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**FORT ZUMWALT SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PLAN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CURRENT
DISTRICT PERCEPTIONS AND PROPOSED CHANGES**

Jackie K. Floyd

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FORT ZUMWALT SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF CURRENT DISTRICT PERCEPTIONS
AND PROPOSED CHANGES

by

Jackie K. Floyd
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Abstract

In the Fort Zumwalt School District, the professional development program lacks a district focus resulting in different professional endeavors dependent upon popular trends or interests rather than teacher and student achievement needs. Written procedures for evaluating the Fort Zumwalt Professional Development Plan have not been implemented at the district level in a systematic manner resulting in the current plan remaining unchanged and with limited evidence of impact on teaching and classroom practices. The researcher collected data from Fort Zumwalt K-12 certified teachers using three instruments: (a) reflection/evaluation sheets, (b) needs assessments, and (c) an electronic questionnaire. The data from these instruments were used to answer five specific questions presented at the onset of this qualitative research study:

1. In what types of professional development opportunities are teachers choosing to participate?
2. What motivates teachers to participate in professional development activities?
3. When do teachers prefer to participate in professional development opportunities?
4. To what degree do teachers believe professional development experiences improve their teaching and classroom practices?
5. Do teachers believe that professional development programs are meeting their need to improve their teaching and classroom practices?

Findings from the five research questions demonstrated that teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District value the professional development opportunities that are

attended. However, professional development participation within the district is limited due to (a) staff members availability to attend opportunities scheduled outside of the school day, (b) limited models of professional development offerings, (c) limited collaboration opportunities, and (d) limited topics related to content, curriculum, and assessment.

Based on the review of literature and data from the research instruments, one may concluded that high quality professional development is a long term, dynamic process designed to improve teaching and classroom practices that support the advancement of student achievement at both the building and district level. Recommendations to the Board of Education will include the need to align district professional development efforts with the district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, incorporating the characteristics of high quality professional development that supports each of the following:

1. teacher content knowledge and best teaching practices
2. collaboration among teachers and administrators
3. alignment with teacher needs, as well as, district and state standards and assessments
4. duration and extension of professional development with sufficient time and appropriate resources provided
5. continual evaluation of the impact on teaching effectiveness and student achievement.

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Key to Abbreviations

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1. NCLB (No Child Left Behind)	1
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Chapter One - Overview of the Study

High quality professional development programs seem to be an essential component in meeting district improvement needs established by the federal mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB requirements focus on improving student achievement, increasing accountability for student performance, and expanding parental involvement leading to the need for hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers. These requirements drive districts to evaluate current professional development as they work to develop programs that support improvements in teaching and classroom practices. It might be true that aligning NCLB requirements to district professional development programs will not solely produce high quality professional development opportunities that support sustained change in teaching and classroom practices. Educators' perceptions and beliefs in the importance and effectiveness of professional development activities are repeatedly noted in the research as an essential component in eliciting positive and sustained change in educational practices. "When a school or a district believes professional development is the key to improving schools, that attitude permeates everything that they do" (Richardson, 2000, ¶ 4). This study was initiated to examine the Fort Zumwalt School District's current Professional Development Plan (see Appendix A). Perceptions of the current plan were obtained, which determined (a) professional development activities most often utilized, (b) the impact professional development had on teaching and classroom practices, and (c) proposed changes to the plan that would better align with teacher needs.

A survey study was conducted to obtain teacher perspectives. All Fort Zumwalt District certified teachers were asked to complete an on-line questionnaire soliciting

participants information regarding (a) demographic information, (b) individual professional development involvement, (c) impact of professional development on classroom practices, and (d) changes necessary to better meet the professional development needs of teachers. These data, along with research on best practices in professional development, were combined to create proposed changes to the existing Fort Zumwalt School District Professional Development Plan.

Background of the Problem

Over the past 25 years, professional development for teachers moved from an optional standard to a mandated standard (Lieberman & Wilkins, 2006). Three pieces of federal legislation drove the mandate for high quality professional development: (a) the Excellence in Education Act of 1985, (b) the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993, and (c) the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The recent shift in thinking might be attributed to NCLB, which measures districts' progress toward meeting academic, professional, and community goals. NCLB was passed by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. The law reauthorized a federal law called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which some say has had a significant impact on education. NCLB was built on four general premises:

1. Accountability for results
2. Use of scientifically-based research
3. Expanded parental options
4. High quality teaching staff

NCLB seems to have prompted school districts to take a more focused approach in providing high quality professional development in their effort to increase student achievement in an era of high-stakes testing and accountability.

In addition to the mandates of NCLB, another reason for the refocus on professional development was the standards-based reform movement, which began 15 years ago. The standards-based reform movement forced school districts to establish student learning goals and to focus their efforts on developing effective curriculum, student assessment, and professional development. According to Guskey (2005), these standards offered educators a direction for reform initiatives by providing consensus about what was important for students to learn and what skills they should acquire.

There are seven educational organizations that tout their responsibility in delivering high quality professional development programming. The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) identified these seven traditional professional development providers. First, universities and colleges claim to be providers because of the incentives teachers receive in their salary schedules for continuing education. The second provider is each state's department of education because of the positive impact their policies have on professional development. State requirements vary greatly regarding professional development requirements, financial support, and the development of individualized professional development plans. A third source involves the local school systems and schools, which may provide the most powerful staff development for teachers. Fourth, teacher unions assume responsibility by helping to define the structure for staff development within the school district. Fifth, professional organizations provide traditional methods of support, which include workshops, conferences, on-line

communications, and publications. The sixth provider is the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This National Board offers awards for teachers that exhibit exemplary practice in their teaching field. Salary incentives and supplements are offered in different states for teachers attaining National Board certification. A seventh and final provider claiming to influence professional development is the federal government and the national priorities set through its system of title funding and in federal legislation tied to NCLB (National Conference of State Legislatures, n.d.). Although these providers make contributions to the field of professional development, they often work in isolation with little or no connection to what is actually transpiring in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. As a result, the professional development opportunities offered through these providers seem to be sporadic and lack a cohesive approach to professional development.

The Fort Zumwalt School District's current Professional Development Plan states that teachers are learners who need to relate new knowledge to existing curricula and classroom experiences. The district plan focuses on four professional development programs. First, the district provides release time from regular classroom duties for teachers to maintain instructional programs. The release time is provided for teachers to focus on curriculum development, implementation, and revision. Teachers volunteer to participate in these curriculum development processes but are not held accountable for implementing the strategies in classroom teaching or providing in-services to other educators in their building.

The second program focuses on conferences and workshops driven in part by the curriculum development process, but most often by teacher or individual building

interests. Each semester, the district publishes a packet of after-school in-service activities on a wide variety of topics. Teachers can choose whether or not to participate in any of these in-service activities. There are no requirements as to which teachers should participate in what professional development in-service sessions. In addition, teachers are allowed to request the opportunity to participate in out-of-district workshops or conferences. Upon return from the conference, the teacher is required to present the new information to peers in a department or faculty meeting—providing professional development to staff members who did not attend the conference. This program structure could allow the same teachers to attend conference opportunities year after year, thus limiting professional development to only a few individuals. The framework for the financial support at the school building level leaves teachers feeling like workshops are a perk, not an integral part of continued professional growth.

The third program focuses on a district mentor program developed to assist teachers during the first two years of teaching. Each new teacher is assigned a mentor who receives formal mentor training. Monthly meetings for new teachers provide consistent delivery of professional learning, but monthly topics cover a wide spectrum of professional development. This vast range of topics does not allow for in-depth, thorough discussion and evaluation. The second year of mentoring is overseen by the building principal and limited to completing a standardized set of goals, listing personal accomplishments, and completing an evaluation of the mentoring program.

The final program outlined in the plan is graduate studies tuition reimbursement. Teachers receive monetary reimbursement (limit of \$900 per year) for graduate credit earned from an accredited college or university. Once a teacher earns twelve credit hours,

a higher salary is earned. Due to the variety of classes available through universities, the district does not limit choices as to what teachers can take, thereby creating unfocused opportunities for professional development. It has been noted by the researchers of this study that teachers receive credit reimbursement for classes that are not related to their content area or to the district Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). In summary, all of the programs outlined in the Fort Zumwalt School District Professional Development Plan have the potential to offer quality professional development opportunities; however, each program operates in isolation, lacking a cohesive approach to professional development.

Importance of the Study

The results of this study may be important to a variety of stakeholders within the Fort Zumwalt School District as well as districts across the nation. The Professional Development Committee, building representatives who are responsible for overseeing professional development programming, will be provided a thorough evaluation of the current Fort Zumwalt Professional Development Plan. The committee will also receive recommendations based on this study that could be considered when presenting proposed changes to the Board of Education. Administrators in the Fort Zumwalt School District may also use the information discerned from the study when planning building-level professional development activities. This study could be particularly important for teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District because their needs and perceptions are taken into account when evaluating the district's professional development program. It

seems that this study may also be important to the student learner if one believes that high quality professional development is directly related to increased student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

School districts are facing increasing demands to (a) improve student achievement, (b) increase accountability for student performance, (c) expand parental involvement, and (d) hire and retain highly qualified teachers. In the Fort Zumwalt School District, each administrator carries the responsibility of creating professional development at the building level. The district does not narrow the focus or dictate how individual buildings should spend professional development money. Each school building may pursue a different professional development endeavor dependent upon popular trends or interests rather than teacher and student achievement needs. However, Lowden clearly defines that well-designed, carefully planned, and financially supported professional development are essential components in educational improvement efforts (2006). School district professional development committees are charged with the responsibility of analyzing current practices and structures, evaluating a current professional development plan, and presenting proposed changes to Boards of Education.

In the Fort Zumwalt School District, this process has not been implemented in a systematic and consistent manner. Each building has only one representative on the district Professional Development Committee. District representatives meet four times per year and serve as the liaisons between the building and district office regarding professional development opportunities. A professional development committee is not formed at the building level, which may cause teachers to feel a lack of ownership in the

planning of building level professional development goals and activities. Limited data, such as needs assessments and professional development evaluations, were collected in the past and reviewed; however, the information was not used to enhance and update the district's professional development plan. As a result, the current Professional Development Plan remains unchanged, and it is uncertain as to whether the current plan has made any impact on teaching and classroom practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine (a) teachers' use of current district professional development opportunities, (b) whether the current district professional development opportunities improve teaching and classroom practices, and (c) if the current professional development opportunities are meeting teacher needs.

Specifically, the research questions answered were

1. In what types of professional development opportunities are teachers choosing to participate?
2. What motivates teachers to participate in professional development activities?
3. When do teachers prefer to participate in professional development opportunities?
4. To what degree do teachers believe professional development experiences improve their teaching and classroom practices?
5. Do teachers believe that professional development programs are meeting their need to improve their teaching and classroom practices?

Evaluating the success or failure of the district's current professional development program in meeting educators' interests and needs provided information that can be used to update the district's ongoing professional development program. The study will assist the district in identifying ineffective components of the current plan so that district professional development budgets will not continue to support ineffective professional development opportunities and activities.

Definitions of Terms and Acronyms

Andragogy. "The word andragogy comes from the Greek noun agogy, meaning 'the activity of leading,' and the stem andr-, meaning 'adult'; taken together, they mean the art and science of teaching adults or helping adults learn" (Terehoff, 2002, p. 66).

Certified staff. Any educational staff member who holds a valid teaching certificate is considered a certified staff member. These include, but are not limited to, classroom teachers, counselors, speech/language therapists, and administrators.

Excellence in Education Act of 1985. The intent of this program was to develop and implement a process to encourage quality teachers to remain in the classroom and to continue the emphasis on improved instruction (National Staff Development Council, 2003).

High quality professional development. "Programs that are sustained, intensive, classroom-focused...and are not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences" (Viadero, 2007, p. 14). High quality professional development should be connected to district goals and contain ongoing activities based on best practices.

Missouri Staff Development Leadership Council (MSDLC). This council is an affiliate of the National Staff Development Council charged with advocating for high levels of learning by communicating, facilitating and building leadership capacity around standards-based staff development practices (National Staff Development Council, 2003).

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). Located within the U.S. Department of Education, NCES is a federal organization responsible for collecting and analyzing data related to education (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001).

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). An organization that serves the legislators and staffs of all 50 states, the NCSL provides research and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on state issues (National Conference of State Legislatures, n.d.).

National Staff Development Council (NSDC). A professional association committed to enhancing professional development programs in order to improve student and teacher performance (National Staff Development Council, 2003).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. NCLB is a federally mandated educational reform that holds states and individual districts accountable for every child's education. NCLB was built on accountability for results, use of scientifically-based research, expanded parental options, and high quality teaching staff (Borko, 2004).

Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. The state of Missouri mandated educational reforms in 1993. This Act calls for increased accountability in improving student academic performance for all of Missouri's public school districts and school buildings. It also provides funding through technology grants for districts to obtain and access the latest technologies (National Staff Development Council, 2003).

Professional development. “Professional development is defined as those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students” (Guskey, 2000, p.16). A term used interchangeably is “staff development.”

Professional Learning Communities (PLC).

...team members who regularly collaborated toward continued improvement in meeting learner needs through a shared curricular-focus vision. Facilitating this effort were:

- supportive leadership and structural conditions,
- collective challenging, questioning, and reflecting on team-designed lessons and instructional practices/experiences, and
- team decisions on essential learning outcomes and intervention/enrichment activities based on results of common formative student assessments. (Reichstetter, 2006, ¶ 1)

Professional Learning Communities focus on shared leadership and responsibility for student learning in all aspects of the school environment.

School Improvement Plan (SIP). This plan is a set of goals and action plan written for each school that focuses on student achievement and growth. A team develops this plan utilizing past achievement scores. This plan is reviewed annually and correlated with the newest testing results. The plan outlines professional development activities and actions taken by the staff to increase student achievement (National Staff Development Council, 2003).

Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs).

Small, building-based groups where each participating teacher develops a specific plan for what he or she wants to change in his or her own classroom practice. The groups meet regularly to support team members in carrying out and refining their plans. (Wiliam, 2007/2008, p. 39)

A term used interchangeably is “learning communities” (LCs).

Workshops. A workshop is an educational training program, usually brief in nature and designed for a small group of teachers (Guskey, 2000). A term used interchangeably is “in-service.”

Limitations of the Study

Participant characteristics. Participants’ knowledge and understanding of the current district professional development plan is varied greatly. The knowledge and understanding of research-based professional development practices and outcomes also may have impacted the responses shared on the survey questions. Depending upon past participation in the professional development plan, the participants’ perception may not have accurately reflected the true state of the school/district. Personal attitudes of the participants responding to the questions on the survey about professional development may have impacted the results obtained.

Respondent misinterpretation. Respondents may have misunderstood the assignment or may not have been able to carry out the task assigned. Respondents may have found it difficult to answer using options provided on the survey.

Mortality threat. Every effort was made to ensure that all participants completed the survey sent; however, it was inevitable that not every subject returned a response.

Data collector bias. Data collectors may have had preconceived notions regarding the current Fort Zumwalt School District's Professional Development Plan. Results were disaggregated electronically, thereby eliminating the potential of the collector bias to interfere with the results on the multiple choice and Likert questions; however, the analysis of the open-ended questions could have been impacted by the interpretation of the investigators and/or their fatigue when scoring the responses.

Data collection time. The amount of time the participants had to respond to the survey and return perceptions was limited. Results were tabulated in a timely fashion in order to present the findings to the Professional Development Committee and ultimately take proposed changes to the Fort Zumwalt School District's Board of Education.

Survey utilization. "There are many challenges to using surveys to contribute to high-quality, rigorous educational research. Too often we create inquiry tools without validating our measures against how respondents interpret our questions, and therefore collect data of questionable quality" (Desimone and LeFloch, 2004, p. 18). It could be the case that surveys provide large-scale information yet may not offer the depth of understanding that interviews and observational techniques could supply.

Survey development training. Investigators had no formal training on the development practices involved in creating surveys. This included, but was not limited to, creating the types of questions used in the survey to be sent to all participants.

Response rate. The rate in which the participants returned their responses to the survey questions was out of the control of the investigators yet had an impact on

analyzing the results in a timely fashion. The short amount of time available for the study exacerbated the timing issue.

Instrumentation threat. The survey participants may have interpreted the survey questions differently, particularly the open-ended questions. Problems may have also occurred if the majority of responses were from individuals with strong opinions.

Type of research. Professional development on a district scale was a complex undertaking and was difficult to summarize with a questionnaire, needs assessment, and professional development evaluations.

Delimitations of the Study

This study did not address the correlation between effective professional development and improved student achievement. While this may be an assumption, this qualitative research study did not collect or analyze data related to student achievement as a result of the implementation of the Fort Zumwalt School District Professional Development Plan.

Assumptions

There were two underlying assumptions in this study. The first assumption was that professional development opportunities operating in isolation and lacking cohesiveness may have little or no impact on improving teaching and classroom practices as well as student achievement. The second assumption was that well-planned, high quality professional development, positively impacting teaching and classroom practices, will increase student achievement.

Summary

In summary, this chapter outlined the background of the problem, described the statement of the problem, explained the purpose of the study, defined terms and acronyms, and assessed limitations and delimitations as well as assumptions of the study. A need was described for examining the Professional Development Plan in the Fort Zumwalt School District was clear. Federal requirements placed upon school districts and the academic achievement expectations for students seem to make on-going professional growth for teachers essential. Gathering and analyzing teacher perceptions, past involvement, and identified needs were determined by the researchers to be crucial when making proposed changes to the Board of Education.

Chapter two includes a review of the framing literature to widen the knowledge base about high quality professional development and effective professional development practices. A thorough understanding of research-based professional development is necessary before developing and reflecting on data collected through multiple evaluative instruments.

Chapter Two - Review of Literature

Federal mandates require school districts to focus attention and effort on the need for high quality professional development. The requirements of No Child Left Behind focus on improving student achievement, increasing accountability for student performance, expanding parental involvement, and hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers. These requirements prompted districts to evaluate current professional development plans as they worked toward developing programs that supported improvements in teaching and classroom practices. Because of these requirements, this study was initiated to examine the Fort Zumwalt School District's current Professional Development Plan. Perceptions of the current plan were obtained, which determined (a) professional development activities most often used, (b) their impact on teaching and classroom practices, and (c) proposed changes to the plan that aligned with teacher needs. Implementing a district/school professional development model/structure is a complex process. The personalities of individual schools and districts, as well as the needs of teachers and students, continually shift, which means that professional development has to be viewed as an evolving process in which teachers are expected to master new skills and teaching methods that lead to higher levels of student achievement.

It seems that there is no longer any doubt in the field of education that quality instruction has the greatest potential to impact student achievement. "Professional development and teacher preparation are key factors within the teaching profession and are indications of future growth and achievement of the students" (Nagy Ning Wang, 2007, p. 111). Darling-Hamond and Ball (1998) stated that teacher quality accounted for about 40% of the variation in student achievement. In addition, a report released in 2000

from the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) noted the importance of professional development for principals and other school leaders in the process of improving student achievement:

Studies in the past several years have provided empirical evidence of what conventional wisdom has long espoused—that the most effective professional development activities for increasing teachers’ knowledge and skills and improving their teaching practice are those that (1) focus on subject matter content and how students learn that content, (2) are ongoing and sustained throughout the year, (3) are consistent with other activities, and (4) provide teachers with opportunities to actively interact and engage with each other around curriculum and instruction. Further, research has indicated that participation in such activities is positively related to student achievement. As a result, recent standards based reforms, including NCLB, have focused on the importance of improving teaching quality through increasing the participation of teachers in “effective” or “high-quality” professional development that has these features of quality. This is in contrast to the much-maligned but ever-resilient and still prevalent “one-shot workshop” which is often focused on management, discipline, or administrative issues rather than on subject matter content. (Desimone, Smith & Phillips, 2007, p. 1087)

It is probably true that an essential component for improving teaching practices involves districts evaluating professional development programming. Kent (2004) said, “High quality professional development is crucial to the future of education. It must be made a priority if the challenges of the student population are to be successfully met”

(p. 432). The federal law defines high-quality professional development broadly, calling for programs that are “sustained, intensive, classroom-focused ... and are not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences” (Viadero, 2007, p. 14). According to Doubek and Cooper (2007), the enactment of the NCLB legislation left school districts with an insurmountable task of ensuring all students have the necessary skills to read, write, and complete math calculations. Many school districts launched professional development initiatives to help teachers meet the diverse student needs. “The growing expectations for teachers are generating widespread interest in the form, content and quality of professional development. States and districts across the country are beginning to rethink their teacher development activities to bring them more in-sync with reform agendas” (Westchester Institute, n.d., ¶ 2). So, it seems that professional development activities should be connected with the directives placed upon schools and guided by state and district reform.

With the increasing expectations for students, manifested through statewide standardized tests in nearly every state and the development of curriculum frameworks throughout the country, a heightened interest in both spending for professional development and the effect of adult learning on student learning has emerged. (Kelleher, 2003, ¶ 1)

The following literature review provides insights into what constitutes high quality professional development. The literature review also defines a variety of professional development structures, common challenges associated with professional development, and methods for districts to evaluate their professional development activities and plans. The following topics will be explored in the literature review: (a) professional

development, (b) implementation designs for professional development, and (c) teacher challenges.

Professional Development

Components of effective professional development. As reported by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2002), research suggested that conventional forms of professional development have little effect on educational practices, organizational changes, and student outcomes. Even when there is a link to the classroom, inconsistency and lack of follow-up serve to lessen the potential impact on teaching practice and student achievement. However, research on what constitutes effective professional development is consistent across many studies. "Professional development sparks curiosity, motivation, and new ways of thinking. It is most effective when it is an ongoing process, which includes appropriate, well-thought-out training and individual follow-up" (Kent, 2004, p. 428). According to researchers Hawley and Valli (2000), the research suggested that high quality professional development is (a) integrated with district/school goals to improve education, (b) guided by a systematic long-term plan, (c) based on teacher-identified needs, (d) primarily school based, (e) focused on subject content and methods of teaching, (f) focused on research-based teaching and learning, (g) designed around collaborative problem solving, (h) provided sufficient time and resources, and (i) evaluated on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning. These principles serve to create a new vision for professional development that could aid districts in meeting the challenges of systematic educational/school improvement.

Guskey (2003a) reviewed research literature on professional development and found consistent support for five characteristics of effective professional development. The first characteristic is the content focus of the activity, meaning the degree to which the activity is focused on improving teacher knowledge of content and how students must be supported when learning the content. The second characteristic is the duration of the activity, which includes the total number of hours spent on the activity, as well as the span of time for the activity. Third, collective participation from teachers in the same school, department, or grade level should be evident. Fourth, the activity must provide opportunities for active learning by the participants. Lastly, the activity must promote coherence between the teachers' professional development, as well as align with state and district standards and assessments. It would seem that using these five characteristics would assist districts in planning effective professional development activities that have the greatest potential for impacting teaching and classroom practices.

Zimmerman and May (2003) support information presented from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) that describes effective professional development as (a) directly focused on helping to achieve student learning goals and supporting student learning needs, (b) a collaborative endeavor – teachers and administrators work together in planning and implementation, (c) school-based and job-embedded, (d) a long-term commitment, (e) differentiated, and (f) tied to the district goals. It might be the case that individuals who design professional development need guidelines to follow to ensure that the activities for the participants promote improved instruction and learning.

Haslam and Seremet (2001) concluded that high quality professional development was an adult learning and growth process that led to increased student learning. Furthermore, the authors said that high quality professional development should focus on content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy. One could conclude that when professional development focuses on the content that instructors teach, it is more likely to impact instruction and increase student learning. “Helping teachers to understand more deeply the content they teach and the ways students learn that content appears to be a vital dimension of effective professional development” (Guskey, 2003b, ¶ 4). The EPE Research Center (2007) supports the notion that high quality professional development should also engage teachers and principals as active learners and problem solvers:

Dating back to at least the early 1990’s, a steady stream of research and commentary has advocated a roughly consistent alternative to the workshop model of professional development. This preferred approach holds that for teacher learning to truly matter, it needs to take place in a more active and coherent intellectual environment – one in which ideas can be exchanged and an explicit connection to the bigger picture of school improvement is made. (¶ 5)

Corcoran (1999) identified three important concepts when planning professional development. The first was to work on teacher subject-matter knowledge due to data that shows the more teachers know about a subject the better they are at teaching it. This concept appeared to be common sense, but it may be neglected. The second important aspect in planning professional development is to help teachers adapt and implement the curriculum with a better understanding of the difficulties students have with the curriculum. The third is to promote equity in the classroom, which means to help teachers

not only understand how they engaged students in learning but also how they may have unintentionally treated one class of students differently than another class. One could then say professional development that focuses on improving teachers' content knowledge while emphasizing best practices for delivering the content may lead to higher levels of student achievement if students are engaged in an equitable learning environment.

