educational programs and instructional practices may not be as appropriate for the school community as state and district-specific programs and practices. Meyers and Smylie stated generic programs and practices might not promote foundational changes at the school operational level which may lead to temporary improvements.

Allensworth et al. (2013) proposed in the effort in developing a successful school, the turnaround process should begin with strong leadership focused on the effort of improving the school culture, the school environment, and strengthening teacher instructional practices. Cosner and Jones (2016) suggested organizational problems along with leadership problems impede schools' abilities to improve. Stein (2012) also suggested that schools performed poorly due to poor leadership. Stein suggested qualified teachers and administrators are needed to turn around failing schools. Stein rejected notions that individual teachers or administrators, lack of resources, or NCLB are accountability factors for poor school performance. Donnell and Gettinger (2015) rejected school districts' notions that attributed a school's poor performance to teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and skills, and teachers' perceptions of the success or failure of education reforms.

Yatsko, Lake, Nelson, and Bowen (2012) revealed state, district, and school inadequacies in employing comprehensive turnaround strategies. Yatsko et al. reported

numerous school districts instituted turnaround strategies as part of ongoing activities meant to transform academic achievement. Yatsko et al. indicated district-level rigid timelines, poor communication, limited support for school-level efforts, and loss of school autonomy were causes for school districts' inability to reinvent schools and reimagine the academic achievement. Yatsko et al. stated school districts employed "kitchen sink" improvement strategies as substitutes for educational reform and failed to focus on turnaround strategies at the school level. Some school districts used the turnaround model instead of the restart model, transformational model, charter school model, and the closure of the school. The cumbersome process to remove ineffective teachers provided incremental academic improvement (Yatsko et al., 2012). Stein (2012) stated although schools face different problems, commonalities such as nonspecific direction, demoralized teachers, and apathetic students account for the destabilization of schools, ultimately leading to their failures.

Donnell and Gettinger (2015) hypothesized that school reforms do not occur because teachers do not accept reform efforts, but rather because school districts misalign reform efforts with the culture of the school and teachers' instructional practices. Stein (2012) suggested using a sense of urgency, visibility, and strong leadership as successful strategies to turn around failing schools. Stein also recommended leaders create strategic plans, clearly communicate plans to teachers, and analyze data to inform decision making as foundations to sustain turnaround effects. Stein also suggested the removal of poor performing teachers and teachers who do not support the turnaround efforts. Similarly, Yatsko et al. (2012) provided five suggestions to sustain turnaround effects:

- States should shift their role of managing turnaround compliance to a role of partnering with turnaround entities.
- States should build pipelines of leaders and teachers as part of their comprehensive turnaround strategies.
- States should assist districts, schools, and turnaround partners in communicating turnaround expectations and results to teachers.
- States should continue to provide regulatory and policy assistance for school districts that desire autonomy and flexibility.
- School districts should create a turnaround department whose function is to recognize and remove barriers that hinder academic achievement transformation.

On the latter point, Yatsko et al. suggested the turnaround department should assume responsibility for executing a comprehensive plan of transformation for schools.

Public data relevant to research study. As stated earlier, school districts consider graduation rates and academic achievement data a reflection of students' classroom performance in addition to their standardized assessment scores. During the 2013 school year, the school under study did not meet growth status with a graduation rate of 57.3%; the graduation rate was 2% lower than the previous year (State Department of Education, 2013). During the 2014 school year, the school again did not meet growth status although the graduation rate increased to 68%; the graduation rate was at least 10% higher than that of the previous year (State Department of Education, 2014). The state department of education suggested the school district turn the local high

school over to conservatorship, reflecting the need to address and improve the low academic performance of the school. However, each year since the district used the comprehensive turnaround strategy known as the conservatorship process the small Southeastern high school has had the problem of experiencing lower than average teacher retention rates (State Department of Education, 2017).

Between the academic years of 2012-2016, the Office of Public Reporting from the State Department of Education reported higher than average teacher turnover data, displaying declining teacher retention each year following the conservatorship process (State Department of Education, 2017). Nie and Lee (2014) suggested that constant turnover rates increased the likelihood that local school systems suffer damages both academically as well as professionally. The Office of Public Reporting did not make available teacher turnover data for academic years before the conservatorship process, or keep a record of district-mandated teacher satisfaction surveys (State Department of Education, 2017).

Summary of the review of literature. In reviewing the literature on school reform and policies (e.g., NCLB, ESSA, Race to the Top), as well as turnaround strategies in chronically underperforming schools, the need arose to investigate teachers' views of self-efficacy and morale as contributing factors in teachers' retention rates. Actions related to NCLB, ESSA, Race to the Top, and turnaround strategies may have contributed to a weakening of teachers' perceived levels of self-esteem and morale. Erwin (2012) focused on NCLB and teachers' opinions of self-efficacy, revealing a significant relationship between NCLB and teachers' views of self-efficacy. In the effort

to understand how teachers' opinions of self-efficacy affect the learning environment, Mojavezi and Tamiz (2012) studied the connection between teachers' views of self-efficacy and learners' self-efficacy. Mojavezi and Tamiz indicated students of teachers who retained a heightened sense of self-efficacy demonstrated higher educational levels than students of teachers who possessed a lower sense of self-efficacy and morale.

Cherian and Jacob (2013) indicated the direct effect of collective efficacy on task performance and career development. Teachers' views of self-efficacy were also impacted by varying degrees of differences in teaching efficiencies, instructional practices, student learning, and student academic performances impacted teachers' views of self-efficacy (Cherian, & Jacob, 2013). Cheran and Jacob reported the association between teachers' views of self-efficacy and students' academic performance, test scores, and behaviors. Studies maintained teachers with elevated views of self-efficacy enhance students' autonomy and self-efficacy. According to Holzberger et al. (2013), teachers' views of self-efficacy also influence their levels of enthusiasm for the teaching profession, commitment to students, and devotion to life-long learning. Cherian and Jacob stated teachers who show a steadfastness to life-long learning consistently aim to improve upon instructional practices by developing their skills, motivating and promoting self-efficacy in others. A qualitative study may provide an understanding of teacher morale as a contributing factor in the lower than average teacher retention rate at a small Southeastern high school.

Implications

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how aspects of turnaround strategies influenced teacher morale, which contribute to the small Southeastern high school's lower than average teacher retention rate. Information obtained from teachers may be beneficial in the development of strategies that administrative leaders may incorporate into the school's current improvement plans. By investigating teacher morale, an applicable framework could be researched and provided for the development of a professional development project, which could center on the significance of teacher involvement in the high school's school reform efforts, as teachers remain the catalyst in school change. Therefore, it is vital that administrative leaders and teachers understand how the loss of experienced teachers may affect students' academic achievement, the stability of the schools' culture and climate, and may have a lasting effect on a school's performance levels. Administrative leaders and teachers may continue to use the results of this study to develop their understanding of teacher morale and teacher retention rates at the research site.

Research from this study may be used to provide insights to administrative leaders to assist in their efforts of affecting teacher morale positively not only at the research site but also other schools in the school district undergoing the conservatorship process. The implication for project development and direction based on research findings may include a professional development project for the research site. Teachers' experiences and teachers' perceptions of morale may be used to develop a professional development project. A professional development project, that I would lead, may provide teachers and

administrative leaders with an understanding of strategies that increase teacher morale, and lead to an increase in teacher retention rates at the research site. Administrative leaders may then employ recommended strategies of the professional development project in alignment with local school reform efforts and district mandated school reform efforts.

Summary

The use of turnaround strategies, such as the conservatorship process, affects teachers and administrative leaders, as well as the school's culture, years after the conservatorship process has concluded (Meyers, & Smylie, 2017). Turnaround strategies aim to improve student learning, raise graduation rates, and reduce dropout rates (Trujillo & Renee, 2015). Johnson (2013) suggested reform efforts using turnaround strategies may have the unintentional consequence of deconstructing school infrastructures by not providing proper resources and create environments which strain and demoralize teachers. During the years of NCLB, teachers reported increased stress and burnout, which led to a higher than the average teacher turnover rate (Grissom et al., 2014). The high school under study experienced conservatorship during the academic years of 2014-2015 when NCLB was active, and the school remains in the control of the conservator as ESSA is active. Despite various factors and variables that cause schools to succeed or fail, Donnell and Gettinger (2015) stated that educational reform mostly occurs at the teacher level, thus altering teachers' sense of self-efficacy and morale.

In Section 2 of this study, I describe the methodology used in response to the research questions and SQs posed in Section 1. Section 2 also contains teachers'

responses to interview questions and SQs. After analyzing the data and coding it for relevant themes, I recommend a professional development course as a remedy to the research problem. In Section 3 of the study, I describe a distributed leadership professional development project. The project contains specific goals, measurable outcomes, accessible training materials, and time-based training outlines. Also included in Section 3 are details that support the implementation of the project such as the rationale, a review of the relevant scholarly literature, a description of the project (see Appendix A), a plan to assess the outcome of the project, and implications of the project. Lastly, Section 4 contains a reflection of the research process, a reflection on the interpretations of the study findings, recommendations for future project development, an evaluation, and an alternative definition of the problem based on interpretations of the study findings.

Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how aspects of turnaround strategies influenced teacher morale, which may have contributed to a small Southeastern high school's lower than average teacher retention rate. Information in this section specifies the research design and approach I used throughout this study. This section also contains information about the selection of the research population, sample size, data instrumentation, data collection procedures, and analysis procedures I applied in this study.

Research Design and Approach

Considering the impetus of the conservatorship process, and teachers affected by the conservatorship process, a qualitative study was best suited to investigate individual aspects and possible commonalities among teachers who had experienced the conservatorship process and how those experiences may or may not have affected teachers' perceptions of morale. A qualitative design was best suited to investigate teacher morale as a possible contributor to lower than average teacher retention rates in the small Southeastern high school. By examining and detailing teachers' experiences and descriptions of the conservatorship process and teachers' perceived levels of morale, I collected information from teachers that may provide enriching and often unheard information to the project study. Through qualitative study methods such as semistructured interviews, participants provided details of how the conservatorship process may or may not have affected their perceptions of morale. Lower than average teacher retention rates may be caused by teachers' perceived levels of morale. Janke,

Nitsche, and DickHauser, (2015) suggested teachers' perceived levels of morale could be affected by reasons connected with working in an underachieving school environment, lack of support from administrative leaders, assessments, and a full workload performed by teachers.

Description of Research Design

I used a qualitative approach to investigate teacher morale by interviewing eight teachers who had experienced the conservatorship process in the high school under study between 2014 and 2016. The qualitative study, as Creswell (2012) explained, is an approach that centers on an event, location, issue, time, or other physical limitations. Creswell stated that qualitative studies assist in providing researchers with insight into an issue through observations of a team and one-to-one interviews with members of the group. Researchers use qualitative studies to describe and transcribe the lived experiences of individuals who have pertinent information about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Using the qualitative approach allowed me to develop an understanding of teacher morale in the high school under study by concentrating on teachers' perceptions of their authentic experiences of working in a school that has undergone the conservatorship process. I used the qualitative method of semistructured interviews to investigate teacher morale. Using one-to-one semistructured interviews motivated teachers to detail their experiences and perceptions of how the conservatorship process did or did not affect teacher morale. I used qualitative research methods such as the inductive process in the collection, exploration, study, analysis, and interpretation of teacher morale. I used the

qualitative approach throughout the research process and when identifying patterns of commonalities and differences that existed in research participants' experiences.

Justification of Research Design

I initially considered the possibility of using the quantitative approach of a correlational study to examine the correlation between failing schools, turnaround strategies, NCLB, ESSA, and RttT. Such an approach would have consisted of examining standardized testing scores before and after the turnaround process. Following the suggestion from a professor at Walden University, I determined that a qualitative approach would be appropriate to examine the authentic experiences of teachers who had experienced the conservatorship process. Events related to the conservatorship process had already occurred; therefore, these developments could have affected teacher morale and warranted studying. Analyzing teachers' perceptions of morale during the conservatorship process helped in the discovery of how the conservatorship process had affected teachers' levels of morale. Reproducing the conservatorship process would have been unethical and difficult to manipulate. Students, parents, teachers, and administrative leaders were involved in the conservatorship process, and reproducing events leading to the conservatorship process would cause stress and undue hardship on human participants. The use of the qualitative study design and semistructured interview methods were influential in providing a rich understanding of how teachers perceived the conservatorship process and extended the understanding of how the conservatorship process affected teachers' perceived levels of morale. Lodico (2010) stated that a

qualitative study usually focuses on small groups or individuals who have pertinent information to share about events or lived experiences.

Participants

Selection of Participants

For this study, I used a purposeful sampling of teachers from the high school under study to reduce the total teacher population to a study sample of teachers who had experienced the conservatorship process during their tenure. Using purposeful sampling procedures and selecting teachers with similar experiences aligns with Lodico's (2010) recommendation of choosing participants who have relevant knowledge connected to the basis of the study. Teachers who had experienced the conservatorship process disclosed information about their experiences in this study. The following were the minimum attributes necessary to participate in this qualitative study:

- research participants must have worked at the high school under study during the last 5 years, and
- research participants must have been a full-time certified teacher at the high school under study.

Justification of Number of Research Participants

There are 165 school districts, with 1,107 schools and 32,311 school teachers in the state. All teachers, schools, and districts are susceptible to the conservatorship process. There are seven schools with 175 teachers in the school district that houses the high school under study. According to the Institute of Education Sciences, the high school under study has a total teacher population of 41 teachers. The high school under

study is characteristically similar to the district; approximately 72.50% of teachers throughout the district have experienced turnaround strategies such as the conservatorship process.

Eight purposively selected teachers participated in interviews, which provided the research study with valuable data. By noting commonalities as well as differences between teachers' experiences, I gained a general depiction of how the conservatorship process may have modified teacher morale. Seventeen percent of teachers in this academic setting have 2 years or less of teaching experience.

Gaining Access to Participants

I selected participants at this research site due to the school's academic standing, teachers' participation in the conservatorship process, and teachers' lower than average attendance rates. The conservator received a letter notifying her of the scope and purpose of the study, expectations during the study, and contact information. The conservator requested a telephone conversation before deciding on approval or denial of the research study. In the telephone conversation, the conservator acknowledged the lower than average teacher retention rates and expressed an interest in the study and interest in improving teachers' retention rates at the research site. After the conservator had approved the study, potential participants received e-mail correspondence notifying them of the scope and purpose of the study, participant's rights, expectations during the study, contact information, and a consent form for participation. Participants returned the signed consent form before partaking in the research study.

Participants' Demographics

In this research study I investigated teachers' perceptions of morale in a small Southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process. As such, it was important to obtain participants' demographic information. Interview questions in the interview protocol (see Appendix B) were used to obtain participants' demographics and generate data that may be informative in understanding how teachers' perceptions of morale could have contributed to lower than average teacher retention rates at the research site. The list of interview questions were as follows:

- How many years have you been teaching?
- How many years have you been teaching at this school?
- How many years do you foresee yourself teaching at this school?
- What would be your reasons for returning to teach at this school?
- What would be your reasons for not returning to teach at this school?

Gender and race were not pertinent to the study and therefore not included in research participants' demographics. Included in this section are data about the teachers' years as an educator and years employed at the research site, whether participants were returning to the school, and the possibility of the teacher's retention at the research site (see Table 3).

Table 3

Demographics of Interview Participants

Participants	Yrs. as an educator	Yrs. at current school	Returning to school next year	Teacher retention possibility
A	18	10	Y	Plan to retire in 2 years
B	16	4	Y	Would not return to teach at a conservatorship school if it was his decision
C	5	5	Y	Would not return to teach at a conservatorship school if it was his decision
D	9	7	Y, but looking for a new school	Leaving (if possible) for monetary reasons, conservatorship process stressful
E	14	8	Y, but looking for a new school	(If no other job is available) Conservatorship process stressful
F	10	4	Y, but looking for a new school	Leaving (if possible) for monetary reasons
G	9	5	Y, but looking for a new school	(If no other job is available) Conservatorship process stressful
H	22	6	Y, but looking for a new school	Divisions created due to the recruiting process participant is leaving after this year.

I replaced teachers' names with alphabetic letters to protect participants' identifying information. Two of the eight participants were staying with the school under study because of the school's proximity to their residence. Participants B and C reside in 5 miles of the school; the vicinity of the school allowed Participants B and C to attend to their children needs without disruptions in their schedules. Participants D, E, F, G, and H were actively looking for employment in other schools; however, three out of the five participants believed the stigma of working for a conservatorship school would sour their future employment outlook in proximal school districts.

Method of Establishing Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

I had no prior knowledge of research participants, and strict adherence to an unbiased approach guided the research process. Before the study began, respondents received documents that specified the intent and scope of the study along with procedures used to protect participants' privacy, concealment of identity, and confidentiality. Many teachers were timid about participating in the research study, due to experience with prior research studies. To establish a trusting relationship, the research participants and I participated in a brief discussion about ethical aspects of confidentiality and anonymity before beginning the interview. I explained the importance and the value teachers' perceptions of morale would have in presenting a project intended to improve teacher contribution to the school reform effort. Once participants and I established a working relationship, we maintained a level of professionalism in our working relationship with the assurance that research participants may leave the study at their discretion. Although many teachers spoke of colleagues' perceptions of morale along with their own,

interview questions remained focused on teacher respondent's perceptions of morale. Participants continually received assurances of heightened levels of confidentiality and security. Participants also received the guarantee they would have the opportunity to raise questions or discuss concerns about the research. Teachers received the assurance that once their interviews were analyzed, they would be given a transcript of the interview interpretations via e-mail, to verify the accuracy of interview interpretation as part of the member checking process. According to Creswell (2009), member checking helps to safeguard the validity of the research study. It would have been preferable to review the data from the interview verbally with participants rather than sending them transcripts, but that was not done

Ethical Protection of Participants

To protect participants during this study, before I began my research, Walden University Institutional Review Board (08-16-17-0347662) provided approval to conduct the qualitative research on teacher morale in a high school that had undergone the conservatorship process. I did not begin the research until the Office of Accountability and Research in the school region, which appoints and supervises the conservator for the district, and the administrative office of the high school received and approved my request to research teacher morale at the research site. There was minimal chance of physical harm to research participants in this research process. There was also minimal chance of embarrassment or stress to participants during the interview process. Priority was given to protect research participants from harm and to actively provide research participants with any benefits that arise from the research study. Equal opportunity was

afforded to research participants regardless of race, educational level, and socioeconomic conditions and statuses. All research participants received notification of risks and benefits of partaking in this research study.

To protect research participants' confidentiality, identifying information that linked research participants' names to the interview responses was coded using study codes. Coding practices were used to safeguard data privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of teachers. I stored research codes in separate documents and maintained those documents in a restricted password location. False names and addresses (including email addresses) were used to disconnect identifying information from collected information, and this helped to protect research participants' anonymity. During telephone screenings, I provided research participants with an exclusionary criterion in the effort to maintain autonomy, benevolence, and reasonableness. Telephone screening provided ample information about the research study that intended to promote inclusiveness. There were no adverse events involving research participants during the qualitative research study.

Data Collection

Description and Justification of Data Collection

Upon receiving IRB approval (08-16-17-0347662), approval for the Office of Accountability and Research, and approval from the administrative office of the high school under study I began seeking qualitative data from teachers employed at the small Southeastern high school study using semistructured interviews. I followed Creswell's (2009) suggestions for data collection procedures, selecting potential research

participants, processes related to questioning research participants during interview sessions, and analysis of data procedures to ensure the credibility of this research project.

Semistructured Interview

Over a period of two months, I used the qualitative method of semistructured interviews to investigate teacher morale. Merriam stated that the use of semistructured interviews is a practical method for recording phenomena that had occurred and were impossible to duplicate. The local librarian approved the use of the library's meeting room to conduct each semistructured interview, at various times. When the interview room was not available, the librarian offered the use of a semiprivate location desk area in the library. In semistructured interviews, teachers detailed both negative and positive effects of the conservatorship process on their perceptions of morale. During the meeting, I listened intently to teachers' responses while only hand-noting times where teachers responded with varying levels of emotions. The semistructured interview, according to Merriam (2009), is an interview method using the blending of highly structured and unstructured interviews. Lodico (2010) suggested planning for semistructured interviews before the interview process begins, which assisted in developing a level of professionalism with research participants. During discussions, Lodico suggested blending the role of the researcher with the role of an active listener.

