THE IMPACT OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL
PARTNERSHIP ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE
PARTNER SCHOOL DISTRICT: A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation in
Curriculum and Instruction

by
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ABSTRACT

Over the last several decades, those engaged in enhancing educational quality have recognized the increasing importance of the role of professional development in enhancing educator performance and student learning. During that same time period, professional development school partnerships between school districts and institutions of higher learning have been seen as a vehicle for transforming or renewing both basic and higher education. It is reasonable to expect that the establishment of a professional development school partnership would exert a significant impact on the professional development program of the district. However, this may not be the case. In fact, Levine (1997) argued, “school districts, with some important exceptions, continue to ignore the potential impact that professional development schools can have in terms of professional development, recruitment, and new teacher induction” (p.6). The purpose of this study was to address empirically the question of the impact of a PDS partnership on a district’s professional development program.

The central research question framing this study was: What has been the impact of an elementary professional development school partnership on the professional development program of the school district at the elementary level?

In order to answer this central research question, the following sub-questions guided the study:

1) As individuals in a variety of roles and contexts perceive it—has the elementary professional development program in the school district changed as a result of the PDS partnership?
2) If changes in professional development have occurred at the elementary level, in what areas have the changes occurred?

a) Assumptions underlying professional development

b) Goals for professional development

c) Delivery of professional development

d) Role of the teacher in professional development

e) Outcomes of professional development

3) What factors explain the changes that have occurred?

The study employed a qualitative case study approach. In-depth interviews using an interview protocol adapted from Seidman were conducted with 25 participants from three distinct categories: 1) central office administrators including curriculum coordinators; 2) principals, and 3) teachers using Seidman’s interview protocol. Data were analyzed using the constant-comparative method (Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

As revealed from the data collected during this study, all of the participant groups with the exception of the low involvement teacher participants, perceived that the professional development school partnership offered and supported multiple opportunities for professional development including enhanced teacher leadership possibilities, generating a culture of inquiry, and empowerment through teacher-generated and teacher-led professional development.

The findings of the study indicate multiple opportunities for future research studies in regards to professional development, school-university partnerships, and teacher leadership and principal leadership in a PDS partnership.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Education is often viewed as the vehicle to promote economic, social, and cultural transformation through school reform during times of national and global changes. Cuban (1990) has pointed out that there are recurring cycles of school reform in which particular ideas and approaches keep reappearing. He has noted that educators’ reform incessantly although not much really changes. However, since the 1960s, thinking about educational change has undergone several different stages of development.

Throughout the history of public education there has been a considerable amount of national attention focused on schools and how they educate children and how colleges of education have prepared teachers and administrators. According to Moloney (1989), these evaluations have resulted in a wave of reforms, one of many in the history of American education. Moloney states, “that while the first reforms encouraged more testing and additional requirements for students and teachers, the second one concentrated on changing or ‘restructuring’ these organizations” (p. 21). The second wave of reform jump-started the beginning of the school restructuring movement as well as the movement to redesign teacher education to better prepare teachers for restructured schools (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). A third wave focused on defining more challenging standards for learning while restructuring schools to produce significantly better outcomes (Schlechty, 1990; Sizer, 1992; Smith & O’Day, 1990).

Looking at reform through an historical lens also suggests waves of reform over time. In the 1950s, Americans became alarmed by the Russian launch of Sputnik and believed that the educational system was lagging behind Russia in technical power. This
event triggered concerns that led to an increased emphasis on science and mathematics in American schools. The response was a government-driven reform and Congress passing the National Defense Act to improve schools.

By the 1960s, another reform agenda was emerging and capturing the attention of the American public. The sixties became the decade of sweeping social reforms and schools became the centers of change. The political emphasis changed from a global focus such as the Cold War to the consideration of internal affairs such as Civil Rights and President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty. Programs such as Head Start, Job Corps, subsidized school lunches, and Title One emerged during this time.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 addressed concerns of African-Americans on several issues, including the issue of equal opportunities for minority youth. In addition to the Civil Rights Movement, the nation faced a number of issues—the Vietnam War, changing cultural values, the anti-war movement, and the feminist movement. As a result, the sixties became the decade of social reforms, and schools the focus of change. In effect, educational institutions took on greater responsibility for the societal well-being of the nation.

By the late seventies and the early eighties, particularly during times of economic instability, schools became the focus of the nation’s political agenda. In 1983, The National Commission on Excellence in Education published an alarming report entitled “A Nation at Risk.” This report claimed that American students were not studying the right subjects, were not working hard enough, and were not learning enough. Additionally, it was revealed that many teachers were “ill-prepared” to teach. As a result
of this report, school reform movements gained momentum, and several states passed laws requiring higher standards and expectations for students.