For staff development to have had an impact on student achievement, Guskey (2000) noted that it must first impact teachers who are engaged in the professional development activity. "Teacher learning must be the heart of any effort to improve education in our society. While other reforms may be needed, better learning for more children ultimately relies on teachers" (Sykes, 1996, ¶ 2). Malcolm Knowles (1984) stated that adults learned best when they were actively involved in the learning process, pulling from past and present learning experiences to solve problems. "When teachers conduct their work in isolation, their satisfaction in and commitment to the profession are jeopardized. Enthusiastic teachers are not usually self-sustaining; thus, good novice and veteran teachers often exit the profession due to burnout and discouragement" (Danielson, 2002, p. 185). For teachers to have remained enthusiastic, feeling supported and connected to peers while receiving constructive feedback was important. "Teachers need opportunities to learn, question, debate, practice, evaluate, practice again, and evaluate again before teaching strategies can be successfully implemented in the classroom" (McQueen, 2001, p. 12).

Mizell (1999) shared that there must be two major issues addressed to demonstrate the critical role of improved student achievement when planning

professional development. First, those who implement the staff development must have student learning as the primary objective. Second, the evaluation must focus on the effects of staff development on student learning. In addition, the researchers, based on past experience, could add a third issue that high quality professional development should provide learning opportunities that are embedded in the daily work of teachers and principals. “Unless schools are places of learning for teachers, they cannot be places of learning for students” (Bernauer, 1999, ¶ 15). The EPE Research Center (2007) further supports ongoing teacher learning:

A 2000 study by the National Staff Development Council examined the award-winning professional-development programs at eight public schools that had made measurable gains in student achievement. The study found that in each of the schools, “the very nature of staff development [had] shifted from isolated learning and the occasional workshop to focused, ongoing organizational learning built on collaborative reflection and joint action.” Specifically, the study found that the schools’ professional-development programs were characterized by collaborative structures, diverse and extensive professional-learning opportunities, and an emphasis on accountability and student results. (¶ 7)

Historically, professional development took place outside of the regular school day, limiting opportunities for experimentation and ongoing professional dialogue:

Professional development that is likely to have the biggest impact has a reciprocal relationship between the time you spend with your colleagues in classrooms trying to solve instructional problems and then reflective time outside of classrooms to think about what you’re going to try next. (Crow, 2008, p. 43)

Collaboration allows peers to problem solve, brainstorm, reflect and interact with one another, bridging the gap between individual isolation and group productivity.

According to Haslam and Seremet (2001), opportunities for teacher experimentation, reflection, and discussion focusing on improving classroom instruction should be built into the school day. “Collegial relationships, fostered via formal and informal mentoring, can initiate a deeper reflection about practice, offer encouragement that supports ongoing growth, and increase the job satisfaction needed for teachers to move through more mature career stages” (Danielson, 2002, p. 185). He further said that when teachers were provided opportunities to collaborate with one another about best practices, student work, and content knowledge, professional growth became an ongoing process that enhanced teaching and classroom practices. “To improve professional development, it is more important to focus on the duration, collective participation, and the core features (i.e., content, active learning, and coherence) than type” (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Suk Yoon, 2001, p. 936). One might conclude that the components of effective professional development should be considered as districts begin to evaluate the models that will serve to facilitate professional development.

Standards-based professional development. One might discern that high quality professional development should be based on research and examples of best practices. Perhaps professional development should be grounded in research-based instructional strategies that not only inform participants about what works, but also describe under what conditions the strategy might have been most beneficial to student learning and when it might have been less successful. “Quality staff development should be based on research and standards—concentrating on strategies that have proven value in improving

student learning” (Norton, 2001, p. 31). Furthermore two studies highlight the importance of the impact that good professional development programs may have on teacher instruction:

A 2001 study by the Consortium of Chicago School Research found that “high quality” professional-development programs – i.e., those characterized by “sustained, coherent study; collaborative learning; time for classroom experimentation; and follow-up” – had a significant effect on teachers’ instructional practices. The study also identified a reciprocal relationship between strong professional-development offerings and a school’s overall “orientation toward innovation,” suggesting the two feed off each other.

A 2000 longitudinal study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education tracked the experiences of teachers participating in activities financed by the federal Eisenhower Professional Development Program (primarily for efforts in mathematics and science). The study found that professional development that focused on “specific, higher-order teaching strategies”—for example, the use of problems with no obvious solutions—increased teachers’ use of such strategies. That was particularly the case, the study found, if the professional-development activity was collaborative in format; involved participation of teachers from the same subject, grade, or school; provided “active learning” opportunities for teachers; and was consistent with the teachers’ goals and other activities. (EPE Research Center, 2007, ¶s 9-10)

Well designed, carefully planned and financially supported professional development is an essential component in all educational improvement efforts (Lowden,

2006). Professional development within a district may include the traditional activities like workshops and course work or less traditional activities, such as grade, team, or department collaboration, as well as vertical teaming collaboration. It may include both formal and informal learning opportunities for teachers, principals, and other staff members. As districts establish what is regarded as professional development, both formal and informal standards are set for district professional development. According to Guskey (2005), setting standards allowed educators to direct and focus reform initiatives by providing consensus about what was important for students to learn and what skills were necessary. In summary, standards brought a much needed focus to curriculum development efforts, forms of student assessment, and effective methods of professional development.

An outgrowth of the standards-based movement is the establishment of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), a professional association committed to enhancing professional development programs in order to improve student and teacher performance. While the NSDC standards are designed to address the requirements of NCLB, they also focus on the importance of considering content, process, and context in the delivery of professional development. Content standards focus on accountability for all student learning to be equitable and for teaching practices to be grounded in research-based methodology. Ongoing evaluation and collaboration regarding teaching practices and student outcomes are the primary focus of the process standards. Context standards ask questions, such as who would be involved in professional development and what resources are available to facilitate the professional development.

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC, 2003) established the following standards aimed at giving schools, districts and states directions in what constitutes quality staff development for educators (see Table 1).

Table 1
National Staff Development Council Standards

<u>Context Standards</u>	<u>Process Standards</u>	<u>Content Standards</u>
*Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district. (Learning Communities)	*Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement. (Data-Driven)	*Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement. (Equity)
*Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement. (Leadership)	*Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact. (Evaluation)	*Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately. (Quality Teaching)
*Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration. (Resources)	*Prepares educators to apply research to decision making. (Research-Based)	*Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately. (Family Involvement)
	*Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal. (Design)	
	*Applies knowledge about human learning and change. (Learning)	
	*Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate. (Collaboration)	

Note. From *Missouri Professional Development Guidelines for Student Success* by NSDC, 2003, p.228. Jefferson City, MO: National Staff Development Council.

Table 1 outlines the context, process, and content standards used when evaluating high quality staff development. The three standards incorporate twelve specific subheadings,

identified in parentheses in Table 1, for districts on which to gauge professional development practices currently in place. Within each subheading, a descriptor is included to aid districts in the evaluation of standards based professional development.

Overview of professional development models. Research shows a variety of professional development models, which must be considered when districts are deciding on programming structures:

Others have argued that there is a lack of clarity and consensus as to what constitutes teacher development. Moreover, models of professional development operate on divergent assumptions about how teacher growth can be supported and implemented. Furthermore, teachers' successful development demands more than increases in their fund of knowledge or skills—that is, informational learning.

Today's K-12 schooling challenges demand changes in the way adults' know—that is, transformational learning. Because many models of professional development employed in K-12 do not adequately consider how adults make sense of their experience, they lack a framework for facilitating development.

(Drago-Severson, 2007, p. 74)

Guskey (2000) identified seven major models of professional development that serve as a framework for providing educators with a variety of options for facilitating professional development:

1. Training – Training could involve large group presentations, discussions, seminars, workshops, demonstrations or role playing. Training is most effective when organized with clear objectives and outcomes, as well as participants involved in modeling, feedback, and coaching within the school setting.

2. Observation/Assessment – Teachers observe colleagues implementing various instructional strategies, classroom management techniques, lesson formats, and presentations of lessons. When teachers have opportunities to observe one another, both gain knowledge through feedback and collaboration.
3. Involvement in a Development/Improvement Process – Educators participate in the revision of curriculum, instructional enhancement, or program development. Participants gain new knowledge and practice shared decision making.
4. Study Groups – Building faculty are involved in collaborative efforts to find solutions to school, student, or program concerns. Study groups share ideas and research topics, and make recommendations for solutions.
5. Inquiry/Action Research – Educators use specific steps to formulate questions about the profession and find answers based on current practice, knowledge, and research.
6. Individually Guided Activities – Teachers determine individual professional development goals and select opportunities that meet these needs. This model allows for individual choice which enhances participant motivation.
7. Mentoring – Experienced teachers pair with less experienced peers for purposes of shared dialogue, ideas, observations, and teaching techniques.

In addition, the Westchester Institute (n.d.) identified several other models to consider when designing high quality professional development that attracts the attention of educators and researchers. These approaches include the following seven models:

1. Teacher Networks – These networks offer the teachers a supportive community beyond their own school building. They are usually organized around specific

subject matter and seek to deepen the understanding of content matter and teaching strategies.

2. Joint Work – Joint work involves shared responsibility for tasks such as curriculum writing, development of assessments, and team teaching. It also encourages teachers to have productive exchanges and reflections on their teaching practices.
3. Collaborations Between Schools and Colleges – Organizations actively promote partnerships between colleges and K-12 schools. These programs help teachers gain access to new knowledge and enable professors to develop a better understanding of how to teach their students.
4. Professional Development Schools – A special form of collaboration between K-12 schools and higher education is formed. This approach brings novice and experienced teachers together with university faculty to improve practice.
5. Teacher Research Projects – Teachers can conduct research in their classrooms in cooperation with their colleagues and university professors. The main reason for this research is to collect and analyze data for the purpose of understanding and improving teaching practices.
6. Mentor Programs – Mentoring programs typically match experienced teachers with beginning teachers for the purpose of sharing knowledge and expertise.
7. Peer Coaching – Like mentoring, peer coaching allows teachers to share experiences, build relationships, and build shared responsibility for improving teaching strategies. This usually involves teachers on the same professional level

as observations in each other's classrooms occur and constructive feedback is offered.

The Westchester Institute Models focus on teachers working with and learning from one another. Each teacher is viewed as an integral part of each model by acting as a leader, peer coach, and equal partner in professional growth opportunities.

Professional developers should keep in mind that "one size does not fit all" any more with teachers than with students. Teachers have different internal characteristics and work in diverse contexts with varying external pressures, and it is important to consider these complex factors when planning for and conducting professional development programs. (Klingner, 2004, p. 252)

Districts must consider the climate and culture currently impacting teacher engagement in professional development when considering models of implementation and programming needs. Infusing the characteristics of effective professional development into the seven models described earlier might serve to create a foundation that could be used to support the implementation of a professional development program.

In addition to these approaches, districts experiment with alternative models of school day formats to accommodate the on-going professional development activities. Strategies include (a) altering the school calendar or day, (b) purchasing time by using early retirees or substitutes, (c) compensating teachers for after-hour activities, (d) scheduling common plan times, and (e) making better use of current time by freeing teachers of non-instructional duties whenever possible. "If the additional time for professional development is to yield truly meaningful improvements, we must ensure that time is used wisely, efficiently, and effectively... It is not the amount of professional

development time, but how we use the time that counts” (Guskey, 1999, ¶ 3). Learning Point Associates from North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL, n.d.) outlines several creative methods to implement models of professional development within the time constraints of an educational setting. A description is provided for each time structure identified (see Table 2).

Table 2

Professional Development Delivery Models (Learning Point Associates, NCREL, n.d.)

Structure	Description
Lunch Hour Planning	Planning periods are scheduled right before or after a lunch time.
Business Partnerships	School staff participates in training sessions with local businesses. They could also participate in summer internships to broaden their understanding.
Staff Meetings	Staff meetings provide opportunities for professional development.
Student Service Opportunities	Students can schedule blocks of time for service learning or internship experiences. This experience offers hands-on learning for students to develop an understanding of future careers and encourages school-community relationships. While students are off-campus, teachers are involved in professional development activities.
Instructional Practice Opportunities	Teachers given practice opportunities with trained observers providing constructive feedback. Videotaping can also be used for teachers or teams of teachers to view later and then offer feedback.
Summer Workshops	Workshops, collaboration, professional development opportunities scheduled during the summer.
Extended Day	School days starting earlier or ending later to accumulate time for a full day or early dismissal day for the purpose of professional development activities to occur.
Early Leave	Staff leaves with students (earlier than their contracted time) in order to accumulate paid time for professional development at a later date.
Common Plan Time	Administrators develop a master schedule which allows teachers within a grade level or department to have a common plan time to collaborate.
Weekend Workshops	Staff can attend weekend workshops with either accumulated paid time or through a stipend/hourly pay rate.
Creative Scheduling	Administrators develop schedules with blocks of time outside of the traditional schedule for teachers to collaborate. This could involve having specials lumped together to create blocks of plan time. Substitutes could also be hired to offer additional supervision for these blocks of plan time.
College Partnership	School or district partnership with a college to offer on-site customized courses or degrees to meet the school's improvement plan. (job embedded professional development)
Special Event Planning	Provide a special event while hiring substitute teachers to supervise while teachers work on school improvement plans and professional development activities.
Sabbatical	Teachers set aside a portion of their salary each year to save funds to be used for a full year's paid sabbatical.
Substitute Teachers	Permanent substitutes can be hired to allow for professional development opportunities. This can either be on a regular basis at the same time each week or on particular days for a longer release time.
On-line Development	Teachers can access professional development services on-line. They can choose their area of interest and complete independently or in small learning teams.

Note. From "Professional Development Structures," by Learning Point Associated, NCREL, Retrieved April 9, 2007, from, <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/profdev/pd6structures.htm>, ¶ 1.

The professional development models researched are multi-layered and complex. The success of any model is dependent upon all stakeholders' understanding of and commitment to the professional development program.

Principal's role in professional development. A principal of any school building has the insurmountable task of leading staff members to enhance student achievement while managing day-to-day tasks. Administrators are charged with finding methods to motivate and educate teachers through collaborative efforts and management of the school environment.

If a school's goal is to improve the quality of the educational environment that it provides for its students—one that encourages creative thinking and problem solving, cooperative learning, and higher levels of thinking—then a principal must create the same type of atmosphere for those individuals most directly responsible for the success of students and schools, namely teachers. A model that allows principals to integrate the two, sometimes-disconnected functions of instructional supervision and staff development will contribute to achieving the goal of schools as learning organizations and will help students in each and every classroom achieve. (Colantonio, 2005, p. 34)

Building principal responsibilities had included operational management tasks such as transportation, facilities, and purchasing, as well as student issues related to safety and security of the school, parental issues, and state and local mandates. When challenged with all these duties, it had been difficult to remain focused on the role of instructional leader. Without appropriate administrative support, improved instruction becomes a secondary responsibility (Yergaloni, 2005). Perhaps principals' primary responsibility would shift back to improving instruction if more administrative support systems were added.

The principal's role in professional development is multi-faceted with each component critical to the success and sustainability of any program. "One challenge facing principals who are accountable for school-based teacher professional development is structuring a process that creates an enthusiastic atmosphere of mutual inquiry and growth among staff members as well as mutual accountability for student achievement" (Terehoff, 2002, p. 65). According to Richardson (2008), as a principal works to establish professional development programming in a school building, the following principal practices play a crucial role in the development process: (a) holding teachers accountable for their teaching and classroom practices as well as student achievement, (b) supervising all team meetings to ensure that collaboration exist and discussions are tied to school goals, (c) taking responsibility for finding time for teams to meet and protect professional development time from interruptions, and (d) ensuring that data are available for teachers to make decisions based upon student performance. Christman and Supovitz (2005) added one more—learning "about instructional communities themselves so that they can then focus the work of these communities on instructional practice" (p. 650). To summarize, a principal has multiple responsibilities when establishing a building-wide professional development program.

Even if principals are accountable for the above responsibilities, it seems that a collaborative effort among stakeholders must exist in order to see growth in professional development programming. Mahon (2003) agreed, "...principals alone cannot produce improvements in student learning. School improvement is not all about the principal. It is about the principal's ability to engage teachers in the process" (p. 51). Recognizing the teachers' experiences when providing adult learning opportunities may be the most

important task of administrators. “Administrators frequently introduce new programs to their staff, yet few manage to grab the hearts and minds of participating teachers” (Gerla, Gilliam & Wright, 2006, p. 280). In andragogy, experiences represent long-term investments in contributions to student learning, colleague collaboration, and a continued need to experience additional learning (Terehoff, 2002).

Improving instruction depends on individual teachers, but staff development can move individual talent into a collective arena so that teachers can share expertise, learn collaborative skills, use research to support defensible judgments, and examine school-wide practices to provide students with a more sound and coherent education. (Collinson, 2000, ¶ 43)

One may then conclude that to improve student achievement, principals should motivate and engage teachers in professional growth opportunities while providing a supportive environment and effective guidance to remain focused on the goals set forth.

Challenges for implementing professional development. Once a district/school selects and implements a professional development model, it would seem imperative that knowledge of common challenges that could undermine the success of the proposed professional development plan be known. A review of the National Staff Development Council’s (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development and A New Vision for Staff Development (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997) notes some possible errors made by educators when planning professional development. Nine common errors are identified as follows:

1. Fads and Quick-Fix Approaches - Schools sometimes choose faddish improvement innovations that involve one-shot training with no follow-up support. Lack of adequate training leads to poorly or incorrectly executed

implementation of the innovation. The effort often is abandoned before its effectiveness is adequately evaluated.

2. **Unutilized Data** - Every school has assessment data. However, sometimes that data is not utilized in a constructive manner.
3. **The Happiness Quotient** - Too often, professional development is evaluated on its “happiness quotient” or entertainment value rather than its quality or worth.
4. **“Sit and Get” Professional Development Event** - One-shot workshop professional development experiences often fail because they do not offer the ongoing assistance and feedback that is necessary to fully learn, practice and refine a new strategy.
5. **Expert Information Dissemination** - Professional development that relies on lecturing and instructing in which educators are passive recipients of received wisdom is less desirable than models that incorporate facilitation, interaction, collaboration, coaching, guiding, and supporting.
6. **Teacher as the Sole Focus** - Teachers have a great direct impact on increased student achievement. However, additional school staff and others must also be familiar with the professional development tied to improvement efforts to ensure continuity. Administrators and central office staff must also be aware of the new learning in order to effectively monitor, support, and assess the improvement efforts.
7. **Professional Development as a Frill** - Professional development should not be considered a “frill” or “extra” that can easily be cut when finances are tight.

8. Initiative Overload - When too many initiatives are implemented at once, time, energy, and resources become diluted, decreasing the chances of meaningful, lasting change. With multiple demands, teachers become frustrated and confused.
9. Insufficient Time - Real learning cannot take place in the 15 minutes before the students arrive at school and the 10 minutes after the students are dismissed. Schools must be creative in establishing extended periods of release time for teachers to study, share, observe, collaborate, plan, and reflect. (U.S. Dept. of Education, n.d., ¶s 1-9)

It may be beneficial for a district planning professional development to take these nine errors into consideration. By addressing these possible errors in the planning phase, districts may be more likely to avoid delays in the implementation of the professional development plan.

The Center for Education Policy School of Education University of Massachusetts Amherst completed a survey of Massachusetts Professional Development Directors (Churchill, Effrat, Brooks, Ryan, & Spurr, 2001). The respondents raised several issues that impact the ability to offer high quality professional development activities. Seven of the issues are identified as follows:

1. The Problem of “Singletons” – Providing content-based professional development for a single physics or Latin teacher within a small district was a challenge.
2. Substitute Shortage – Finding substitutes limited the ability to have teachers involved in professional development during the school day.

3. Variation in District Professional Development Days – Districts varied in the number of professional development days offered.
4. Parent Resistance to Early Release Days – Early release days faced resistance from parents who needed to make alternate childcare arrangements during the workday.
5. Time for Teacher Learning – After school workshops faced the challenge of a teacher already tired from a full day's work with students.
6. District Versus Building-level Priorities – Buildings within the same district may have varied the ways professional development days were spent.
7. Capacity for Planning – Professional development directors had to wear a variety of hats and have other responsibilities that sometimes limited the ability to plan high quality professional development activities.

It would seem the seven issues could be categorized into three main issues: (a) the need for avoiding isolated workshops, (b) the need to find time during the school year as well as school day to provide professional development, and (c) the inability of the professional development director to focus solely on planning professional development activities.

Marshall, Pritchard, and Gunderson (2001) identified four practices that had little or no positive impact on school improvement in the area of professional development:

1. Individual Choice - There is no indication that offering individual choice in planning professional development translates into improvement in education. The problem is that individual efforts have no constancy of purpose—no common direction with a specific end in mind to guide the initiatives. They

also found no evidence that professional development offered through sources outside the district, such as regional service centers or universities, has value.

2. Use of Teacher Needs Assessments - These “want” lists are of little value.
3. Incentives - External incentives do not work.
4. Departments - Departmental structure in providing professional development is an impediment because artificial barriers were firmly in place. Typically, insufficient time was allocated for department meetings, resulting in much less meaningful professional development.

Taking into account (a) nine errors that may occur during planning professional development, (b) seven issues that impact the ability to offer high quality professional development, and (c) four practices that have little or no positive impact on school improvement in the area of professional development, one might discern the importance that planning, preparation, and follow-through can have on creating a successful program. Researching and having the knowledge of these possible challenges related to the success of a district’s professional development plan may prevent unnecessary barriers during initial implementation. One could assume that by carefully planning and evaluating all potential professional development practices, districts could avoid many, if not all, challenges.

Evaluating professional development. Growing expectations for teachers and student learning lead to an increased interest in content and quality of professional development. School districts find themselves evaluating their current professional development practices and asking if effective professional development activities are being provided within a sound professional development structure. “Evaluation should be

considered during the earliest stages of planning and continued throughout the development, implementation, follow-up, and maintenance. It cannot be something we simply tack on at the end, hoping for good results” (Guskey, 2000, p. 92). In addition, one might ask if professional development efforts are improving teaching practices and student learning. For districts to evaluate the effectiveness of a professional development program, it makes sense that they must have some background knowledge of the basic principles that constitute effective, high quality, professional development.

In conjunction with providing high quality professional development, it seems that districts should develop a means for evaluating staff professional development opportunities and practices. In 2000, the Missouri Commissioner of Education requested that the Missouri Staff Development Leadership Council (MSDLC) create a rubric (see Appendix B) that would provide consistent guidelines for professional development practices. The rubric consists of context, process, and content standards for professional development. Within the context standard, learning communities, leadership, and resources are considered. The MSDLC’s process standard evaluates data analysis, research-based practices, professional development design, learning, and collaboration. The MSDLC’s content standard evaluates equity, teaching quality and family involvement. This rubric is used as a guideline to determine which professional development programs meet the criteria to compete for the Commissioner’s Award of Excellence for Professional Development in the state of Missouri.

The Missouri Professional Development Guidelines for Student Success noted a five level program evaluation system (see Table 3) taken from Guskey’s *The Age of Our Accountability* (1998, ¶ 29) and *Does It Make A Difference?* (2002, p. 48).

Table 3
Professional Development Evaluation Guidelines

<p>Level 1 – Reactions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Questionnaires *Rating Scales *Feedback Sheets <p>What did I like about this session? Did the material make sense? Were the activities meaningful?</p>
<p>Level 2 – Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Paper/Pencil Assessments *Simulations *Skill Demonstrations *Oral/Written Personal Reflections *Examination of Professional Portfolios
<p>Level 3 – Org. Support & Change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *District/School Records *Questionnaires *Structured Interviews with Participants and/or School Administrators <p>Is what I learned aligned with the District Improvement Plan and/or District mission? In what ways have I been or am I encouraged or supported in implementing this change?</p>
<p>Level 4 – Use of New Knowledge & Skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Questionnaires *Structured Interviews *Oral/Written Personal Reflections *Examination of Participants’ Journals or Portfolios *Direct Observation *Video and/or Audiotapes <p>In what ways have I <u>used</u> the information I learned?</p>
<p>Level 5 – Student Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Assessment Results *Student Portfolio Evaluation *Grades *Standardized Test Results *Assessment of Students’ Self-Concept *School Attendance *Homework Completion Rates *Classroom Behaviors *Disciplinary Actions *Detention and/or Dropout Rates <p>What was the impact on students?</p>

Note: From “The Age of Our Accountability,” by Guskey, 1998, *Journal of Staff Development*, 19, p. 36-44; “Does It Make A Difference? Evaluating Professional Development,” by Guskey, 2002, *Educational Leadership*, p. 45-51.

In addition to using the MSDLC professional development rubric, many districts use other strategies to evaluate professional development such as (a) develop and implement questionnaires and surveys to assess teachers' perceptions on the quality of professional development available and the impact of the professional development on instructional practices, (b) survey students to elicit perceptions on the effectiveness of classroom instruction and its impact on meeting learning needs, (c) use data gathered from both formal and informal methods of evaluating staff members' professional development needs and perceptions on current professional development activities and programs, and (d) commit to staying the course while remaining open to the possibility that the professional development plans/structures may need adjustment for continuous school improvement. Black (2007) concluded that the key to this evaluative process is actually using the information gathered from the needs assessments and perception surveys to take action, and at times, take risks.