Data Collection Instrument

I designed the interview protocol to align with the RQ and SQs. The RQ that was used to guide this study and the three SQs that were used to categorize teachers' responses were as follows:

RQ: What are teachers' perceptions of morale in a small Southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process?

The three SQs were as follows:

SQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process?

SQ2: What are teachers' experiences with the conservatorship process?

SQ3: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process's effect on the levels of morale?

Interview questions contained in the interview protocol were used to gather data on how the various facets of the conservatorship process may or may not have affected teachers' perceptions of morale, during teachers' different experiences with the conservatorship process. Lodico (2010) suggested that researchers should use initial questions, as well as follow-up questions, as a standardization tool that would be useful during data analysis process. The following is an abbreviated list of interview questions for this study:

- What were your perceptions of your administrator's attempt to empower you during the conservatorship process?
- What were your perceptions of your administrator's classroom visibility during the conservatorship process?
- What were your perceptions of how your administrator valued your opinions and suggestion during the conservatorship process?
- What were your perceptions of how your administrator supported your instructional practices during the conservatorship process?

- What were your perceptions of the professional development opportunities at your school during the conservatorship process?

Following each interview, teachers consented to follow-up interviews if additional information was needed to provide clarifying insights into unclear responses. Probing questions provided clarity for obscure responses on a topic. Because of the semistructured interview platform, research participants were gracious in providing full details about their experiences during the conservatorship process when responding to probing questions. Probing questions included stems such as “Can you share more information about...”, “Can you explain why... made you feel that way?” Moreover, “Can you share your understanding on the subject of...?” provided for research participants an opportunity to expound on questions contained in the interview protocol.

Source for Data Collection

Creswell (2012) suggested using an existing instrument that could be modified to measure independent and dependent variables specific to a study. According to Creswell, public journal articles could provide sample items that a researcher could use to alter an interview protocol. I followed Creswell’s suggestion and searched ERIC for a commercially available published instrument relevant to my topic of study. The interview question stems, *what are your perception of, how many years do you foresee yourself, and if you do or do not return* were obtained from the research of Hoppen, Rigoni, Klein, and Ritter, (2016). Hoppen et al. established the sufficiency of their data instrument and thereby question stems by empirically testing a cluster of flower growers. The purpose of the Hoppen et al.’s data instrument and data stems was to identify, to define, and to

provide open-ended questions to use with a target group. I modified the interview protocol to include clear and unambiguous questions. The initial questions and follow-up questions contained in the interview protocol fit the situation and were suitable for participants' responses and were suitable for gathering data. The interview protocol was provided to research participants to establish the foundation and boundaries of this research study. The boundaries of the research included interview times, access to research information, protection of research participants' information, and interview questions. Interview questions that the research participants responded to focused on participants' perceptions of the conservatorship's process effect on levels of morale. Interview questions afforded research participants the opportunity to detail changes in levels of morale in relationship to the conservatorship process. During the interview process, research participants received assurances I will maintain my role as an unbiased researcher throughout the research process. In the interviews, teachers provided data that represented a various range of perceptions (Merriam, 2009). The conducted interviews provided valuable information about teachers' perceptions of morale at the research site.

Data Management

I recorded, transcribed, and coded participants' interviews in a research journal and maintained in a secure location. A voice recorder was used to chronicle all interviews, according to research participant's approval. The location of all voice recordings is on safeguarded computer files. The voice recordings obtained through the Dragon Nuance computer program during transcription is password protected and stored using a separate filing system. The separate notepad that contained recorded and related

themes along with corresponding timeline stamps was attached to the accompanying transcribed report and stored using a separate filing system. The coding and categorizing of relatable themes included the process of transferring coded response, the analyzation of coded and categorized responses, and information gathered using the assistance of the NVivo computer program to a separate filing system. Upon completing the process to collect data, measures to secure all materials related to the study using the following methods:

- conversion of audio data that included transcribed audio files and interpreted transcribed files into a password protected electronic files;
- placement of hard copies of transcribed audio files, marginal notes, and interpreted transcribed files in a locked storage unit;
- withholding teachers' names throughout and beyond the interview process and coding of teachers' names and the storing of keys related to coded information with transcribed audio files and placed in a locked storage unit;
- maintenance of all electronic records including audio files, reproduced audio files, interpreted transcribed files, scanned copies of transcribed interview protocols and scanned copies of transcribed interview interpretations; and
- a scheduled date to destroy all hard copies and all electronic data 5 years after the date of the study acceptance.

During data analysis, electronic data were all securely maintained on a safeguarded personal computer. I electronically stored and kept files with names and headings unrelated to this study on a safeguarded external hard drive.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

Before conducting research, I obtained permission to conduct the study from Walden Institutional Review Board (08-16-17-0347662). After I consulted with administrative leaders at the high school under study, they granted approval and access to research participants. Possible research participants have publicly listed email addresses. I searched archival data of the high school under study to locate potential research participants employed at the research site before the conservatorship process. The search parameters were teachers employed at the high school under study from 2012; each year was searched using a cross-reference of names. Of the teachers hired during the conservatorship process, 17 teachers who were employed at the research site before the conservatorship process were rehired by the school district. I searched through teachers' names on the high school's website to locate potential research participants' email addresses which were used to contact potential research participants. I sent emails to 17 teachers who met the parameters of the qualitative study inviting them to participate in the research. Potential research participants received email correspondence containing the research project consent form. In the email, potential research participants were permitted to contact me by telephone if they were interested in taking part in the research. Initial email and telephone efforts yielded eight participants who met the study research criteria. Eight research participants signed the consent form and promptly returned the consent document in seven days. Once the consent forms were returned and filed, each research participant scheduled their phone interviews. During the phone conversation, each research participant received the reading of the telephone and email script to ensure

potential research participants met the parameters for the study; the phone call also provided each research participant with the purpose and significant aspects of the study and was then invited to participate in the study. Because the study research parameters only sought current teachers who were teachers during the conservatorship process, research participants' suggestions to include other teachers did not result in teachers who met the research study criteria. Each participant had the opportunity to remove themselves from the interview and research at any time throughout the study. Each participant also had the chance to pose questions and suggestion throughout the study. Data gathered during the research study were stored on an encrypted external hard drive and safeguarded in a filing system in my home. The data will continue to stay on the external hard drive through the duration of the research and no more than five years beyond the end of the study.

Role of the Researcher

Throughout the research process, my role as a researcher is to research, record, and represent the essence of teachers' experiences. According to Merriam (2009), a primary role of the researcher is to set aside personal viewpoints about an event so as not to restrict understanding the essential elements of the event. Researchers are the primary instrument in gathering data during the study of an event and as such it is vital that researchers identify, understand and monitor how their biases may shape and interpret data collection (Merriam, 2009). As a researcher, I understand the significance of my role in this study and my responsibility to this study. I experienced the application of turnaround strategies during my first years as an educator. Since then, I have focused on

the aspects of accountability measures in turnaround strategies. I currently work as a middle school educator in the same state as the high school under study. The research site is in a different school district than where I currently work. I do not possess a personal or working connection with the high school under study. I gained approval from the conservator as well as the high school principal to perform the study at the research site.

Throughout my educational courses, I have also developed an awareness of the significant role that a teacher's morale has in the improvement of students' academic attainment. I have yet to document retained teacher morale in a school who have undergone turnaround strategies. Throughout this research process, I have found it helpful to reflect upon my experiences and experiences of professional colleagues who have shared experiences with understanding teacher morale and turnaround strategies. My focus was to at best set aside prejudgments or at least monitor all pre-judgments in the effort of maintaining an unbiased perception of teachers' experiences with the conservatorship process. During interviews, my previously held negative presuppositions of turnaround strategies began to lessen as I began the process of listening carefully for the meanings and intent of teacher's responses. Merriam (2009) recommended laying aside presuppositions. During interviews, my role as a researcher was to objectively ask questions and to objectively record answers. During data analysis, my role as a researcher was to objectively analyze and order the data. To protect the research from bias, I requested participants review their record of responses to ensure the intent of their answers correlated to recorded data and recorded themes. Throughout the study, I recorded my thoughts and perceptions in a separate notebook which is in a secure

location. My overall goal was to objectively focus on participants' responses throughout data collection and data analysis process. My objective was to obtain credible and valid data that may be used to provide insight to school leaders about how aspects of turnaround strategies influenced teachers' perceptions of morale, contributing to the lower than average teacher retention rates at the research site. I analyzed similar characteristics of participants' interview responses and different aspects of the conservatorship process that affected teachers' perceptions of morale in the effort to organize data. Lodico recommended using large categorical labels and coding segments of similar data to assist in organizing research participants' perceptions of morale. Following that recommendation, similarities and differences in teachers' perceptions of morale were recorded, analyzed, and coded using thematic labels.

Data Analysis

Analyzing and Coding Data

Throughout the study, I gathered and analyzed data from semistructured interviews. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the process of analytically searching and organizing the interview transcripts enable researchers to develop and understand findings. The data analysis procedures consisted of the following steps:

- audio recording one-to-one interviews,
- member checking of audio recording and transcripts,
- reviewing transcripts for patterns,
- reviewing transcripts for themes,
- using NVivo for coding,

- using open coding, and
- hand transcription of nonverbal communication.

Data contained in this study provided an understanding of teachers' perceptions of morale during the conservatorship process at a small Southeastern high school. Eight teachers participated in one-to-one semistructured interviews. Interviews began with a reiteration of the scope of the research study research and confidentiality agreement. Initial interviews were conducted using the interview protocol. The interviews with research participants occurred in a local library's meeting room, a semiprivate location desk area in the library, and lasted an average of 49 minutes without accounting for breaks between questions.

The interview process centered on the interview protocol and was used to gather data and study data for this study. Participants and I discussed numerous topics on teacher morale during the conservatorship process. Each interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. I hand transcribed a record of nonverbal communication as not all communication is verbal (Merriam, 2009). Participants' interviews were recorded using an audio digital voice recorder, transcribed for analysis, and coded no more than three days after the interview session. I used the Dragon Nuance computer program to transcribe voice recordings quickly. However, there was a need to follow along with the audio recording to make corrections of unfamiliar words, which when reviewed alongside audio recordings safeguarded the accuracy of the transcription. The personalized review of each interview transcription also assured a saturation of each interview question response. After the transcription process, each teacher received a verbatim transcript of

the interview along with the audio recording of the interview in three to five days. After I received transcription accuracy forms, I began coding and categorizing interview responses. Lodico (2010) recommended using the inductive approach, which is the “bottom-up” process to build a conceptual understanding by using gathered information or data to describe an event. The induction process was used to create a foundation of understanding of teacher morale and teacher retention rates through an analysis of teachers’ experiences during the conservatorship process.

I began the coding process by alphabetizing participants’ identifying information, numbering each interview question and by alphabetizing each sentence in the transcription. I used the analytical coding, which is coding that derives from an examination and reflection on the meaning of the transcript (Merriam, 2009). Transcriptions included marginal notations of essential details and possible themes based on research participants’ interview responses and intent of responses. After carefully reading, analyzing, and coding each transcription, looking for new themes, redundant themes, and discrepant themes, I used marginal notes to record new themes, predominate themes, and discrepant themes. The creation of a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel provided a location to record and organize themes from participant’s quotes, teachers’ similar characteristics, teachers’ responses, and different events that affected teacher morale, based on teacher interview question responses. A separate spreadsheet was used to contain a summative list of combined research interview themes and research participants’ quotes.

Accuracy and Credibility

I used the member checking process to validate the accuracy of audio recording, the accuracy of transcript analysis, and the accuracy of transcription alignment to the intent of participant's responses. Research participants received a transcription of the interview and an interview transcription accuracy form via email after each interview. After receiving and reviewing transcription comments and the transcription form, teachers did not feel the need to schedule a follow-up interview or include any further comments on their interview or remove any comments from their transcriptions.

The credibility of the qualitative study centered on assuring the validity of collected and interpreted data. Merriam (2009) stated proper participants serve as informants and can express perceptions of the studied topic; in this case, the studied topic was teacher morale during the conservatorship process. Research participants verified the reliability and authenticity of their transcribed interviews. Research participants received a typescript of the completed data analysis results. By providing research participants with a transcription validity form, research participants verified researcher bias was not present in the completed data report. Following Merriam's suggestion, I used an audit trail documenting the methods procedures as well as transcription process, to ensure validity.

I used progressive subjectivity checks in documenting my developing understanding. I also documented my biases as anecdotal logs in the margins of my interview protocol. I listed possible biases that arose during this research study. Some biases that arose were teachers' biased perceptions of the conservatorship process due to

relationships with teachers who were negatively affected during the conservatorship process, as well as my perceptions of the conservatorship due to experience. Another bias that hindered data collection procedures was teachers' disinclination in sharing their perceptions of the conservatorship process effect out of fear related to job safety.

Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases

In the event of discrepant cases (cases that provide conflicting or contradicting information), safeguarding all discrepant cases will be an essential component of the data collection procedures (Lodico, 2010). Discrepant cases provide perceptions of the conservatorship process that differs from most of research participants' perceptions. Lodico stated that discrepant cases also provide an opportunity to probe study participants to understand experiences that differ from the majority population. Discrepant cases are as relevant to the research study as corresponding information. Discrepant cases, as well as cases that supported the research question, was used to add relevancy to the research project and provide information that added to the description of teacher morale.

Review of Data Collection Procedures

The interviews with research participants lasted an average of 49 minutes. The interview process centered on the interview protocol and used both the data collection processes and data analysis measures for the study. Merriam (2009) stated that interviews are a practical method to use when studying phenomena that had occurred and were impossible to duplicate. I used this study to investigate the various perceptions of teacher morale and experiences during the conservatorship process. Semistructured conversations

transpired over a period of 2-months in the library's meeting room. I used the inductive process to investigate teacher morale to develop an understanding of how teachers' perceptions of morale during the conservatorship process and how teachers' perceptions of morale may have or may not have affected teacher retention rates. Using qualitative methods, in alignment with the research question, an investigation of eight teachers' perceptions of morale were analyzed to produce substantial findings leading to an understanding of teachers' perceptions of (a) the conservatorship's process, (b) lower than average teacher retention rates, and (c) teacher morale.

Data Analysis Results

I used qualitative methods, according to Creswell's (2012) recommendation, to provide emerging themes that encapsulated the teachers' responses to the RQ: What are teachers' perceptions of morale in a small Southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process? The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how aspects of turnaround strategies influenced teacher morale, which contributes to the small Southeastern high school's lower than average teacher retention rate. I collected data from eight teachers using semistructured interviews and analyzed data from the interviews using an inductive approach. Upon the conclusion of the data collection process and the data analysis process, I organized data responses into key factors that aligned with the research question. I used an aggregation of data to provide a rich description of teachers' perceptions of morale during the conservatorship process. I organized the data findings to correspond to the RQ and the SQs, to provide a

comprehensive description of the central phenomenon. The three following SQs were used to categorize teachers' experiences and perceptions of the conservatorship process:

SQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process?

SQ2: What are teachers' experiences with the conservatorship process?

SQ3: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process's effect on their levels of morale?

I developed six themes, which emerged from an analysis of interview questions.

Teachers' responses to interview questions were used to produce thematic categories and codes. Themes were inclusive enough to encompass all teacher's responses and the intent of teacher's responses. Each participant provided salient answers to each research SQ.

Findings from Research Questions

Themes that emerged from research participants' responses were used to add depth of understanding to the research question. Themes displayed in this study were aligned to facets of the conservatorship process and did not serve as an exhaustive list of the various facets of the conservatorship process. I categorized each theme by recurring patterns that related to participants' experiences with the conservatorship process.

Teachers' perceptions of morale, during the conservatorship process, were revealed based on an analysis of recurring patterns. Reoccurring themes presented in this study are as follows: teachers' attendance, teachers' lack of empowerment, conservators' classroom presence, conservators' instructional support and professional development opportunities, and teachers' perceptions of being stressed and burned out. I have outlined themes in this study to describe how the experience of working in a turnaround school

affected teachers' perception of morale in a small Southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process.

I created the thematic category "powerless and centrality of power" from a collection of participants' responses related to teacher empowerment. Each participant held perceptions that the disempowerment they experienced had a negative influence on their perceived levels of morale. There were five predominate codes in participants' responses related to administrative leaders' ability or inability to share power with teachers in the school. The coding of teachers' responses reflecting either a positive or negative aspect of empowerment is as follows: lack of empowerment efforts, lack of empowerment development, localized selective empowerment, selective empowerment, and disempowerment.

I created the thematic category of "no confidence and no voice" from participants' perceptions of feeling as if they work at the school and were not a valued member in the school reform effort. Each participant held perceptions that their inability to share their opinions, experience, and expertise had a negative influence on their perceived levels of morale. The predominate codes used in the creation of the thematic category were from teachers' perceptions of not being valued, no room for suggestions or opinions, perceptions of being unsuccessful, recruited teachers' opinions and suggestion were valued and division of teachers based on preferential treatment.

Teachers' responses provided the research with three codes related to teachers' perceptions of provided professional development. Many participants held the perception that repetitive and ineffective had a negative influence on their perceived levels of

morale. Too many professional development sessions that focused on similar instructional practices, professional development sessions being excessive and partly useful, and professional development sessions being not helpful to veteran teachers were codes that emerged during analysis of teacher responses. Using codes that I derived from teachers' perceptions of professional development sessions, I developed the thematic label of "ineffective professional development opportunities."

Codes and thematic categories I aligned to subquestion 1 (see Table 4) were representative of one aspect of the conservatorship process and depicted how teachers perceived the conservatorship process. Codes and thematic categories were then used to add depth of understanding in addressing the research question, "What are teachers' perceptions of morale in a school that has undergone the conservatorship process?"

Table 4

Alignment of Codes and Thematic Categories to Research Subquestion 1

Codes	Theme	RQ
Lack of empowerment efforts		
Lack of empowerment development	Powerless, the centrality of Power	
Localized selective empowerment		
Selective empowerment		
Disempowerment		
Perceptions of not being valued		
No room for suggestions or opinions		
Perceptions of being unsuccessful	No confidence and no voice	SQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process?
Recruited teachers' opinions and suggestions were valued		
Division of teachers based on preferential treatment.		
Too many professional development sessions that focused on similar instructional practices		
Professional development sessions were not as helpful to veteran teachers	Ineffective and repetitive professional development opportunities	
Professional development sessions were excessive and partly useful		

I developed the thematic category of “excessive visitations” from codes relating to teacher accountability models, inconsistent feedback, feelings of fear, excessive classroom visitations and issues regarding self-efficacy. Each participant held perceptions that the conservator’s and administrators’ excessive classroom visits had a negative influence on their perceived levels of morale. The creation of codes encompassed teachers’ responses in connection to their perceptions of how administrators’ classroom visits mimicked customary accountability models; however, classroom visitations did not provide teachers with pertinent information.

Three codes were prevalent during participants’ interviews: teachers had to follow the prescribed instructional curriculum, administrative leadership supported instructional practices when teachers followed prescribed instructional curriculum when the conservator spoke as if the teacher did not know their profession, and teachers’ perceptions of being successful diminished. Each participant held perceptions that being mandated to follow the repetitive prescribed curriculum had a negative influence on their perceived levels of morale. Using these three codes, the thematic category of “support for repetitive instructional practices” was suitable for prevailing codes. I formed these codes from research participants’ discussion of how the conservator selected curriculum for the school without regarding student population and did not want teachers to instruct students with student-centered curriculum.

I created the thematic category stressed and burned out from relevant literature and five codes related to teachers’ perception. Teachers’ perceptions included reoccurring themes such as: looking forward to finding another teaching position, perceptions of

anxiety that a non-renewal form will be issued, using available sick days to find another job, using available sick days to recuperate mental health, and poor attendance due to poor morale. Many participants held perceptions of being stressed and burned out and their perceptions had a negative influence on their perceived levels of morale. I developed the codes from a collection of participants' responses that were related to teachers' fear of being terminated without clear reasonings and teachers not having the ability to dispute or file a grievance against the conservator due to loss of employment.