A Nation at Risk became an important landmark in the history of school reform in the United States. Because of its grim prediction that America’s educational system would soon be engulfed in a sea of mediocrity, the report was a compelling call for major changes in education. As the nation entered the 1990s, school reform shifted to the idea of increased accountability. By increasing accountability for measurable improvement, it was thought that the outcomes would result in the changes society was demanding of schools. Goals 2000 was also an effort by the federal government to set standards for American education. It mandated specific goals such as preparing preschool children to be “ready to learn” and to increase graduation rates. Restructuring schools to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population and greater competition from a world that was rapidly changing in terms of technology became the focus of most educators.

Speck and Knipe (2001) maintain “professional development has to play a key role in school reform efforts, both at the organizational and individual level, if reform efforts are to succeed and be sustained” (p. 211). Continued reports from government bodies, state legislatures, and various commissions provide momentum at the local, state, and national level to sustain ongoing, high-quality professional development (Speck & Knipe, 2001).

If children are to meet the high standards adopted by states and school districts, then teachers will have to be prepared to help them meet those demands. According to Cuban (1990), “teachers are at the center of school reform for they must carry out the demands of high standards in the classroom” (as cited in Garet et al., 2001, p. 916).
Therefore, the success of any education reform depends on the qualifications and effectiveness of teachers. According to the U.S. Dept. of Education (1998) “professional development is a major focus of systemic reform initiatives”.

Reformers have reported that changing teacher practices does not occur by simply changing curriculum and assessment procedures. Consequently, “professional development is touted as the ticket to reform” (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p. 173). Shulman and Sparks (1992) contend that “the continual deepening of knowledge and skills is an integral part of any profession and teaching is no exception” (as cited in Garet et al., 2001, p. 916).

According to Guskey (2000), “High-quality professional development is at the center of every modern proposal to enhance education” (p. 16). Guskey and Huberman (1995) argue, “regardless of how schools are formed or reformed, structured or restructured, the renewal of staff members’ professional skills is considered fundamental to improvement” (as cited in Guskey, 2000, p. 16).

Over the past two decades, a large body of research literature has emerged on professional development, teacher learning, and teacher change. Easton (2008) contends that in order for “powerful learning opportunities” to occur, they must be embedded in teachers’ work and teachers must identify areas for their own learning (as cited in Wei et al., 2009, p. 1). Hawley and Valli (1999) conclude that, “Structuring schools as learning organizations is important to the development and maintenance of professional values and group norms that support continuous professional learning for educators” (p. 144). One of the key strategies for enhanced professional development and school renewal that emerged in the 20th century is the professional development school movement.
The Emergence of Professional Development Schools

Professional development schools emerged in the mid-1980s as a compelling force for “advancing both the revitalization of teacher education and the reform of K-12 schools” (Abdal-Haqq, 1998, p. 1). They would be envisioned as models of best practices and highlighted as learning sites for the preparation of prospective teachers (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). In the past, reform efforts in schools or colleges of education have been developed and implemented separately even though the two share some similar goals and needs (Stallings & Kowalski, 1990).

The term “Professional Development School” (PDS) originated in the work of the Holmes Group (1986) in Tomorrow’s Teachers. The Holmes Group proposed the Professional Development School as a way to connect school reform and teacher development, two of the major issues that drive school improvement. Darling-Hammond (1994) offers this: “Professional development schools are linchpins in the movement to restructure education, as the form of learner-centered education demanded by the restructuring movement depends first and foremost on the knowledge and capacities of teachers” (p. 9).

In the Holmes Group’s 1990 manifesto Tomorrow’s Schools: Principles for the Design of Professional Development Schools, six propositions were presented for this new hybrid institution. The Professional Development School would: (1) promote significant teaching and learning; (2) create learning communities for large numbers of students; (3) serve everybody’s children, not just an elite group such as the children of university faculty; (4) promote professional development of educators; (5) foster inquiry about teaching and learning; and (6) forge new types of partnerships between K-12 and
higher education. Members of the Holmes Group (more recently, known as the Holmes Partnership) and a number of other universities were embracing these propositions and beginning to actualize such an institution.

Over the years, professional development schools have taken on many forms and have been nourished in a variety of contexts. According to Benson and Larsen (1999),

the attempts at successful partnerships between K-12 schools, colleges, and departments of education included efforts that bring professionals together in a school setting to share responsibility for the preparation of new teachers, the professional development of university faculty serving as teacher educators, the support of research directed at improvement of practice, and enhanced student learning. (p. 71)

By the year 2000, it was becoming evident that teacher education programs were heavily invested in the professional development school movement. Some were merely re-designations of public schools where prospective teachers were placed for student teaching while others were genuinely attempting to transform the processes of teacher learning and development. The reality was that the professional development school movement was being promoted and supported by a range of organizations, and confidence in their potential for improving schooling was on the rise.