Haslam and Seremet (2001) identify three levels of professional development evaluation:

Level 1: Assess the quality of the activity against the professional development standards. Using the plans and materials prepared for the activity, observations, and surveys of participants, assess the extent to which the content, format, and organization of the professional development activity meet the standards.

Level 2: Assess the extent to which participants develop and use new skills and knowledge. For activities intended to lead to changes in behavior, use classroom visits to assess whether participants developed new skills and whether they use

them. For activities intended to communicate information, assess the extent to which participants mastered the content.

Level 3: Assess the extent to which professional development contributes to improved student outcomes. Making this assessment is difficult, but it is worth the effort if the Level 2 evaluation shows that teachers are using new classroom skills.

Assess the link between professional development and student outcomes by measuring the intensity of the use of the new teaching approaches, and review samples of student work or student achievement gains in areas targeted by the new teaching approaches. (p. 21)

Kedro and Short (2004) point out that measuring the extent of professional development in a large school system is complex. The challenge is to gauge training and its effects when schools choose different instructional reform models at different times and the models seemed to change frequently. What is learned can assist districts implementing school-wide reform models. The following is a list of five components that should be in place when implementing a school-wide professional development reform model:

1. The right model, practiced by a large proportion of a school's instructional staff, may contribute to positive change on a state high-stakes performance assessment. This study found student achievement on state tests improved in schools where teachers reported widespread adequate training and researchers found effective implementation of the model.
2. An overarching, district-wide, coherent instructional plan is preferable. Using multiple models at different schools to promote staff buy-in at each does not

work well in a large district with a high rate of staff turnover. Training a stream of new teachers detracts from institutionalizing the innovation. The district may never reach the point where it has a teacher corps well-versed in the adopted methods. This challenge is compounded in a school system with high student mobility rates (more than 33% in the St. Louis district). As children move from one model to another during the school year, learning and achievement may be adversely affected. Appropriate models can be adapted to the district-wide framework. St. Louis is making this change.

3. Multiple sources of data are preferable in gauging levels of staff development and implementation. When assessing staff development, a single standardized survey may not get at all the details. Using several data sources is superior to using just one. Some teachers who are surveyed may honestly perceive they have adequate levels of training and that their school has fully adopted the instructional model, but evaluators who observe classroom instruction and examine on-site documents may find otherwise.
4. School instructional staff must develop and deliver their own on-site training sessions and workshops to keep a coherent focus on the reform model. Model providers vary widely in the comprehensiveness of the professional training they offer.
5. Finally, adopting an instructional model requires a great deal of patience. Building a trend of academic performance on a state test takes time. Immediate large gains are unlikely. Staff must be made aware that achievement dips, temporary setbacks may occur, and, in some cases, boards

of education or local political and community leaders will demand immediate results from the schools and may not have the perseverance to see an instructional reform program through to fruition. (Kedro & Short, 2004, p. 48)

When developing a district-wide professional development model, one might want to consider the importance of having a primary model for the district that allows school staff to deliver site-based training sessions. This process may provide an opportunity to obtain data across the district in regards to the effectiveness of professional development activities being implemented at the building level.

It could be concluded that evaluating professional development practices is imperative in maintaining appropriate, high quality professional development programming designed to meet the needs of all staff. Multiple tools on how to evaluate a district's professional development program are accessible to districts that are in the process of revising current programs. Perhaps, districts should consider not only using the evaluation tools during a revision, but also on a regular basis, to maintain the quality and integrity of adopted programs. Through a systematic cycle of evaluation, a districts' professional development program will continuously evolve to meet the current needs of staff and students.

Evolution of professional development. Sparks and Hirsh (1997) said, "Staff development not only must affect the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of individual teachers, administrators, and other school employees, but it must alter the cultures and structures of the organization in which those individuals work" (p. 1). In order to make a difference in teaching and classroom practices, Sparks and Hirsh (1997) illustrated that a

shift must be made when designing professional development. Table 4 outlines shifts in the context, content and process of professional development that must be made.

Table 4
Shifting Professional Development Planning

FROM	TO
Focus on teacher needs only	Focus on student learning outcomes
Focus on individual development	Focus on individual, school, and system-wide development and improvement (CSIP, SIP)
Transmission of knowledge, skills, strategies	Inquiry for teaching and learning
Pull-out training	Job-embedded learning
Generic teaching skills	Combination of content knowledge and content-specific teaching skills
Fragmented, piecemeal, one-shot	Driven by clear, coherent, long-term strategic plan
District direction and decision-making	School direction and decision-making
Professional developers as trainers	Professional developers as facilitators, consultants, evaluators
Professional development as some people's job	Professional development as everyone's job
Professional development for teachers	Professional development for everyone
Professional development as a frill	Professional development as essential
Professional development for teacher improvement	Professional development for all school community
Awareness and one- or two- session workshops	Professional development that provides adequate time for learning, practice and adequate follow-up
Individual decisions	Collegial discussions and decisions
Individual/general applications	Stimulating and supporting site-based initiatives
Professional development without accountability for student achievement	Professional development with accountability for student outcomes

Note. From *A New Vision for Staff Development* by Sparks & Hirsh, 1997, p.51. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

In summary, the shift in professional development planning moved from (a) a focus on teaching to student learning, (b) generic teaching skills to content specific teaching skills, (c) individual decision-making to collegial decision-making, and (d) professional development without accountability to professional development with accountability.

The relationship between effective teaching practices and professional development opportunities is clear within the research reviewed. Richardson (2007, p. 60) provided the following summarization of the research:

When we know that the teacher makes the biggest difference in a child's achievement in school, it's unconscionable to avoid doing all we can to improve the quality of teaching. Improving the quality of teaching means focusing on providing the kind of professional development that will make a difference. Relying on a tired workshop approach to adult learning is probably not going to improve teaching quality in your district. What actions would take your district in a better direction? Our inactions are decisions as well, decisions with consequences. Is it amoral for educators not to take action that would make a difference? Is it amoral when:

- The superintendent knows that a better route to professional development exists, but does not pursue it?
- A board of education knows the district spends thousands of dollars every fall to pay a motivational speaker who makes no difference at all in student learning?
- A principal stands by quietly while teachers fritter away hard-won team time rather than focus on work that would make a difference to student

learning? Fortunately, we have many examples of schools, districts, and leaders who learned more and then acted upon their learning so it would benefit others.

It may be true that the evolution of professional development has progressed from a teacher-directed focus to a student-directed process. This shift may be a result of the necessity to improve student achievement in order to meet increased accountability requirements. One might believe that administration personnel are responsible for remaining current on components of effective professional development to ensure teachers are receiving appropriate training in order to meet students' educational needs. Stakeholders should be able to assemble these components into an appropriate implementation design.

Implementation Designs for Professional Development

Overview of implementation designs. Once a district has established the models of professional development that best meet the needs of staff, a site-based design, district-wide design, or an integrated implementation design should be selected. Guskey (2000) describes site-based design as professional development that is driven by staff at individual buildings. Administrators and educators make decisions based on individual needs and issues directly impacting the school community. District-wide designs provide a broader vision and perspective, which allows wider scope of improvement. The design also extends professional development opportunities, materials, and resources across all school levels. An integrated implementation design intertwines the effective components

of both site-based and district-wide designs to provide a combined approach that encapsulates the best of both designs.

Reeves (2006) stated that leaders set the direction of the professional development agendas. Unfortunately, some districts still use mind-numbing workshops with teachers listening to an expert lecture about professional development without taking into consideration the varying nature of the audiences. For districts that utilize this model, consideration should be given to what teachers teach, how subjects should be taught, how to meet the needs of individual students, and how to build internal capacity. If districts placed an emphasis on internal capacity, leadership efforts likely come from the teachers involved. Reeves (2006) believed that a large part of professional growth takes place within the context of the classroom. Foster (2004) shared that the recursive cycle in which teachers observe a master teacher, attempt to implement new practices in classrooms, and then discuss these attempts with colleagues yield the most significant changes in teachers' attitudes.

Administration personnel who are responsible for a district's professional development seem to use one of two designs for implementing professional development. Based on the researchers' past experience, the two main professional development designs are site-based or district-driven. Administration personnel may advocate for professional development that focuses on the site-based concept of learning communities:

Teachers in schools that have embraced this system of professional development are generally committed to collective school and team goals, use data and other forms of evidence to make decisions, engage in extended study and discussions of

educational issues and the instructional practices, and enjoy the benefits of supportive, collegial interactions. (Sparks, 2004, p. 304)

While Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) could historically be viewed as site-based, in reality, PLCs could have been viewed as either a school-based implementation or district-based implementation. Moving from a school implementation to a district implementation requires a cultural shift in professional learning across the district, acknowledged through changes in policies and procedures (Barth, DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Easton-Watkins, & Fullan, 2005). The way professional development is viewed by teachers and principals depends upon who is responsible for the implementation and the quality of the explanation. “In the long term, teachers will continue with a practice only if they see inherent value in their new skills and only if they are internally motivated to continue with them” (O’Shea, 2005, p. 136). It is, therefore, the responsibility of the implementers to attract interest and sustain the value identified in the PLCs.

On the other hand, administration personnel may advocate for professional development that is established and implemented by the district office. Sparks (2004) describes this professional development as built on mandates, scripted teaching, and careful monitoring for compliance. In districts where this design of professional development is employed, teachers are generally told what to do and when to do it, particularly in high stakes subject areas, such as communication arts and mathematics. While this form of professional development does not allow for individual ownership of professional learning, it serves as a foundational approach for preparing staff to assume more responsibility in professional growth. In summary, the researchers note that there is no clear evidence to suggest that one professional development design is more effective

than the other, leading one to assume that a combination of the two designs may be most beneficial.

Engstrom and Danielson (2006) stated that administrators need to actively participate in and manage the professional development opportunities provided by the district. The authors continued by saying that administrators must work collaboratively with teachers to play a key role in organizing and supporting staff development at the building level. Sparks (2004) shared two specific ideas to promote professional development: (a) a communication structure that requires teacher representatives to meet monthly with the respective principals to support professional development efforts and (b) the requirement of regular agenda items to be held at district-level administrative meetings. Further Sparks (2004) said:

Highly structured and scripted training may occasionally be required to support underprepared and novice teachers. But when these types of programs are the sum total of staff development, I fear for the future of our most vulnerable students, who have the greatest need for high-quality teaching that is supported by sustained, intellectually demanding professional learning. Such learning will occur only within collaborative cultures that promote teachers' professional judgment, deepen their understanding of the subjects they teach, expand the strategies available to successfully teach a diverse classroom of students, and create nourishing connections among staff members. Anything less will be a tragedy for our neediest students and for public education. (p. 306)

Widely accepted professional development models based on the researchers' experience include the Professional Development Pathways Model (PDP), Teacher

Learning Communities (TLC), and Professional Learning Communities (PLC). These professional development models incorporate a community approach in their design and implementation. “Today’s accountability requires we implement new hierarchical patterns of leadership that recognize and use every person’s leadership qualities” (Seaton, Emmett, Welsh & Petrossian, 2008, p. 26). In order to fully engage teachers and principals in the professional development model selected, each participant must play a role throughout the implementation.

Professional Development Pathways. A possible model for professional development identified in the literature is the Professional Development Pathway model (PDP). “The Professional Development Pathway Model included four recommended steps built on the unique need of each school or district” (Lieberman & Wilkins, 2006, p. 126). There are four steps included in this model. The first step in this model is to review the district school improvement plan and develop a needs assessment related to teacher and student learning. The second step requires faculty members to determine which pathway of professional development they believe would best meet their needs. Pathways include school-wide training, grade level/content area training, and/or individual choice options. As staff members move through a chosen pathway, the third step is to reflect on the relationship between the professional development practice and student achievement. The last step in this model is to revisit the improvement plan and again assess the needs of the district and/or schools at large. Lieberman and Wilkins (2006) state that many professionals who use the PDP model find it to be complex but agree that it provides stakeholders a voice in their own professional development growth. The PDP model is best described in a flowchart format (see Figure 1)

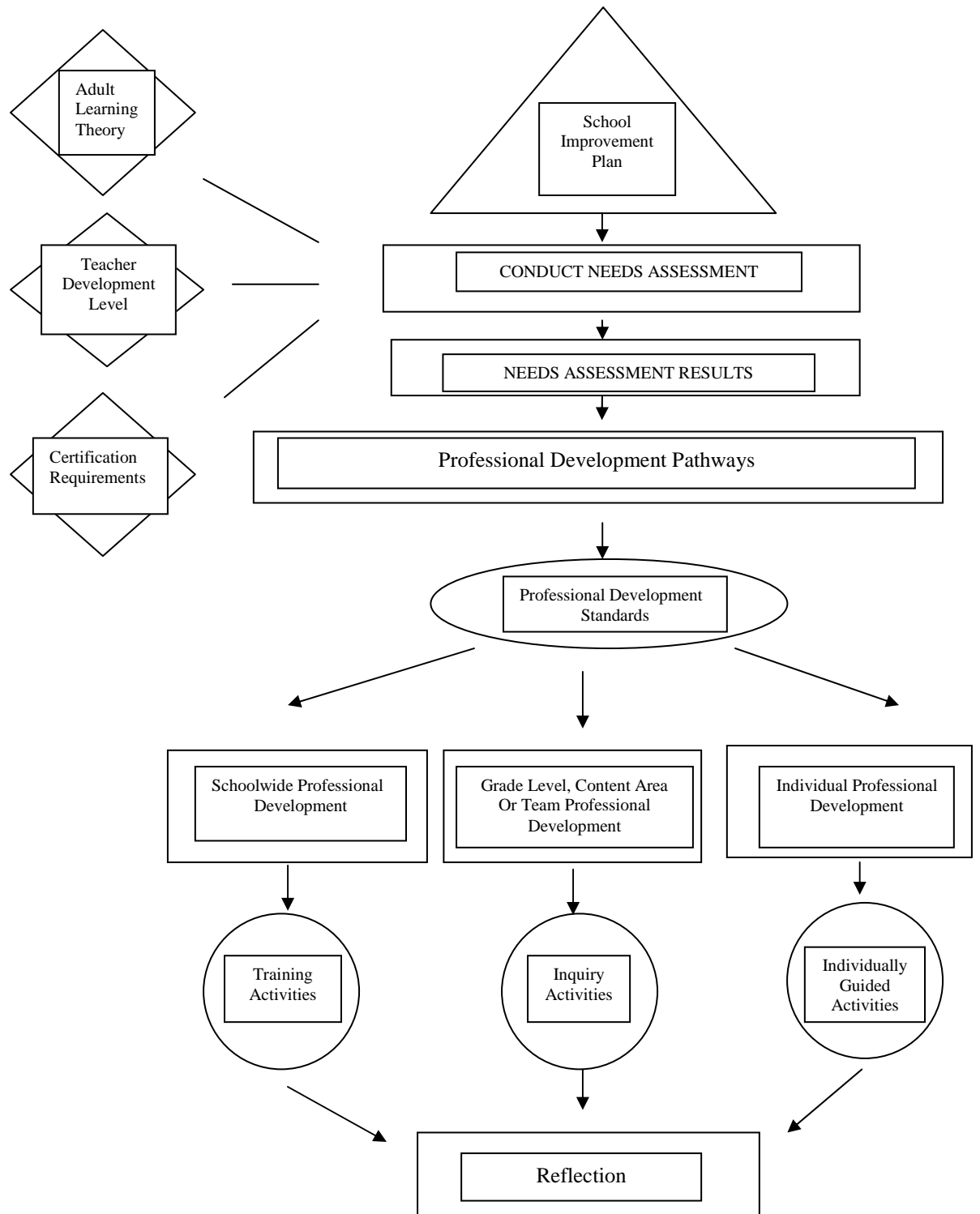


Figure 1 *Professional Development Pathways Model*

Note. From “The Professional Development Pathways Model: From Policy to Practice,” by Lieberman and Wilkins, 2006, *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 42, p. 124-128.

The PDP flowchart illustrates the importance of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) as evidenced by its placement at the top of Figure 1. All professional development activities and participation are thereby related to meeting district goals established in the SIP. While the structure is district goal-oriented, teachers have the opportunity to choose various pathways within the structure to meet individual, professional needs.

Teacher Learning Communities

Overview of Teacher Learning Communities. Two research studies focus on another professional development structure known as Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs), which are also referred to as Learning Communities (LCs). Wood (2007) drew six conclusions with implications for TLC success and sustainability from the data obtained. First, because the goal of TLC is to establish collaboration in the learning communities, participants must feel a connection between their collaboration and student learning. Second, while the district makes considerable headway with the structural dimensions of the TLCs, efforts to enhance teacher efficacy can be constrained by the required compliance of high-stakes accountability policies. Third, the groups spent more time in community-building efforts than in critical inquiry aimed at improving teaching practices. Fourth, if TLC principles and practices run counter to the district culture norms, sustainability may be in question. Fifth, leadership provides a promising context for change and monitors conditions that threaten to undermine TLCs. Finally, districts invest authority and autonomy in the participants, as well as adequate time and support, in order for TLCs to be successful.

Wood (2007) went on to identify four core behaviors underlying these points, which represent endemic challenges to professional development initiatives seeking to create and sustain TLCs: (a) defined and fostered teacher agency, (b) determined core purposes for teacher collaboration, (c) tracked the impact on district culture, and (d) identified enabling and constraining institutional and policy conditions. One may conclude that although TLCs provide a structure for effective, on-going professional development, the outcome of the professional development can be limited by a lack of district support and a lack of understanding true collaboration.

In Woods' *Teachers' Learning Communities: Catalyst for Change or a New Infrastructure for the Status Quo?* (2007) a survey based on TLCs was reviewed. Participants were asked how often engagement occurred in specific activities before and after LCs were established. Table 5 outlines the responses from teachers:

Table 5
Teacher Engagement Before and After Participation in LCs

	Before	After
Collegial conversations	84.1%	92.8%
Feedback on professional performance from colleagues and more useful suggestions to improve practices	36.6%	54.1%
Discussions focused on student work samples	44.3%	61%
Discussions focused on assignments and lesson plans	56.6%	69.9%
Discussions about dilemmas of practice	54.4%	72.2%

When asked on a 5-point Likert scale to rate whether the following existed to a greater degree before or after the LCs, Wood (2007) found the survey respondents gave more ratings at the high end (4 or 5) after LCs. Table 6 outlines the ratings:

Table 6
Survey Responses on Likert Scale

	Before	After
Increased trust among professional colleagues	42.4%	51.9%
Better understanding of how to meet student needs	59.3%	73.1%
A district climate more conducive to risk-taking and innovation	59.4%	70.7%
A greater sense of professional efficacy to improve student learning	44%	50%

If LCs are to succeed, individual teachers, in the opinion of the researchers, must internalize the need for high quality teaching. It seems, too, that teachers must confront difficult problems with student learning instead of turning away, giving up, finding others to blame, or waiting for others to solve the problems. “Schools’ most complex problems are best solved by educators collaborating and learning together. Some of the most important forms of professional learning occur in group settings within schools and districts” (McAdamis, 2007b, p. 7). It seems to be the case that when given the opportunity to collaborate, educators are actively involved in problem solving efforts, which empowers participants to take ownership in professional development. “Distinct from other encounters, learning conversations have a focused intentionality: they are

goal-driven toward professional reflection and, ultimately, toward student benefits” (Hurley, Greenblatt & Cooper, 2003, p. 32). If LCs are committed, (Wood 2007) found that teachers were more likely to turn to one another, take collective responsibility, and actively pursue effective solutions.

The success or failure of efforts to improve student learning, in the end, resides with teachers. Perhaps the most promising aspect of the Learning Communities Project is that it has been designed by and for teachers who are sincerely committed to all students’ learning. This initiative has held out the enticing possibility that the LCs might actually transform how teachers understand and conduct their work. (p. 736-737)

William (2007/2008) noted that successful implementers of TLCs incorporate the following eight practical suggestions:

1. Plan for the TLCs to run for at least two years.
2. Start with volunteers. Once a path is set by the volunteers, then others are more likely to follow.
3. Meet monthly for at least 75 minutes. In order to allow time for teachers to try out the ideas presented, time is needed between each meeting. However, if meetings were too far apart, the program could lose momentum.
4. Aim for a group size of 8-10. Groups should be large enough to provide differences of opinion, yet small enough for everyone to have time to discuss ideas and what teachers are doing in the classroom.

5. Try to group teachers with similar assignments. It is best to aim for similar grade assignments in elementary school and for subject areas in middle and high schools.
6. Establish building-based groups. Instead of gaining ideas from other schools, teachers need to take a small number of good ideas and fully integrate them into their teaching practices.
7. Require teachers to make detailed, modest, individual action plans. Teachers should limit the number of changes to implement in the classroom and then identify how to make time for the new strategies within the classroom.
8. Provide a facilitator. It is important not to have a person seen as an “expert” telling others in the group what to do, but someone that ensure meetings are productive.

In summary, the researchers have noted that effective TLCs do not happen naturally. It may be the case that the success of any professional development program, including TLCs is reliant upon systematic planning; utilizing research-based suggestions and models.

Challenges with Teacher Learning Communities. While learning communities (LCs) are commonly viewed as a positive professional development initiative, difficulties may be encountered with implementing and maintaining effective LC practices. In fact, Wood (2007) identified ten paradoxes, challenges, and possibilities when studying the LCs as a professional development method:

- 1 "...LC participation seemed to be making only superficial changes, existing more at the level of perception than practice. They expressed worry that initial enthusiasm might give way to disappointment – even cynicism” (p. 717).
- 2 "...a lack of time and a blurring of focus made it difficult to sufficiently develop a command of the protocols” (p. 720).
- 3 “Many felt they were being asked to do too much within a limited time frame and that the original purpose of the LCs was lost” (p. 721-722).
- 4 “Subject matter specialists, for instance, could not see the value of collaborating with counselors or other specialists, like P.E. or art teachers, and vice versa” (p. 722).
- 5 “There seemed to be an underestimation of the traditional boundaries, like grade levels and academic content, which tend to divide teachers” (p. 722).
- 6 “Collaboration becomes difficult to negotiate around forces that partition teachers from one another, that is, subject areas, grade levels, complex schedules and responsibilities, and so forth” (p. 722).
- 7 “...LC participation runs the risk of regressing to an old and familiar dependency on skill acquisition, one that historically has characterized far too much of teachers’ work” (p. 725).
- 8 “...LC participants settled on a “problem” regarding children’s learning without reflecting on the middle-class perspectives that prevail in most schools and characterize most teachers’ interpretations” (p. 728-729).
- 9 “...some teachers feel they hear mixed messages about the purposes and control of the LCs” (p. 731).

10 "...the hierarchical nature of most school cultures frequently means that administrators define and direct that work and teachers become socialized to that reality" (p. 732) .

Educational practitioners, who have undertaken change initiatives, such as Learning Communities, may begin the process with excitement and optimism that can inhibit the ability to predict possible challenges that lie ahead. One might consider the educational structure and culture that may resist the intended change initiative when planning. Black (2007) shared information that districts may want to consider when organizing and evaluating LCs within schools. The author describes nine attributes to consider. Successful TLCs

- are a key element of a school's improvement plan.
- operate with trust, effective communication, clear goals and objectives, and strong administrative support.
- focus on continuously improving teaching and learning.
- are committed to inquiry, research, and best practices.
- identify and address instructional needs in their schools.
- conduct action research. They select learning problems, collect data, analyze and interpret data, and take action to improve instruction.
- experiment and take risks with support from school leaders.
- identify strategies that help low-performing students learn.
- share their collective knowledge, methods, and success with others in their schools. (p. 41)

Districts that consider establishing LCs must not assume staff feel the same need for their development. The following strategies could address the challenges described above. The first strategy is that teachers need to be part of identifying realities in regard to curriculum effectiveness, student achievement, school environment, staff morale, and goal development. Second, as districts implement LCs, it seems consideration should to be given to the number of goals set by the district, ensuring that goals are measurable and attainable. And, educators should be able to see progress toward goal attainment, thereby motivating teacher involvement in the LC.

Professional Learning Communities

Overview of Professional Learning Communities. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focus on three big ideas: ensuring student learning, creating a culture of collaboration, and maintaining a focus on results. “The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as professional learning communities” (DuFour and Eaker, 1998, p. xi). The structure of a PLC can be as varied as the many districts that implement them. The primary goal of all PLCs was to enhance and increase student achievement through collaborative efforts that focus on the three big ideas discussed above. Buffum and Hinman (2006) believed that the PLC paradigm is based on the simple cliché of going “back to basics.” DuFour and Eaker (1998), gurus of the PLC model, suggested that there are three fundamental questions that every teacher must consider: (a) What do we want students to learn? (b) How do we know if students learn it? and (c) What will we do if students do not learn? In the process of answering these questions, teachers become

empowered to improve student learning and achievement, as well as to identify the need for professional development opportunities that support and enhance the ability to meet students' learning needs.