Codes and thematic categories I aligned to subquestion 2 (see Table 5) were representative of one aspect of the conservatorship process and depicted how teachers perceived their experience with conservatorship process. Codes and thematic categories were then used to add depth of understanding in addressing the research question, "What are teachers' perceptions of morale in a school that has undergone the conservatorship process?"

Table 5

Alignment of Codes and Thematic Categories to Research Subquestion 2

Codes	Themes	SQ2
Teacher accountability models Inconsistent feedback Feelings of fear Excessive classroom visitations Issues regarding self-efficacy	Excessive visitations	
Looking to find another teaching position Fear of non-renewal Sick day to find another job Recuperate mental health days Poor attendance due to poor morale	Stressed and burned out	SQ2: What are teachers' experiences with the conservatorship process?
Teachers had to follow the prescribed instructional curriculum Leadership conditionally supported instructional practices Feelings of unsuccessful	Repetitive instructional practices	

During a 2-month period, participants' interview responses to interview questions (see Table 6) were used to generate findings for this study. I used this research question and subquestions to investigate teachers' perceptions of morale in a small Southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process. I used subquestion 1 to investigate teachers' perception of the conservatorship process.

Table 6

Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Subquestion 1

Research subquestion addressed	Interview questions
SQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process?	What are your perceptions of your administrator's attempt to empower you?
	What are your perceptions of how your opinions and suggestions are valued?
	How do you perceive the professional development opportunities presented during the conservatorship process?

SQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process? The conservatorship process involved administrators and teachers. Teachers' perceptions were investigated to understand how the conservatorship process affected three areas important to teacher development: empowerment, collegial relationships, and developing teachers as professionals. One teacher's response summed the effects of the conservatorship process on teachers' perceptions of those three essential areas: "Knowing that you have no voice despite all your years of education and all of your years of experience in the classroom is really a hard pill to swallow." Dominant reactions or

themes for the three essential areas were: powerless teachers because of the centrality of power held by the conservators, teachers having no confidence and no voice in their school, and ineffective and repetitive professional development opportunities.

Theme: Powerless, the centrality of power. Teachers in the study described school administrators' attempts to empower teachers in the decision-making process on school and classroom policies and procedures. Every research participant detailed how administrators failed to empower teachers and belittled experienced teachers' roles, demonstrated a preference for newly hired teachers and did not value experienced teachers' perceptions. Teachers stated there was a lack of empowerment efforts with Participant G stating,

The conservator placed minimal effort in empowering teachers. The local administrator attempted to empower teachers and did an excellent job of keeping teachers in the loop and stressing to teachers that it was business as usual but when the conservator was present the feeling of it was her way or the highway quickly returned.

Participant H shared these perceptions during his response,

Although teachers had experience working in the school and knew the student population teachers were not thought of as teachers with up-to-date information only as cogs in a deformed machine. Administrators working with the conservator relaxed some of the conservator's stances when the conservator was not present.

Teachers also perceived the cost of empowerment would have caused a loss of employment; Participant F stated,

I do not think I wanted power it was like all the teachers who claimed their titles and power were released so why would I want power? I needed to keep my job more than I needed power. The conservator did not offer and I did not ask. If the conservator would have offered I would have looked upon the offer with an eye of suspicion.

Teachers perceived administrators held all the power and provided power to newly recruited teachers or no teachers at all. One veteran teacher explained, “We were given the option of it is the conservator’s way or the highway.” Participant D, who also taught in the school before and after the conservatorship process stated,

When we got back to school we knew who was in control. We knew not to ask for power or any form of power. Quite frankly speaking I do not think the conservator was in a power-sharing mood or at least that is not the way she presented herself. We knew just knew that all our heads were being prepared for the chopping block. We kept quiet and kept our heads low.

Statements from Participant C and Participant A provided vivid descriptions of teachers’ perceptions of morale as it is concerned with this one aspect of the conservatorship process. Participant C stated, “When the conservator was on campus teachers assumed their positions of being visible as less as possible.” According to Participant A, “The conservator came in with all the power and made sure we knew who had the power. Sure we had power in our classrooms whenever the conservator was not visiting but around the school we were as strong as students were in our classrooms no power.”

Theme: No confidence and no voice. Every teacher in this research study shared perceptions of teacher voices were not valued and the subsequent loss of confidence.

Participant C echoed teachers' voices in the statement, "When I shared my belief that my opinions were not valued the exchange I had with the conservator made me feel not comfortable to speak openly to the conservator to share suggestions and opinions anymore." Another participant perceived teachers' voices were only heard by administrators when teachers' voices aligned with administrators' voices. Participant F stated, "If suggestions from teachers were not aligned fully with the conservator's demands, then teachers' suggestions were quickly ignored." A statement provided by Participant A provided an understanding of teachers' perceptions. Participant A shared,

The conservator did not care about teachers and teachers there had already messed up so why should the conservator listen to those teachers. Whatever the teachers were doing was wrong so the conservator instructed teachers what to do and disregarded teachers as professionals.

The conservator, according to Participant F did, however, value newly recruited teachers' voices. Participant F stated,

Newly recruited teachers' suggestions and opinions were valued more than teachers who remained. I recall a PLC where I voiced an opinion about an instructional practice and the conservator spoke as if I had not spoken a word. When the recruited teachers spoke the conservator acknowledged the recruited teacher and celebrated those teachers' opinion.

Participant F also shared their perceptions that the conservator believed that teachers had failed before and discounted retained teachers' voices. Participant G explained perceptions of preferential treatment, and prominent division in the school began to arise, creating a deep rift between teachers and administrators. According to Participant G,

My colleagues' opinions and suggestions stemmed from years of experience as well as from what we perceived as the best practices for our students. When the conservator did not value our suggestions and opinions we felt that the conservator and administrators were not valued.

Theme: Ineffective and repetitive professional development opportunities. In this study, more than half of teachers consistently stated professional development sessions were somewhat helpful but overall repetitive. Participant B perceived,

There were plenty opportunities for professional development sessions after the conservator took control of the school. Professional development sessions were frequently happening as much as twice a week before the conservator took control of the school there were not professional development happening at the school.

Participant A also held perceptions of effective professional development opportunities. Participant A shared that, "A new software program new methods new styles of lesson plans new learning styles different ideas were presented during professional developments. I felt that the offered professional developments were positive however many teachers I know found professional development sessions negative." Participant A; however, stated, "My colleagues felt as if professional developments were intrusive to the learning environment teachers were overwhelmed by

the number of professional developments and voiced their frustrations administrators ignored teachers' voices."

Perceptions of the cumbersomeness of professional developments were shared from Participant D who stated, "Professional developments were too excessive and teachers did not have time for their regular planning period." Participant D also shared perceptions with Participant F who added, "Professional developments were held off campus without pay and during non-school hours sometimes. Administrators did not outright punish teachers who did not attend these professional developments but administrators viewed teachers' non-attendance to know who would remain in their positions the following year."

Participant E recalled a professional development account and stated,

Recruited teachers conducted professional development sessions most of the time. Professional development sessions were ineffective because the information did not relate to the high school's student and teacher population. When novice teachers presented materials there were no new materials or methods outside of the "new" ways the conservator wanted the school ran i.e. what the novice teachers presented as new instructional methods which were instructional methods we used in the past professional development sessions. Professional developments became repetitive mostly. When the conservator conducted professional development sessions professional development sessions were mostly negative and teachers felt as if they were just attending professional development sessions to get fussed at by the conservator or recruited teachers.

Participant F humorously laughed when describing professional development opportunities and stated,

Professional development sessions were boring and information passed along although informative could have been passed along in an e-mail. Recruited teachers, who conducted professional development sessions were excited to present the newest strategies. However teachers with years of experience recognized new strategies as old strategies with new names. There were a few new things that recruited teachers brought to professional development sessions that increased teachers' instructional capacities however to sit and listen to a full meeting for a piece of information that administrators could have e-mailed was a tremendous waste of time.

Participant C explained their perceptions that retained teachers in professional development sessions perceived that they did not have a voice at professional development meetings with Participant C stating, experience with extrapolating data was ignored.

My view was that they felt that if I knew how to extrapolate data why did I not extrapolate data to help the school out before the conservator took over the school. During professional development sessions I felt as if I was subservient to recruited teachers, although recruited teachers had far fewer years of teaching experience.

The poignant statement from Participant B added volume to the understanding of how teachers perceived the conservatorship process effect in three areas essential to teacher development,

Professional development sessions focused on masking the school's problems by diverting teachers' focus to students' social-emotional problems data and the conservator's method of running the school. I felt as if I was on the outside looking in on a meeting that I was not supposed to attend. Administrators and recruited teachers placed teachers attending the meeting in positions where administrators and recruited teachers talked to teachers rather than talked with teachers. When administrators talk to you as opposed to being talked with especially if you are a professional with a good number of years of experience your level of intelligence is insulted.

I used the research question and subquestions to investigate teachers' perceptions of morale in a small Southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process. Interview questions (see Table 7) I aligned to subquestion 2 were included to investigate teachers' experience with the conservatorship process.

Table 7

Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Subquestion 2

Research subquestion addressed	Interview questions
	Do you contribute your attendance rate to your perception of your morale?
Subquestion 2: What are teachers' experiences with the conservatorship process?	During the conservatorship process, what were your perceptions of your administrator's classroom visibility?
	What were your perceptions of how your administrator supported your instructional practices?

SQ2: What are teachers' experiences with the conservatorship process? This study was used to investigate retained teachers' experiences during the conservatorship process. Teachers shared their experiences of three effective areas in their teaching spheres. The three areas where teachers shared their experiences were conservators' influence on teacher attendance, conservator's influence on classroom presence, and how the conservator affected teachers' instructional practices. Shared teachers' experiences provided three dominant reactions or themes which were: stressed and burned out, excessive visitations and repetitive instructional practices.

Theme: Stressed and burned out. Participants shared their experiences of how working in their school environment affected their attendance rates and their propensity to return to their position in following years. Many interviewed teachers stated the conservatorship process had an adverse effect on their perceived levels of morale. Research participants detailed their negative interactions with conservators and

administrators then used allotted days to search for new employment. Participant B described how teachers used the availability of their sick days and personal days,

During April teachers in the school are given letters stating whether they will be retained or released. During April I along with other teachers in the school used our available days to scout for new employment and possible interviews with prospective schools. It is never a good feeling wondering if you have a job from year to year knowing your job is based on someone's perceptions of if you are performing well in your job. When you have your paper (teaching degree) you can go anywhere and find a teaching position because there is a teacher shortage. My attendance was affected due to poor morale with the conservatorship process. Due to my negative interactions with the conservatorship process negative feedback from classroom observations and perceptions of negative working environment my attendance dropped as I began looking for a job. Having a job lined up was my way to control the situation of being retained or released. If I were to return then I would reject the future job. If I were to be released, then I would have a job in my coffers.

Participant H perceived the attendance rate was bad but is better because,

At the onset of the conservatorship process attendance went down but now it is a little better. The attendance rate is better because of teacher turnover many of the teachers who were there at the onset of the conservatorship process left the school.

Participant H's perceptions provided an understanding of how the conservatorship process contributed to lower than average retention rates in the district for the school under study. Another contributing factor to lower than average attendance rates was teachers using available days to recuperate or what is known as mental health days.

Participant C stated,

Before the conservatorship process my attendance was either average or above average before the conservatorship process maybe missing only one day a school year. After the conservator took over the school I took off more days in that first year than all my years combined. Many days I took off was due to being overstressed which caused me illnesses I have never had before the conservatorship process.

Mirroring Participant C's statement was Participant D who stated how his mental health deteriorated during the conservatorship process. Participant C recalled,

I remember one day I had had enough and contacted the administrator to find someone to cover my class. The administrator did not respond I divided my remaining classes with other teachers and left the school during the conservatorship process this was a common practice amongst teachers.

Participant F's statement provided the severity of the mental health days needed by teachers because according to Participant F,

My attendance was above average up until this last year. During the last year I was placed on remediation because administrators rated me as a subpar teacher. I

was hospitalized due to hypertension and this was the result of the conservatorship process.

Participant C summed up the attendance issue with the following statement, “We had the lowest attendance rate in the district, I do believe that it is related to teacher morale because teachers just did not want to work in such a stressful and unsure environment.”

Theme: Excessive visitations. During teacher interviews, each research participant shared their perceptions of the school administration’s classroom visibility and how administrator’s classroom visibility affected their classroom environments.

Participant B stated,

Teachers were accustomed to classroom observations associated with customary teacher evaluations. However, administrators would come into your room with a host of administrators and stand stoically in the back of your room with notepads never saying a word of encouragement never participating in the lesson and leave administrators would rarely provide feedback.

In agreement with Participant B was Participant E who stated,

Before the conservatorship process administrators would visit the classroom and would later provide feedback that was tailored to progress the teacher further in education I did not feel that the new administrators wanted to see any level of progression from the teacher.

Teachers’ perceptions of feelings of fear began to develop in participants and participants’ classrooms as administrators provided no feedback to participants.

Participant A recalled that,

During the first year under the conservatorship process administrators would visit my classroom at least two to four times a week. Administrators' presence in the classroom would cause students to shut down and not participate in classroom functions. I felt leery during that first year of classroom visitations until administrators began to assist in the classroom.

The feelings of fear were also shared by Participant C who said, "I felt that visitations affected my classroom autonomy and depending on which administrator came in the room the feedback could be constructive to criticized feedback." The excessive visitation did not allow Participant C to give herself to her students because she was always doing a show for administrators. Each participant perceived the conservator's classroom visits as excessive and intrusive. Participant C's statement aptly summed up each participants' view of the conservator's classroom visitations. Participant C stated, "no one wants administrators to monitor teachers so much that teachers cannot be themselves." Due to classroom visitations issues of self-efficacy ensued, with Participant F angrily stating, "At the end of the day the work that needed completion was completed and whether or whether not administrators recognized their obligations towards classroom observations teachers did not desire to put on a show for administrators."

Theme: Repetitive instructional practices. As teachers discussed the conservators' influence on teachers' instructional practices 100% of teachers responded the conservator had either somewhat supported their instructional practices or demonstrated an apathetic stance on their instructional practices. Participant B shared,

The conservator somewhat supported my instructional practices. There were some areas where some things were good but I did not perform my duties consistently.

Every teacher has some area or areas where they need to improve the conservator helped point out areas where improvements were needed.

Participants shared how the conservator demonstrated an increased interest in teachers who taught in the confines of a strongly suggested curriculum. Participant G stated,

The conservator shared their opinions and suggestions to teachers and some suggestions were better than no suggestions. I feel that when your boss (administrator) tells you (teacher) to fix a problem with work (instructional practices) and provides a suggestion on how to fix that problem then you fix that problem or lose your job (teaching position).

Participant F echoed Participant G's statement. Participant F stated,

The conservator did help with my instructional practices. The conservators held many professional development sessions that helped with teachers' instructional practices. Although professional development sessions were boring me and other teachers chose to cherry-pick information to help with instructional practices.

Participant A slightly contrasted Participant G and Participant F's perceptions by saying,

How can the conservator support your instructional practices when they want to get rid of your instructional practice? I feel as if we were forced to adopt a curriculum that we had no clue about. No the conservator did not support my instructional practices the conservator supported me practicing their instructional practices.

Participant H also did not possess favorable perceptions of the conservators' influence on teachers' instructional practices. Participant H stated,

The conservator was unknowledgeable in many of the teaching areas in the school but made suggestions on instructional practices that did not fit with the content of the class or the students in the class as well as placing me in an awkward position. Do I listen and poorly instruct my student and keep my job or do I properly instruct my students and lose my job because I did not follow the conservator's suggestions?

Participant E perceived teachers did what they needed to do to help students learn.

Participant E stated,

An opinion is just that an opinion and if the way you are teaching is helping students learn then you reached your goal of teaching students. Teachers spliced new conservator's suggestions with repetitive instructional practices when the conservator was not present. The conservator pushed back on the concept of splicing instructional practices when administrators discovered teachers' instructional practices alterations. The conservator did not pursue administrative actions because the splicing of conservator's suggestions and repetitive instructional practices proved beneficial to students' academic achievement.

Participant D perceived the conservator as being, "neutral to how other teachers and I instructed students previously and were more concerned about instructing students their way and failed to follow through on suggested strategies."

I used this research study to investigate teachers' perceptions of morale in a small Southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process. Therefore, research participants responded to interview questions related to their perceptions of morale on each presented aspect of the conservatorship process. Teachers responded to interview questions (see Table 8) I aligned to subquestion 3 and were representative of how teachers perceived their levels of morale during conservatorship process. Teacher responses were then used to add depth of understanding in addressing the research question, "What are teachers' perceptions of morale in a school that has undergone the conservatorship process?"

Table 8

Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Subquestion 3

Research subquestion addressed	Interview questions
SQ3: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process's effect on levels of morale?	Please describe how your administrator's attempt to empower you affected your level of morale?
	Please describe how your administrator's classroom visibility affected your level of morale?
	Please describe how your administrator's value of your views and recommendations affected your level of morale?
	Please describe how your administrator's support of your instructional practices affected your level of morale?
	Do you contribute your attendance rate to your perception of your morale?
	Please describe how the professional development opportunities at your school affected your level of morale?

SQ3: What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process's effect on levels of morale? According to research participants' perceptions and statements, morale was perceivably affected during the conservatorship process, teacher morale, according to participants, declined further when teachers did not perceive a sharing of empowerment during decision-making processes about their classrooms. A question provided to participants was, "How was your administrator's attempt to empower you in the decision-making process on school and classroom policies and procedures affected

your level of morale?" Participant E's statement encapsulated what other participants shared with me during the interview process. Participant E stated,

Morale was low due to the onset of the conservatorship process knowing that you have no voice despite all your years of education and all of your years of experience in the classroom is really a hard pill to swallow.

I asked participants how the conservator viewed teachers' suggestions and opinions and if the conservator's views of teachers' suggestions and opinions altered teachers' perceptions of morale. Each teacher, when responding to this interview question responded with a negative reply. Participant E stated, "No one wants to work in a place where there is no or low value placed on his or her life's work." When questioned as to how professional development sessions affected teachers' perceptions of morale, each participant stated professional development sessions did not affect morale positively; Participant A recalled, "We were and are doing our jobs just let us do our jobs if you are not going to present us with anything new." When asking if teacher lower than average attendance rate reflected teachers' perceptions of morale, almost all participants responded with the similar answer of yes. Participant G's response did not believe that morale was an influence on his or her attendance rate. Participant G responded, "The conservatorship process did not lower my morale, and had no effect on my attendance. I rarely take off when I do take off it is because I want to take off and not because of my perceptions of morale." Participant A did not allow the conservatorship process to lower his or her attendance because he or she was setting an example for students. Participant A responded by saying,

My attendance was regular I showed up to work every day like I was supposed to despite all the drama that was going on there. I did hear about other teachers who would miss or would just leave during the day. Personally I did know how those teachers would ask students to respect education when the teachers did not respect education. If I took off work there was a valid reason I would take off. You want students to show up to school despite all they go through, so you need to show up to work despite all that you go through.

Each participant stated classroom visitations affected their perceptions of morale. All participants' perceptions of morale were somewhat affected negatively, but not as negatively as those of Participant H. Due to the administrator's apathetic stance on instructional practices, teachers' perceptions of morale were negatively affected with one research participant holding strong views against the conservator's support for instructional practices. Each of the eight teachers interviewed stated that the conservatorship apathetic stance on instructional practices had an undesirable effect on their morale.

Teachers' perceived positive and negative experiences with the conservatorship process were categorized using primary negative and positive labels (see Table 9). Positive experiences were said to positively affect teacher's perceptions of morale, while negative experiences were said to influence teacher's perceptions of morale negatively. Teachers who reported positive experiences with the conservatorship process were assigned "P" as part of their thematic code, and teachers who reported negative experiences with the conservatorship process were assigned "N" as part of their thematic

code; no new codes emerged from interview responses using thematic coding. As no new themes or categories emerged, the process of finalizing the findings of data analysis began.

Table 9

Overview of Themes from Participant Interviews

	Themes	Positive influence on participant	Null influence on participant	Negative influence on participant
1	Stressed and burned out		A, B, G	B, C, D, E, F, H
2	Powerless, the centrality of power			B, H, A, F, C, G, D, E
3	Excessive visitations			A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
4	No confidence and no voice			A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
5	Repetitive instructional practices			A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
6	Ineffective and repetitive professional development opportunities	A, B		C, D, E, F, G, H

RQ finding. As a foundation to investigate how aspects of turnaround strategies influenced teacher morale, which contributes to the small Southeastern high school's lower than average teacher retention rate, I used the following RQ: What are teachers' perceptions of morale in a small Southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process? Participants described their levels of perceptions of morale

during their experiences with certain aspects of the conservatorship process. Many participants expressed various aspects of the conservatorship process negatively influenced their levels of morale. Participants overwhelmingly expressed how the loss of power, voice, and opinions negatively influenced their levels of morale. Many teachers stated they developed a negative perception of morale, during the conservatorship process. Teachers also stated their perception of the various aspects of the conservatorship process were discouraging, leading teachers to seek employment in other schools and school districts.

Conclusion

In response to the RQ, I sought to develop an understanding of teacher morale during the conservatorship process at a small Southeastern high school. I analyzed data from each teacher through semistructured interviews. The interview process was used to provide teachers with an opportunity to share their perceptions of their involvements with the conservatorship process and voiced their views on how certain aspects of the conservatorship affected their morale and subsequently their morale. Teacher responses to interview questions were used to provide answers to the research question. Although one teacher stated that the conservatorship had neither a positive or negative effect on his morale, the remaining teachers felt that the conservatorship process did have a negative effect on their perceived levels of morale. Data obtained from teachers suggested an insufficient amount of professional development opportunities, adding the perception that current professional development training were punitive and insufficient.

Discrepant Case

The strength of this qualitative research study followed the suggestion of Merriam (2009), by having a foundation based on various participants' ideological, epistemological, and methodological accounts of a phenomenon. Elimination of participants' accounts of their involvements with the conservatorship process did not occur. This project study included all representations of participants' perceptions as part of the professional literature on teachers' perceptions of morale in a school that has undergone the conservatorship process. Although no discrepant cases emerged during this study, participants' responses varied and at times did not align with the research question. For example, Participant G responded that the conservatorship process did not lower his morale when the question pertained to the affect that teachers' perceptions on morale had on attendance. Participant G stated he is a teacher who rarely takes time off, and when he does take off it is because he wants to take off and not because of his perceptions of morale. Other participants stated that morale was an influence on their attendance and their colleagues' attendance. The difference of perceptions does not constitute a discrepant case; however, the difference of perceptions demonstrates how various perceptions assisted in developing crystallization on teachers' perceptions of morale. The inclusion of participants' perceptions that would have disconfirmed or challenged the research question would have taken equal importance as participants' perceptions that aligned with the research question, in this research study. This project study included all representations of participants' perceptions as part of the professional

literature on teachers' perceptions of morale in a school that has undergone the conservatorship process.

Evidence of Quality

Lodico (2010) stated there is an association between credibility and comparing research participants' perceptions of events with the researcher's reported description. All research participants actively compared their perceptions of morale, experiences, and their perceptions of teacher retention associated with the conservatorship process. The reported descriptions and interpretations helped establish the credibility of this qualitative research study. To protect the credibility of the research, Lodico's suggestions for member checks, audit trails, and reflexivity were influential. Lodico also suggested that researchers provide a report richly detailing participants' interpretation of social, cultural and historical contexts that formed their perceptions of morale in a school that has undergone the conservatorship process. To demonstrate the credibility of my research findings, the teachers reviewed the full transcript verbatim transcriptions as well as interview interpretations. After transcription of voice recordings, participants received transcripts and voice recordings to validate the accuracy of the recording and the accuracy of the transcription. After research participants validated transcriptions and voice recordings, they reviewed for accuracy the transcription interpretations to ensure that they aligned with participants' intent of interview response. It would have been better to review transcripts and interview interpretation with teachers to gather feedback; however, teachers stated that process was unwarranted.

When I chose this topic of research, there was an acknowledgment that the turnaround process affected my employment with a school district (My former school district was not part of this research project.). Also acknowledged was that many of the experiences related to the turnaround process originated from teachers who have been affected by the turnaround process (conservatorship). Throughout the research project, there was a strict examination of potential prejudices and attitudes about prior experiences with the turnaround process. To assure an objective view of the turnaround process would be provided, scholarly research of the turnaround process in an alternative district where there was no formal or informal knowledge about how the high school conducted their turnaround process, was gathered. There was also no formal or informal knowledge about teachers who contributed their perceptions in this research study. During the interview process, participants voiced their perceptions, free of interjections from prejudices and attitudes, to avoid interference with observing teachers' explanations of the conservatorship process. The disregarding of prejudices and attitude is a process Merriam (2009) calls reflexivity, which calls for a critical reflection of prejudices, assumptions, biases, and worldview of the turnaround process and how a subjective view will affect the research project.

Although research participants checked the trustworthiness of the research study throughout each process, they still received and reviewed the final findings of the study for a final check of the trustworthiness of the study. Using member checking to enhance the integrity of the study was an essential process for validating the credibility of this research project. Before proceeding to conduct another interview, it was necessary to

receive validation from the research members concerning the interview process, the transcription process, and the transcription interpretation process. After transcribing voice recordings, research members received voice recordings and an editable copy of the transcription, via email, to evaluate as an accuracy review. Research participants were encouraged to adjust transcriptions as needed. I preserved altered transcriptions and maintained copies of original transcripts, altered transcriptions, and corrected transcripts, in addition to clean transcripts in digital files and paper files.

Another important indicator of validity employed in this qualitative research study was an audit trail. Merriam (2009) explained that an audit trail describes data collection procedures, the creation of categories, and attainment of decisions during the research study. The audit trail, according to Anney (2014), involves examining the inquiry process and data analysis to validate the data write-up. Anney suggested that the researcher use an audit trail during the construction of the data analysis process, to account for research decisions that explain how data was collected, recorded and analyzed. I used an audit trail during this study that will allow readers the opportunity to follow the logic used in determining themes, codes and data analysis. Readers can use the audit trail in determining whether the qualitative research study warrants further inquiry.

Project Deliverable

I utilized all data to develop a project that attends to teachers' perceptions of morale at the high school under study. In response to data analysis, I began researching aspects of effective professional development training and the distributed leadership framework as a recommended solution to teachers' perceptions. Founded on these

findings, I recommend a project study that may enable administrative leaders to incorporate strategies from effective professional development training and the distributed leadership framework into the school's current professional development training. The strategies I recommend in this project study will include the distribution of leadership tasks intended to include teachers' expertise and experiences, while at the same time providing teachers and administrative leaders with insights of the importance of teachers in the school reform efforts. Administrators and teachers who facilitate effective professional development training may offer participants an understanding of how to conduct future professional development training that may benefit the social and situational constructs of the school. Administrative leaders may transform current professional development activities using the distributed leadership framework based on information and perceptions I collected from teachers during the interview process. The proposal to offer modifications in the current professional development training were directly related to the themes identified in the data.

Summary

Section 2 of this Qualitative Research Study contains a descriptive account of data collection processes and data analysis measures used during the research study process. Teachers who contributed to this study shared information, during the interview process, about the school where they were employed. Research participants participated in the member checking process to validate the accuracy transcriptions and interpretations which was used to provide crystallization of teachers' ideas and understandings.

Section 3 of this qualitative study contains a recommended solution to address problems teachers revealed throughout the interview process in Section 2. I also provide relevant information through the literature review on effective professional development sessions and the distributed leadership framework and their relationship to research participants' perceptions of morale. Section 4 contains my reflections on the professional development project. The scholarship involved in the work of this study reflects my work at Walden University.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

I obtained the data contained in this study from eight teachers' perceptions of (a) the conservatorship process, (b) teacher morale, and (c) lower than average teacher retention rates. The data showed that administrative leaders and teachers require additional professional development that encourages inclusivity in school reform efforts. An analysis of the teachers' responses to interview questions revealed teachers possessed negative perceptions of the conservator-provided professional development. This presents a need to create additional professional development sessions to attend to teachers' perceived sense of self-efficacy, morale, and inclusivity. The analysis of teachers' perspectives provided further direction in the construction of the professional development project. After a careful analysis of the themes resulting from analysis of the interviews, it became evident that teacher morale in the high school was affected by accountability measures associated with the conservatorship process. Research participants' responses referenced common themes such as teaching to the test, lack of administrative support, lack of autonomy, and lack of respect from colleagues and administrators. A common thread among these themes was that administrators do not perceive teachers as essential components of the conservatorship process (i.e., school reform effort), a factor that significantly affected teacher morale.

Professional Development Project

These study outcomes support the need for a professional development project for teachers and administrative leaders that offers guidance on the implementation of

collaborative school improvement efforts. As such, I recommend the distributed leadership professional development project that I will use to target administrative leaders' perceptions of teachers as leaders relating to ongoing school reform efforts. I created professional development sessions were developed to scaffold administrators' and teachers' understandings of the benefits of conceptualizing leaders as a shared practice throughout the social and situational construct of the school. Administrative leaders, the conservator, and teachers are the intended audience for the professional development project. The data contained in the study indicated each subgroup of the school's stakeholders were participating members in the school reform effort. Much of the data obtained indicated that teachers held perceptions of being excluded in the conservatorship process.

Goals of the Professional Development Project

The goal of the distributed leadership professional development program is to provide administrative leaders and teachers with an understanding of the distributed leadership framework that will lead to a collaborative effort in the small Southeastern high school's educational reform. I will provide guidance and support using aspects of the distributed leadership framework to administrators, teachers, and others in the school's educational community during the 4-day professional development project. I will provide administrative leaders and teachers with professional development sessions that attend to teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy and morale, and teachers' desire to be collaborative members of the school's current reform efforts.

Teachers and administrative leaders are the intended audiences for this professional development project. I developed four professional development sessions to address teacher morale and, subsequently, teacher retention rates. Each professional development session centers on aspects of effective professional development and the distributed leadership framework and has four implementable objectives along with two strategies. The four objectives consisting of two discussion topics addressing strategies that will support the overall goal of the professional development project are as follows:

1. To develop unbiased collegial relationships that assist in expanding the leadership spectrum and that assist in academic problem-solving.
 - A. (a.m. session) An environment of trust: developing collegial relationships that adjust along the organizational leadership spectrum.
 - B. (p.m. session) Distributed leadership mindset: expanding the leadership spectrum beyond the top-down approach with a focus on academic problem-solving.
2. To blend the individualist goals and team goals that will assist in developing collaborative educational participation.
 - A. (a.m. session) Define behaviors of forced educational collaboration and collaborative educational participation.
 - B. (p.m. session) Leader together leader apart: understanding how leadership is a term based on individualistic goals as well as team goals.

3. To develop teachers' and administrative leaders' understanding of how collaborative participation may assist in school centered distributive leadership processes.
 - A. (a.m. session) How collaborative educational participation uncovers underlying issues related to school structures, educational operations, and procedures that affect organizational behaviors.
 - B. (p.m. session) Selecting school-centered distributed leadership processes.
4. To develop processes that support and sustain academic achievement, the distributed leadership process, and the conservatorship process.
 - A. (a.m. session) Develop processes based on data, evidence-based literature, and best practices.
 - B. (p.m. session) Develop processes that reinforce the overall goal of the conservatorship process.

The design of the professional development project will focus on leaders, practice, and situational aspects of the distributed leadership framework. The project attends to teachers' needs and administrators' mandates, as well as the conservatorship's goals. Tashi (2015) described *distributed leadership* as the process of sharing and executing decision-making and influential practices throughout various levels of an organization instead of in the traditional hierarchical format, where the individual appointed as the leader is responsible for guiding, coaching, and inspiring those identified as subordinates. Teachers in this study stated a desire to be included in the decision-making process. The appointed leader is responsible for holding subordinates accountable

for the academic success or failure of students in a school (Tashi, 2015). As organizations employ the distributed leadership framework, the hierarchical format used in traditional organizations recedes (Tashi, 2015). Tashi identified a positive correlation between distributed leadership and improved teacher performance. Tashi also noted the positive relationship between distributed leadership and improved organizational leaders, which has occurred despite the diverse methods used to implement the distributed leadership framework vital in each school's improvement plan.

The collaboration between school leaders and various levels in the school are essential and increase discernment in the implementation of the distributed leadership framework (Tashi, 2015). The principal leader retains an authoritative role; however, principals delegate much of the control, in a parallel manner, to various levels in the school. Different levels of the school's organization assume responsibility for school leader-assigned tasks. Members of the school's organization differ in how they operate and engage in tasks based on contextual and situational variances embedded in assigned tasks (Tashi, 2015).

Components of the Professional Development Project

I will provide guidance and support using aspects of the distributed leadership framework to administrators and teachers during the 4-day professional development project. Components of the professional development project include:

- lessons consisting of lectures, activities, and discussions that focus on aspects of the distributed leadership framework;

- a flexible timetable that allows teachers and administrators the opportunity to practice the aspects of distributed leadership;
- provision of a safe and unbiased environment; and
- development of a tailored framework that adheres to the aspects of the distributed leadership framework through lectures, activities, and discussions.

On Day 1, administrative leaders and teachers will receive an outline (see Table 10) of the professional development sessions. I will present an overview of the need for the distributed leadership professional development project. I will also present an overview of goals and outcomes. The objective of the session is to ensure that administrators and teachers obtain an equitable understanding of the significance of morale in the high school. Professional development participants will also receive materials specific to their needs to assist in the promotion of their understanding of purpose, scope, and sequence of the distributed leadership framework. During the first session, it is essential that administrative leaders and teachers discuss past, present, and future power dynamics in the school. Goals discussed during Sessions 2 through 5 will consist of collegial discussions centered on presented topics, whereas goals discussed during Sessions 6 through 8 will focus on site-specific topics.

Table 10

Professional Development Project Outline

Day	Purpose	Session	Topic of Discussion	Objective
1	To gain critical feedback from teachers and teacher teams to create an environment for distributive leadership.	1	(a.m. Session 1) An environment of trust: Developing collegial relationships that adjust along the organizational leadership spectrum.	The development of an unbiased collegial relationship that assists in expanding a leadership spectrum that focuses on academic problem-solving.
		2	(p.m. Session 2) Distributed leadership mindset: Expanding the leadership spectrum beyond the top-down approach with a focus on academic problem-solving.	
2	To understand forced educational collaboration versus collaborative educational participation.	1	(a.m. Session 3) Defining behaviors, associated with forced educational collaboration and collaborative educational participation.	The blending of individual and team goals to assist in developing collaborative educational participation.
		2	(p.m. Session 4) Leader together leader apart: Understanding how leadership is a term based on individualistic goals as well as team goals.	
3	To understand the “why” of collaborative educational participation.	1	(a.m. Session 5) How collaborative educational participation uncovers underlying issues related to school structures, educational operations, and procedures that affect organizational behaviors.	Advancing understanding of how collaborative participation assists in the school-centered distributive leadership process.
		2	(p.m. Session 6) Selecting school-centered distributive leadership processes.	
4	To understand processes as an ongoing system focused on professional growth and academic achievement.	1	(a.m. Session 7) Processes based on data, evidence-based literature, and best practices.	The development of processes that support academic achievement, the distributed leadership process, and the conservatorship process.
		2	(p.m. Session 8) Processes that reinforce and sustain the overall goal of the conservatorship process.	

Rationale

Creating a professional development project permitted me the opportunity to suggest a recommendation that addresses issues and matters presented by participants throughout this study. The recommendation was made to increase teacher morale and teacher retention rates at the small Southeastern high school. Teachers expressed their perceptions of the conservatorship process and how their perceptions influenced their perceived levels of morale at the research site. As such, many of the teacher participants expressed that they felt as if the conservatorship process had a negative influence on their ability to share their experience and expertise in professional development sessions. Teacher participants believed that if administrators and newly hired teachers included experienced teachers in the school reform process, they might have a higher level of morale than under the current processes.

The professional development project directly associates with the data analysis findings contained in Section 2. Teachers expressed discontent at being excluded from the school's operational processes by colleagues and administrative leadership. Teachers also expressed their desire to feel like a productive part of the school. A common theme shared among the participants was the feeling of not being included in the operational processes of the school. In analyzing individual interview responses, I concluded that this professional development project would best suit teacher respondents' perceptions of low morale. An evident perception held by many teacher respondents was the need to develop a program that would be inclusive to all teachers as opposed to exclusive to newly hired teachers at the research site. I selected the genre of professional development because the

research site has an established professional development project, and providing administrators and leaders with an understanding of how to retool the current program would be the best fit to address teacher morale at the small Southeastern high school.

Review of the Literature

The goal of the distributed leadership professional development program is to provide administrative leaders and teachers with an understanding of the distributed leadership framework which will lead to a collaborative effort in the small Southeastern high school's educational reform. After collecting and analyzing data from teacher participants, I determined that the research site could benefit from aspects of an effective professional development program which administrators could incorporate into the currently in place professional development programs at the research site. These aspects comprise the foundation for agents of change in the school. Effective professional development sessions are initiated and maintained by the administrative leaders as well as instructional leaders in the school (Vislocky, 2013). I researched aspects of an effective professional development program and aspects of the distributed leadership framework, for this project study. I then applied the aspects of an effective professional development program and aspects of the distributed leadership framework to the professional development project to support teacher morale in the high school under study. The following literature review provides a synopsis of literature relating to effective professional development and its components, including its influence on motivation, teacher instructional practices, and teacher acquisition of organizational knowledge. Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) identified the following aspects of

effective professional development sessions that teachers and administrators should implement:

- collaborative learning;
- established connection between data, professional learning, and instructional practices;
- active learning;
- developing and applying understandings of content knowledge; and
- sustaining learning in professional development meetings.

Overview of Topic Covered and Search Terms

The search for relevant literature for the professional development project followed the qualitative research study. Initial searches focused on effective professional development sessions and aspects of professional development sessions. Scholarly resources were used to reflect various concepts of professional development. As the research progressed, keyword search terms were expanded to include *human capital* and *professional development, teachers' self-efficacy in professional development sessions,* and *district mandated professional development.* Search terms also included *professional development that changes instructional practices, ineffective professional development, peer-centered professional development, professional development activities, collaborative learning in professional development, using data in professional development, content knowledge during professional development, and sustaining learning beyond professional development.* Google Scholar, ProQuest, Elsevier, and ERIC were used to locate and identify relevant articles. Using search term categories and

keywords in isolation as well as in combinations helped to locate relevant scholarly articles. The search parameters were limited to peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and dissertations between the years of 2012 and 2018.

Collaborative learning with professional development. Owen (2014) described professional development that encourages collaborative learning as learning environments that support teachers regularly working together for an extended time. Owen described how teachers in professional learning communities shared values and visions, focused on student-centered pragmatic activities, and participated in developing scholarly inquiries that led to transformational changes in instructional practices in professional learning communities. Owen stated professional development that supports and sustains effective professional learning communities is effective when maintained by teachers who possess teaching practices that are up-to-date in the era of educational reform. Owen stated administrative leaders who support collaborative learning in professional development sessions and subsequently, professional learning communities, employ distributed leadership models. According to Pennington (2014), professional development sessions provide the foundation for collaborative participation between teachers, administrative leadership, the conservator, and the state department of education, enabling these parties to assess and address specific challenges purposefully in the research site. Geldenhuys and Oosthuizen (2015) reported the effectiveness of school reform such as conservatorship depends on teachers' motivation to collaborate in training with administrative leadership, and administrative leadership's ability to provide feedback on implemented instructional practices. Administrative leaders using

collaborative learning during effective professional development sessions are concerned with social characteristics of learning that are shared throughout individual constructs and events that directly connect to teachers' instructional practice (Voogt et al., 2015). Voogt et al. suggested collaborative learning activities may be explicitly purposed to transform teachers' instructional practice while developing teachers' ownership of their transformation. According to Voogt et al., professional development participants who share the role, responsibility, and accountability of facilitators are essential to collaborative learning processes.