Fullan (2006) suggested educators are in a position to revisit PLCs. He identified five critical elements for effective PLCs: (a) reflective dialogue, (b) de-privatization of practice, (c) collective focus on student learning, (d) collaboration, and (e) shared norms and values. Fullan (2006) also described two major sets of conditions required to ensure PLC success. The first condition is structural-time to meet: (a) physical proximity, (b) inter-dependent teaching roles, (c) communication structures, (d) teacher empowerment, and (e) school autonomy. The other condition is referred to as culture. The culture of a school can include (a) the participants' openness to improvement, (b) trust and respect of building leadership and colleagues, (c) cognitive and skill base of participants, (d) supportive leadership, and (e) socialization of both new and returning staff members. "If teachers are to become empowered to improve classroom curriculum and the methods used to teach it, a professional culture must be developed to support their efforts" (Bernauer, 1999, ¶ 14). Professional communities within schools have been a minor theme in many educational reforms since the 1960s and became a research phenomenon in 1981. Fullan (2006) suggested it was time to take note of this model:

Twelve years later professional learning communities have become more prevalent, which is exactly why we should take them more seriously. The shift from research (what makes professional learning communities tick) to development (how do we cause more of them to become established) also has been part of recent developments. May I note as well that good development

includes and sharpens the research knowledge base because there is nothing like trying to make a complex idea work to learn more deeply about it. (¶ 26)

When pursuing the implementation of a professional learning community, educational leaders seem to recognize the importance of a school culture change. Fullan (2006) identified six important elements in order to facilitate cultural change. The first is a need to distinguish between the structural and cultural change, noting that the cultural change is more important but more difficult to achieve. Second, each school believes that the PLC model involves a whole-system change. Schools collaborate with each other so educators learn from each other. Third, some of the strategies are coordinated by the district but also encompass two-way interaction and mutual influence across both levels. Fourth, school and district leaders see themselves as engaged in changing the bigger context or system to meet the multi-faceted needs of the district. Fifth, PLCs help schools become more confident and competent, taking risks to involve others and becoming more accountable to the public. Sixth and finally, utilizing PLCs is about energizing all stakeholders to make good decisions that are based on what is best for students. Borko (2004) provides research evidence that strong PLCs foster teacher learning and improve instructional practices. “Doing better things is all about cultures of professional learning. PLCs need to be seen explicitly in this light or they will go the way of just another innovation that captures the limelight ephemerally” (Fullan, 2006, ¶ 40). In summary, effective professional learning must be built into the district/building culture through ongoing reflection and collaboration.

Challenges with Professional Learning Communities. Fullan (2006) stated that what educators are calling PLCs varies from one district to the next and lacks the

knowledge and depth needed to be effectively implemented. Educators may make the mistake of treating PLCs as the latest innovation, which can result in PLCs getting discarded too easily. Fullan (2006) stated that teachers do not have enough opportunity to engage in continuous and sustained learning in the settings—observing and being observed by their colleagues. It stands to reason that the educational structure and environment has to provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate and mentor one another in the pursuit of professional learning.

Buffum & Hinman (2006) also looked at PLCs and the realities of complacency and cynicism among the teachers in a top down, politically driven approach. These researchers shared that “some teachers see themselves as pawns, subject to the whims of local, state and federal mandates” (p. 16). Capistrano Unified School District’s San Clemente High School is the site of a case study for PLCs and the implementation process. “Unfortunately, while some years were better than others, over time, little change in academic growth had taken place” (p. 17). The administration and faculty discovered that time is the biggest roadblock to having the ability to address the concerns. Late start days, typically consisting of one to two hours, were not providing enough time to delve more deeply into assessment diagnostics and the sharing of best practice. It was also determined that teacher collaboration alone is not a natural act, and specific strategies are needed to help facilitate these efforts. “Collaboration among teachers has not been the norm historically. Typically, collaboration is neither taught nor modeled in university coursework nor do practicing teachers receive substantial support from colleagues or administrators” (Goddard, Goddard & Tschannen-Moran, 2007, p. 878). “We can’t just invite teachers to collaborate or give them the opportunity to collaborate.

We have to create systems that require them to work together in teams... Collaboration by invitation doesn't work; you have to systematically embed it" (DuFour, 2001, ¶ 26). Susan Printy, a specialist in educational administration at Michigan State University, concluded that poorly designed PLCs hinder improvement and are a disservice to students. She found that LCs are often organized by grade level or departments, which reinforce ineffective practices already in place (Black, 2007). Not only should a district build in time for collaboration to occur, but teachers must also be trained in strategies of effective collaboration. Research seems to say that a systematic process of collaboration should be implemented so that teachers feel confident in sharing and critiquing information. Without a systematic approach, teachers may tend to regress to old habits of engaging in management and housekeeping tasks that are not directly related to teaching and classroom practices.

Examples from a Survey Study

Once a district commits to an implementation design for professional development, it might be helpful to organize the delivery so that it is conducive to district needs. Churchill et al. (2001) outlined three examples of professional development implementation in their Survey of Massachusetts Professional Development Directors. The first example reviewed was implemented in the Shrewsbury Public School District. In this example, an associate superintendent led the district's professional development offerings after consulting with a professional development committee, which included teachers, administrators, and the president of the teachers' union. The district had four full days designed for professional development divided into morning and afternoon

sessions. The morning session was site-based and organized by the principal according to building interests and school improvement plans. The afternoon session was district-organized by the professional development committee and based upon district goals. In addition to these four days, the teachers were offered a variety of after-school mini-courses, graduate courses, and study groups.

The second professional development example (Churchill et al., 2001) was implemented in the Springfield Public School District. This example focused on district-wide consistency of standards-based curriculum. A designated professional development center employed two full-time staff and 24 content-area or grade-level supervisors/directors who organized the offerings for each grade/area. The professional development center worked with the superintendent, supervisors, directors, and teachers' union to identify the professional development needs for the district. In this example, the district offered seven full professional development days, four before school started for curriculum study and three during the school year for analysis of data and curriculum implementation. Professional development days were organized by subject area and grade level. Teachers were required to attend professional activities based upon current teaching assignments. The district scheduled early-release days monthly and also offered a full array of after-school workshops and off-site courses as well as conference opportunities.

Churchill's third example reviewed was implemented by the Lynn Public School District. This example was a building-based facilitator professional development model. Professional development was staffed by a director of staff development and instructional support as well as site-based instructional facilitators in each of the 25 buildings in the

district. These site-based facilitators were trained “expert” teachers used to help model lessons, provide mentoring, lead study groups, and assist teachers in improving teaching practices. The facilitators assessed the needs at each individual building, based on a close familiarity with how the students were taught, and then worked collaboratively with the director to plan the professional development opportunities. Individual building and staff goals were then aligned with the district-wide goals (Churchill et al., 2001).

The three examples cited all involved districts that built professional development time into a yearly calendar. Professional development activities were designed to meet both district and building level goals. Each provided a structure that facilitated collaboration among teachers. In addition, each district offered after-school workshops and conferences to support individual teachers’ professional development opportunities. While the three districts shared common components, each was individual in the implementation and structure of specific components. It would seem that PLCs that are built with building and district input would have the capability to incorporate what research defines as best practices for professional development.

Teacher Challenges

Closing the knowing and doing gap. A common misconception is that teachers’ classroom practices might improve with more education, knowledge, and information. However, knowing the information may not be enough to improve classroom practices; educators might need to know how to apply the learned information in order to impact teaching and learning in the classroom. The isolated nature of the educational profession

provides little opportunity for collegial sharing, mentoring, and coaching that will facilitate the movement from knowing to using the information.

Colantonio (2005) also shares that one of the most common complaints voiced by teachers is the ineffectiveness of the one-shot nature of most professional development opportunities. Schools sometimes hire an “expert” who comes in to present a one-size-fits-all teaching strategy. Unfortunately, when the expert departs, teachers are left with just enough information to be interested in the strategy but not the support needed to implement, practice, and adapt the strategy. “Teachers must utilize a new skill twenty to thirty times before they have sufficient mastery to incorporate it within their teaching repertoire, utilize it comfortably, and adapt it to the needs of their students” (DuFour & Sparks, 1991, p. 58). The lack of follow-through on the implementation process after teachers engage in professional learning activities leaves teachers rarely using strategies learned during singleton workshops. Perhaps, teachers could benefit from observations of colleagues, time to reflect, and discussion of how to best implement new teaching strategies.

Depending on outside experts to improve student learning has been a largely unsuccessful approach to professional development. Too often, a small group of teachers attend training sessions with outside experts and are expected to share their “new knowledge” with their colleagues at school. Typically, the notes from the training session sit on the teachers’ shelves gathering dust with the other professional development resources brought back from other sessions. (Baron, 2008, p. 56)

More than ever, teachers are inundated with professional development opportunities that profess to change teaching practices and increase student achievement. The pressures placed upon teachers to raise student achievement is resulting in the practice of attending one-time workshops due to limited availability of effective ongoing professional development. The result is that teachers are not lacking knowledge of best practices but lacking the support to implement these practices within the classroom. “The most pressing issue confronting educators is not a lack of knowledge but a lack of implementation, and a key to improving schools is taking purposeful steps to close this knowing-doing gap” (DuFour, 2007, p. 27). Districts that are serious about improving classroom teaching practices might benefit from serious consideration of not only increasing staff knowledge, but also providing ongoing support for implementing best teaching practices.

Despite the growing consensus about the importance of professional development in school reform, many districts do not yet devote much attention to professional development. Typically, they do not view professional development as a system, nor do they see it as necessarily linked to other core systems. For example, a recent study of schools that had been recognized for excellence in professional development of the U.S. Department of Education concluded that these schools operated fairly independently from their districts. Districts provided [content] standards and curriculum guides; they offered credit, funds, or actual opportunities to attend professional development workshops; but they were not very actively involved. In fact, several schools wished that their districts would

take a more active role in promoting and supporting reform. (Haslam & Seremet, 2001, p. 2)

Survey data obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) showed that in 2000, teachers typically spent about a day or less in professional development on any one content area. Only 18% of teachers felt that the training received was connected “to a great extent” to other school improvement activities, while 10-15% reported having been given significant follow-up materials or activities. The survey data goes on to say that a range of 12-27% of teachers felt that professional development activities significantly improved teaching. These data support the thought that many teachers view the professional development opportunities available as uninspiring, if not bordering on demanding. The National Staff Development Council (2003) was clear in the belief that 25% of an educator’s work time should have been devoted to professional learning and collaboration with colleagues, yet in a 2000 survey, not one district had reached that level of commitment. “Ask most classroom teachers why educational reform is going so slowly, and they’ll tell you it’s the lack of time for professional activities other than direct instruction of students” (Barkley, 1999, ¶ 1). Districts are faced with the dilemma of finding time within the school day for professional development while supervising students or releasing students, thereby adding days to the school calendar. Either way, there is a significant financial commitment to providing professional development activities within the school day. “Without increased time for professional development linked to the curriculum, teachers cannot acquire the knowledge and skills they need to help all students perform at high levels” (Darling-Hammond, 1999, ¶ 27).

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL, n.d.) stated that the success of virtually all education reform hinges on the skill and knowledge of classroom teachers. The NCSL also stated that only ongoing teacher learning through professional development can make current teachers aware of changing expectations and newly-validated, effective teaching methods. Without clear delineation of responsibility for professional development and potential inequalities in learning opportunities, policymakers will continue to grapple with how to best move toward more effective professional development delivery. States that require professional development typically mandate “clock hours” with little regulation on the types of activities that qualify for certificate renewal. School districts with minimal guidance and funding tend to rely on less effective, one-time in-service and workshop models:

The work of school improvement is unlikely to advance much beyond its current level unless educators begin to exercise some professional accountability for practice within their own ranks and unless they begin to consolidate their authority and influence to hold policy makers accountable for the investments in the institutions and professional development necessary to make large-scale improvement work. (Elmore, 2007, p. 32)

Educators at the federal, state and local level make high quality professional development a priority. Evidence of this priority is shown by a commitment to funding activities and programs that shift from knowledge attainment to classroom implementation. The NCSL (n.d.) identified the most likely reason for focusing on whole school professional development that lacks in-depth study opportunities and follow-up is cost. In-service days and school or district workshops remain the most common forms of professional

development activities. These activities are not conducive to in-depth study, but they are less expensive than other methods and involve less release time and restructuring of the school day. It seems that current policies do not provide the necessary incentives to spur schools to offer more effective methods of professional development. As a result, “one-shot workshops” continued to prevail even knowing the limited impact on changing teaching and classroom practices (Sykes, 1996).

It would appear that current professional development opportunities are often geared more toward providing teachers with content and best practices knowledge. However, without opportunities for ongoing learning that is embedded within the school day, teachers may lack the support needed to effectively implement the knowledge gained in a manner which impacts teaching and classroom practices. The research may lead one to believe that providing teachers with the knowledge alone is not enough to impact classroom practices; teachers need time to practice, reflect and collaborate in order to experience the success desired. The pressure to improve student performance and achievement can cause districts to take the route of “one-shot” workshops in an effort to provide some type of professional development. The follow through component for professional development may be overlooked due to the lack of funding, time constraints, and commitment required to ensure a high quality professional development program.

Teacher empowerment. Traditionally, teachers are not in control of establishing professional development activities. Instead, the design and implementation of professional development has been directed by outside organizations that do not necessarily understand the real demands of teaching. In fact, teachers generally are the

last involved in shaping the profession but are often relegated to being mere recipients of the ideas and reforms from those far removed from the classroom. It has been the experience of the researchers of this study that outside experts impose experiences on teachers in a top down manner. Teachers are under constant pressure to respond to various initiatives and policy mandates but have no shared strategies for figuring out how to translate such policy directives for the classroom (Chokshi & Fernandez, 2005).

Chokshi and Fernandez (2005) went on to state that another significant hindrance to teacher empowerment is that there are not many immediate or direct platforms for teachers to voice policy concerns and suggest new ideas. There are limited opportunities for dialogue between textbook publishers, administrative officials, and other policymakers who set teachers' agendas. One of the most common criticisms from teachers is that new reforms contradict previous reforms or worse yet, concurrent reforms (Datnow & Stringfield, 2000; Ross, Alberg, & Nunnery, 1999). At times, teachers follow a policy related to professional development only because of the threat of rewards or sanctions (Desimone et al., 2007). Teachers are much more likely to be rewarded for compliance and conformity than for critical dialog, inquiry and innovation (Wood, 2007). In fact, there is evidence to suggest that forced policies sometimes result in shallow, short-term implementation; whereas, a shared vision of reform is more likely to create of feeling of ownership, thereby sustaining the reform effort (Desimone, 2002). Savvy teachers know that reforms can come and go.

The biggest problem with reform efforts that come from the top down is that often, teachers don't buy into them. A number of the teachers we talked to indicated that they often just try to ride out reform programs, hoping the most

obtrusive will prove untenable and eventually go away. (Gordon & Crabtree, 2006)

As a result, some teachers greet a new policy with a “wait and see” attitude, expecting that it will disappear over the horizon like so many of its predecessors (Ross, Henry, Phillipsen, Evans, Smith, & Buggey, 1997). Teachers continue to have little control or voice in public educational policy, state and district mandates, and even school rules and procedures. Boone, D’Ambrosio, and Harkness (2004) stated that one challenge of professional development involves bridging the gap between what the teachers want and expect and the district’s own goals.

Wood (2007) uncovered conflicts that frequently emerge when efforts to enhance the professional autonomy, authority, and responsibility of teachers conflicts with hierarchical and bureaucratic districts and school cultures. He also found that most participants disclaimed a connection between their collaborative work and student learning. The efforts to enhance teacher efficacy appear to be constrained by high-stakes accountability policies requiring compliance. Wood (2007) claimed that more time is devoted to community-building efforts than to critical inquiry aimed at improving practice. Further, leadership may have unwittingly caused conditions that threaten to undermine professional development initiatives. The author summarized by declaring that districts need to invest greater authority and autonomy in participants, as well as providing the adequate time and support.

Summary

Chapter two was a review of literature on (a) professional development, (b) implementation designs, (c) teacher learning communities, (d) professional learning communities, and (e) teacher challenges. Each section addressed multiple topics related the components of effective professional development, as well as various models and structures to consider when developing and evaluating professional development programming.

Research findings suggested that the success of any professional development program is reliant upon systematic planning and utilizing research-based suggestions and models. In addition, providing teachers with “one-shot” professional development opportunities alone is not enough to impact classroom practices; teachers need time to practice, reflect, and collaborate. A systematic process of collaboration may serve to provide a structure that allows teachers to become more comfortable with the process of sharing and critiquing group information. This requires districts to build in time for teacher collaboration, as well as training in effective collaboration strategies.

Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were most often cited in the research as professional development models that incorporate best practices. However, effective TLCs and PLCs do not happen naturally. In order to fully engage teachers and principals in a professional learning model, each participant must play a role throughout the implementation. Principals should motivate and engage teachers in professional growth opportunities while providing a supportive environment and effective guidance. It would seem that PLCs built into the school day

with building and district input have the capability to incorporate what research defines as best practices for professional development.

The professional development models and structures researched are multi-layered and complex. The success of any model or structure is dependent upon all stakeholders' understanding of and commitment to the professional development program. It may be true that the evolution of professional development has progressed from a teacher-directed focus to a student-directed process as a result of accountability requirements. Therefore, districts have the responsibility of ensuring that professional development programming has evolved as well toward meeting state and federal mandates for providing high quality professional development programming. As a result, districts would be well-advised to evaluate professional development practices to maintain appropriate, high quality professional development programming designed to meet the needs of all staff.

Completing a major program evaluation usually serves as the catalyst for serious reflection on the current designs, policies, and practices of your professional development programs—their goals, content, processes, and contexts. In fact, revelations are often so powerful that they bring about the realization that major changes are needed if significant results are really expected from professional development. People frequently conclude that designing the evaluation should be the first step in the program planning process, rather than an afterthought during implementation. (Champion, 2002, p. 79)

Chapter three describes the action research methodology used to obtain descriptive information regarding current perceptions of Fort Zumwalt's Professional

Development Plan. Teacher perceptions were solicited using Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheets, Professional Development Needs Assessments, and the Professional Development Questionnaire. The topics include (a) subjects, (b) research design, (c) questionnaire instruments, (d) validity, (e) internal validity, and (f) procedures.

Chapter Three - Methodology

Over the past 25 years, professional development for teachers moved from an optional standard to a mandated standard (Lieberman & Wilkins, 2006). Three pieces of federal legislation drove the mandate for high quality professional development: the Excellence in Education Act of 1985, the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993, and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The recent shift in thinking may be attributed to NCLB, which measures districts' progress toward meeting academic, professional, and community goals. NCLB was passed by Congress and signed into law by President George Bush on January 8, 2002. The law reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which had been the federal law most impacting education. NCLB was built on four premises:

1. Accountability for results
2. Use of scientifically-based research
3. Expanded parental options
4. High quality teaching staff

High quality professional development is at the center of the NCLB legislation. To maintain a high quality teaching staff, it is the opinion of the researchers of this paper that districts need to provide a focused approach to professional development programming that is grounded in scientifically-based research methodology.

The purpose of this study is to determine how teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District use current district professional development opportunities. The study assists the district in identifying effective and ineffective components of the current plan so that the district professional development committee can make change

recommendations to the Board of Education. These proposed changes may enhance the impact of professional development on teaching and classroom practices.

This qualitative study addresses the following research questions:

1. In what types of professional development opportunities are teachers choosing to participate?
2. What motivates teachers to participate in professional development activities?
3. When do teachers prefer to participate in professional development opportunities?
4. To what degree do teachers believe professional development experiences improve their teaching and classroom practices?
5. Do teachers believe that professional development programs are meeting their need to improve their teaching and classroom practices?

Research Methodology

The research method used in this qualitative study is classified as action research. Action research methodology seems to be a good fit for studies that are focused on (a) problem-solving, (b) a need for change or improvement, and (c) teacher reflection on practices (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). This study focused on a need for change or improvement—the potential weaknesses of the Fort Zumwalt Professional Development Plan. Over the years, stakeholders voiced concerns that district professional development opportunities did not meet teacher needs, due in part to the lack of cohesive planned activities.

This study used a survey questionnaire to elicit teacher perceptions in regard to the use and impact of district professional development opportunities. It would seem that by giving teachers an opportunity to share perceptions and viewpoints, change or improvement efforts would be more readily received by the staff. Research obtained through the literature study, along with the data gathered from participants, will be used to recommend changes that may improve the district's professional development programming.

When asked to share perceptions and experiences about professional development participation, teachers had the opportunity to reflectively think about the impact of professional development on teaching and classroom practices. During this process, the researchers also reflected on current professional development practices and perceptions. These reflective practices, coupled with the research presented in chapter two, provided the basis for making change recommendations.

To restate, action research methodology was the best fit for this qualitative study because the goal was to (a) focus on a problem, (b) institute a change or improvement, and (c) reflect on practices by teachers. The overall purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development practices in the Fort Zumwalt School District.

Subjects

The participants for this qualitative research study included all K-12 certified teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District. One thousand, two hundred eighty (1280) teachers received the electronic questionnaire sent on Friday, March 14, 2008. The participants included 569 elementary teachers, 302 middle school teachers and 409 high

school teachers. The average number of years of service for the surveyed teachers was 10.8. The percentage of surveyed participants with a master's degree or higher was 61.1%.

Teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District are a part of a rich educational history. According to the history of the Fort Zumwalt School District, as posted on the district website, in 1869, the first school was built in O'Fallon, Missouri, on the grounds of St. Mary's Academy. This was followed by additional one and two-room schools located in Flint Hill, Dyer, Josephville, Mt. Hope, St. Peters and Cool Springs. In 1910, O'Fallon built two new multi-room schools at the location of the current Hope High School. The district operated its own high school until 1918, when a parochial high school was established leaving too few students to operate a public high school. Students in the Fort Zumwalt School District wishing to attend a public high school had to be transported to St. Charles or Wentzville School Districts for secondary education services. In 1960, the Fort Zumwalt School District opened its own high school and reestablished its own one through twelve educational system. Over the next nine years, student enrollment increased dramatically and additional elementary schools were added. To meet the demands of the growing student population, the district was forced to implement split sessions in the secondary grades for several years with students returning to regular hour sessions in 1973. The history of Fort Zumwalt goes on to say that the district opened its eighth elementary building and second high school in 1987.

Rapid growth has been a big part of Fort Zumwalt's history. Throughout the 1990s, the district added new facilities and building additions to keep up with the growing student enrollment. These facilities included four elementary buildings, one

middle school building, and one high school building. Since 2000, the district had added three elementary buildings, one middle school building, and one high school building. At the time of this study, the district consisted of 15 elementary schools, four middle schools, four high schools and one alternative high school for a total student population of 18,880 students. The Fort Zumwalt School District was the largest district in St. Charles County, Missouri. It was located in the central northern section of the county and covered an area of approximately 125 square miles with approximately 85,000 residents out of a county population of 283,883 (Year 2000 estimate). The district was predominantly a suburban community with some outlying rural areas. The subjects involved in this study included all K-12 certified teachers from the historically rich Fort Zumwalt School District, which began when the first building was opened in 1869.

Research Design

This research study was qualitative in nature with data derived from three instruments. This qualitative research design provided a holistic method to investigate teachers' perceptions and beliefs. This holistic perspective focused on the concept of professional development as a complex system. The qualitative design allowed for naturalistic inquiry, a study of real-world situations without predetermined outcomes (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Researchers were interested in the opinions of all teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District; therefore, questionnaire instruments were selected to collect and describe the overall use and effectiveness of the Fort Zumwalt Professional Development Plan. Questionnaires have been effective tools to produce qualitative data because large numbers of people could be surveyed quickly. It would seem that if the

questionnaire is convenient and well-designed, people are more likely to participate. As a result, questionnaires elicited certain information such as demographic data, likes/dislikes, and perceived needs as well as perceptions and opinions. "...questionnaires can produce qualitative data that most audiences, including education policy makers, feel confident about. They like the idea of learning from large numbers of people" (Champion, 2006, p. 61). The purpose in using questionnaires in this study was to obtain perceptions from a large sample to determine the effectiveness of the Fort Zumwalt School District Professional Development Plan.

Questionnaire Instruments

This research project relied on three primary questionnaire-type instruments in order to (a) learn how teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District used current district professional development opportunities and (b) understand perceptions regarding the impact of these professional development opportunities on teaching and classroom practices. Using multiple instruments is called triangulation and is a means of verifying results. By using data from three different instruments, researchers were better able to support their findings and identify common themes or trends in participant responses.

Of the three instruments, two were developed by the district professional development committee, and the third instrument was created by the researchers. Both district instruments are distributed yearly to obtain teacher feedback in reference to professional development opportunities in which faculty members participated during the school year. Prior to this study the data obtained from these two instruments were shared with committee members and returned to building administrators with no additional

follow up. There was opportunity for the district to collect longitudinal data; however, the information was not recorded and maintained on a yearly basis. The third instrument, a questionnaire, was developed by the researchers to conduct an evaluation of the district's current professional development program. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) when developing questions in a survey, the researchers consider four standards when constructing the questions:

1. Was this a question that could be asked exactly the way it was written?
2. Was this a question that meant the same thing to everyone?
3. Was this a question that people could answer?
4. Was this a question that people would be willing to answer, given the data-collection procedures?