Data driven professional development. Allowing teachers in professional learning communities to discuss student learning data, informs and alters professional learning as well as shapes teachers' instructional practices (Marsh, Bertrand, & Huguet, 2015). However, at times, teachers use data simplistically causing professional learning and instructional practices to remain unaltered (Marsh et al., 2015). There is a need to assist teachers in recognizing how to bridge the divide between data-driven instructional practices and practical instructional practices (Marsh et al., 2015). To assist teachers, Marsh et al. recommended three interventions that included adding literacy and data coaches to professional learning communities. Specifically, trained coaches with pedagogical and andragogical knowledge can offer school-based training and ongoing support for teachers. Marsh et al. believed coaches' expertise in content knowledge and data analysis would assist teachers in understanding the connection between data and the need for adjustment in various content areas. Professional learning communities that use data-driven reform initiatives regularly occur to form inquiry groups or data teams

(Marsh et al., 2015). Marsh et al. stated these data-driven communities involved collegial collaboration guided by instructional leaders or a facilitator and are effective in influencing teachers' thought processes and instructional practices. Marsh et al. stated discussions in data-driven professional learning communities are productive because of the nurturing environment among peers and may provide diverse expertise and information that enriches conversations and data analysis processes. Jimerson and Wayman (2015) recommended situating data analysis and its use in a sequence of organizational routines to assist teachers, coaches, and facilitators with data-driven professional learning communities. Jimerson and Wayman also recommended professional learning communities focus on converting data into actionable practices at the classroom level, and use the collective knowledge of administrative leaders, instructional leaders, and teachers with professional learning communities to gather, synthesize, and disseminate data and monitor actionable practices.

Active learning in professional development. In response to educational reform that encouraged the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices, instructional coaches often serve as facilitators of professional development (Desimone & Pak, 2017). There is a strong correlation between effective instructional coaching and improved school culture, collegial collaboration, perceptions of self-efficacy, and academic achievement (Desimone & Pak, 2017). Desimone and Pak stated strategic placement of instructional coaches is useful in systematic educational reform efforts. Such placements increase student achievement by developing teachers' understanding of adaptations needed for improved instructional practices. During professional

development, instructional coaches activate learning through embedded discussion or performance tasks with participants in specific content areas, lesson planning, data analysis, and developing professional development activities that support teacher learning (Desimone & Pak, 2017).

Desimone and Pak (2017) stated that opportunities for teachers to participate in active learning are essential in creating effective professional development sessions. The belief is that by actively learning, teachers become knowledgeable in the content-specific skills needed to increase their professional capacities (Van den Bergh, Ros, & Beijaard, 2014). Van den Bergh et al. identified collaborative learning, mutual learning, and problem-based learning as various forms of active learning. These forms, used by administrative leaders, are school-based and rely upon the needs of the school. Van den Bergh et al. contrasted active learning, where participants are involved in shared learning activities, with passive learning, where participants receive information. In active learning, instructional coaches guide teachers during learning activities that are necessary for developing a rich understanding of learning goals (Van den Bergh et al., 2014). According to Desimone and Pak coaching offers professional development participants the opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions of content matter, content-specific pedagogical approaches, and diagnosis of assessments that assist students in developing a profound understanding of subject matter content.

The application of content knowledge in professional development sessions.

Professional development that considers teachers as learners focuses on learning applications that develop teacher instructional capacity (Loughran, 2014). Loughran

argued that embedded in the myriad of ideas relating to professional development for teachers are different perceptions concerning professional self-sufficiency, professional responsibility, and expectations and norms associated with teachers as learners. Loughran suggested professional development should place an emphasis on the development of teachers' competencies and instructional practices. Loughran suggested central concepts of professional development should be the development of teachers' instructional practices and transforming teachers to transform students. Loughran asserted professional development often focuses on developing activities for teachers as opposed to focusing on developing activities to work with teachers. Meijer, Kuijpers, Boei, Vrieling, and Geijsel (2017) similarly stated the purpose of active learning is to facilitate deep learning and critical reflection and to encourage transformational change in teachers' professional development. Loughran believed there is a need for improvement in the education of teachers' knowledge, efficiency, and sense of distinctiveness and self-efficacy. The goal of professional development is thus to develop teachers' pedagogical knowledge and align that knowledge with instructional practices to produce acceptable academic achievement (Loughran, 2014). Meijer et al. (2017) suggested an effective vehicle for achieving the goal of professional development is learning from colleagues and others in the professional community.

Benson and Danjun (2013) identified four categories of pedagogical discussions: reflection, experimentation, self-regulation, and negotiation. The authors stated teachers foster autonomy in an educational setting by experimenting with various organizational and learning methods, as opposed to adopting standard pedagogical practices. Benson

and Danjun encouraged teachers to “take the first steps” in developing their understanding of their purpose, assets, and weaknesses in their educational environments. One method for teachers wanting to address the gap between pedagogical autonomy and standard pedagogical practices is to practice applicable skills during teacher education or professional development sessions. According to Benson and Danjun, teacher education or professional development sessions play an essential role in developing teachers’ professional capacity to practice autonomous pedagogical approaches in educational environments and school reform systems.

Sustaining learning in professional development trainings. Vislocky (2013) suggested effective educator professional development should be an ongoing, teacher-led, and collaborative event sustained over multiple days and weeks. Korthagen (2017) suggested aspects of effective professional development address the fundamental flaw of traditional professional development models’ inability to move beyond the mere attempt to influence teachers’ thinking. According to Korthagen professional development models need to shift the focus onto the learner’s behavior by making aspects of teacher learning personal and motivational. To create an environment that supports learning during professional development, Girvan, Conneely, and Tangney (2016) suggested a three-phase approach to introducing new pedagogical practices: the observation of learners, an iterative cycle of participation as learners, and reflective and subsequent planning. Motivating teachers to adopt new practices and make suggested changes to instructional practices becomes a reality when professional development focuses on teacher personal development and reflective activities (Girvan et al., 2016). According to

Girvan et al., reflective activities during effective professional development encourage growth in teacher instructional capacity and develop teachers' understanding of new pedagogical practices.

Patton, Parker, and Tannehill (2015) stated although teachers assume a responsible role in professional development, teacher learning is influenced by the culture and climate of the school environment, and administrative leaders are responsible for fostering an environment that is beneficial to and acceptable for teacher learning. Patton et al. stated administrative leaders should provide management support for effective professional development that supports learning initiatives and facilitates the collaborative work of teachers in an environment that sustains positivity and teacher growth. Patton et al. further asserted that teacher learning is effective when professional development is a collective effort and involves social interactions among teachers and their colleagues.

Distributed Leadership Framework. According to Tsang and Liu (2016), teachers are essential agents who have exponential impacts on students' academic achievement. Therefore, how to improve the efficacy of teachers and teaching has been an important conversation in this era of school reform. School-wide changes are affected by teachers' perceptions of critical capacity, self-efficacy, and autonomy to implement innovative and creative instructional practices (Sales, Moliner, & Amat, 2017). Sales et al. suggested teacher leaders is essential in school-wide change and should be encouraged by leaders in professional development sessions. Administrative leaders also serve as sources of influence as well as sources of initiative for effective professional

development sessions (Sales et al., 2017). Professional development sessions are meant to encourage fair opportunities for members to influence decisions, a cooperative process that encourages diversity, and an inclusive nature that expands beyond classrooms (Sales et al., 2017). Sales et al. explained that school-wide change that supports education reform is possible when the distribution of leadership is among capable members of a school community. Distributive leadership is a democratic process that encourages participative leadership that shifts along the spectrum of organizational hierarchy between administrative leaders and teachers (Sales et al., 2017). Klar, Huggins, Hammonds, and Buskey (2016) reported that administrators are increasingly being urged to distribute leadership tasks to other leaders in the school-wide community to progress school outcomes.

The distributed leadership framework contains a possible solution to the situations hierarchical leadership poses. According to Spillane (2006), the distributed leaders framework emphasizes using teachers' skills and expertise. The distributive leadership framework offers school members an environment that encourages shared authority and trust. Spillane stated distributed leadership is an alternate to customary leadership practices, which allow multiple people to share in the responsibility arranged in less fluid and emergent school reform efforts. As Lumby (2013) explained, power remains limited or at an increased level with the approval of administrative leaders, and power boundaries related to the professional community are expanded or reduced upon the approval or disapproval of administrators.

Meyers and Smylie (2017) suggested that school leaders provide and support the foundational workings of the school community. To that end, Meyers et al. recommended distributed leadership as an effective framework to address the needs of teachers and administrative leaders to facilitate longer-term results. According to Meyers et al., teachers reported elevated perceptions of connectedness and engagement and better perceptions of morale in schools that used the distributed leadership framework. To engage teachers and administrative leaders in the distributed leadership framework, Meyers et al. suggested administrative leaders afford teachers, irrespective of their position or function, with an environment and opportunities that are conducive for personal and professional growth. According to Meyers et al., administrative leaders should allocate human resources and energy in the effort to secure teacher buy-in, as it will build the perception that the school reform efforts are fair and reasonable, and to promote a working environment where teachers' engagement and motivation become a part of the school reform efforts.

Hasanvand, Zeinabadi, and Shomami, (2013) found distributive leadership has a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy due to its pragmatic nature, which encourages a proportional distribution of school leaders' workloads as well as for teachers to demonstrate leadership qualities, content expertise, and collaborative work cultures. According to Hasanvand et al., the pragmatic nature of distributive leadership impacts the overall school performance and leadership effectiveness. The collective knowledge and communal responsibilities are also essential elements that contribute to a school's overall sustainable development and serve as sources to shoulder communal

responsibilities for teachers in the profession (Hasanvand et al., 2013). Benefits from school leaders acknowledging real connections, collective knowledge, and communal responsibilities include an increase in teachers' commitment to the school's goals and strategies, positive self-efficacy, and improved experience of work (Hasanvand et al., 2013). Naicker and Mestry (2013) emphasized the complexities relating to the purpose of a school's organizational change and development and suggested leaders adopt the fluidity of distributed forms of leadership. Naicker and Mestry argued that distributed forms of leadership enact school members at various levels in the organization, which added to the complexity of a school's organizational structure. Leaders in this context should consider this complexity a collective phenomenon due to its fluid and developing nature, as opposed to being fixed to a unique phenomenon (Naicker & Mestry, 2013).

Effective professional development training. Gulamhussein (2013) reported that school leaders must create professional development projects that assist teachers in processes related to adapting, adopting, and retooling their instructional practices. Professional development availability is not the issue, however; the issue with current professional sessions is their poor record in changing teachers' instructional practice and student academic achievement (Gulamhussein, 2013). According to teachers' responses in this study, professional opportunities existed in the research sites; however, many respondents perceived that professional development sessions were ineffective and punitive. Another problem, as teachers perceived it, was that the current professional development model leaders used no longer suited its intended purpose. Gulamhussein proposed effective professional development should include workshops that focus on

student academic achievement through the provision of ongoing support for teachers.

Gulamhussein encouraged school leaders to provide a supportive environment for teachers throughout the implementation phase and the difficult challenges of adopting or retooling new instructional practices. Gulamhussein also recommended providing teachers with professional development workshops that are unique to the subject taught by teachers.

Lesaux, Burkhauser, and Kelley (2013) stated that teachers need to adapt, embrace, and retool instructional practices and pedagogical and andragogical strategies to meet the demands of state academic standards. Lesaux et al. suggested providing and implementing effective professional development strategies alongside already in place full-day professional development sessions. In this study, teachers' perceptions of morale demonstrated the need for a new model of professional development that aligns with the evolving realities of the turnaround model.

Effective professional development sessions that support instructional practices. Professional development sessions include strategies to boost morale, create an autonomous environment, increase professionalism, sustain organizational change, and encourage the sharing of andragogical conversations between teachers and administrative leaders, the district where the high school under study resides has mandated standards for professional development (Abstract County School District, 2014), which include the following:

- using data in the determination of students and teachers' learning needs,
- identifying shared objectives for students and teachers' learning,

- professional learning communities that extend teachers' knowledge and pedagogical understanding, and
- selecting and implementing effective evidence-based strategies that encourage growth.

The district encourages leaders to establish professional learning communities that increase teacher effectiveness and changes in teachers' instructional practice while increasing academic achievement (Abstract County School District, 2014). The use of resources during professional development should be associated with effective professional learning, promote equities, and achieve results for teachers and students. The district also mandated the use of data from multiple sources to enrich professional learning communities. Schools with the district are mandated to facilitate weekly professional development meetings, according to district standards.

Olivant (2014), in an extensive 2-year analysis of several thousand published studies, published 400 studies on professional development. Olivant stated standardization diminishes teachers' autonomy and control over school-wide tasks and weakens or eradicates teachers' authority over instructional choices and school-wide development efforts. Blanks (2013) listed 16 common characteristics of effective professional development programs. Blanks' list, although suggestive, contains only one (selecting and implementing effective evidence-based strategies that encourage growth) of the district's characteristics of professional development. Blanks argued one of the problems with state-mandated professional development is that states only provide broad guidance governing teacher professional development. Another problem Blanks

identified is that the educational field lacks evidence-based studies on the correlation between teacher professional development and its influence on improved academic achievement.

According to Zareie, Nasr, Mirshahjafari, and Liaghadtar (2016), effective professional development takes on an active role in illuminating paths to educational achievement for all involved parties in the educational community. Zareie et al. suggested teacher training during professional development should provide teachers with an environment conducive to understanding fundamental concepts and principles used in teaching and leading, and should provide teachers with the ability to present methods to others. Such an environment should be supportable, sustainable, and in alignment with the vision, concepts, acts, inspirations and reflections of its school community (Zareie et al., 2016). The same authors proposed professional development should continuously develop teachers into specialists in their profession and provide teachers with the educational opportunities that lead to changes in their instructional and leadership capabilities. Kruger, van Rensburg, and de Witt, (2016) similarly asserted leaders conducting professional development must also meet teachers' expectations and hold teachers accountable for their learning. Zareie et al. recommended providing teachers with current pedagogical and andragogical information to fill the gaps teachers identify and prepare teachers for a dynamic presence in the school community.

Bills, Giles, and Rogers (2016) stated professional development enhances teacher quality and is worthwhile and valued. However, standards-based professional development reduces teachers' learning and performance to measurable aspects without

engaging in collaborative professional learning communities (Bills et al., 2016). Bills et al. suggested a renewed interest in the teacher as the learner, which would shift the focus from teacher quality to how administrative leaders and teachers can work together in the advancement of professional development that supports the school culture and fosters professional growth. When professional development focuses on teachers as learners, teachers develop perceptions of being “privileged” to be included in an “enriched learning culture” as opposed to being in professional development where administrators diminish teachers’ roles (Bills et al., 2016). Teachers and leaders express their lived experiences in this context as being in and feeling seen and do not consider professional development as an event but as a constant relational encounter that recognizes teachers’ breadth of knowledge that supports all school community members’ teaching practices (Bills et al., 2016). According to Stewart (2014), teachers are invested in the collective effort when leaders considered teachers as learners. Teachers will exhibit a reluctance to share or productively receive advice in an uncomfortable learning environment. Impactful teacher learning thus happens when teachers are involved in a community of their peers working toward a shared goal (Stewart, 2014).

Miller et al. (2016) conducted a multiyear analysis to evaluate the influence of balanced leaders professional development, such as the distributed leadership framework, on learning, perceptions, and behaviors. Miller et al. concluded professional development that focuses on balanced leaders generates essential and positive effects on perceptions of efficacy. Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo, and Hargreaves (2015) shared similar findings, stating investing in conditions that develop and encourage teachers and the school community to

take on individualistic, professional, and communal accountability for continuous development and achievement for students is more important than extending customary societal expectations and requirements. Brown and Militello (2016) further stated administrative leaders is uniquely positioned to transform professional development in schools into effective learning communities because of their knowledge of teachers' pedagogical needs, grade and content level needs, and overall needs of the school.

Project Description

I designed an implementable timetable in the professional development project to support administrative leaders, and teachers in the school. The goal of the distributed leadership professional development program is to provide administrative leaders and teachers with an understanding of the distributed leadership framework which will lead to a collaborative effort in the small Southeastern high school's educational reform. The professional development project is designed to take place over a period of 4 days. The optimal time to conduct professional development sessions is during the beginning of the academic school year. However, the 4 days needed for allocation of professional development sessions are flexible enough to occur at any time of the school year. According to teachers' perceptions of professional development, experienced teachers would benefit from the subject matter of the distributed leadership framework. It would assist school leaders in delegating school reform tasks as well as provide teachers with guidance on collegial collaboration in goal setting to achieve effective school reform. The focal audiences for professional development sessions are administrative leaders and teachers, as they are the stakeholders accountable for planning and implementing

appropriate school reform efforts. It is also permissible for ancillary staff members (lunchroom attendants, custodians, and security staff members) to attend, though it is not required.

I will present teachers and administrative leaders with evidence-based literature and implementable best practices that foster collaborative efforts while maintaining the focal points of the conservatorship process throughout the professional development project. I along with teachers and administrative leaders will create a cross-comparison list of teacher items and administrative items. The three topics on the last day (processes based on data, evidence-based literature, and best practices and processes that reinforce the overall goal of the conservatorship process) will capitalize on the collegial relationship established during the professional development sessions. The focal point of the last day is to consider possible obstructions to the implementation of aspects of the distributed leadership framework. Professional development sessions offer teachers and administrative leaders the opportunity to dialogue to rebuild relationships, understand leadership roles, and develop processes that assist in continued collaborative efforts to increase the academic achievement of students.

Project Resources

Administrators using the professional development project will provide teachers with the opportunity to become shared partners in school reform efforts. The professional development sessions also focus on the needs of the school, the needs of administrative leaders and teachers, the school improvement plan, accessibility of resources, and expected administrative leaders and teacher attrition and teacher performance and

practice. The professional development project includes opportunities, in each session, for teachers and administrators to collaborate across the leadership spectrum, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the distributed leadership framework in the research site.

After Walden University's Chief Academic Officer has approved the project study, I will schedule a meeting with the conservator and school administrator to share the research study results, to discuss aspects of the distributed leadership professional development project, and to extend the offer to implement the professional development project (see Appendix C). Upon receiving permission to conduct the professional development sessions, I will discuss how aspects of the distributed leadership professional development project can be altered to fit the needs of the school. The high school under study currently uses professional development to inform teachers of information. Resources such as a meeting room, notepads, and pens are currently in place to conduct the professional development project. In a semistructured meeting, I will ask the conservator and administrator to collaborate in ensuring the professional development project meets school needs. Administrative leaders and teachers may assist in presenting information and spurring collegial discussions, if desired.

Because of budgetary reasons, the high school under study may or may not possess resources that are readily available, to suit the needs of this professional development project. In that event, I will supply the resources needed for this professional development, including:

- a laptop or computer for the PowerPoint presentation (facilitator owned),
- a projector to display the PowerPoint presentation (facilitator owned),

- post-it notes (facilitator owned),
- a display easel (facilitator owned),
- notepads (estimated cost \$28.00 for 48 from a local stationery store),
- pens and pencils (estimated cost \$7.00 from a local stationery store),
- markers (estimated cost \$32.00 for 48 from a local stationery store), and
- anchor chart paper (estimated cost \$66.00 for 75 sheets from a local stationery store).

To cover the cost of these resources, I will use funds in my teacher's savings account. Teachers and administrators may be considered as resources for speakers if suggested by the conservator or school administrative members. The high school under study's teacher pool is diverse in experience and knowledge, and teachers are valuable resources as direct contact agents with students. The conservator, administrative leaders, and teachers are valuable resources who will ensure the school and district's visions and goals are the focal points in the professional development sessions. Teachers and administrators are unlikely to request compensation, as this is a customary practice as explained by teachers in this study. Teachers in this study stated teachers and administrative leaders currently participate as speakers and facilitators during professional development meetings.

Potential Barriers

The allocation of time and resources are considerable barriers for professional development sessions. Scheduling professional development sessions may interfere with administrative duties or may encounter scheduling conflicts with administrative meetings.

Scheduling professional development sessions with teachers may interfere with teaching planning time. I will request to conduct professional development sessions during professional development days that occur before the onset of a new school year. If those days are not available, I will request to conduct professional development sessions during district-mandated professional development times. The professional development project is not intended to replace current professional development topics or meetings. The professional development project is intended to enhance current professional development topics and meetings by strategies to incorporate teachers' voice, experience, and expertise. Therefore, the sequential order of professional development sessions is necessary; however, it is not necessary to conduct sessions during four consecutive days.

Obtaining administrative leaders and teachers' buy-in for the distributed leadership professional development sessions may also be considered a barrier to successful implementation. To promote an environment that will encourage buy-in, I will express to administrative leaders and teachers how a shift from the existing hierarchical structure to a shared structure will affect social change throughout the school and how this social change may be beneficial to students' academic achievement. I will also express to administrative leaders and teachers that such a shift may be achievable given the realities and responsibilities of their current situation and perceptions. Because of the flexibility and ongoing support of the distributed leadership professional development sessions, I believe the completion of all professional development sessions could happen during the first weeks of a new school year.

Project Implementation

The timetable (see Table 11) is contingent upon the conservator and the administrative leader's approval of the professional development project and will be included in the presentation of the professional development sessions.

Table 11

Distributed Leadership Professional Development Timeline

Time to PD implementation	Tasks to complete
	Present qualitative study findings to conservator, administrative leaders, and teachers.
4 Months	<p>Present need for the distributed leadership professional development project.</p> <p>Request approval from conservator and school administrative leaders to implement professional development project.</p>
3 Months	<p>Meet with administrative leaders and teachers to present need for the distributed leadership professional development project. Obtain administrative leaders' buy-in.</p> <p>Request assistance in locating a professional development room.</p> <p>Work with administrative leaders and teachers to understand the short-term and long-term needs of students, teachers, and the school.</p> <p>Create budget.</p>
2 Months	Use the budget to print items necessary for the professional development project.
1 Month	<p>Meet with administrative leaders and teachers to ensure the availability of professional development room.</p> <p>Ensure room and seating is appropriate for professional development sessions.</p>
2 Weeks	<p>Make seating chart to use, if necessary.</p> <p>Meet with teachers to introduce myself and explain aspects of the distributed leadership professional development project.</p> <p>Use the budget to purchase snack items for professional development sessions.</p>
Day of the professional development event	Welcome, everyone. Ensure sign-in sheet is complete.

Based on the school's current professional development meeting time frame, I will adjust each professional development session to meet the timeframe requirements.

However, each professional development session will require an estimated time frame of 90 minutes to 3 hours. All school members will sign in during each session. Flexible seating arrangements will allow for teachers and administrative members to collaborate without the sense of a hierarchical system. If teachers section off to one side and administrative leaders section off to another, then I will use a seating arrangement chart such as a circle chart to encourage collaborative grouping in the professional development setting.

In Session 1 of 8, teachers will receive content information and available links to professional development resources. I will guide the professional development session and provide teachers and administrative leaders with a presentation of the overview and outcomes of the study along with the request to implement subsequent sessions. Sessions 2 through 8 will consist of a mixture of leadership activities and team-building exercises during breakout sessions to discuss organizational leaders and school needs. Organizational leadership discussions will include building instructional leadership teams and content leaders groups.

In Session 2 of 8, teachers will receive content information on expanding the leadership spectrum beyond the top-down approach through a PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint will include information about responsibilities related to the distributed leadership framework and how to lead a team efficiently. The session will end with a leadership activity where teachers will choose quotes from leaders that best describe their leadership mindset. During a gallery walk, other teachers will view quotes and predict how members of that leader's team will respond to the quote.

In Session 3 of 8, teachers will define behaviors of team members being forced to collaborate and team members of participative educational collaborations. Content included in the PowerPoint will include information on how participative collaboration increases team member motivation and commitment. The session will conclude with a team building activity where teachers list attributes of forced participation meetings and discuss strategies to overcome the attributes of forced participation.

In Session 4 of 8, teachers will develop an understanding that individualistic goals and team goals often work together to develop a team. Teachers will understand how teachers and administrators connect their creativity and innovation to individualism that promotes efficacy in teamwork. The session will end with teachers holding mock discussions with team members on an individual development plan, then discussing how the individualistic development plan aligns with the school's vision and goals.

In Session 5 of 8, teachers will discuss how participating in collaborative education uncovers underlying issues that affect organizational behaviors. Teachers will discuss how to shift from unwritten organizational behaviors to a system of accountability. Teachers will develop team goals and expectations during breakout sessions. Teachers will create a team improvement plan that supports organizational behaviors.

Sessions 6 through 8 will focus on school-wide academic achievement and establish protocols for teacher teams and school protocols that sustain the distributed leadership framework. In Session 6 of 8, teachers and administrative leaders will consider and present team improvement strategies and school-wide improvement strategies, in the

professional development sessions. Teachers and administrative leaders will also discuss with professional development participants how team improvement strategies and school-wide improvement strategies are related to school reform. If the team improvement strategies and school-wide improvement strategies are not aligned, teachers and administrative leaders will work together to align the plans. Teachers and administrative leaders will discuss barriers to efficiently implement the plans and develop strategies to overcome the barriers.

In Session 7 of 8, teachers and administrative leaders will focus on adjusting educational processes to address the needs of the data. Teachers will adjust educational processes and present to professional development participant evidence-based literature and best practices that align with the school's educational processes. Administrative leaders will assist teachers in understanding school-wide data and delineate accountability and expectations to the instructional leadership team. The leaders team will discuss organizational goals with team members accountable for achieving organizational expectations.

In Session 8 of 8, teachers and administrative leaders will present strategies on how to discuss the distributed processes and the overall goal of the conservatorship process to the school community. Teachers and administrative leaders will establish processes that reinforce and sustain the distributed leadership framework. Session 8 will conclude the distributed leadership professional development project, during which participants will receive the professional development survey. Administrative leaders and

teachers will be encouraged to share how the sessions will help support the school's vision and continuous work improvement plans.

Roles and Responsibilities

I will assume the role of an instructional coach and facilitator during the professional development sessions. During each session, I will collaborate with administrative leaders and teachers to research and adjust sessions to focus on the needs of the school community, teachers' critical feedback, and objectives of the conservatorship process. I will assume the role of presenter during the professional development sessions; however, administrative leaders and teachers may also serve as presenters during sessions 6 through 8, as session 6 through 8 will focus on incorporating school-specific topics into the distributed leadership framework. I will request that potential presenters share the content of their presentations with me before presenting to ensure the continuity of the professional development sessions.

Project Evaluation Plan

Following Spaulding (2014), I created a set of objective-based benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. I will use objective-based benchmarks to provide data that may compliment the summative data collection. I will use the objective-based benchmarks to mark the achievement progress of the project by focusing on participants' perceived experiences and effectiveness of the professional development project. According to Spaulding (2014), objective-based benchmarks assist in evaluating specific outcomes that will define the success or failure of a program using data and pre-established criteria. Establishing objective-based benchmarks will allow for a detailed

evaluation of professional development sessions as opposed to conducting a professional development evaluation at the completion of the project. The formative data collected during the professional development project will be used to alter and improve the project. Spaulding (2014) stated objective-based benchmarks are used to focus an evaluation on a series of preestablished objectives and is used to obtain specific data to assess whether the objectives were met in the program.

I will review each objective-based benchmark survey after the applicable session and provide immediate responses through open discussion during the closure of the next professional development session. Each professional development participant will receive an objective-based benchmark evaluation survey at the end of Sessions 2, 4, 6, and 8 (see Appendix D). Objective-based benchmark surveys will be anonymous, and participants will be encouraged not to place identifying information on the evaluation forms. I will assure participants their responses will remain confidential and attend to their survey responses promptly. Table 12 contains the objective-based benchmarks for the project.

Table 12

Professional Development Objective-Based Benchmarks Assessment

Objective	Benchmark
1	≥70% of professional development participants understand how to develop an unbiased collegial relationship that assists in the expanding of the leadership spectrum focused on academic problem-solving.
2	≥70% of professional development participants understand how the blending of individualistic goals and team goals assists in developing collaborative educational participation.
3	≥70% of professional development participants understand how to develop collaborative participation to assist in the school-centered distributed leadership process.
4	≥70% of professional development participants understand processes that support academic achievement, the distributed leadership process, and the conservatorship process.

A summative evaluation of the professional development sessions will provide feedback about the sessions and will be used to adapt future sessions (see Appendix E). According to Spaulding (2014), researchers use summative evaluations to collect quantitative or qualitative data to measure results and determine how those results relate to the overall evaluation of the professional development sessions and their success. Each participant will receive a summative evaluation survey at the conclusion of the distributed leadership professional development project. Summative surveys will be anonymous, and participants will be encouraged not to place identifying information on the evaluation forms. I will assure professional development participants their responses will remain confidential and will attend to their survey responses promptly. I will review each

summative survey and provide an overview of responses to the administrative leaders and teachers via email or face-to-face meeting. Surveys will seek participants' perceptions of line items related to professional development relevance, resources, effectiveness, session length, presenters, and instructional delivery. Surveys will also include a section for open-ended suggestions. Administrative leaders and teachers may use the collected data from benchmark goal surveys or summative evaluation surveys to improve future professional development sessions. Administrative leaders and teachers at the research site are stakeholders who will have an immediate influence on the professional development project and will implement sessions at the research site. Administrative leaders and teachers may also use the collected data to provide ongoing support such as specific training throughout the distributed leadership activities.

Project Implications

The professional development project holds implications for the local school community and district. The professional development project contains professional development sessions designed to stimulate and support positive social change by presenting teachers and administrators with strategies to address teacher morale and, in turn, teacher retention rates at the research site. Teachers are the catalyst for spurring social change in this professional development project. Administrators are also agents of change as they will provide opportunities that increase teachers' knowledge, self-efficacy, skills, and morale. Teachers and administrative leaders have the opportunity to advocate for social change through their increased understanding of teachers' perceptions of morale by fostering an environment where stakeholders work collaboratively to

increase teacher retention rates. Increased teacher retention rates may further the success of the high school under study.

Local Community

The small Southeastern high school's retention rate was lower than average, during the academic years of 2012-2016 (State Department of Education, 2017). In response, I examined teachers' perceptions of morale as a possible contributor to the retention rate. This professional development project contains strategies from the distributed leadership framework that administrators may use in efforts to improve teacher morale and in their efforts to foster a more inclusive environment. The recommended professional development project is designed to be incorporated into the school's current professional development program and designed to provide administrators with an understanding of strategies to include teachers' perceptions, learning habits, experiences, and expertise.

Schools are places where people come to experience education; administrators and teachers must reconsider their thought process about those in their local school community. Newcomb (2003) argued that to educate students well, school superintendents and lunchroom workers alike need to examine how they consider their jobs. The local school community must become cognizant of embedded norms, which can hinder their performance or shield the school community from new possibilities. According to Newcomb (2003), educational organizations should have a collaborative environment with a focus on thought processes and collegial interactions throughout the school. By altering embedded norms and policies, changes in performance and practices

occur. Newcomb (2003) suggested local school members who participate and engage in a collaborative manner with surrounding communities offer the school's administrators and teachers increased opportunities to share educational visions with the surrounding communities. Through such altered interactions, embedded norms, and policies, collaborative school members establish new capacities for foundational accomplishments. Administrative leaders, at times, must go beyond customary organizational norms and barriers to share leadership objectives in the adoption of the distributed leadership culture. Pool (1997) believed that school faculty and school administrators with a commitment to what is best for students and willingness to take risks to help them learn are innovative teachers who desire to make a difference or effect change in their schools.

Importance of Project in Larger Context

Teacher morale is essential in many schools throughout the district and the nation. This distributed leadership professional development project recommendation may not only be influential at the research site but also schools in the district undergoing the conservatorship process. This project study may also serve as a framework to other districts in other cities that are using comprehensive turnaround strategies. This project study may be used by other school districts that are looking to increase teacher morale and teacher retention rates during the turnaround process in various schools. Administrative leaders may use the project in conjunction with their current school reform efforts and with their current professional development programs, to promote social change in their local school community.

This professional development project may be informative and implemented by any school undergoing a district-mandated turnaround process or conservatorship process. This professional development project may positively influence administrative leaders and teachers in the district by promoting a leadership shift and the development of participative collaboration that addresses the needs of both the conservatorship process and teachers, to elevate teachers' perceptions of morale. The professional development project will also afford administrative leaders, teachers, and local school community leaders the opportunity to improve collaborative sessions lacking in the current professional development models. The implementation of the project may facilitate social change as the local school community becomes aware of how including teachers' voices, experiences, and expertise in school reform efforts can assist in increasing teachers' perceptions of morale and therefore their retention rates. Administrative leaders and teachers possessing such an understanding may increase school reform efforts, by having a holistic approach that incorporates teachers' voices, experiences, and expertise into the school reform efforts.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The distributed leadership professional development project was created to address teachers' perspectives of not being included in school reform efforts. Section 3 contained the implementable distributed leadership professional development project stemming from the data contained in Section 2, coupled with the qualitative information from Section 1. The goal of the distributed leadership professional development program is to provide administrative leaders and teachers with an understanding of the distributed leadership framework, which will lead to a collaborative effort in the small Southeastern high school's educational reform. Sessions in the project address:

- the environment of distributed leadership that creates a foundation for continuous educational improvement,
- replacing forced educational participation with collaborative educational participation,
- selecting school-centered processes with the intent of establishing long-term educational inclusiveness in the school, and
- securing processes that provide an ongoing system focused on professional growth and academic achievement.

Each session will address teachers' perspectives of (a) the conservatorship process, (b) teacher retention, and (c) teacher morale. Each session also stemmed from the review of the literature in Section 1.

I created the professional development project to support administrative leaders and teachers in their efforts to distribute leadership responsibilities throughout the school. As administrative leaders and teachers conduct professional development sessions, teachers can provide suggestions specific to the high school's student body that address the cultural and educational needs of the students. I developed the project to assist the conservator, administrative leaders, and teachers in providing a collaborative environment meant to spur transformative support as opposed to quid pro quo support. A significant strength of this project is its flexibility to meet the needs of participating administrators and teachers and its flexibility to be manipulated to provide support to teachers and administrators in the school.

A noted limitation of this distributed leadership professional development project is the ability of administrative leaders to relinquish leadership responsibilities to teachers and teachers' ability to accept leadership responsibilities with fidelity. The implementation of the project relies on the adoption of all components of the project by administrative leaders and teachers. Administrative leaders and teachers are both needed to achieve the goals of the project. The administrative leaders may or may not implement the professional development sessions into their current school reform model. Teachers may also limit the project by displaying preferred treatment to an individual (or a group) who has insignificant capabilities to lead or by displaying a preferred endorsement of instructional practices that do not align with best practices. The project needs committed members to ensure its success.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

An alternative approach such as the use of qualitative data obtained from a longitudinal study could be used in observational studies of teachers to research common traits of teachers' perceptions and attitudes over an extended period of time. An alternative approach to support teachers' perceptions of morale would consist of allowing each teacher to meet with administrative leaders or a representative of the administrative team to discuss how the current leadership framework affects their morale. This alternative approach would provide teachers with a platform to express their perceptions to administrative leaders and allow administrative leaders the opportunity to identify needed areas of improvement to teachers in a private session. Another approach would be for the administrative leaders to hire instructional coaches who would oversee each department in the high school. Instructional coaches would be responsible for developing and overseeing professional development sessions, ensuring administrative leaders hear teachers' voices during such sessions.

An alternative to the professional development project is the development and use of an interschool visitation process as a method of improving teacher morale. The interschool process would consist of administrators and teachers selecting comparable schools to visit (Archibong, 2012). According to Archibong (2012), interschool visitations enhance teacher morale as teachers become cognizant of how comparable teachers process comparable situations. Another alternative to the professional development project is the development and use of teacher leadership programs. Teacher leadership programs may inspire teachers to instigate positive social and educational

changes in the high school under study (Lowery-Moore, Latimer, & Villate, 2016).

According to Lowery-Moore et al. (2016), administrators who develop teacher leadership programs would develop the program to nurture the development of self-efficacy and the aspirations of teachers beyond their comfort zones and adopt the concept of exercising influence on school reform. The administrator could use either alternative program to develop teacher morale and influence teacher retention rates at the small Southeastern high school.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

During the project development, I considered potential viewpoints that could alter the outcome. I developed this project to improve professional development in the high school under study because improving professional development may afford teachers and administrative leaders with opportunities to provide strategies to increase teacher morale, leading to an increase in teacher retention. I created this project using various research models, committee members' feedback, the Walden University project study template, and Walden University qualitative checklist. Using the collected and analyzed data, I developed the distributed leadership professional development project, which when implemented, may have a positive influence on teachers' perceptions of morale at the research site. I presented several recommendations that may also be useful in increasing teacher morale, such as:

- providing a platform for teachers to express their perceptions of the conservatorship process;
- the hiring of instructional coaches by administrative leaders; and

- providing the opportunity for teachers to share their perceptions of morale, curriculum, and instructional practices in a group setting.

I further presented objective-based benchmarks and a summative evaluation plan to evaluate the effectiveness of this project. According to Spaulding (2014), researchers use summative evaluations to collect quantitative or qualitative data to measure results and determine how those results relate to the overall evaluation of professional development sessions and their success. Along with the research site's administrative leaders, I will use the objective-based benchmark evaluation to mark the progress of the project by assessing participants' perceived experiences and effectiveness throughout the professional development project. The evaluation system will consist of four goals, which provide ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of each session in the project study. As a collective group, the research site's administrative leaders, teachers, and I will assess the effectiveness of the project through participant surveys. Administrator and teacher buy-in is necessary for the success of the project and will therefore require the collection of project attendance records and project survey records. The goal of the distributed leadership professional development program is to provide administrative leaders and teachers with an understanding of the distributed leadership framework that will lead to a collaborative effort in the small Southeastern high school's educational reform. To this end, data obtained from goal-based benchmark evaluations will be analyzed at the end of each session to determine if the project is achieving its base goal. If teachers' negative perceptions of morale persist, the collective group of teachers will revise the project as needed in the attempt to improve teachers' perceptions of morale.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Researchers and educators have identified the influence of teacher morale on teacher retention rates as a problem that has affected many schools nationwide (Westervelt, 2016). The influence of teacher morale on job satisfaction was addressed by educational policymakers, who decided it was imperative to investigate the impact of teacher morale on the educational environment (Bosso, 2017). Although there is a significant correlation between teacher morale and teacher retention, many school districts have limited studies on teacher's perspectives, issues, and beliefs (Bosso, 2017). The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how aspects of turnaround strategies influenced teacher morale, which contribute to the small Southeastern high school's lower than average teacher retention rate. This study may also contribute to the existing body of research on the topic of teacher morale.

I used a qualitative approach to conduct a study of teacher morale by investigating teachers' perceptions of their experiences with the conservatorship process at a small Southeastern high school. The findings indicated teachers did not perceive their role as being part of the school reform effort due to administrators and newly hired teachers disallowing experienced teachers' expertise, experience, voice, and opinions in the high school's reform efforts. Teachers expressed that the school currently has a professional development program; however, teachers hold perceptions that facilitators of the program unfairly discount experienced teachers, and facilitators use the current program punitively. Teachers also mentioned that teacher morale at the research site is low and the research site had the highest absenteeism record in the district. To address teacher

morale, I recommended a professional development project to provide teachers and administrative leaders with an understanding of strategies that may increase teacher morale, which may lead to an increase in teacher retention rates at the research site. The distributed leadership professional development project potential influence on social change will be guided by the collegial relationship between administrators and teachers, at the high school under study.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications for Positive Social Change

This study may help to shift current school reform efforts by offering strategies that may be beneficial to those looking to change the way administrative leaders view teachers during school reform efforts. A social change may occur if administrative leaders develop positive perceptions of teachers' importance, experience, and expertise during school reform efforts. This study holds implications for social transformation throughout the local school community. The study will afford administrative leaders, teachers, and the local school community with resources to incorporate the distributed leadership professional development project into their existing professional development program to improve collegial collaboration and develop leader-training models for teachers. The study may also have social implications for other schools in the district, as the project is flexible to accommodate various school systems.