The questions on the instrument created by the researchers were written in second person format as if an interviewer were asking the participant the questions verbally. Some questions included current educational terminology related to professional development activities. However, with the large sample used in this study, it was impossible to know if every respondent drew the same meaning from the terminology as intended by the researchers. To increase the likelihood of honest responses, all questions were answerable and the questionnaire was anonymous.

The first of the three instruments used in this study is the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheet (see Appendix C). The Fort Zumwalt School District uses this instrument to obtain feedback on each in-service offered by district personnel. Participants completed this form at the conclusion of each in-service attended. The evaluation form consists of five questions aligned with two district professional

development goals. The district goals listed on the evaluation are to increase student learning by providing high quality professional development and to increase student learning by providing information that will further help to engage the learner. Participants have the option to remain anonymous when completing this form by not adding a name; however, participants are asked to complete the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheet at the conclusion of the presentation with the presenter collecting the forms.

The second of the three instruments used in this study is the Professional Development Needs Assessment (see Appendix D). This form is disseminated by the district Professional Development Committee to all certified teaching staff. The purpose for gathering this information is to gain teacher recommendations for workshops, conferences, and staff development activities. This needs assessment addresses what teachers feel is needed at the district level, building level, and department/grade level for ongoing professional development. Participants have the option to remain anonymous when completing this form. The building professional development representative provides a collection envelope in a designated location for completed forms.

The final instrument employed for this study is the Professional Development Questionnaire created through SurveyMonkey.com by the researchers (see Appendix E) and was sent to all certified staff in the Fort Zumwalt School District. This instrument is comprised of ten questions regarding participant demographics, utilization of professional development opportunities, and perceptions regarding the impact that professional development opportunities have on teaching and classroom practices. Demographic questions consist of single-response items. Question four on the survey is a matrix format

with drop down boxes that provide additional information. Questions five, six and eight are set up with a four-point Likert scale to record participant responses. Question seven and nine are based on a simple yes/no multiple choice, with an explanatory box included in question nine. Question ten involves two open-ended responses to allow for more individualized answers.

Validity

Validity means the degree to which correct inferences can be made based on results from instruments; validity is dependent not only on the instrument itself but also on the instrumentation process and the characteristics of the group surveyed (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Validity is the truth, appropriateness, and usefulness of the Professional Development Program Reflection/Evaluation Sheet, the Professional Development Needs Assessment, and the Professional Development Questionnaire. The three instruments used in this qualitative research study were developed by highly qualified teaching professionals to ensure the validity of the results obtained.

The instruments used in this qualitative research study should be evaluated on content validity. Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) define content validity as “the degree to which an instrument logically appears to measure an intended variable” (p. 580). The Professional Development Program Reflection/Evaluation Sheet presents concerns with both content, specifically question three, and format, due to the collection method. The Professional Development Needs Assessment appears to have appropriate content and format to measure for its intended purpose. Lastly, the Professional Development Questionnaire’s content is appropriate for measuring the five research questions;

however, the instrument was distributed in an electronic format which may have limited the number of responses. Overall, the three instruments seemed to provide information relevant to the questions presented in the study.

Internal Validity

A qualitative research study is multi-faceted with many ways to explain the outcome of the research findings. These varied explanations are referred to as threats to internal validity and are found in most research projects. In a survey research study, there are two primary threats to internal validity: location and instrument decay. Location threat is described as the particular location in which data are collected that could affect the outcome of the results. In the case of this study, if a number of participants were uncomfortable or unable to retrieve, complete, and send electronic mail, this could have impacted the overall outcome of the results. In addition, the workshop reflection/evaluation sheets were collected by the presenter, possibly impacting the integrity of the responses. Instrument decay refers to the scoring procedures becoming changed in anyway. Using multiple researchers to score an instrument or researcher fatigue while scoring an instrument could have led to instrument decay. This threat to internal validity was recognized for the Professional Development Evaluation/Reflection Sheet and the Needs Assessment due to the manual data collection by researchers. This threat was eliminated for the Professional Development Questionnaire through the use of SurveyMonkey.com which controlled instrument decay through electronic gathering and scoring of data.

Procedures

A written letter of consent from the district Superintendent (see Appendix F) was obtained to conduct educational research on the current Fort Zumwalt School District Professional Development Plan. The research involved collecting data from evaluation forms completed by staff members who participated in district professional development activities. In addition, data were obtained from professional development needs assessment forms disseminated by the professional development committee and completed by all certified staff. A questionnaire was developed to gain additional data regarding teachers' utilization of current professional development opportunities as well as perceptions about the impact these opportunities had on teaching and classroom practices.

Survey participants were all K-12 certified staff in the Fort Zumwalt School District. Participants received an e-mail that outlined the purpose of the survey, instructions for completing the questionnaire, anonymity of responses, and process for returning responses. Questionnaire items included some subject characteristic questions (grade level, age, and years of experience), as well as questions regarding perceptions of the professional development efforts within the Fort Zumwalt School District. Participant responses were used to determine teacher perceptions at the various grade levels within the district. Once teacher perceptions were retrieved, responses were electronically tabulated by SurveyMonkey.com to develop an overall teacher view of current district professional development practices. Data from all three instruments were then analyzed to identify which components of the current professional development plan were most often used and which components were viewed as most effective. The results of the

evaluation sheets, needs assessments, and questionnaire and a review of current research on effective professional development practices were shared with the district's Professional Development Committee along with suggestions for proposed changes. The Committee provided additional feedback and information that was incorporated into a Professional Development Plan proposal made to the Fort Zumwalt School Board.

Summary

Chapter three describes the methodology for the qualitative action research study on the Fort Zumwalt School District Professional Development Plan. An overview was provided as well as the research method and study design. Subjects were described, instruments used to collect the data were discussed, and procedures for conducting the study were outlined. Chapter four presents the results of the professional development reflection/evaluations, needs assessments, and questionnaire responses. Chapter four also answers the research questions posed in chapter one through the presentation of the data.

Chapter Four - Results

The results of the study were presented by giving the general description of the samples completing each of the following: the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheets, the Professional Development Needs Assessment, and the Professional Development Questionnaire created through SurveyMonkey.com. Five research questions presented in chapter one were answered using tables, figures, charts and narratives from the data obtained throughout this qualitative study. This qualitative study addresses the following research questions:

1. In what types of professional development opportunities are teachers choosing to participate?
2. What motivates teachers to participate in professional development activities?
3. When do teachers prefer to participate in professional development opportunities?
4. To what degree do teachers believe professional development experiences improve their teaching and classroom practices?
5. Do teachers believe that professional development programs are meeting their need to improve their teaching and classroom practices?

Description of the Sample: Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation

The Fort Zumwalt School District provides a Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheet in order to obtain feedback on each in-service activity offered by district personnel. The forms completed by workshop attendees during the 2007-2008 school year were used for this study. Fort Zumwalt School District workshops

were organized into six educational strands: Communication, Assessment, Curriculum, Technology, Leadership and Teaching Strategies. Participants completed this form at the conclusion of each in-service attended. The evaluation format consisted of four statements aligned with two district professional development goals. The district goals listed on the evaluation were 1) to increase student learning by providing high quality professional development and 2) to increase student learning by providing information that will further help to engage the learner. Participants had the option to remain anonymous when completing this form by not adding a name; however, participants were asked to complete the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheet at the conclusion of the presentation with the presenter collecting the forms.

Responses from the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheets were tabulated and presented in terms of how elementary teachers, middle school teachers, and high school teachers responded to four statements, with the choices being “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Limited,” and “Disagree.” Topics such as (a) effective communication with parents, (b) use of Braille, (c) parent/teacher conference techniques, and (d) working with parents to meet students’ educational needs were included.

Due to the stipulation given in questionnaire statement three [Student feedback indicated that the goals of the in-service increased the effectiveness of the teacher. (Only required for ongoing Professional Development/Collaboration.)], several (29%-74%) of the participants did not respond, thereby creating a no-response percentage in this area. A no-response percentage was seen at times regarding other statements as well, just not as frequently as with statement three.

The following tables were responses from participants based on four statements from the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheet:

1. The participants were engaged in work beneficial to the promotion of professional growth.
2. The in-service allowed participants to engage in activities and learning situations which are consistent with the district's Professional Development Educational Strands.
3. Student feedback indicated that the goals of the in-service increased the effectiveness of the teacher. (Only required for ongoing Professional Development/Collaboration.)
4. Participant goals or teaching style may be adjusted as a direct result of this in-service.

Table 7 outlines the responses from elementary certified staff regarding participation in district level workshops focused on: (a) communication, (b) assessment, (c) curriculum, (d) technology, (e) leadership, and (f) teaching strategies.

Table 7
Elementary Certified Staff Responses from the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheet

Workshops	Strongly Agree	Agree	Limited	Disagree	No Response
Communication	Total Number of Respondents = 63				
Beneficial...	50%	40%	10%	0%	0%
Engaged...	35%	40%	25%	0%	0%
Feedback...	27%	21%	13%	0%	39%
Teaching...	52%	29%	14%	5%	0%
Assessment	Total Number of Respondents = 23				
Beneficial...	91%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	78%	17%	5%	0%	0%
Feedback...	22%	4%	0%	0%	74%
Teaching...	74%	13%	4%	0%	9%
Curriculum	Total Number of Respondents = 72				
Beneficial...	78%	22%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	74%	21%	3%	0%	2%
Feedback...	39%	3%	1%	0%	57%
Teaching...	71%	21%	4%	0%	4%
Technology	Total Number of Respondents = 64				
Beneficial...	88%	10%	2%	0%	0%
Engaged...	80%	16%	3%	0%	1%
Feedback...	36%	10%	0%	2%	52%
Teaching...	69%	17%	3%	2%	9%
Leadership	Total Number of Respondents = 67				
Beneficial...	82%	18%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	81%	18%	0%	0%	1%
Feedback...	40%	21%	3%	0%	36%
Teaching...	54%	39%	1%	0%	6%
Teaching Strategies	Total Number of Respondents = 183				
Beneficial...	76%	24%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	74%	23%	2%	0%	1%
Feedback...	31%	9%	2%	0%	58%
Teaching...	68%	27%	2%	0%	3%

The data in Table 7 reflects that elementary teachers most often attend workshops related to teaching strategies and are less likely to attend workshops on assessment.

While only 23 teachers attended assessment workshops, 91% “Strongly Agree” that the

assessment workshops are beneficial. Sixty-three respondents attended communication-related workshops and one-fourth felt the workshops provided “Limited” engagement. Statement three on the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheet, “Student feedback indicated that the goals of the in-service increased the effectiveness of the teacher,” received a substantial percentage of non-responses in all six educational strands. The question was designed to address specifically ongoing professional development opportunities that allow teachers time to try techniques such as differentiation or Six Trait Writing in the classroom as well as reflect on the student feedback information gained between each workshop session. Since the majority of the workshops that teachers attend are one-time workshop opportunities, perhaps this question was seen as irrelevant by the participants, leading to a non-response.

Table 8 is a tabulation gathered from middle school certified staff based on evaluations of the district level workshops attended.

Table 8
*Middle School Certified Staff Responses from the Professional Development
 Reflection/Evaluation Sheet*

Workshops	Strongly Agree	Agree	Limited	Disagree	No Response
Communication	Total Number of Respondents = 17				
Beneficial...	65%	30%	5%	0%	0%
Engaged...	36%	46%	5%	13%	0%
Feedback...	36%	5%	5%	0%	54%
Teaching...	54%	46%	0%	0%	0%
Assessment	Total Number of Respondents = 24				
Beneficial...	71%	29%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	75%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Feedback...	33%	8%	0%	0%	59%
Teaching...	63%	25%	8%	0%	4%
Curriculum	Total Number of Respondents = 32				
Beneficial...	75%	22%	3%	0%	0%
Engaged...	72%	25%	0%	0%	3%
Feedback...	53%	13%	6%	0%	28%
Teaching...	69%	31%	0%	0%	0%
Technology	Total Number of Respondents = 61				
Beneficial...	87%	13%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	85%	15%	0%	0%	0%
Feedback...	51%	18%	0%	0%	31%
Teaching...	80%	15%	2%	0%	3%
Leadership	Total Number of Respondents = 28				
Beneficial...	93%	7%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	82%	14%	0%	0%	4%
Feedback...	46%	14%	0%	0%	40%
Teaching...	64%	32%	4%	0%	0%
Teaching Strategies	Total Number of Respondents = 39				
Beneficial...	69%	31%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	69%	28%	0%	0%	3%
Feedback...	33%	5%	3%	0%	59%
Teaching...	61%	33%	3%	0%	3%

Table 8 shows more middle school teachers attend technology workshops than any of the other five educational workshop strands. Eighty percent or more of the respondents strongly agreed that the technology workshops are beneficial, engaging, and

impact teaching. Thirteen percent of communication workshop participants selected “Disagree” in regard to being engaged in the training presented. Workshops based on the educational strands for assessment and curriculum received 70-75% strong agreement that the in-services are beneficial and engaging to participants. Leadership workshops were attended by 28 middle school teachers with 93% strongly agreeing that the workshops are beneficial. As also noted with elementary teachers, statement three [Student feedback indicated that the goals of the in-service increased the effectiveness of the teacher. (Only required for ongoing Professional Development/Collaboration.)] on the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheet received a significant percentage of non-responses in all six educational strands.

Table 9 outlines the responses from high school certified staff regarding participation in district level workshops focused on (a) communication, (b) assessment, (c) curriculum, (d) technology, (e) leadership, and (f) teaching strategies.

Table 9
*High School Certified Staff Responses from the Professional Development
 Reflection/Evaluation Sheet*

Workshops	Strongly Agree	Agree	Limited	Disagree	No Response
Communication	Total Number of Respondents = 22				
Beneficial...	73%	23%	4%	0%	0%
Engaged...	59%	33%	4%	4%	0%
Feedback...	41%	13%	0%	0%	46%
Teaching...	68%	28%	0%	0%	4%
Assessment	Total Number of Respondents = 21				
Beneficial...	95%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	86%	14%	0%	0%	0%
Feedback...	62%	10%	5%	0%	23%
Teaching...	81%	14%	0%	0%	5%
Curriculum	Total Number of Respondents = 43				
Beneficial...	88%	12%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	90%	5%	0%	0%	5%
Feedback...	53%	5%	0%	0%	42%
Teaching...	84%	14%	0%	0%	2%
Technology	Total Number of Respondents = 26				
Beneficial...	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Feedback...	69%	0%	0%	0%	31%
Teaching...	92%	8%	0%	0%	0%
Leadership	Total Number of Respondents = 12				
Beneficial...	67%	33%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	42%	58%	0%	0%	0%
Feedback...	25%	17%	8%	0%	50%
Teaching...	33%	50%	0%	0%	17%
Teaching Strategies	Total Number of Respondents = 15				
Beneficial...	87%	13%	0%	0%	0%
Engaged...	73%	27%	0%	0%	0%
Feedback...	27%	6%	0%	0%	67%
Teaching...	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%

To summarize Table 9, teaching strategies and leadership workshops had the lowest attendance rate for high school teachers. Curriculum in-service activities had the highest attendance rate by high school participants, with 90% strongly agreeing that the trainings are engaging. Twenty-six high school teachers attended technology-related workshops,

with 100% strongly agreeing that the workshops are beneficial and engaging. In addition, 92% strongly agreed that the technology workshops impact teaching practices in the classroom. Once again, statement three [Student feedback indicated that the goals of the in-service increased the effectiveness of the teacher. (Only required for ongoing Professional Development/Collaboration.)] resulted in a large percentage of teachers not responding.

Description of the Sample: Professional Development Needs Assessment

The Fort Zumwalt School District also distributes a yearly Professional Development Needs Assessment disseminated by the district Professional Development Committee to all certified teaching staff. The purpose for gathering this information is to gain teacher recommendations for workshops, conferences and staff development activities. The Needs Assessment addresses what teachers feel is needed at the district, building and department/grade level for ongoing professional development. The Needs Assessment also offers teachers the option of presenting a district, building, or department/grade level workshop. Participants have the option to remain anonymous when completing this form. The building professional development representative provides a collection envelope in a designated location for completed forms.

At the time of this writing, the Fort Zumwalt School District had 1,280 certified employees. District data are presented with regard to the educational levels of these staff members in total elementary school numbers and total secondary school numbers, as well as the total Fort Zumwalt School District staff numbers. These levels are broken down into the following categories: (a) Bachelor's Degree, (b) Bachelor's Degree + 12 hours,

(c) Bachelor’s Degree + 24 hours, (d) Master’s Degree, (e) Master’s Degree + 12 hours, (f) Master’s Degree + 24 hours, (g) Master’s Degree + 36 hours, (h) Master’s Degree + 48 hours, (i) Specialist’s Degree, and (j) Doctoral Degree. Table 10 displays faculty educational levels at Fort Zumwalt.

Table 10
Educational Levels of Fort Zumwalt Faculty

Education Level	Elementary Level N=569		Secondary Level N=711		Total District N=1,280	
	Faculty#	Faculty%	Faculty#	Faculty %	Faculty#	Faculty%
B.S.	132	23	135	19	267	21
B.S.+12	43	8	43	6	86	7
B.S.+24	30	5	46	7	76	6
M.A.	244	43	249	35	493	39
M.A.+12	41	7	66	9	107	8
M.A.+24	39	7	53	7	92	7
M.A.+36	11	2	32	5	43	3
M.A.+48	24	4	80	11	104	8
Specialist	4	1	3	0	7	1
Doctorate	1	0	4	1	5	0
Total	569	100	711	100	1,280	100

Professional Development Needs Assessments were distributed to all 1,280 certified faculty by the Professional Development Committee representatives at each building. Needs Assessments were completed and returned to the building representative. Each Needs Assessment was reviewed and responses were tallied to create a list of the most requested professional development topics. Table 11 identifies the top four requested needs for professional development.

Table 11

Professional Development Needs Assessment Summary 2007-2008 N=1,280 Faculty

Elementary	Middle School	High School
Technology Training (38%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Smart Boards ➤ E-Beams ➤ United Streaming ➤ Instructional Integration 	Curriculum Implementation (31%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Instructional Strategies ➤ Six Trait Writing 	Differentiation Strategies (29%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Response to Intervention
Curriculum Implementation (26%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Instructional Strategies ➤ Six Trait Writing ➤ Math Investigations 	Collaboration (29%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Vertical & Horizontal Teaming 	Technology Training (28%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ SIS K12 Training ➤ Instructional Integration
Collaboration (24%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Professional Learning Communities 	Technology Training (24%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ SIS K12 Training ➤ Instructional Integration 	Behavior Intervention Strategies (23%)
Differentiation (12%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Response to Intervention ➤ English Language Learners Teaching Strategies 	Differentiation Strategies (16%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Response to Intervention 	Missouri Reading Initiative Training (20%)

Table 11 shows that there were considerable needs identified across all building levels in the area of technology as well as in the area of curriculum implementation. Respondents specifically noted the need for more training on Smart Board usage and effective instructional strategies. All three building levels ranked collaboration and Response to Intervention training as high areas of professional development need for the 2007-2008 school year. The desire for additional vertical and horizontal teaming, as well as differentiation strategies, were identified as a high need.

Description of the Sample: Professional Development Questionnaire

The final instrument designed for this study was the Professional Development Questionnaire created through SurveyMonkey.com and sent to all certified staff in the Fort Zumwalt School District, which included 1,280 teachers. A total of 330 certified faculty members, or 26%, submitted responses to the survey questions. (see Appendix G)

This questionnaire was comprised of 10 questions regarding participant demographics, utilization of professional development opportunities, and perceptions regarding the impact that these opportunities had on teaching and classroom practices. Demographic questions consisted of single response items and the data obtained from participants completing the questionnaire were as follows. (see Figure 2)

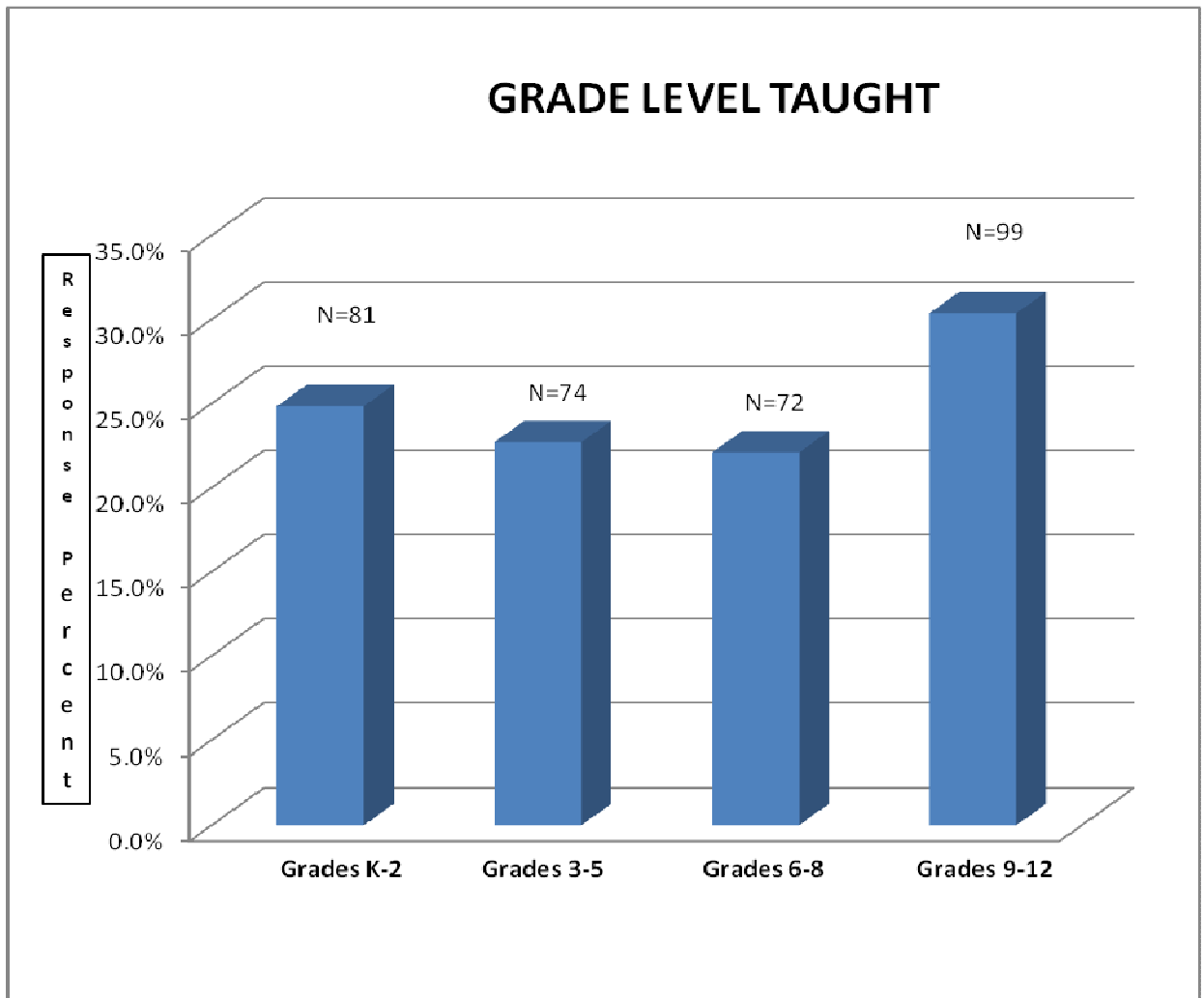


Figure 2. Which Grade Level Do You Currently Teach?

N=326 Faculty

Question one identified the respondents by four grade-level groups. The percentages of respondents by grade-level groups ranged from 22.1 to 30.4, with the most responses from the high school level and the least responses from the middle school level. Elementary, which combined kindergarten through second grade and third through fifth grade numbers, represented 47.5% of the responses. Four participants chose to not respond to this question.

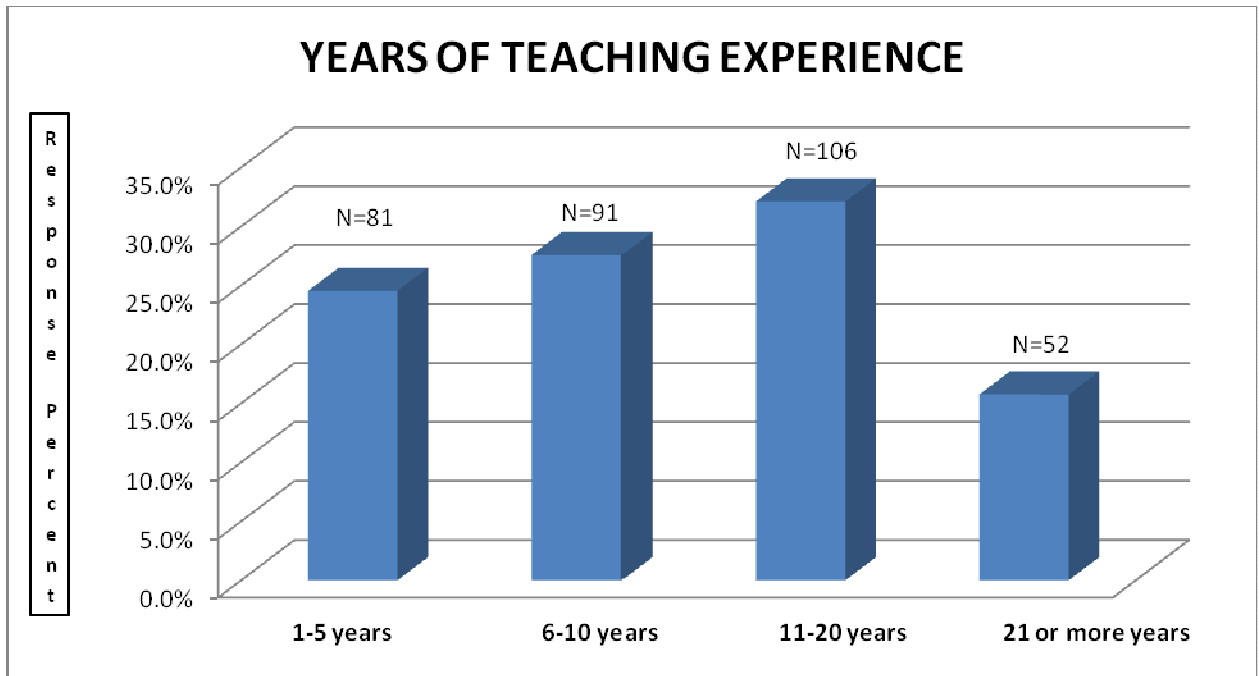


Figure 3. Years of Teaching Experience

N=330 Faculty

The information regarding years of teaching experience is displayed in Figure 3. Four categories are provided, the lowest response coming from participants who have twenty-one or more years experience to the highest response from teachers with eleven to twenty years teaching experience. Over 50% of the questionnaire respondents are teachers with ten or fewer years of experience.

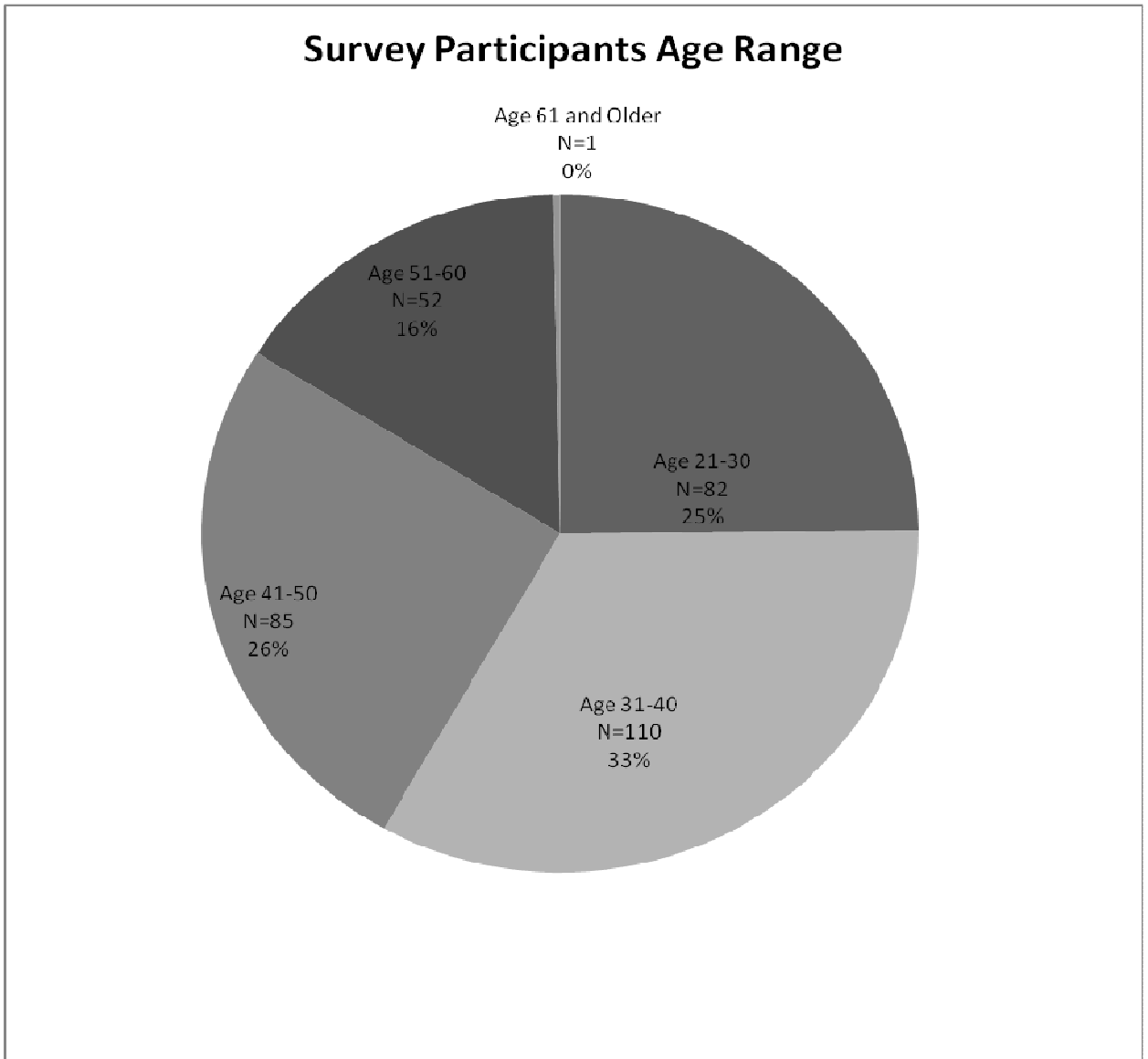


Figure 4. Which Age Range Best Describes You?

N=330 Faculty

Question three included five categories relating to the age ranges of the teachers participating in the survey. The first category is the age range of 21-30, with 82 teachers responding; second age range, 31-40, had 110 teachers responding; third age group, 41-50, had 85 teachers responding; fourth, 51-60, had 52 teachers responding, and the fifth category, ages 61 and older, had only one teacher respond.

The last seven questions on the Professional Development Questionnaire were designed to elicit answers to the five questions that provide the basis for this research project. The remaining data is described as it relates to each individual research question.

Research Question 1: In what types of professional development opportunities are teachers choosing to participate?

In the Professional Development Questionnaire, item four (For each professional development opportunity listed below, please select yes if you have participated or no if you have not participated during the last two years. If you select yes, identify the impact the professional development opportunity has had on your teaching and classroom practices. If you select no, identify why you did not participate in that professional development opportunity.) was designed to elicit two sets of data. Survey participants were asked to respond to the types of professional development activities in which they participated during the past two years. If participants selected a “yes” response, meaning they had participated in the type of professional development listed, they were asked to identify the impact on their teaching and classroom practices. When selecting a “no” response, meaning they had not participated in the type of professional development listed, participants were asked to identify the reason why.

Table 12

Participated in Professional Development and its Impact

Participation and Classroom Impact:				
Answer Options	Not used in classroom	Somewhat used in classroom	Often used	Response Count
1. University course	5	78	103	186
2. Cooperative grade level/department work	8	119	163	290
3. Study groups	26	43	29	98
4. Online courses	16	52	26	94
5. Individual workshops	16	173	102	291
6. Series of brief workshops	7	125	66	198
7. Out-of-district conference and/or workshop	8	75	134	217

According to these data in Table 12, survey participants are most often involved in individual workshops and cooperative grade level/department work. The impact on teaching and classroom practices was identified as “somewhat used” or “often used” while “not used” was a significantly lower number by comparison. The two types of professional development least often used are study groups and online courses. The amount of impact in these two areas resulted in less differentiation among the options provided.

Table 13

Non-participation in Professional Development and the Reason

Non-Participation and Why:				
Answer Options	Not interested	Not offered	Not feasible	Response Count
1. University course	53	8	77	138
2. Cooperative grade level/department work	2	22	3	27
3. Study groups	67	132	28	227
4. Online courses	128	31	66	225
5. Individual workshops	14	8	10	32
6. Series of brief workshops	46	40	36	122
7. Out-of-district conference and/or workshop	24	30	57	111

To summarize Table 13, online courses and study groups were the opportunities most likely to receive a “no” response. Participants also shared that these were the types of professional development opportunities in which they were least interested.

Cooperative grade level/department work and individual workshops returned the fewest number of “no” responses. Table 13 further shows that 38% of the teachers who did not participate in university courses expressed they were “not interested” in this opportunity while 56% stated feasibility as the reason for not participating.

Research Question 2: What motivates teachers to participate in professional development activities?

Questionnaire item number five asked participants to rank their motivation for participating in professional development opportunities from highest to lowest, with highest ranked as “first” and lowest ranked as “fifth.” Teacher participants selected from five motivators:

Table 14

Ranked Motivators for Professional Development Participation N=327 Faculty

Answer Options	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Response Count
To improve student achievement	138	107	35	10	9	299
To earn more money	24	31	51	86	116	308
To improve teaching skills and knowledge	131	141	33	10	4	319
To advance career and maintain certification	20	22	83	134	58	317
To meet peers who share professional interests	15	17	111	64	120	327

Out of the five motivators, Table 14 shows 279 participants ranked “improving student achievement” or “improving teaching skills and knowledge” as the top two; 138 ranked student achievement as the top motivator, and 141 ranked “improving teaching skills and knowledge” as the second highest motivator. “To meet peers who share professional interests” was ranked as the least motivating reason (120 responses) for teachers to participate in professional development. However, because participants did not rank all motivators, “to meet peers who share professional interests” was also ranked third by 111 participants.

Research Question 3: When do teachers prefer to participate in professional development opportunities?

Survey question seven in the Professional Development Questionnaire asked teachers when they preferred to participate in professional development. Five choices were given: “Before School,” “After School,” “During School,” “Saturdays,” and “Summer.” Teachers were asked to respond with either a “yes” or “no” to each choice.

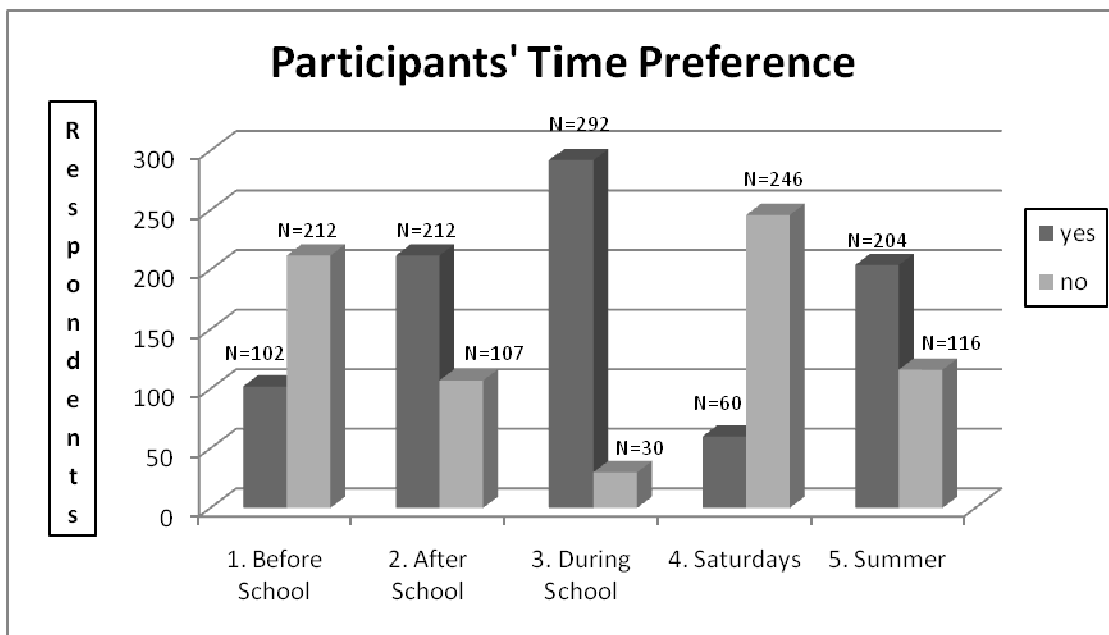


Figure 5. Preferred Times for Professional Development

Ninety-one percent (322) of the those surveyed would have preferred to participate in professional development “During School.” Eighty percent of teachers did not want to attend professional development opportunities on “Saturdays.” Sixty-eight percent of teachers did not want “Before School” professional development, while 66%

said they would prefer to participate in professional development activities “After School.”

Research Question 4: To what degree do teachers believe professional development experiences had improved teaching and classroom practices?

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) established ten standards on which to evaluate effective professional development as it relates to improving teaching and classroom practices. These standards provide the ten statements that teachers evaluated in question eight on the Professional Development Questionnaire. Each statement allowed teachers to choose the following answer options: “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree.”

Table 15

Teacher Perceptions in Comparison to NSDC Standards

N=328 Faculty

Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
1. Professional development opportunities foster continuous staff development.	89	<u>173</u>	52	14	328
2. Professional development focuses on scientifically based content.	19	<u>184</u>	108	12	323
3. District professional development plan provides adequate time during the workday for staff to learn and work together.	12	34	<u>131</u>	<u>149</u>	326
4. Professional development provides the structure, support and follow-up necessary to impact student improvement.	13	119	<u>148</u>	47	327
5. Professional development prepares teachers to use appropriate research-based teaching and learning strategies.	29	<u>195</u>	86	16	326
6. Professional development prepares teachers to effectively deliver instruction to students at all skill levels.	31	<u>197</u>	82	14	324
7. Professional development prepares teachers to administer and use various formative and summative assessment formats.	15	<u>157</u>	<u>128</u>	21	321
8. Professional development prepares teachers to effectively interpret and use data to improve instruction.	13	<u>147</u>	<u>138</u>	27	325
9. Professional development provides specific training in using teacher selected, district approved, instructional materials.	45	<u>184</u>	76	18	323
10. Professional development provides training in differentiated instruction.	30	<u>180</u>	98	17	325

While survey participants did not “Strongly Agree” with any of the ten statements listed in Table 15, there were several statements with which they did “Agree.” Statements five and six returned the highest rate of agreement, 60% and 61% respectively. “Disagree” responses were most significant for statements four, 45%, and statement eight, 42%. Only one of the ten statements, number three, elicited a significant number of “Strongly Disagree” responses, 46%.

Research Question 5: Do teachers believe that professional development programs are meeting needs to improve teaching and classroom practices?

In the Professional Development Survey, question nine asked participants to decide whether district professional development opportunities meet their needs with regard to improving teaching and classroom practices. Teachers were required to respond with a “yes” or “no” and then to provide a reason for their selection.

Table 16
District Professional Development Opportunities Meeting Teacher Needs

District professional development opportunities have met my needs with regard to improving my teaching and classroom practices?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	45.5%	146
No	54.5%	175
<i>answered question</i>		321
<i>skipped question</i>		9

As demonstrated in Table 16, teachers who responded to whether or not district professional development opportunities were meeting their needs with regard to improving teaching and classroom practices provided only a 9% difference in the “yes”

and "no" selections based upon the results tallied from teacher responses. One hundred seventy-five participants felt that the district was not meeting their professional development needs; whereas, 146 felt that their needs were being met. Teachers cited a variety of reasons for selecting either "yes" or "no" to question nine on the Professional Development Questionnaire.

Table 17
Reasons Needs Are Met/Not Met in Regards to Professional Development

Top Five Reasons for Responding Yes	Top Five Reasons for Responding No
Conferences and workshops are best	No opportunity to collaborate on what is learned in training
A variety of in-services offered	Not enough variety in what is offered in each content and at each grade level
In-services are helpful	Do not want to attend professional development afterschool – not offered during school day
Good ideas from experienced teachers	District opportunities are not high quality, lack depth and follow through
Needed in-services are provided	Not enough professional development offered for implementing curriculum

In Table 17, of the 146 participants who gave a "yes" response in regards to the district meeting their professional development needs, 34 participants shared why they believed their needs were being met. Of the 175 teachers who responded that their needs were not being met, 155 gave a reason why they answered "no." Table 17 outlines the top five reasons given in regards to both "yes" and "no" responses.

Question ten was designed to give survey participants an opportunity to provide individual input or give suggestions about what changes the district should consider to enhance the impact of professional development in the Fort Zumwalt School District. The survey tool allowed teachers to provide one or two individual responses.

Table 18
Teacher Suggested Changes for Professional Development

Elementary	Middle School	High School
School Day Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ½ Day Release Time ➤ Built-in Calendar 	School Day Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ½ Day Release Time ➤ Built-in Calendar 	School Day Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ½ Day Release Time ➤ Built-in Calendar
Increase Available Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Varied Topics ➤ All Content Areas 	Increase Available Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Varied Topics ➤ All Content Areas 	Increase Available Workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Varied Topics ➤ All Content Areas
Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Common Plan Time 	Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Common Plan Time 	Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Common Plan Time
Technology Training	Workshop Attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Incentives ➤ Accountability 	Outside Professionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In & Out of District ➤ Motivational Speakers
Outside Professionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In & Out of District ➤ Motivational Speakers 	Workshop Follow-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Better Feedback Forms ➤ Ongoing Discussions 	Technology Training

Of the 330 teachers who responded to the survey, Table 18 shows 88% (289) provided one suggested change while 73% (240) provided two suggested changes. Only 12% (41) of survey respondents failed to answer question ten. Suggested changes varied widely; however, common themes emerged across building levels. All three building levels proposed the same top three changes for professional development: school day opportunities, increase available workshops, and collaboration. Workshop Attendance and Workshop Follow-up were rated in the top five only at the middle school level, although some elementary and high school teachers had noted these as well.

Conclusion

Chapter four was a disaggregation of district level perspective data from three instruments used in this qualitative study. A description of the sample from each instrument was also included, highlighting obvious trends and correlations in the data. In chapter five, the results of the investigation are reviewed, findings based on the five research questions are provided, and conclusions are presented as recommendations to the Board of Education in the Fort Zumwalt School District.

Chapter Five - Summary and Conclusions

The current Fort Zumwalt Professional Development Plan states that teachers are learners who need to relate new knowledge to existing curricula and classroom experiences. To achieve this vision, the district professional development funds are used on five programs: (a) teacher release time to review, (b) write and revise curriculum, (c) opportunities for teachers to attend conferences and workshops both in and out of district, (d) a district level mentoring program for first year teachers and administrators, and (e) graduate studies tuition reimbursement. While each of these programs offer professional development, each operates in isolation of one another and are voluntary in nature. As a result, some educators in the Fort Zumwalt School District may not participate in professional development opportunities.

As a district facing increasing demands to improve student achievement and increase accountability for student performance, evaluating the success or failure of the district's professional development program is essential in identifying ineffective professional development activities. The study was conducted to determine how teachers utilized current district professional development opportunities. Participants shared perceptions regarding the impact that these professional development opportunities had on teaching and classroom practices. Specifically, the questions answered were

1. In what types of professional development opportunities are teachers choosing to participate?
2. What motivates teachers to participate in professional development activities?
3. When do teachers prefer to participate in professional development opportunities?

4. To what degree do teachers believe professional development experiences have improved their teaching and classroom practices?
5. Do teachers believe that professional development programs are meeting their needs to improve their teaching and classroom practices?

In order to answer the five research questions, three research instruments were used to collect data with limitations being identified in the use of each instrument. The research instruments were (a) Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheets (b) A Professional Development Needs Assessment, and (c) A SurveyMonkey.com Questionnaire. A majority of respondents completing the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheet marked “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” when attending in-district workshops relating to all six educational strands. However, statement three, “Student feedback indicated that the goals of the in-service increase the effectiveness of the teacher (Only required for ongoing Professional Development/Collaboration)” in all six educational strands across all grade levels received a substantial percentage of non-responses. When tabulating the reflection/evaluation sheets, it was noted that multiple respondents stated confusion as the reason for not answering statement three. Respondents stated in writing that the question was vague or difficult to understand. It was also noted that multiple respondents drew pictures, such as smiley faces, representing positive feelings toward the presentation, presenter and/or treats provided. A quick review of the reflection/evaluation forms showed that staff in the Fort Zumwalt School District believed professional development workshop opportunities are beneficial and engaging.

The second research instrument was a Professional Development Needs Assessment completed by each certified staff member in the spring of 2007 providing data on the professional topics viewed as most important for the district/building to focus on during the 2007-2008 year. A review of each building's needs assessment forms indicates that similar needs are expressed across the district and building levels such as technology training, differentiation, and collaboration. There are no accountability measures in place to ensure that the needs listed are used to plan building and district professional growth opportunities. As a result, the Fort Zumwalt School District Needs Assessment is simply an exercise in collecting data with no plan to make use of the information.

The final instrument designed for the study was the Professional Development Questionnaire created through SurveyMonkey.com and sent to all certified staff in the Fort Zumwalt School District. The questionnaire provided an opportunity for educators to respond anonymously to questions regarding the professional development programming in the Fort Zumwalt School District. Because the questionnaire was sent to all certified faculty and was voluntary in nature, it was possible that only those teachers with the strongest opinions took the time to complete the questionnaire. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with these limitations in mind.

Summary of District Findings Related to the Research Questions

As the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in the Fort Zumwalt School District, the data retrieved from all three instruments, particularly the SurveyMonkey.com questionnaire, will be beneficial in developing recommendations for revising the current district professional development plan. These recommendations will

be submitted to the District Professional Development Committee and the District Board of Education. The following is a summary of the findings based on the five research questions.

1. In what type of professional development opportunities are teachers choosing to participate?

The reflection/evaluation sheets completed by district workshop participants, as well as teacher responses to item four (For each professional development opportunity listed below, please select yes if you have participated or no if you have not participated during the last two years. If you select yes, identify the impact the professional development opportunity has had on your teaching and classroom practices. If you select no, identify why you did not participate in that professional development opportunity.), on the Professional Development Questionnaire were used to obtain data for answering research question one. Based on responses from the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation sheets, elementary teachers most often attend workshops related to teaching strategies and curriculum. Data from middle school teachers identified workshops on technology as receiving the highest participation rate, followed by attendance at teaching strategies and curriculum related workshops. High school teachers attend curriculum related workshops most often, followed by workshops related to technology.

Item four on the questionnaire identifies seven models of professional development: (a) university courses, (b) cooperative grade level/department work, (c) study groups, (d) online courses, (e) individual workshops, and (f) out-of-district conferences and/or workshops. Questionnaire respondents were given the opportunity to

indicate which professional development models had been used. The data shows that the majority of teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District are receiving professional development through individual workshops (88%), grade level/department work (87%), out-of-district conferences and/or workshops (65%), series of brief workshops (60%), and university courses (56%).

In conclusion, based on the data obtained from the District Reflection/Evaluation sheets, Fort Zumwalt School District teachers are most likely to attend workshops related to (a) curriculum, (b) teaching strategies, and (c) technology. Based on data from the questionnaire, district teachers are most often participating in individual workshops and grade level/department work. A piece of data that should not be overlooked is that teachers report not using professional study groups due to lack of offerings. Research would suggest that study groups can be a highly effective form of professional development; however, teachers who responded to question four are reporting that this method of professional development is not readily available to teachers in Fort Zumwalt.

2. What motivates teachers to participate in professional development activities?

At the heart of this question lies an additional question, “Are teachers motivated by intrinsic or extrinsic rewards to pursue professional development opportunities?” Based on the responses received on the questionnaire, Fort Zumwalt teachers are motivated by the following intrinsic rewards: “To improve student achievement” and “To improve teaching skills and knowledge.” Likewise, respondents appear to be least motivated by the desire to “Earn more money” and “To advance career and maintain certification.” This lead the researchers to conclude that teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District

are more likely to participate in professional development activities believed to improve teaching and classroom practices that would most directly impact student achievement.

3. When do teachers prefer to participate in professional development opportunities?

Data was collected from item seven on the questionnaire to determine when teachers prefer to participate in professional development. Question seven asked teachers to respond “Yes” or “No” to each of the following time preferences for attending professional development opportunities: (a) “Before School,” (b) “After School,” (c) “During School,” (d) “Saturdays,” and (e) “Summer.” Teacher responses indicate that 91% prefer to attend professional development opportunities “During School,” followed by 66% of respondents preferring “After School” opportunities and 63% of respondents preferring “Summer” professional development opportunities. On the other hand, the data indicates that teachers least prefer to participate in professional development on “Saturday” (80% response) and “Before School” (67% response). This data is further supported by teacher responses to item nine on the questionnaire which gave teachers the opportunity to provide a reason as to why they do or do not believe that district professional development opportunities are meeting professional needs. Teacher responses were summarized into the top five reasons, one of which is “Do not want to attend professional development after school—not offered during the school day.” From an overview of this data, it can be concluded that teacher participation in professional development would increase if more professional development opportunities were available during the school day. In addition, professional development should be offered

outside of the school day either after school or during the summer to enhance teacher participation in district professional development opportunities.

4. To what degree do teachers believe professional development experiences improve their teaching and classroom practices?