There are further social change implications of this study. The distributed leadership professional development project may lead to improved andragogical practice in the professional development, causing a positive social change through the distribution

of leadership responsibilities across the school's social and educational construct, particularly in teachers' professional learning communities. The professional development is structured to provide administrative leaders and teachers with an understanding of strategies that may increase teacher morale. Therefore, this professional development project has the potential to provide a foundation for schools undergoing the conservatorship process. The foundation of this professional development is flexible and therefore could be altered at various schools in the district, thus creating professional communities prepared to address teachers' need to feel included in school reform efforts. Increasing teachers' perceptions of morale may lead to improved teacher retention rates.

Directions for Future Research

The findings of this qualitative study were limited; I obtained data from only eight participants from the same high school. Future research could include other schools in the school district's boundaries. Further research could also include schools in other school districts in the state, as many districts in the state use similar comprehensive turnaround strategies. In this qualitative study, the focus was on teachers' perceptions of morale as a possible contributing factor in lower than average teacher retention rates. A researcher may further this study in future studies by including observations of administrative leaders and teacher interactions, and other collegial interactions in professional learning communities. Such observations could provide a more objective view of andragogical practices at the research site(s). Additionally, future researchers could further this study with the use a quantitative approach or methods to investigate teachers' influence in professional development.

Conclusion

School reform is a continuous process that aims to increase student academic achievement. School reform should not seek to penalize teachers for lower than average student academic achievement without consideration of factors beyond teachers' realm of influence. Teachers in this study stated they felt pressure to increase students' test scores and feared for their teaching positions if test scores did not meet adequate yearly progress projections. School reform efforts should not seek to demoralize teachers by silencing teachers' voices, expertise, and experiences. Teachers in this study stated the conservator did not listen to voices during the conservatorship process. Instead, school reform efforts should embrace teachers' diverse levels of experience, suggestions and opinions, and expertise. Future research must consider how to meet school reform needs while meeting the human capital needs of the school and school districts throughout the application of the project.

In this study, I used a qualitative approach to investigate how aspects of turnaround strategies influenced teachers' perceptions of morale as they contributed to the lower than average teacher retention rates in a small Southeastern high school. The findings of the research demonstrated the need for collegial collaboration in school reform efforts. The finding of the research suggests a framework for a 4-day distributed leadership professional development project that provides guidance and support to teaching and administrative leaders, with the intent to improve teacher morale and increase teachers' retention rates at the research site. This study may enrich teachers' perceived level of morale and attend to teachers' desire to be included in school reform

efforts, increasing teacher retention rates. In Section 4, I provided recommendations for future research, as well as an analysis of the scholarship needed to complete this doctoral journey. In doing so, I began to understand the depth of my growth as a scholar and student. As a doctoral student, I understand the need for objectivity in analyzing data and conducting thorough research. Finally, organizing and conducting this study and developing a project addressing a local problem increased my social awareness about relevant issues facing the field of education.

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Appendix A: Distributed Leadership Professional Development

Goal: The goal of the distributed leadership professional development program is to provide administrative leaders and teachers with an understanding of the distributed leadership framework which will lead to a collaborative effort in the school's educational reform.

Objectives: to develop unbiased collegial relationships that blend individualist goals and team goals that assists in expanding the leadership spectrum to foster collaborative educational participation that focuses processes that support academic achievement, academic problem-solving, the distributed leadership process as well as the conservatorship process. The development of processes that support academic achievement, distributed leadership process as well as the conservatorship process.

Learning Outcomes: Administrative leaders and teachers will develop collaborative participation in the local school community. The administrative leaders and teachers will use their understanding of the distributed leadership framework to focus on teacher morale and students' academic achievement. The administrative leaders and teachers will use the distributed leadership professional development project based on school-wide needs.

Introduction:

Welcome statement

Slides presenting the distributed leadership framework with research data, results and slides supporting the need for the distributed leadership framework are as follows.

Overview of the distributed leadership professional development project.

Statement of purpose and objectives of the professional development sessions.

Outline of professional development sessions.

Establishing guidelines for sharing of information.

Establishing the benefits of an unbiased environment.

Session 1: Developing collegial relationships that adjust along the organizational leadership spectrum

8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Registration

8:30 a.m.- 11:00 a.m.: Teachers will receive content information and available links to professional development resources. I will facilitate the professional development session and provide teachers and administrative leadership with a presentation of the overview and results of the qualitative study and the request to implement subsequent professional development sessions.

Session 2: Distributed Leadership Mindset: Expanding the leadership spectrum beyond the top-down approach with a focus on academic problem-solving.

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. Afternoon meet and greet

12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Teachers will receive content information on expanding the leadership spectrum beyond the top-down approach through a PowerPoint presentation. The PowerPoint will include information about the responsibilities of distributive leadership and how to lead a team efficiently.

The session will end with a leadership activity where teachers will choose quotes from leaders that best describes their leadership mindset. During a gallery walk, other teachers will view quotes and predict how members of that leader's team will respond to the quote.

Session 3: Define behaviors of forced educational collaboration and collaborative educational participation.

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Registration and morning meet and greet.

8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Teachers will define behaviors of team members being forced to collaborate and team members of participative educational collaborations. Content included in the PowerPoint will include information on how participative collaboration increases team member motivation and commitment. The session will conclude with a team building activity where teachers list attributes of forced participation meetings and discuss how strategies to overcome the attributes of forced participation.

Session 4: Leader together leader apart: Understanding that leadership is a term that is based on individualistic goals as well as team goals.

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. Afternoon meet and greet

12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Teachers will develop an understanding that individualistic goals and team goals often work together to develop a team. Teachers will understand how teachers

and administrators connect their creativity and innovation to individualism that promotes efficacy in teamwork. The session will end with teachers holding mock discussions with team members on an individual development plan than holding discussion how the individualistic development plan aligns with the school's vision and goals.

Session 5: How collaborative educational participation uncovers underlying issues related to school structures, educational operation procedures that affect organizational behaviors.

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.: Morning meet and greet

8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.: Teachers will discuss how participating in collaborative education uncovers underlying issues that affect organizational behaviors. Teachers will discuss how to shift from unwritten organization behaviors to a system of accountability. Teachers will develop team goals and expectations during break-out sessions. Teachers will team improvement plan that supports organizational behaviors.

Session 6: Select school centered distributed leadership processes

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Afternoon meet and greet

12:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.: Will focus on school-wide academic achievement and establish team and school protocols that sustain the distributed leadership framework. Session 6 of 8 teachers and administrative leadership will consider team improvement plans and school-wide improvement plans and discuss how the two are related. If the team improvement plans and school-wide improvement plans are not aligned, teachers and administrative leadership will work together to align the plans. Teachers and administrative leadership will discuss barriers to efficiently implement the plans and develop strategies to overcome the barriers.

Session 7: Select school centered distributed leadership processes

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.: Morning meet and greet

8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.: Teachers and administrative leadership will focus on adjusting educational processes to address the needs of the data. Teachers will adjust educational processes based on research-based literature and best practices. Administrative leadership will assist teachers in understanding school-wide data and delineate accountability and expectations to the instructional leadership team. The leadership team will discuss with

organizational goals and team members accountable for achieving expectations.

Session 8: Processes that reinforcement the overall goal of the conservatorship process.

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Afternoon meet and greet

12:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.: Teachers and administrative leadership will discuss how to share processes and the overall goal of the conservatorship process to the school community and establish processes that will reinforce and sustain the distributed leadership framework.

<p>1</p> <h2>Distributed Leadership Professional Development</h2> <p>Louis J. Lane Doctoral Candidate Walden University</p> <p>WALDEN UNIVERSITY <i>A higher degree. A higher purpose.</i></p>	<p>2</p> <h2>Distributed Leadership Professional Development</h2> <p>Louis J. Lane Doctoral Candidate Walden University</p> <p>WALDEN UNIVERSITY <i>A higher degree. A higher purpose.</i></p>
<p>3</p> <h2>Developing Collegial Relationships</h2> <p>[Day 1 A.M. Session]</p> <p>Understanding how collegial relationships are formed</p> <p>A shift must be made from: A shift must be made to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchical relationships (Top Down Process) • Autocratic relationships (Tell) • Negative communal relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mixture consisting of hierarchical and collegial relationship (distributed) • Democratic/Collegial (Co-determined) • Positive communal relationships <p>WALDEN UNIVERSITY <i>A higher degree. A higher purpose.</i></p>	<p>4</p> <h2>Developing Collegial Relationships</h2> <p>[Day 1 A.M. Session]</p> <p>Understanding how collegial relationships are formed</p> <p>A shift must be made from: A shift must be made to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchical relationships (Top Down Process) • Autocratic relationships (Tell) • Negative communal relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A mixture consisting of hierarchical and collegial relationship (distributed) • Democratic/Collegial (Co-determined) • Positive communal relationships <p>WALDEN UNIVERSITY <i>A higher degree. A higher purpose.</i></p>

5

Developing Collegial Relationships

(Day 1 A.M. Session)

Understanding how collegial relationships are formed

A shift must be made from:

A shift must be made to:

- Hierarchical relationships
(Top Down Process)
- Autocratic relationships
(Tell)
- Negative communal relationships
- A mixture consisting of hierarchical and collegial relationship (distributed)
- Democratic/Collegial (Co-determined)
- Positive communal relationships

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6

Developing Collegial Relationships

(Day 1 A.M. Session)

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7

Developing Collegial Relationships

(Day 1 A.M. Session)

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8

Developing Collegial Relationships

(Day 1 A.M. Session)

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A shift must be made to:

- Hierarchical relationships
(Top Down Process)
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- A mixture consisting of hierarchical and collegial relationship (distributed)
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- Positive communal relationships

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9.

Developing Collegial Relationships

(Day 1 A.M. Session)

- Having presented processes to develop collegial relationships, leadership can be distributed to accentuate the team approach.
- The presented processes is essential for schools undergoing the conservatorship process but can be modified for other schools within the district.
- The distributed leadership framework works well as a effective leadership tool throughout the school's social and educational constructs

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11.

Expanding the Leadership Spectrum

(Day 1 P.M. Session)

Understanding how to encourage future leaders

A shift must be made from:

A shift must be made to:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing on processes and tools Transactional leadership style Responding to change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing on individuals and interactions Transformation leadership style Leading change |
|---|---|

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10.

Expanding the Leadership Spectrum

(Day 1 P.M. Session)

Uncovering ways to help others help leaders

The focus is on:

- Encouraging change within others
- Constant collaboration with others
- Step back and allow others to develop solutions

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12.

Expanding the Leadership Spectrum

(Day 1 P.M. Session)

Understanding how to share the leadership vision

Clear communication is the foundation

- Inviting others to share in the vision
- Focus on how big ideas fit into others' vision
- Communicating the vision in a way that include others

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13.

Expanding the Leadership Spectrum

(Day 1 P.M. Session)

Understanding how to share the leadership process

Review the school's vision and goals of the school

- Cover information of how others can help shape the school's visions and goal
- Understand how others' vision themselves fitting into the school's vision and goals
- Develop a plan of change to how as a collective group can achieve the school's vision and goals.

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14.

Expanding the Leadership Spectrum

(Day 1 P.M. Session)

Developing leadership processes that focus on problem solving

Efficient distribution of leadership practices

- Integrate teachers' expertise and experience
- Ensure teachers' decision-making skills are appropriate to the situation and the school's visions and goals
- Leadership definition, roles, and responsibilities must be clear

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15.

Expanding the Leadership Spectrum

(Day 1 P.M. Session)

Developing leadership processes that focus on problem solving

Efficient distribution of leadership practices

- Provide direction in the problem-solving process
- Ensure teachers' data collection and management and instruction/intervention goes beyond individual classrooms
- Align leadership practices and leaders to obtain academic results

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16.

Expanding the Leadership Spectrum

(Day 1 P.M. Session)

Developing proactive problem-solving through effective leadership processes

Leadership processes that pre-work the problem

- Using data to develop early warning systems
- Identify teachers who have experience with the problem
- Provide collective support to ensure problem has implementable plan and timeline
- Identify possible causes of the problem and possible barriers that prevent implementation of plan and timeline

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17.

Expanding the Leadership Spectrum

(Day 1 P.M. Session)

Effective distributed leadership spectrum

- Spread across school
- Administrative leaders maintain overall control
- Teachers work in groups or pods with a designated instructional leader

19.

Forced Educational Collaboration vs. Participative Educational Collaboration

(Day 2 A.M. Session)

To define behaviors of forced educational collaboration and collaborative educational participation

The focus is on:

- Transactional Leadership Style
- Transformational Leadership Style
- Supportive Collaboration
- Collaborative Learning

18.

Expanding the Leadership Spectrum

(Day 1 P.M. Session)

Effective distributed leadership spectrum

- Spread across school
- Administrative leaders maintain overall control
- Teachers work in groups or pods with a designated instructional leader

20.

Forced Educational Collaboration vs. Participative Educational Collaboration

(Day 2 A.M. Session)

Understanding how collegial relationships are formed
A shift must be made from: A shift must be made to:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transactional Leadership • Transformational Leadership • Contingent reward system • Providing assistance only when challenges or mistakes occur | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformational Leadership • Development individualistic reward system • Providing positive feedback to spur intellectual stimulation that encourages groups to problem solve mistakes and challenges |
|--|--|

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21 **Forced Educational Collaboration vs. Participative Educational Collaboration**
(Day 2 A.M. Session)

Understanding how participative collaboration operates
Putting the team in teamwork

- Generate acceptance with teachers around educational vision or concern
- Encourage teachers to give their opinions on educational vision or concern
- Empower teachers to use and follow through on their creative solutions to educational vision or concern

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22 **Forced Educational Collaboration vs. Participative Educational Collaboration**
(Day 2 A.M. Session)

Understanding leadership responsibilities in a participative collaboration environment
Agents of change

22 **Forced Educational Collaboration vs. Participative Educational Collaboration**
(Day 2 A.M. Session)

Understanding leadership responsibilities in a participative collaboration environment
Agents of change

- Ensure the decision making process is inclusive
- Ensure the process is collective and collaborative and combative and competitive
- Commit to committing to collective decisions and actions
- Ensure group the final decision rests with leadership team members
- Share reasons why decision was made and next steps forward

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23 **Forced Educational Collaboration vs. Participative Educational Collaboration**

(Day 2 A.M. Session)

Understanding leadership responsibilities in a participative collaboration environment
Agents of change

- Ensure the decision making process is inclusive
- Ensure the process is collective and collaborative and combative and competitive
- Commit to committing to collective decisions and actions
- Ensure group the final decision rests with leadership team members
- Share reasons why decision was made and next steps forward

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24 **Forced Educational Collaboration vs. Participative Educational Collaboration**
(Day 2 A.M. Session)

Developing participative collaboration meetings that focus on facilitating conversations around educational visions and educational concerns
Strategic sharing of information and knowledge

- Set tone and message for meeting
- Share all necessary information for the meeting
- Set times for meeting
(alternative time is needed if meeting becomes unproductive)
- Do not readily dismiss nonconventional ideas

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25. Forced Educational Collaboration vs. Participative Educational Collaboration
(Day 2 A.M. Session)

Characteristics of a participative educational collaboration meeting

Establishing supportive collaborative teams

- Articulate roles and responsibilities within meeting
- Build consensus around educational vision and educational concerns
- Establish processes that lead continuous improvement in educational practices
- Facilitate and encourage the sharing of educational expertise

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26. Forced Educational Collaboration vs. Participative Educational Collaboration
(Day 2 A.M. Session)

- Having presented processes to develop participative educational collaboration meetings, leadership can be distributed to accentuate the team approach.
- The presented processes is essential for schools undergoing the conservatorship process but can be modified for other schools within the district.
- The distributed leadership framework works well as a effective leadership tool throughout the school's social and educational constructs

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27. Incorporating individualist's goals with team goals
(Day 2 P.M. Session)

To incorporate individualist's goals with team goals

The focus is on:

- Understanding reasons for individualist goal
- Provide and define collective goals
- Work with teacher to align individualist goals to school's goals
(do not compromise on collective goals)
- Track teacher's goal plans
- Observe teacher's efforts to align personal goals to collective goals

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28. Incorporating individualist goals with team goals
(Day 2 P.M. Session)

Understanding how to incorporate individualist goals with team goals

A shift must be made from: A shift must be made to:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condemning individualist's goals • Isolating individualists • Communicating with individualists with individualism in mind | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance of individualist's goals • Recognizing how individualists factor into team model • Communicating with individualists as team members |
|--|---|

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29.

Incorporating individualist goals with team goals

(Day 2 P.M. Session)

Understanding how to incorporate individualist goals with team goals in meetings

Opening the doors of the meetings

- Understand individualist's goals are important and necessary for teacher's growth
- Understand team goals are important and necessary for school's growth
- Empower teachers to share how their goals will aid the school's goals

31.

Incorporating individualist's goals with team goals

(Day 2 P.M. Session)

Understanding a leader's responsibilities in incorporating individualist's goals with team goals

Two-way process

- Focus on taking individualist's goals into consideration when making team decisions
- Assist individualist in transformational thinking
(thinking and behaving as individual to thinking like a group member)
- Provide opportunities where the individualist can align themselves with group needs
- Allow individualists and group members to operate on desired task and team member activities without interference

30.

Incorporating individualist goals with team goals

(Day 2 P.M. Session)

Understanding the importance of incorporating individualist goals with team goals

Personal goals used to support team goals

- Individualist teachers negatively influence team performance
- Incorporating individualists into a team positively influence team performance
- Individualists readily share their experience, creativity and expertise
- Individualists are competitive and motivated to make a difference
- Individualists are often self-directed

32.

Incorporating individualist's goals with team goals

(Day 2 P.M. Session)

Developing team meetings that focus on incorporating individualist's goals with team goals

Strategic sharing of information and knowledge

- Connect the success of individualist's goals to the success team goals.
- Encourage competitiveness in obtaining success for team goals
- Generate acceptance for working apart and working together
- Do not readily individualist's goals

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33. Incorporating individualist's goals with team goals
 (Day 2 P.M. Session)

Characteristics of a meeting incorporation individualist's goals with team goals

Establishing supportive individualist's goals and team goals meetings

- Allow reflection time for individuals as well as team on overall goals
- Allow individuals to express how team goals will help with individual goals
- Allow team to express how individual goals will benefit from team goal
- Allow individuals time to demonstrate how their experience and expertise will benefit the team

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35. Understanding the "why" of collaborative educational participation
 (Day 3 A.M. Session)

Understanding how to encourage collaborative educational participation

A shift must be made from: A shift must be made to:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Static educational environment • Set leaders • Viewing teachers as teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible environment • Leaders across the educational constructs • Viewing teachers as leaders |
|---|--|

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34. Understanding the "why" of collaborative educational participation
 (Day 3 A.M. Session)

- Promotes inclusiveness
- Develops teacher's perceptions of morale
- Promotes self-efficacy
- Increase teacher participation
- Develops a community of teachers

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36. Understanding the "why" of collaborative educational participation
 (Day 3 A.M. Session)

Characteristics of collaborative educational participation meetings

Establishing collaborative educational participation meetings

- Meetings are positive and interdependence is allowed
- Meetings allow for group processing ideas and individual processing ideas
- Individual efforts in meetings are valuable for team success
- Individuals within the group make contributions to the group because of their creativity, experience and expertise.