Data from the District Evaluation/Reflection sheets leads to the conclusion that district level professional development workshops are impacting teaching and classroom practices in the Fort Zumwalt School District based on the favorable responses noted on statement four, "Participant goals or teaching style may be adjusted as a direct result of this in-service." Elementary teachers rated teaching strategies workshops favorably; 100% believed that workshops were beneficial, and 95% believed that the knowledge gained from participating in the workshops may impact teaching practices. Middle school teachers rated technology workshops favorably with 100% agreeing that the workshops were beneficial, 95% agreeing that participation in technology workshops may impact teaching practices, and 94% agreeing that participation in curriculum related and teaching strategy workshops may impact teaching practices. High school workshop participants rated technology most favorably, 100% of respondents stating that the workshops were beneficial and 100% stating that knowledge gained from the workshop may impact teaching practices. Likewise, 100% of high school respondents stated that curriculum related workshops were beneficial, and 98% stated that the knowledge gained from the workshops may impact classroom practices.

In addition, responses to item eight on the questionnaire, which asked teachers to rate their perceptions regarding professional development efforts in the Fort Zumwalt School

District, support data obtained through the reflection/evaluation sheet. Sixty-nine percent of respondents agree/strongly agree that district professional development opportunities prepare teachers to use appropriate teaching and learning strategies and to effectively deliver instruction to students at all skill levels. However, additional data elicited from question eight shows that 59% of respondents disagree/strongly disagree that the district's professional development plan provides the structure and support needed to impact student improvement. Likewise, 85% disagree/strongly disagree that adequate time is provided during the school day for staff to learn and work together. Respondents were split in agree/disagree responses to the idea that district professional development opportunities prepare teachers to use formative and summative assessments, as well as how to interpret data to improve instruction. A portion of this data lead to the conclusion that teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District believe that professional development opportunities are beneficial in helping to improve the delivery of effective teaching and learning strategies. However, one may question just how effective professional development opportunities are in light of the high percentage of respondents who disagree/strongly disagree that the district's professional development plan provides the structure and support needed to impact student improvement.

5. Do teachers believe that professional development programs are meeting their needs to improve their teaching and classroom practices?

Data was collected from item nine on the Professional Development Questionnaire to determine if district professional development opportunities were meeting staff needs. Teachers were asked to respond "Yes" or "No" and were given the opportunity to provide

additional information to support responses. Forty-six percent of respondents agreed that district professional development does meet staff needs, stating that a variety of good workshops/in-services are offered by experienced teachers. However, 54% disagree that district professional development meets staff needs citing (a) lack of collaboration time, (b) limited content and curriculum offerings, (c) inadequate times that professional development opportunities are offered, and (d) lack of depth and follow through. It can then be concluded that while some teachers are satisfied with current district professional development programming, more than 50% of respondents were not satisfied due in part to factors that have been consistently presented throughout the research literature as key components to effect professional development.

A summary of the findings from the five research questions lead the researchers to conclude that teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District appear to value the professional development opportunities that are attended. However, professional development participation within the district are limited due to (a) staff members' availability to attend opportunities scheduled outside of the school day, (b) limited models of professional development offerings, (c) limited collaboration, and (d) limited topics related to content, curriculum and assessment. Findings from the research questions should be further reviewed in conjunction with research-based components of high quality professional development prior to developing recommendations for improving the Fort Zumwalt School District Professional Development Plan.

Considerations for High Quality Professional Development

In order to plan for professional development programming, districts must have a solid knowledge base regarding what constitutes high quality professional development. As defined by the federal law (NCLB), high quality professional development called for programs that are “sustained, intensive, classroom-focused... and are not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences” (Viadero, 2007, p. 14). Based upon findings in this study, the following characteristics of high quality professional development should be considered when creating a district plan designed to meet the challenges of systematic educational school improvement:

1. teacher content knowledge and best teaching practices
2. collaboration among teachers and administrators
3. alignment with teacher needs, as well as, district and state standards and assessments
4. duration and extension of professional development with sufficient time and appropriate resources provided
5. continual evaluation of the impact on teaching effectiveness.

Further, the Fort Zumwalt School District Professional Development Plan should be evaluated in comparison to research-defined characteristics of high quality professional development. In the following section, the district plan is examined through comparison of the data from the three research instruments to review the quality of the current district professional development programs.

Evaluation

The need to focus on teacher content knowledge and best teaching practices is well-documented throughout the review of literature. As teachers develop content knowledge, it may lead to the use of effective teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of students. Of the 1,280 educators employed in the Fort Zumwalt School District, a total of 147 teachers (11%), 72 elementary, 32 middle school, and 43 high school, attended in-district, curriculum-focused workshops during the 2007-2008 school year. Overall, 70% or more respondents strongly agreed that curriculum-based workshops are beneficial and engaging, and over 50% strongly agreed that participation in the workshop may lead to adjustments in teaching strategies. The Professional Development Needs Assessment forms completed in the spring of 2007 indicate that elementary teachers ranked curriculum implementation as the second highest need for professional development, while middle school teachers ranked curriculum implementation as the highest need. However, high school teachers did not rank curriculum implementation as one of the top four needs. Based on responses from the Professional Development Questionnaire (the third research instrument), all three building levels listed increased availability of workshops in all content areas as the second highest need for professional development opportunities. It was also noted that teachers who said the district is not meeting professional development needs feel that one of the top five reasons is that not enough curriculum professional development is being offered.

Several inconsistencies emerged when data from all three instruments were evaluated. The spring needs assessments showed the majority of staff at the elementary and middle school level had requested curriculum-based workshops. However, during the

2007-2008 school year, only 104 elementary and middle school responses were recorded, which represented the maximum number of teachers who could have attended curriculum-related workshops. Although these 104 respondents provided favorable ratings regarding the benefits of attending the workshops, the Professional Development Questionnaire sent out spring 2008 cited lack of curriculum and content area workshops as one of five reasons for not attending district professional development in-services. An implication to consider based on the data is that while the district has offered curriculum/content area workshops, they are not well attended, due to the content covered or time frame the workshop was offered.

Collaboration among teachers and administrators was noted as an essential characteristic that provides teachers with a supportive community, shared responsibility for student learning, and an avenue for productive exchanges of ideas and teaching practices. Providing for teacher collaboration requires districts to implement creative scheduling, common planning time, and extended calendar options. The Professional Development Needs Assessment (the second research instrument) results demonstrated that elementary and middle school teachers feel that collaboration, specifically vertical/horizontal teaming and Professional Learning Communities, is one of four top requests for professional development opportunities. In addition, 290 teachers indicated “yes” to participation in cooperative grade level/department work, and 56% of those participants responding reported often using the techniques shared during these professional development opportunities in classroom practices. When responding to whether or not the district professional development opportunities are meeting teacher needs with regard to improving teaching and classroom practices, the top reason for a

“no” response was “no opportunity to collaborate on what was learned in training.” All three building level groups suggested collaboration is a necessary change that the district should consider to enhance the impact of professional development in the Fort Zumwalt School District. When analyzing survey question number eight, of the 326 respondents, 86% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “District professional development plan provides adequate time during the work day for staff to learn and work together.”

The data related to teacher perceptions regarding the use of collaboration as a professional development tool are consistent in noting teachers’ strong desire to participate in collaborative exchanges of ideas and teaching practices. For true collaboration to occur, as defined by high quality professional development, sufficient time within the school day needs to be provided. Ninety-one percent of the 322 teachers responding to question seven on the questionnaire stated a preference for “During School” workshops.

One must then conclude that professional development is most effective when clearly defined and organized on the common goals and needs of district and staff. In addition, professional development programming must be aligned to district and state standards and assessments. Districts would be well advised to evaluate current professional development plans based on the ten standards established by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). Furthermore, this evaluation should be conducted using teacher input to determine alignment. Question eight on the Professional Development Questionnaire elicited teacher perceptions regarding district professional development as it relates to NSDC Standards. Teachers do not “Strongly Agree” that the

district professional development opportunities align with any of NSDC standards but did agree that the district met seven of the ten standards. A high percentage (60%-61%) of “Agree” responses occurred with two standards: “Professional development prepares teachers to effectively deliver instruction to students at all skill levels” and “To use appropriate research-based teaching and learning strategies.” As mentioned earlier, respondents selected “Strongly Disagree” or “Disagree” 86% of the time to the standard “District professional plan provides adequate time during the work day for staff to learn and work together.”

While staff perceived that district professional development opportunities are meeting seven of ten NSDC standards based on data from SurveyMonkey.com questionnaire, 54.5% stated that district professional development is not meeting teacher needs. The top reason is reported as “No opportunity to collaborate on what was learned in training” which correlates with standard four, where 45% of respondents marked disagreement with regard to “Professional development provides the structure, support and follow-up necessary to impact student improvement.” Furthermore, 57% of respondents agreed that “Professional development provides specific training in using teacher selected, district approved, instructional materials,” yet when identifying the top five reasons why teachers feel needs are not being met by the district, the fifth highest response was “Not enough professional development offered for implementing curriculum.” While staff is able to identify some alignment between district professional development and NSDC standards, more than 50% of teachers’ needs are not met according to question nine.

A focus on duration and extension of professional development with sufficient time and appropriate resources provided was identified as a need throughout the questionnaire. “Ask most classroom teachers why educational reform is going slowly, and they’ll tell you it’s the lack of time for professional activities other than direct instruction of students” (Barkley, 1999, ¶ 1). The data strongly suggest that teachers prefer to participate in professional development during the school day, with 91% responding favorably. Sixty-eight percent of respondents do not want to attend professional development activities before school, and 34 % prefer not to attend after-school. However, 64% agree to professional development during the summer months. As previously stated, 86% of teachers selected “Disagree/Strongly Disagree” to the statement “District professional development plan provides adequate time during the workday for staff to learn and work together” as related to NSDC standards. When citing the top five reasons given by respondents for why the district is not meeting professional development needs, teachers note—not being able to attend professional development opportunities after school.

The data obtained are relatively consistent in that teachers report a strong desire to be involved in professional development that is embedded into the work day. In fact, the lack of daytime offerings has impacted teachers’ participation in professional activities. The research from the review of literature also supports the need to provide professional learning opportunities within the school day, allowing all staff and administrators to take part in ongoing professional learning. This type of professional development scheduling requires districts to modify traditional school calendars and school days, including late

starts or early releases. Additional and/or alternative resources should be considered when developing this plan.

The impact of high quality professional development should be continually evaluated based on teaching effectiveness. The end result of any professional development activity should be improvement of teaching and classroom practices in order to increase student achievement. In the review of literature, it was noted that evaluating professional development in a large district, such as Fort Zumwalt, is a complex process that must be carried out yearly to ensure that professional development activities are meeting district goals, as well as teacher needs. Individuals and districts charged with the evaluation process should be committed to openly addressing what is working and not working in the current plan.

Prior to this study, the only professional development evaluation tool used district-wide in the Fort Zumwalt School District was the Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheet. These reflection/evaluation sheets are only used to evaluate formal, after school workshops. Data retrieved from the questionnaire showed that 290 respondents participated in cooperative grade level/department work, with 163 teachers often using the ideas shared in the classroom. However, this form of professional development does not require participants to complete an evaluation sheet. In addition, a review of the reflection/evaluation sheets resulted in a high percentage of teachers responding favorably to the workshops being beneficial, engaging, and changing teacher practices. These data could appear contradictive when reviewing the questionnaire responses. When participants were asked to give reasons why professional development

opportunities had not met their needs, respondents noted that district opportunities were not high quality and were lacking in depth, variety, and follow through.

Recommendations to the Board of Education

High quality professional development is a long term, dynamic process designed to improve teaching and classroom practices that support the advancement of student achievement. Based on the results of this study, this process should include continuous inquiry by teachers and administrators about effective professional development components, collaboration with colleagues, and exposure to research-based best practices. Further, the district's professional development efforts should be derived from the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan and supported by and focused on the following characteristics of high quality professional development:

1. teacher content knowledge and best teaching practices
2. collaboration among teachers and administrators
3. alignment with teacher needs, as well as, district and state standards and assessments
4. duration and extension of professional development with sufficient time and appropriate resources provided
5. continual evaluation of the impact on teaching effectiveness.

The current Fort Zumwalt Professional Development Plan is organized and developed with the following five categories of professional development: (a) curriculum review cycle, (b) conference/workshops/related travel, (c) professional development training,

(d) district mentoring program, and (e) graduate studies tuition reimbursement. Based on the results of this study, recommendations to the Board of Education will address each of these categories with an additional category for ongoing program evaluation. These recommendations were made while working within the current district calendar (184 contracted days, 174 student contact days), school day format (six hour day) and a budget allocation of \$370,000 (1% of the foundation formula budget).

Curriculum Review Cycle

1. Provide release time, stipends and materials for the curriculum committees to develop concept-based subject/grade level common assessments.
2. Offer technology integration training that supports curriculum implementation each semester as an after-school as well as summer opportunities.
3. Provide a variety of curriculum related training opportunities, which incorporate best practices, differentiation, Six Trait Writing, and literacy-based concepts.

Conferences/Workshops/Related Travel

1. Provide funding for national, state and local participation of teachers and administrators in conferences and learning opportunities.
2. Institute a stipend of \$12 per hour for teachers who attend weekend or summer professional development activities.

Professional Development Training

1. Provide funding for substitutes and stipends to allow for teacher collaboration within the school day to include both vertical and horizontal grade level/department work, study groups, formative and summative assessments, data-driven decision-making, and teacher-to-teacher observations.
2. Distribute a percentage of the professional development funds to the building based upon a per teacher allocation.
3. Use data from the revised Professional Development Needs Assessment to develop the next year's professional development training opportunities, both within the building and district level plans.
4. Develop a summer professional development institute to provide teachers with opportunities to attend professional activities related to teacher needs and district goals.

District Mentoring Program

Continue to maintain district collegial support and practical assistance to new teacher development. The professional development plan will continue to allot 1% of funds to this mentoring program.

Graduate Studies Tuition Reimbursement

Do not allow professional development funds to be available for tuition reimbursement until all other categories of outlined professional development activities have been appropriately addressed.

Recommendations for Ongoing Program Evaluation

1. Revise Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheets using questions and statements that are succinct and easy to understand.
2. Devise a new method for collecting Professional Development Reflection/Evaluation Sheets at the end of a workshop.
3. Revise The Professional Development Needs Assessment to provide a format that lists professional development topics aligned to the district's CSIP plan. In addition, provide a space to allow for individual comments.
4. Adopt a rating scale/scoring guide for the Professional Development Committee Members to evaluate district professional development programming related to the impact on student achievement, leadership, collaboration, implementation of teaching strategies, and information analysis.
5. Send an electronic questionnaire to certified staff and administrators every two years to continue reflection and evaluation efforts started as a result of this study.
6. Provide teachers with a simple standard checklist as a tool to monitor individual professional development.
7. Submit to the Superintendent's office, by September 1, a plan outlining the professional development activities for each building aligned with funding received.

Future Recommendation for Considerations

1. Extended school hours to allow for collaboration among certified staff.
2. Add days to the school calendar to provide professional development release time to all staff during contracted hours.
3. Provide common planning periods to allow for vertical and horizontal teaming.
4. Train and develop teachers in the art and science of classroom assessment techniques as a means of using student feedback to improve student learning and teacher instruction.

The above recommendations address teacher perceptions obtained through three questionnaire instruments. Teacher perceptions are in alignment with the characteristics of high quality professional development, as well as research-based best practices for professional learning. Furthermore, the recommendations were a direct result of the findings related to the five research questions developed at the onset of this qualitative action research study. It is the researchers' belief that the implementation of the recommendations would serve to enhance the Fort Zumwalt School District's Professional Development Plan by providing the support needed to improve teaching and classroom practices, thereby, increasing student learning and achievement.

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**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR
FORT ZUMWALT SCHOOL DISTRICT
(Appendix A)**

2007-2008

Supplement to the
Professional Development Plan and
Beginning Teacher Induction Handbook

July 2007

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (2007-08)

In accordance with Fort Zumwalt School District Policy GCLLH, **Professional Development Programs**, and Article XV – Professional Development of the **Professional Agreement 2005-10**, Section 7, **Outstanding Schools Act**, SB380 and compliance associated with the **Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP)**, the Fort Zumwalt School District hereby reaffirms its commitment to professional development.

The district recognizes that teachers are learners who need to relate new knowledge to existing curricula and classroom experiences and apply and critically evaluate new teaching techniques and strategies. The Supplement to the Professional Development Plan reaffirms the district's belief that a teacher's acquisition of knowledge and skills has a direct influence on learner outcomes and accomplishments of desired performance standards.

Professional growth is a long term, dynamic process concerned with the effective functioning of all staff involved with the learning process. This development may come about through continuous inquiry into practice, interaction with colleagues, and exposure to research and new ideas. The district's professional development efforts are and should be derived from the school district's CSIP setting district priorities; these should address both students and staff needs. The underlying strength of the professional development program is predicated on the assumption that inservice education should allow teachers to:

- respond to changing educational policies and priorities that impact on the expected achievement levels of all students;
- keep informed about and involved in curriculum changes and developments that reflect on personal performance;
- participate in district curriculum studies;
- incorporate all new materials and equipment in the instructional programs;
- adopt new teaching strategies and methods designed to maximize teacher effectiveness and promote achievement of standards established for each content area;
- employ new strategies for successful classroom management;
- increase student achievement in all areas at all levels;
- develop professionally to become instructional leaders intent on the educational growth and accomplishments of the students;
- implement the Mentor Program;
- become aware of advancements in instructional technology and the possibilities for classroom applications to promote higher levels of student involvement and achievement.

In providing professional development activities, the district will strive to make available opportunities that may include but are not limited to:

- new teacher certification;
- first year mentor programs;
- presentations and demonstrations;
- in-district and out-of-district conferences;
- workshops and in-services;
- state/local/national meetings of professional organizations related to improving instruction;
- curriculum review schedule and processes involved;
- personal and professional development;
- avenues to increase academic achievement of all students;
- areas targeted for improvement on the district/building CSIP.

I. CURRICULUM REVIEW CYCLE

The district recognizes the advantages of maintaining a well-defined instructional program development process that operates to meet the learning needs of all students. An active plan for instructional program review is necessary in order to maintain instructional programs that will continue to meet the needs of all students.

The structure and operating guidelines for the district's Curriculum Council outlines major responsibilities for staff participation and involvement in all areas of curriculum development (this is formally outlined in the **Guidelines for Instructional Program Development** handbook).

The most essential ingredient of the curriculum process is the experience and expertise of the classroom teachers and curriculum coordinators. Their work in curriculum development, implementation, revisions, application and coordination is vital in the district's effort to maintain a dynamic instructional program development process.

Professional participation in all curriculum areas often requires release time from regular classroom teaching duties. The district is committed to providing the personnel and the needed release time for coordination of activities as well as professional growth opportunities to assist staff members in staying abreast in their curriculum areas.

II. CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS/RELATED TRAVEL

New developments in educational structure, order, function and relation are occurring continuously and at a phenomenal rate. Participation in conferences, meetings and workshops can be an effective method for assuring that instructional techniques and strategies used in the classrooms remain current and responsive to the changing times and to current best practices as outlined by educational research as long as consistent and long-term follow-up activities are provided.

Based upon staff needs assessments, areas of emphasis are identified by building and by district. These areas are outlined in the building/district CSIP. The focus is not meant to justify the exclusion of other identified needs but to provide a means for addressing priority needs of critical concern to the building and/or district.

Emphasis during the 2007-08 school year will focus on presenting a balanced instructional program to assist all students in basic skill attainment and in becoming proficient learners. Increasing student achievement at all levels and in all content areas is the primary focus of the Fort Zumwalt School District. All goals for increasing student achievement will be included in the district and building's CSIP.

During the 2007-08 school year, the following curricular areas will be involved in specific activities related to the curriculum development process:

Curriculum Studies

Communication Arts K-5
Communication Arts 6-8
Communication Arts 9-12

Curriculum Implementation

Reading K-5 and 6-8
Industrial Technology 7-12
Library Media K-12

Curriculum Revisions

Math K-5; 6-8; and 9-12
Physical Education K-5 and 6-12

These content areas will require professional development opportunities for staff members in keeping abreast with curriculum changes/modifications and student achievement in each area. All required components for the 4th Cycle of MSIP will be incorporated into all new curriculum guides. Staff development activities will focus on improving the instructional program in all areas to assist students in meeting their full learning potential, demonstrating competency in all areas.

III. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSERVICES

Because of time constraints and personal obligations, many teachers are unable to attend conferences and workshops that are held outside of the district. To remain responsive to staff needs and the curriculum development process, an after-school/in-house staff development program is needed. These inservices/workshops will be coordinated by semester, with emphasis placed on curriculum specific needs and increasing student achievement at all levels and in all content areas.

Because of the expertise of the district staff, many of the presenters for the inservice programs will be district staff members. All staff members participating in an out-of-district conference or workshop are required to present information learned at the conference either in their department meeting, a building workshop or a district-wide inservice for interested staff members.

IV. MENTOR PROGRAM

The district has developed and implemented a mentor program to assist all teachers during their first two years of teaching. The program offers collegial support, practical assistance, and assists the new teacher in polishing their teaching and management skills. The mentor will assist the new teacher in initiating; implementing, monitoring and evaluating the new teacher's professional development plan as outlined in the **Professional Development Plan** and **Beginning Teacher Induction Handbook**.

All teachers beginning their first year of teaching will have a peer teacher assigned as their mentor. All mentors are required to participate in the district's in-service on serving as a mentor. A building administrator will serve as the mentor for all teachers during their second year in the teaching profession.

V. GRADUATE STUDIES TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

Often the continued development of professional skills related to teaching and pursuing graduate study might best advance learning. Graduate credit earned from an accredited college or university will be considered for tuition reimbursement with limits as defined in Section XIX of the **Professional Agreement** (2005-2010).

Professional development funds will not be available for tuition reimbursement until all other categories of outlined professional development activities, as defined in this supplement, have been appropriately addressed

VI. BUDGET FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Proposed expenditures**:

I.	Curriculum Development/Studies	\$ 70,000
II.	Curriculum Implementation/Revisions	30,000
III.	Curriculum Application/Coordination	50,000
IV.	Conferences/Meetings/Related Travel	80,000
V.	In-district Inservices	50,000
VI.	Mentor Program	20,000
VII.	Graduate Hour Reimbursement***	40,000

TOTAL: \$ 340,000****

* This budget reflects building level professional development allocations of approximately \$75,000 (\$60 per teacher).

** All figures are approximate and are subject to change based on staff participation.

*** Funds will be considered available when programs/services in all categories are complete.

**** This is a tentative budget based upon projected minimum guarantee apportionment and may have to be adjusted when actual funds are finalized.

Professional Development Rubric

(Appendix B)

Missouri Professional Development Guidelines for STUDENT SUCCESS



Notes

**RUBRIC FOR DETERMINING EXCELLENCE IN
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

THIS ASSESSMENT TOOL
will be used for determining

**THE COMMISSIONER'S AWARD of EXCELLENCE
for
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Missouri Staff Development Leadership Council (MSDLC)
Affiliated with the Missouri Staff Development Council (MSDC) and the
National Staff Development Council (NSDC)

March 2002



CONTEXT

LEARNING COMMUNITIES	Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district. (Related to MSIP Standard 6.7; Indicators: 6.7.1, 6.7.2, 6.7.5)			
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff in this school/district plan instruction and/or solve problems independently with little or no collaboration. • Staff learning and professional growth is most often focused on staff interests rather than student learning. • No attempt is made by teams to align staff development with district or building goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some staff collaboration exists to plan instruction and/or problem-solve; however, the instances are infrequent. • Some staff learning and professional development includes using data to increase student learning. • Some attempt is made to align staff development to the district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) and/or the building-level goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most staff form collaborative teams and engage in planning instruction and solving problems. • Most staff teams focus their planning for instruction using data to improve student learning. • Learning teams align staff development with the district's CSIP and building-level goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff is part of on-going school-based learning teams that are a primary component of the staff development plan. • All staff uses data and is regularly involved in a variety of professional growth activities to improve student learning. • All learning teams focus consistently on district and building-level goals. 	

CONTEXT

LEADERSHIP	<p>Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement. (Related to MSIP Standard: 6.7; Indicators: 6.7.1, 6.7.5, 6.7.6)</p>		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles are rigidly defined, and leader(s) take little or no responsibility for student achievement. • The leader makes all decisions with little or no input from the learning community. • Student achievement is poor and/or showing little improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles are unclear or undefined, and leaders seldom assume responsibility for student achievement. • The leader sporadically seeks input from the learning community. • Student achievement is static and/or showing short-term improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles are collaboratively defined, and leaders share and foster responsibility for student achievement. • The leaders consistently nurture collegiality within the learning community. • Student achievement is showing some long-term improvement linked to effective leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership roles and responsibilities are interchangeable, and stakeholders assume responsibility for student achievement. • Leadership teams are in place at all levels and focus on continuous instructional improvement. • Student achievement is high and can be linked to a high-quality school improvement plan; quality, focused professional development; and exemplary leadership.