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37. Understanding the “why” of collaborative educational participation

(Day 3 A.M. Session)

- Having presented an understanding of why collaborative educational participation is warranted, leadership can be distributed to accentuate the team approach.
- The presented processes is essential for schools undergoing the conservatorship process but can be modified for other schools within the district.
- The distributed leadership framework works well as a effective leadership tool throughout the school’s social and educational constructs

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38. Understanding the “why” of collaborative educational participation

(Day 3 P.M. Session)

- Develop school centered distributed leadership processes

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39. Processes based on data

(Day 4 A.M. Session)

- Develop school centered processes based on data and research-base literature and best practices

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40. Processes based on data

(Day 4 P.M. Session)

- Develop school centered processes that reinforce the overall goal of the conservatorship process.

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Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Title of Research Project: Teacher Morale in a Turnaround High School Process

Location _____

Interviewer _____

Interviewee _____

Release form signed? ____

Notes to interviewee:

With your approval, I would like to audio record our conversation, by recording our conversation recalling information can help the note-taking and transcribing process. Audio recordings and transcribed conversations of this conversation and follow-up conversations will be destroyed five years after this interview. Audio recordings and transcribed conversations will only be reviewed by the researcher. All information obtained from our conversation will be confidential and your participation in this research is voluntary. You are under no obligation to continue our conversation and may end our conversation if you are feeling uncomfortable. I do not intend to harm you or cause you any harm or stress. Your participation in this research project is appreciated.

This interview should last at least 45 minutes, but no longer than one hour. This interview can be extended if you would like to expand your response to any question that you deem necessary for this research project. During this interview, there are several questions that we will cover related to the conservatorship process. You may skip questions that make you feel uncomfortable responding to during our conversation. I will

keep interview questions and responses clear and concise to ensure the maximum amount of interview questions are answered.

Introduction:

As a teacher of a school that is undergoing the conservatorship process I would like to speak with you because you may have important information to share about your experience. The intention of my research project is to develop teacher centered professional development that is based on teachers' affective areas of need as opposed to general district obligated professional development project. This study does not intend to put an end to turnaround strategies, but to improve teaching and learning through enhanced turnaround strategy techniques. I am not interviewing you to evaluate your teaching strategies or skills during this or any follow-up interviews. I am interviewing you to understand your experience with the conservatorship process to learn how to improve teacher morale.

Confidentiality of responses is guaranteed

Approximate length of interview: 45-60 minutes, one question

Purpose of research:

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher morale as a possible contributor to teacher retention rates. Interview questions below will be used to provide a descriptive view of teacher morale during the conservatorship process. The primary research question will be used to investigate teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process at the high school. The questions contained in this research seek to investigate teacher morale from teachers who have experienced the conservatorship process. The

questions seek to investigate how the conservatorship process did or did not affect their levels of morale. Sub-questions will assist to develop a rich description of the conservatorship process by categorizing the effect on teacher morale, during the conservatorship process.

RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of morale in a small southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process?

- A. What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship's effect on their levels of morale?
 1. What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process?
 2. What are teachers' experiences with the conservatorship process?
 3. What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship's process on their levels of morale?

Interview Questions:

- During the conservatorship process, what were your perceptions of your administrator's attempt to empower you in the decision-making process on school/classroom policies and procedures? Please describe how your administrator's attempt to empower you in the decision-making process on school/classroom policies and procedures affected your level of morale?
- During the conservatorship process, what were your perceptions of your administrator's classroom visibility? Please describe how your administrator's classroom visibility affected your level of morale?

- What are your perceptions of how your opinions and suggestions are valued?

Please describe how your administrator's value of your views and recommendations affected your level of morale?

- What were your perceptions of how your administrator supported your instructional practices? Please describe how your administrator's support of your instructional practices affected your level of morale?

- How was your attendance this year? How was your attendance last year? Do you contribute your attendance rate to your perception of your morale?

- How do you perceive the professional development opportunities at your school?
Please describe how the professional development opportunities at your school affected your level of morale?

- How do you perceive the professional development opportunities at your school?
Please describe how the professional development opportunities at your school affected your level of morale?

- How many years have you been teaching? How many years have you been teaching at this school? How many years do you foresee yourself teaching at this school?

- If you return to teach at this school what will be your reason? If you do not return to teach at this school what will be your reason?

Response from Interviewee:

Reflection by Interviewer

1. Closure

- Thank you to interviewee
- Reassure confidentiality

Ask permission to follow-up _____

Appendix C: Research Findings

Purpose of research:

The purpose of this study was to investigate teacher morale as a possible contributor to teacher retention rates. Interview questions below will be used to provide a descriptive view of teacher morale during the conservatorship process. The primary research question will be used to investigate teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process at the high school. The questions contained in this research seek to investigate teacher morale from teachers who have experienced the conservatorship process. The questions seek to investigate how the conservatorship process did or did not affect their levels of morale. Sub-questions will assist to develop a rich description of the conservatorship process by categorizing the effect on teacher morale, during the conservatorship process.

RQ1: What are teachers' perceptions of morale in a small southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process?

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship process?
2. What are teachers' experiences with the conservatorship process?
3. What are teachers' perceptions of the conservatorship's process on their levels of morale?

Interview Questions:

- During the conservatorship process, what were your perceptions of your administrator's attempt to empower you in the decision-making process on school/classroom policies and procedures? Please describe how your administrator's attempt to empower you in the decision-making process on school/classroom policies and procedures affected your level of morale?
- During the conservatorship process, what were your perceptions of your administrator's classroom visibility? Please describe how your administrator's classroom visibility affected your level of morale?
- What are your perceptions of how your opinions and suggestions are valued? Please describe how your administrator's value of your views and recommendations affected your level of morale?
- What were your perceptions of how your administrator supported your instructional practices? Please describe how your administrator's support of your instructional practices affected your level of morale?
- How was your attendance this year? How was your attendance last year? Do you contribute your attendance rate to your perception of your morale?

- How do you perceive the professional development opportunities at your school?

Please describe how the professional development opportunities at your school affected your level of morale?

- How do you perceive the professional development opportunities at your school?

Please describe how the professional development opportunities at your school affected your level of morale?

- How many years have you been teaching? How many years have you been teaching at this school? How many years do you foresee yourself teaching at this school?

- If you return to teach at this school what will be your reason? If you do not return to teach at this school what will be your reason?



Teacher Morale in a Turnaround School

By
Louis J. Lane

1.

. The Local Problem

During the 2014-2015 school year, a local school district used turnaround strategies such as conservatorship as part of a comprehensive school reform effort. The school district applied comprehensive accountability systems with the intent of improving student academic achievement and school performance. The blanket turnaround strategies required the school district to replace school administrators as well as a minimum of half of school staff members and to implement a new curriculum program. The turnaround model, comes from the private sector and is based on unjustified claims, and fails to acknowledge research evidence that asserts mass terminations do not improve organizational performance

2.



3.

The Problem

- ▶ The practice of using the conservatorship process, has created a problem by adversely affecting the retention rate of teachers within the high school under study. The Office of Public Reporting from the Mississippi Department of Education (2012-2016) reported teacher turnover data (Table 1), which exhibited declining teacher retention each year following the conservatorship process.

Table 1 2014-2017 Teacher Retention Data								
District #	District Name	School #	School Name	Year	New Teachers	Returning Teachers	Total Teachers	% Return
7100	Tunica School District	008	High School Under Study	2014 - 2015	13	33	46	72%
7100	Tunica School District	008	High School Under Study	2015 - 2016	14	28	42	67%
7100	Tunica School District	008	High School Under Study	2016 - 2017	18	23	41	56%

Note: Reported teacher turnover data
(Mississippi Department of Education, 2012-2016)

4.

A Possible Contributor to the Local Problem

A possible contributor to teacher retention rates of the high school under study is teacher morale. During the 2014-2015 school year, over half of the teachers part in a sickout, which the school district considered as false illnesses and subsequently labeled the false illness as the green flu. Surveyed teachers revealed low teacher morale within the high school under study. An administrator from the high school under study acknowledged that teacher morale is lower within the school due to accountability measures associated with the conservatorship process

5.

Purpose of the Case Study

- ▶ This study provided a better understanding of teacher morale as a possible contributor to teacher retention rates. The research question “What are teachers’ perspectives of morale in a school that has undergone the conservatorship process?” was used as a guide for this case study. Eight local high school teachers’, who experienced the conservatorship process, authentic experiences were explored using interviews. Teachers’ perception of morale were related to such terms as empowerment, conservators’ influence in the classroom, valuing of teachers’ opinions and suggestions, support for instructional practices, influence on attendance, and perceptions of professional developments.

6.

Methodology

Research Design	Participants	Data Collection
Qualitative Approach	A purposeful sampling of eight teachers who experienced the conservatorship process during their tenure	Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Narrative Process • Case Study Design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research participants worked at the high school under study during the last five years. • Research participants are full-time certified teachers who taught at the high school under study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face • Recorded • Transcribed each interview • NVIVO

7.

Research Question & Sub-Questions

What are teachers' perspectives of morale in a small southeastern high school that has undergone the conservatorship process?

- What are teachers' perspectives of the conservatorship process?
- What are teachers' experiences with the conservatorship process?
- What are teachers' perspectives of the conservatorship's process effect on their levels of morale?

Theme: Powerless, Centrality of Power

“The conservator placed minimal effort in empowering teachers. The local administrator attempted to empower teachers and did an excellent job of keeping teachers in the loop and stressing to teachers that it was business as usual but when the conservator was present the feeling of it was her way or the highway quickly returned.”

“I do not think I wanted power, it was like all the teachers who claimed their titles and power were released, so why would I want power? I needed to keep my job more than I needed power. The conservator did not offer, and I did not ask. If the conservator would have offered, I would have looked upon the offer with an eye of suspicion.”

“Although teachers had experience working in the school and knew the student population teachers were not thought of as teachers with up-to-date information, only as cogs in a deformed machine. Administrators working with the conservator, relaxed some of the conservator’s stances when the conservator was not present.”

9.

Theme: No Confidence and No Voice

"The conservator did not care about teachers, and teachers there had already messed up so why should the conservator listen to those teachers. Whatever the teachers were doing was wrong, so the conservator instructed teachers what to do and disregarded teachers as a profession."

"Newly recruited teachers' suggestions and opinions were valued more than teachers who remained. I recall a PLC where I voiced an opinion about an instructional practice, and the conservator spoke as if I had not spoken a word. When the recruited teacher spoke, the conservator acknowledged the recruited teacher and celebrated the teacher's opinion."

"As many as my colleagues' opinions and suggestions stemmed from years of experience as well as from what we perceived as the best practices for our students. When the conservator did not value our suggestions and opinions, we felt that the conservator and administrators were not valued."

10.

Theme: Ineffective & Repetitive Professional Development Opportunities

"PD's were boring, and information passed along, although informative, could have been passed along in an email. Recruited teachers, who conducted PDs were excited to present the newest strategies. However, teachers with years of experience recognized new strategies as old strategies with new names. There were a few new things that recruited teachers brought to PDs that increased teachers' instructional capacities, however, to sit and listen to a full meeting for a piece of information that administrators could have emailed was a tremendous waste of time."

"PDs' focused on masking the school's problems by diverting teachers' focus to students', social-emotional problems, data, and the conservator's method of running the school. I felt as if I was on the outside looking in on a meeting that I was not supposed to attend. Administrators and recruited teachers placed teachers attending the meeting in positions where administrators and recruited teachers talked to teachers rather than talked with teachers. When administrators talk to you as opposed to being talked with, especially if you are a professional with a good number of years of experience, your level of intelligence is insulted."

"Recruited teachers conducted PDs most of the time, PDs were ineffective because the information did not relate to the high school's student and teacher population. When immediate staff presented materials, outside of new the new ways the conservator wanted the school ran, PDs were repetitive mostly. When the conservator conducted PDs, PDs were negative mostly, and teachers felt as if they were just attending PDs to get fussed at by the conservator or recruited teachers."

11.

Theme: Stressed and Burned Out

12.

"At the onset of the conservatorship process attendance went down, but now it is a little better. The attendance rate is better because of teacher turnover, many of the teachers who were there at the start of the conservatorship process left the school."

"before the conservatorship process, my attendance was either average or above average before the conservatorship process, maybe missing only one day a school year. After the conservator took over the school, I took off more days in that first year than all my years combined. Many days I took off was due to being overstressed which caused me illnesses I have never had before the conservatorship process."

"I remember one day, I had, had enough and contacted the administrator to find someone to cover my class. The administrator did not respond, I divided my remaining classes with other teachers and left the school, during the conservatorship process this was a common practice amongst teachers."

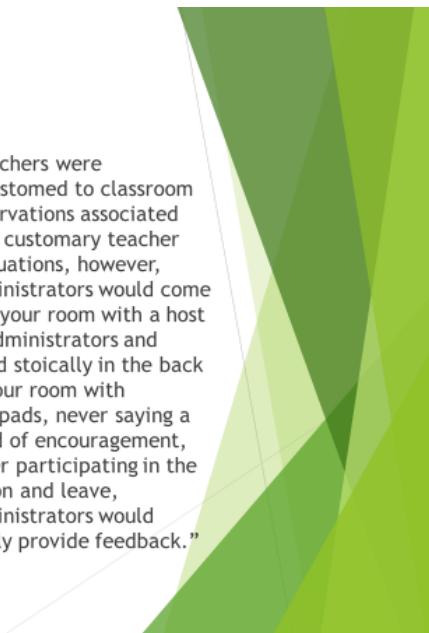


Theme: Excessive Visitations

"Before the conservatorship process, administrators would visit the classroom and would later provide feedback that was tailored to progress the teacher further in education; I did not feel that the new administrators wanted to see any level of progression from the teacher."

"during the first year under the conservatorship process administrators would visit my classroom, at least two to four times a week. Administrators' presence in the classroom would cause students to shut down and not participate in classroom functions. I felt leery during that first year about classroom visitations until administrators began to assist in the classroom."

"Teachers were accustomed to classroom observations associated with customary teacher evaluations, however, administrators would come into your room with a host of administrators and stand stoically in the back of your room with notepads, never saying a word of encouragement, never participating in the lesson and leave, administrators would rarely provide feedback."



13.

Theme: Excessive Visitations

"Before the conservatorship process, administrators would visit the classroom and would later provide feedback that was tailored to progress the teacher further in education; I did not feel that the new administrators wanted to see any level of progression from the teacher."

"during the first year under the conservatorship process administrators would visit my classroom, at least two to four times a week. Administrators' presence in the classroom would cause students to shut down and not participate in classroom functions. I felt leery during that first year about classroom visitations until administrators began to assist in the classroom."

"Teachers were accustomed to classroom observations associated with customary teacher evaluations, however, administrators would come into your room with a host of administrators and stand stoically in the back of your room with notepads, never saying a word of encouragement, never participating in the lesson and leave, administrators would rarely provide feedback."

14.

Distributed Leadership Professional Development Project

Eight sessions covered during four day professional development

- An analysis of 8 teachers interview responses were used to develop a professional development project that attended to teachers' needs as well as district-mandated school reform efforts
- Teachers' interview responses revealed the desire to be included in the district-wide school reform efforts.
- The results of data analysis support the need and design of the professional development project which focuses on school-wide collaborative participation for district-wide school reform efforts.

15.

Participants

- Administrative Leaders
- Teachers



16.

Professional Development Project Time Table

Day	Purpose	Session	Topic of Discussion	Goal
1	Gain critical feedback from teachers and teacher teams to create an environment of distributed leadership.	1	(A.M. Session 1) An environment of trust: developing collegial relationships that adjust along the organizational leadership spectrum.	The development of an unbiased collegial relationship that assists in the expanding of the leadership spectrum that focuses on academic problem-solving.
		2	(P.M. Session 2) Distributed Leadership Mindset: Expanding the leadership spectrum beyond the top-down approach with a focus on academic problem-solving.	
2	Forced educational collaboration vs. collaborative educational participation	1	(A.M. Session 3) Define behaviors of forced educational collaboration and collaborative educational participation	The blending of individualist goals and team goals that assists in developing collaborative educational participation
		2	(P.M. Session 4) Leader together leader apart: Understanding that leadership is a term that is based on individualistic goals as well as team goals.	
3	Understanding the "why" of collaborative educational participation	1	(A.M. Session 5) How collaborative educational participation uncovers underlying issues related to school structures, educational operation procedures that affect organizational behaviors.	Developing the understanding how collaborative participation assists in the school centered distributed leadership process
		2	(P.M. Session 6) Select school centered distributed leadership processes	
4	Processes as an ongoing system focused on professional growth and academic achievement	1	(A.M. Session 7) Processes based on data and research-based literature and best practices.	The development of processes that support academic achievement, distributed leadership process as well as the conservatism process.
		2	(P.M. Session 8) Processes that reinforcement the overall goal of the conservatism process.	

Appendix D: Professional Development Objective-Based Benchmark Surveys

The questions in this survey are created to determine your perceptions on if the objectives of this professional development session met its goal.

Goal 1: To develop an unbiased collegial relationship that assists in the expanding of the leadership spectrum that focuses on academic problem-solving.

Your perception of session's attempt to:	Objectives not met-----Objectives Met				
	1	2	3	4	5
Provide unbiased environment					
Build collegial relationships	1	2	3	4	5
Expand leadership spectrum	1	2	3	4	5
Focus on academic problem-solving	1	2	3	4	5

Professional Development Session Objective-Based Benchmark Survey

The questions in this survey are created to determine your perceptions on if the objectives of this professional development session met its goal.

Goal 2: To blend individualist goals and team goals that assists in developing collaborative educational participation.

Your perception of session's attempt to:	Objectives not met-----Objectives Met			
Understand individualist goals	1	2	3	4
Understand team goals	1	2	3	4
Develop collaborative participation	1	2	3	4

Professional Development Session Objective-Based Benchmark Survey

The questions in this survey are created to determine your perceptions on if the objectives of this professional development session met its goal.

Goal 3: To build an understanding of how collaborative participation assists in the school centered distributed leadership process.

Your perception of session's attempt to:	Objectives not met-----Objectives Met
Develop an understanding of collaborative participant	1 2 3 4 5
Explain how collaborative participation assists the school.	1 2 3 4 5

Professional Development Session Objective-Based Benchmark Survey

The questions in this survey are created to determine your perceptions on if the objective of this professional development session met its goal.

Goal 4: To develop processes that support academic achievement, distributed leadership process as well as the conservatorship process.

Your perception of session's attempt to: Objective not met-----Objective Met

Develop processes that support academic achievement 1 2 3 4 5

Develop processes that support the distributed leadership process 1 2 3 4 5

Develop processes that support the conservatorship process 1 2 3 4 5

Appendix E: Professional Development Survey

This survey is to identify improvement needs for the Professional Development Project. This survey is private and confidential and no identifying information should be provided and your responses will not be shared. The survey includes a brief section that addresses teachers' perceptions of the project and a section for your suggestions for future professional development project. The survey is flexible and will adjust to accommodate the needs of the district, the school and the teacher.

Dear Teacher.

Collaborative participation is essential in today's schools reform efforts to ensure that teachers who have experience, knowledge and skills are able share their perceptions of instructional practices and curriculum in the effort to advance students' academic achievement. This survey is designed for you to provide feedback as to areas of the professional development project where improvements are warranted, and training is needed. This survey covers areas such as administrative efforts to provide an unbiased environment for collaborative participation, professional development facilitation, as well as other areas that are assist in developing effective professional development sessions. The information you and your colleagues share will be used to create comprehensive professional development sessions in the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration as you complete this survey.

Sincerely

Louis J. Lane

Professional Development Project Survey

Workshop Title:

The date the professional development took place:

Please rate the following: 0 Not satisfied – 10 Extremely satisfied

I am pleased with today's session 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Handouts were engaging and valuable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Time in the workshop was sufficient to allow collaborative learning and practicing new concepts 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The sessions were well planned, interactive and collaborative 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The presenter was effective 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The atmosphere was unbiased, enthusiastic, interesting, and conducive for collaborative participation with colleagues 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Sessions content and strategies will increase my instructional practices 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I would recommend these sessions in the future 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What is the important concept you learned during professional development sessions?

What supports are needed for sustaining and improving professional development sessions?

What ideas could you provide for follow-up sessions?

If you were not satisfied with professional develop sessions, what could be added or removed?

What would you like to include in future professional development sessions?

Additional Comments (Please write your comments in provided space below):