CONTEXT

RESOURCES	Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration. (Related to MSIP Standard: 6.7; Indicators: 6.7.1, 6.7.6)			
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In order to be in compliance, only the minimal statutory budget requirements are dedicated to staff development. ▪ The staff has limited access to facilities, resources and personnel to support adult learning and collaboration. ▪ The staff is given minimal time for adult learning and collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only the minimal statutory budget requirements are dedicated to staff development. ▪ The staff has some access to facilities, resources and personnel support adult learning and collaboration. ▪ The staff is given some time for adult learning and collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The minimal statutory budget requirements are dedicated to focused staff development, which is aligned with the CSIP. ▪ Facilities, resources and personnel are readily available to support adult learning and collaboration. ▪ The staff is regularly provided time for adult learning and collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monies allocated for staff development are significantly more than the basic statutory requirement and aligned with the CSIP. ▪ The staff and board consistently provide facilities, resources and personnel to support adult learning and collaboration. ▪ The school community consistently participates in adult learning and collaboration. 	

PROCESS

DATA-DRIVEN	<p>Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement. (Related to MSIP Standard 6.7; Indicators: 6.7.3, 6.7.4, 6.7.5)</p>		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student data are not used in school improvement planning. ▪ Staff development is planned based only on individual interests of staff. ▪ No one accepts responsibility for collecting, analyzing and using data to increase student achievement. ▪ Little or no meaningful student data are communicated to staff. ▪ There is little or no evidence for working together to analyze student data, monitor progress and impact achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some student data are used in school improvement planning. ▪ Staff development is planned based on a needs- assessment and collective staff interests. ▪ Some staff accepts responsibility for collecting, analyzing and using data to increase student achievement. ▪ Some student data are communicated to staff upon request. ▪ There is some evidence of working together to analyze student data, monitor progress and impact student achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student data are used in school improvement planning. ▪ Professional development plans directly relate to student data. ▪ Staff accepts responsibility for collecting, analyzing and using data to increase student achievement. ▪ Student data are provided to staff for improving instruction. ▪ Staff collaborate using student data in study groups, action research groups and other professional growth activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student data are the basis of school improvement planning. ▪ Staff development is consistently determined by student data. ▪ Evidence is clear that student achievement has increased as the result of using student data to change practice. ▪ Student data are consistently provided to staff and the community for improving student achievement. ▪ The learning community consistently collaborates and uses data as the basis of professional growth.





PROCESS

EVALUATION	Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact. (Related to MSIP Standard 6.7; Indicators: 6.7.3, 6.7.4, 6.7.5)		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development is evaluated based on personal satisfaction rather than its impact on student achievement. ▪ No one accepts responsibility for the evaluation of staff development. ▪ Data are seldom or never collected. ▪ Staff development evaluation results are not used to implement change. ▪ Staff development evaluation is not used to determine needed resources such as time, money and matter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development is sometimes evaluated based on its impact on student achievement. ▪ Occasionally, someone accepts responsibility for the evaluation of staff development. ▪ Data are occasionally collected. ▪ Staff development results are sometimes used to implement change. ▪ Staff development evaluation is sometimes used to determine needed resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development is often evaluated based on its impact on student achievement. ▪ Someone generally accepts responsibility for the evaluation of staff development. ▪ Data are consistently used. ▪ Staff development results are often used to implement change. ▪ Staff development evaluation is used to determine needed resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development is consistently evaluated based on its impact on student achievement. ▪ A person is designated to be responsible for the consistent evaluation of staff development. ▪ Multiple sources of data concerning knowledge gained by participants, level of implementation and changes in student learning are consistently collected. ▪ Staff development results are consistently used to implement change. ▪ A variety of evaluation data are used to determine needed resources and evaluate intended outcomes.

PROCESS

RESEARCH-BASED	Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to apply research to decision making. (Related to MSIP Standard 6.7; Indicators: 6.7.2, 6.7.3, 6.7.4)		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little or no research on best practices for professional development, curriculum, instruction and assessment is considered when making decisions regarding student achievement. ▪ No one accepts responsibility for seeking out information or conducting research for planning and/or decision making. ▪ Little or no staff members show interest in educational research. ▪ Resources for research are not allocated. ▪ Little or no collaboration for research is encouraged. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff has some awareness of the importance of research when making decisions and/or selecting strategies for improving student learning. ▪ Some staff accepts responsibility for seeking out information or conducting research for planning and/or decision making. ▪ Some staff have indicated an interest in conducting action research and communicating results. ▪ Sometimes resources are allocated and utilized for research. ▪ Some staff collaborate and share research-based information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff often uses research when making decisions and/or selecting strategies for improving student learning. ▪ Staff often accepts responsibility for seeking out information or conducting research for planning and/or decision making. ▪ The staff have often indicated an interest in conducting action research and communicating results. ▪ Resources often are allocated and utilized for research. ▪ Many staff teams use pilot studies and action research to monitor initiatives and make informed decisions about the continuation and institutionalization of those initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educators are effective users of educational research regarding school improvement and the enhancement of student achievement. ▪ Staff consistently takes responsibility for studying and utilizing research for school improvement. ▪ The staff consistently conducts action research and communicates results. ▪ Resources are consistently allocated and utilized for research. ▪ Teams consistently conduct pilot studies and action research to support, confront, and/or generate new knowledge and evidence about the effectiveness of innovations and initiatives.





PROCESS

DESIGN	Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal. (Related to MSIP Standard 6.7; Indicators: 6.7.3, 6.7.5)			
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development seldom moves beyond training, workshops, courses, and large group presentations. ▪ Those responsible for staff development seldom select learning strategies based on the intended outcomes. ▪ Staff development design seldom considers use of teachers' prior knowledge or experience. ▪ The use of combined learning strategies by collaborative teams is seldom incorporated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development occasionally includes collaborative lesson design, the examination of student work, curriculum development, case studies and action research, etc. ▪ Those responsible for staff development occasionally select learning strategies based on the intended outcomes. ▪ Staff development design occasionally considers the use of teachers' prior knowledge or experience. ▪ The use of combined learning strategies by collaborative teams is occasionally incorporated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development often includes collaborative lesson design, the examination of student work, curriculum development, case studies and action research, etc. ▪ Those responsible for staff development often select learning strategies based on the intended outcomes. ▪ Staff development design often considers the use of teachers' prior knowledge or experience. ▪ The use of combined learning strategies by collaborative teams is often incorporated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development consistently includes collaborative lesson design, the examination of student work, curriculum development, case studies and action research, etc. ▪ Those responsible for staff development consistently select learning strategies based on the intended outcomes. ▪ Staff development design consistently considers the use of teachers' prior knowledge or experience. ▪ The use of combined learning strategies by collaborative teams is consistently incorporated. 	

PROCESS

LEARNING	Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students applies knowledge about human learning and change. (Related to MSIP Standard 6.7; Indicators: 6.7.1, 6.7.2)		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development seldom promotes the practice of new skills that would improve student achievement. ▪ Staff development learning methods seldom mirror the methods teachers are expected to use with their students. ▪ Staff development leaders seldom gather, use or communicate information about learning styles. ▪ Time or support is seldom provided to increase knowledge about change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development occasionally promotes the practice of new skills that would improve student achievement. ▪ Staff development learning methods occasionally mirror the methods teachers are expected to use with their students. ▪ Staff development leaders occasionally gather, use or communicate information about learning styles. ▪ Occasionally, there is time or support provided to increase knowledge about change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development often promotes the practice of new skills that would improve student achievement. ▪ Staff development learning methods often mirror the methods teachers are expected to use with their students. ▪ Staff development leaders often gather, use or communicate information about learning styles. ▪ Efforts are often made to provide time and support for increasing knowledge about change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development consistently promotes the practice of new skills that would improve student achievement. ▪ Staff development learning methods consistently mirror the methods teachers are expected to use with their students. ▪ Staff development leaders consistently gather and use information about learning styles. ▪ Knowledge about change is consistently and systematically addressed through staff development.





PROCESS

COLLABORATION	Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate. (Related to MSIP Standard 6.7; Indicators: 6.7.2, 6.7.6)			
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is little evidence of focused collaboration on student achievement. ▪ School leaders seldom facilitate increasing knowledge and skills for collaboration. ▪ Time is seldom scheduled for the staff to learn and work together during the school day. ▪ Educators seldom share what they learned through staff development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is occasional evidence of focused collaboration on student achievement. ▪ School leaders occasionally facilitate increasing knowledge and skills for collaboration. ▪ Time is occasionally scheduled for the staff to learn and work together during the school day. ▪ Educators occasionally share lessons learned from staff development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Often there is evidence of focused collaboration on student achievement. ▪ School leaders often facilitate increasing knowledge and skills for collaboration. ▪ Time is often scheduled for the staff to learn and work together during the school day. ▪ Educators often share lessons learned from staff development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is consistent evidence of focused collaboration on student achievement. ▪ School leaders consistently accept responsibility for, model and facilitate increasing knowledge and skills for collaboration. ▪ Time is consistently scheduled for the staff to learn and work together during the school day. ▪ Educators consistently share lessons learned from staff development. 	

CONTENT

EQUITY	<p>Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students; create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments; and hold high expectations for their academic achievement. (Related to MSIP Standard 6.7; Indicator: 6.7.5)</p>			
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No monitoring of achievement gaps among groups of students is done to adjust instruction. ▪ No one accepts responsibility for closing the achievement gap. ▪ Educators are unaware of instructional needs of diverse students. ▪ Data have not been disaggregated for improving student achievement. ▪ No support is provided for non-learning students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The district occasionally monitors achievement gaps among groups of students to adjust instruction. ▪ Some responsibility is accepted by the school and/or district for closing the achievement gap. ▪ Educators attend some training sessions, but are not connecting and applying what they learn about student diversity. ▪ Some data are disaggregated and used to improve student achievement. ▪ Support and success for non-learning students is left up to the individual teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The district monitors achievement gaps among groups of students to adjust instruction. ▪ Closing the achievement gap is seen as a school and/or district responsibility. ▪ Educators are increasingly more knowledgeable about student diversity and apply their knowledge. ▪ Disaggregated data are used to improve student achievement. ▪ A system is in place to identify and support non-learning students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The district consistently monitors achievement among groups of students and can document progress toward closing the gap. ▪ The school board, administrators, teachers and community consistently share responsibility for closing the achievement gap. ▪ Educators are knowledgeable about student diversity and consistently apply their knowledge. ▪ Multiple sources of disaggregated data are consistently used to guide the improvement of student achievement. ▪ Multiple interventions that provide support for non-learning students are in place. If one strategy does not work, other options are utilized. 	





CONTENT

QUALITY TEACHING	Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately. (Related to MSIP Standard 6.7; Indicators: 6.7.1, 6.7.2, 6.7.3, 6.7.6)			
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educators have no opportunity to participate in sustained professional learning, to improve instructional strategies and/or to consider the means to assess student progress. ▪ Staff development opportunities are designed to include all educators regardless of job assignment or individual needs and without consideration for follow-up. ▪ Educators believe curriculum, instruction, and assessment are separate components of teaching and learning. ▪ Instructional leaders and administrators provide no resources or support for sustained professional development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development opportunities are occasionally available to sustain professional learning, to improve instructional strategies, and to consider means of assessment. ▪ Staff development is occasionally designed with some consideration for differentiated needs and with opportunity for some follow-up events. ▪ Staff development activities occasionally focus on the correlation of curriculum, instruction and assessment. ▪ Instructional leaders and administrators occasionally provide resources and support for educators' sustained professional development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff development opportunities are monitored to ensure that educators can deepen their subject knowledge, instructional skills and assessment strategies. ▪ Staff development is often differentiated according to educators' needs and usually includes follow-up events. ▪ Staff development provides educators an awareness of the relationship among curriculum, instruction and assessment. ▪ Instructional leaders and administrators provide resources and support for educators' sustained professional development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educators consistently have job-embedded, regularly scheduled staff development opportunities to deepen their subject knowledge, instructional skills and assessment strategies. ▪ Staff development is consistently differentiated and designed to occur over time, in collaborative groups that engage in study, dialogue, action research, and/or examination of student work. ▪ Educators consistently integrate curriculum, instruction and assessment in planning lessons and units. ▪ Instructional leaders consistently ensure resources and support for sustained professional development while participating as a member of the learning community. 	

CONTENT

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT	<p>Standard: Staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately. (Related to MSIP Standard 6.7; Indicator: 6.7.5)</p>		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student achievement information provided to parents is not clear, consistent or concise. ▪ Staff development does not prepare educators to create partnerships with parents to support student learning. ▪ There is no system for meaningful input from parents, business, or community. ▪ Status quo is desired for managing the school, and partnerships are only sought when money or volunteers are needed. ▪ Outsiders are not welcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student achievement information is occasionally provided to parents with meaningful explanations. ▪ Staff development occasionally prepares educators to create partnerships with parents to support student learning. ▪ There is occasionally a means for input from parents, business, or community. ▪ Partnerships are occasionally sought on a limited basis for money or donations only. ▪ Input is sought from parents, business, or community, but is ignored in final decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student achievement gains are communicated and monitored, and can be linked to implementing learning community involvement. ▪ Staff development is designed to prepare educators to create partnerships with parents for supporting student learning. ▪ The school staff has knowledge of why partnerships are important and includes members of the learning community in strategic planning and decision making. ▪ Partnerships are ongoing and evaluated for their impact on students. ▪ Collaboration and communication among partners is evident. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achievement increases can consistently be linked to involvement of the learning community. ▪ The school and community consistently partner to prepare parents and educators to support every child's learning. ▪ The staff is trained and consistently utilizes two-way communication with the learning community about student achievement. ▪ All partnerships are mutually beneficial. ▪ Collaboration and communication among partners continuously foster improvement.



**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Reflection/Evaluation Sheet**

(Appendix C)

In-service Title:

In order to receive District in-service credit, the Fort Zumwalt Professional Development Committee requires each participant to complete the following reflection/evaluation sheet. This form will be used by the PDC to collect data to meet the needs and better provide for the professional growth of the educators within the district.

Name Optional _____ School _____
(Required only when requesting credit for building level collaborative activities)

Grade/Subject _____ Date ____/____/____

Please complete the reflection by rating (circle one) and give a brief summation.

PDC GOAL: To increase student learning by providing high quality professional growth.

1. The participants were engaged in work beneficial to the promotion of professional growth.

Strongly Agree Agree Limited Disagree

Explain _____

2. The in-service allowed participants to engage in activities and learning situations which are consistent with the district's Professional Development Educational Strands.

Strongly Agree Agree Limited
Disagree

Explain _____

3. Student feedback indicated that the goals of the in-service increased the effectiveness of the teacher. (Only required for ongoing Professional Development/Collaboration.)

Strongly Agree Agree Limited
Disagree

Explain _____

PDC GOAL: To increase student learning by providing training that will further help to engage the learner.

4. Participant goals or teaching style may be adjusted as a direct result of this in-service.

Strongly Agree
Disagree

Agree

Limited

Explain _____

5. Please indicate information from the in-service that you intend to share with colleagues.

Professional Development Needs Assessment

(Appendix D)

One of the main functions of the Professional Development Committee (PDC) is to recommend workshops, conferences and staff development activities. These recommendations are based on the needs identified by input from the professional staff on things needed to improve classroom instruction and increase student achievement.

Please take a few minutes and complete this Needs Assessment Survey to help the PDC work to improve professional development opportunities in our district. The completed survey should be returned to your building's representative on the PDC (membership roster on back).

List two district-level needs for on-going professional development:

1. _____ Presenter _____

2. _____ Presenter _____

List two building-level needs for on-going professional development:

1. _____ Presenter _____

2. _____ Presenter _____

List two department/grade level needs for on-going professional development:

1. _____ Presenter _____

2. _____ Presenter _____

What areas would you be willing to present or co-present as an inservice?

1. _____ Level: Building District (circle one)

2. _____ Level: Building District (circle one)

Have you received any handouts at workshops/conferences that you would like to copy and place in the professional development section of the school's library for other staff members? _____ Yes _____ No

Topics: _____

Optional: Name _____ Building _____

Professional Development Survey

(Appendix E)

Professional Development Survey for Fort Zumwalt Certified Teachers

Fort Zumwalt Professional Development Survey

The purpose of this survey is to determine how teachers in the Fort Zumwalt School District utilize current district professional development opportunities. In addition, survey participants will share their perceptions regarding the impact that these professional development opportunities have on their teaching and classroom practices.

1. Which grade level do you currently teach?

- Kindergarten through 2nd grade
- 3rd Grade through 5th Grade
- 6th Grade through 8th Grade
- 9th grade through 12th Grade

2. Years of teaching experience?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- 21 or more years

3. Which age range best describes you?

- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61 or over

4. For each professional development opportunity listed below, please select "yes" if you have participated or "no" if you have not participated during the last two years. If you select "yes", identify the impact the professional development opportunity has had on your teaching and classroom practices. If you select "no", identify why you did not participate in that professional development opportunity.

	Yes	No
1. University course	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2. Cooperative grade level/department work	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3. Study groups	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4. Online courses	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5. Individual workshops	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
6. Series of brief workshops	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
7. Out-of-district conference and/or workshop	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Professional Development Survey for Fort Zumwalt Certified Teachers

5. Please rank the following items from highest(first) to lowest(fifth) with regards to what motivates you to participate in professional development activities?

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
To improve student achievement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To earn more money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To improve teaching skills and knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To advance career and maintain certification	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To meet peers who share professional interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Rate the following professional development opportunities based on your individual interest or need.

	Most Interest	Some Interest	Little Interest	No Interest
1. Technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Effective use of instructional interventions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Effective instructional strategies/practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Effective teacher collaboration procedures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Formative and summative assessments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Effectively implementing an IEP	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Working with students with special needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Discipline and classroom/behavior management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Parent involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Data driven decision making	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. I prefer to participate in professional development opportunities during the following times.

	Yes	No
1. Before School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. After School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. During School	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Saturdays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Summer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Professional Development Survey for Fort Zumwalt Certified Teachers

8. The following response items will be used to assess teachers' perceptions regarding professional development efforts in the Fort Zumwalt School District.

Please rate each of the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Professional development opportunities foster continuous staff development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Professional development focuses on scientifically based content.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. District professional development plan provides adequate time during the workday for staff to learn and work together.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Professional development provides the structure, support and follow-up necessary to impact student improvement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Professional development prepares teachers to use appropriate research-based teaching and learning strategies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Professional development prepares teachers to effectively deliver instruction to students at all skill levels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Professional development prepares teachers to administer and use various formative and summative assessment formats.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Professional development prepares teachers to effectively interpret and use data to improve instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Professional development provides specific training in using teacher selected, district approved, instructional materials.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Professional development provides training in differentiated instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Professional Development Survey for Fort Zumwalt Certified Teachers

9. District professional development opportunities have met my needs with regard to improving my teaching and classroom practices?

Yes

No

Reason

10. In your own words, list two changes that you believe would enhance the impact of professional development in the Fort Zumwalt School District.

1.

2.

**Study Consent Letter
(Appendix F)**

October 8, 2007

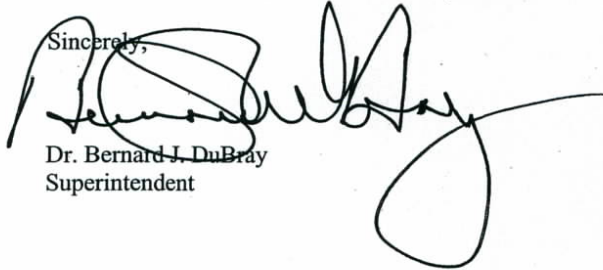
Dr. Bernard J. DuBray
110 Virgil St.
O'Fallon, MO 63366

To Whom It May Concern:

Jackie Floyd, Deanne McCullough and Jennifer White have my permission to conduct educational research required by Lindenwood University for the purpose of completing their Doctoral Program.

The research project will be conducted on the Fort Zumwalt School District Professional Development Plan beginning September 2007 and completed by June 2008 and will comply with all policies and procedures established by the Fort Zumwalt School District Board of Education. This research will involve the dissemination of surveys to a random sample of certified staff members regarding their participation in district professional development opportunities and the outcomes of these experiences. No student or staff names or identification numbers will be published.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernard J. DuBray", written over the typed name and title.

Dr. Bernard J. DuBray
Superintendent

Summary of Survey Results
(Appendix G)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Which grade level do you currently teach?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Kindergarten through 2nd grade	24.8%	81
3rd Grade through 5th Grade	22.7%	74
6th Grade through 8th Grade	22.1%	72
9th grade through 12th Grade	30.4%	99
<i>answered question</i>		326
<i>skipped question</i>		4

Years of teaching experience?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1-5 years	24.5%	81
6-10 years	27.6%	91
11-20 years	32.1%	106
21 or more years	15.8%	52
<i>answered question</i>		330
<i>skipped question</i>		0

Which age range best describes you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
21-30	24.8%	82
31-40	33.3%	110
41-50	25.8%	85
51-60	15.8%	52
61 or over	0.3%	1
<i>answered question</i>		330
<i>skipped question</i>		0

For each professional development opportunity listed below, please select "yes" if you Yes

Answer Options	Not used in classroom	Somewhat used in classroom	Often used	Response Count
1. University course	5	78	103	186
2. Cooperative grade level/department work	8	119	163	290
3. Study groups	26	43	29	98
4. Online courses	16	52	26	94
5. Individual workshops	16	173	102	291
6. Series of brief workshops	7	125	66	198
7. Out-of-district conference and/or workshop	8	75	134	217

No				
Answer Options	Not interested	Not offered	Not feasible	Response Count
1. University course	53	8	77	138
2. Cooperative grade level/department work	2	22	3	27
3. Study groups	67	132	28	227
4. Online courses	128	31	66	225
5. Individual workshops	14	8	10	32
6. Series of brief workshops	46	40	36	122
7. Out-of-district conference and/or workshop	24	30	57	111
Totals				
<i>answered question</i>				327
<i>skipped question</i>				3

Please rank the following items from highest(first) to lowest(fifth) with regards to what motivates you to participate in

Answer Options	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Rating Average	Response Count
To improve student achievement	138	107	35	10	9	1	299
To earn more money	24	31	51	86	116	1	308
To improve teaching skills and knowledge	131	141	33	10	4	1	319
To advance career and maintain certification	20	22	83	134	58	1	317
To meet peers who share professional interests	15	17	111	64	120	1	327
<i>answered question</i>							329
<i>skipped question</i>							1

Rate the following professional development opportunities based on your individual interest or need.						
Answer Options	Most Interest	Some Interest	Little Interest	No Interest	Rating Average	Response Count
1. Technology	152	139	27	3	1.629284	321
2. Effective use of instructional interventions	137	153	29	3	1.68323	322
3. Effective instructional strategies/practices	213	96	16	1	1.40184	326
4. Effective teacher collaboration procedures	84	183	55	5	1.941896	327
5. Formative and summative assessments	58	149	87	30	2.274691	324
6. Effectively implementing an IEP	66	131	99	30	2.285276	326
7. Working with students with special needs	110	143	60	13	1.92638	326
8. Discipline and classroom/behavior management	94	125	85	24	2.118902	328
9. Parent involvement	51	150	96	27	2.305556	324
10. Data driven decision making	45	92	127	60	2.623457	324
<i>answered question</i>						328
<i>skipped question</i>						2

I prefer to participate in professional development opportunities during the following			
Answer Options	Yes	No	Response Count
1. Before School	102	212	312
2. After School	212	107	319
3. During School	292	30	322
4. Saturdays	60	246	306
5. Summer	204	116	320
<i>answered question</i>			327
<i>skipped question</i>			3

The following response items will be used to assess teachers' perceptions regarding professional					
Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
1. Professional development opportunities foster	89	173	52	14	328
2. Professional development focuses on scientifically	19	184	108	12	323
3. District professional development plan provides	12	34	131	149	326
4. Professional development provides the structure,	13	119	148	47	327
5. Professional development prepares teachers to use	29	195	86	16	326
6. Professional development prepares teachers to	31	197	82	14	324
7. Professional development prepares teachers to	15	157	128	21	321
8. Professional development prepares teachers to	13	147	138	27	325
9. Professional development provides specific training in	45	184	76	18	323
10. Professional development provides training in	30	180	98	17	325
<i>answered question</i>					328
<i>skipped question</i>					2

District professional development opportunities have met my needs with		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	45.5%	146
No	54.5%	175
Reason		191
<i>answered question</i>		321
<i>skipped question</i>		9

In your own words, list two changes that you believe would enhance the		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
1	100.0%	289
2	83.0%	240
<i>answered question</i>		289
<i>skipped question</i>		41

IRB Approval

(Appendix H)

08-33

IRB Project Number

Lindenwood University

Institutional Review Board Disposition Report

To: Jackie Floyd, Jennifer White and Deanne McCullough

CC: Cynthia Vitale

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the resubmitted proposal for research titled

“Ft Zumwalt School District Professional Development Plan: A Qualitative Study of District Teachers’ Perceptions, Practices and Needs.”

Reviewed on February 13, 2008

The Institutional Review Board:

XXXX Approves the revised proposal.

 Tammi Pavelec 2/18/2008

Signature IRB Chair

Date