The Holmes Group and the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) spearheaded by John Goodlad were two of the earliest national organizations that promoted the development of professional development schools. During the 1990s, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) also became active in teacher education and encouraged its members to find alternative ways to partner with colleges of education.

In order for change to work in schools, programs must work at all levels. When assessing professional development schools as an educational reform effort, the research
clearly articulates their value can only be determined if all participants document their outcomes. Teitel (2004) concludes:

There is a growing recognition of the importance of documenting outcomes in credible ways, and an increased use of multiple measures and conceptual frameworks that link outcomes with process. Although there are still gaps in data available, perhaps the most significant development is that there has been a tremendous growth in the body of knowledge about the positive impact professional development schools have made on students. This impact has been substantiated and speaks to the ultimate purpose of professional development schools. (p. 38)

Mantle-Bromley (2002) summarizes it best when she says “if professional development schools serve as the vehicle for ongoing improvement of the whole, then gains can be made from this intensive form of school-university collaboration” (p. 28). Otherwise, professional development schools are limited to preparing novice teachers for existing classrooms and practices and the goal of simultaneous renewal will not be achieved.

Professional development schools are not just places to prepare future educators but also places for responsible and continuous innovation. They are places for ongoing creation and discovery, where K-12 and university faculty collaborate for effective practice and policy through applied study (Lanier, 1994 as cited in Darling-Hammond, 1994.

Will schools and school districts that embrace the PDS for their vehicle of professional development experience what Fullan (2001) refers to as real change?

Real change, then whether desired or not, represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty; and if the change works out it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment and professional growth. The ties of uncertainty and the joys of mastery are central to the subjective meaning of educational change. (p. 32)
Purpose and Research Questions

Given the importance of professional development for all educators, it is important to understand how this phenomenon is experienced within the context of a professional development school (PDS) community. As schools and school districts strive to create new structures and models for professional development, it is vital to review and evaluate the type of professional learning that improves instruction (National Staff Development Council, 2009). With the advent of professional development schools, Levine (1997) argues, “school districts, with some important exceptions, continue to ignore the potential impact that PDSs can have in terms of professional development, recruitment, and new teacher induction” (p. 6). Therefore, the purpose of this study will be to examine the effects of a PDS partnership and the PDS model on a school district’s professional development program. More specifically, I will investigate whether or not the State College Area School District represents one of those “exceptions” that Levine highlights, in regard to how professional development as a function has been impacted by the PDS collaborative (See Figure 1.1).
Figure 1.1

PDS as Stimulus for Simultaneous Renewal
The central question for this study is: What is the impact of a professional development school partnership on the school district’s professional development program at the elementary level? Specific research questions include:

1. As individuals in a variety of roles and contexts perceive it, has the elementary professional development program in the school district changed as a result of the PDS partnership?

2. If changes in professional development have occurred at the elementary level, in what areas have the changes occurred?
   a) Assumptions underlying professional development
   b) Goals for professional development
   c) Delivery of professional development
   d) Outcomes of professional development

3. What factors explain the changes that have occurred?

**Definition of Terms**

The following definitions will be used in the context of this study:

**Professional Development Schools:** A collaboration between a school and a university’s college of education with the goal of improving teaching and learning by advancing the education of pre-service teachers, conducting inquiry into the teaching and learning process, and providing professional development for experienced teachers and university educators.

**Professional Development:** As put forth by Guskey (2000), “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” (p. 16). To further clarify “professional development” Guskey maintains that three characteristics need to be considered. He states: “Professional development is (a) intentional, (b) ongoing, and (c) systemic” (p. 16). It is a purposeful endeavor designed to bring change at all levels.

**Intern:** Students in a college teacher preparation program at a professional development school site, whose placement is for the length of an entire school year.

**Mentor:** A faculty member employed by a school district who has agreed to collaborate throughout the length of an internship as a mentor for student interns in a professional development school.

**Professional Development Associate:** The PDA provides support for the professional development of interns and mentor teachers during the school year. Professional development associates visit school sites weekly; conduct observations of interns, spends time with mentors, interns, and children; and serves as a resource for all members of the professional development school community.

**Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of this study initially deal with the inherent limitations associated with the two data collection methods of this study. The data collection methods of this study include interviewing and document analysis.

Interviews can be a limited source of data since participants can only report their perceptions of and perspectives on what has happened (Patton, 1990). Those perspectives and perceptions can become vague or unclear particularly after long periods of time;
therefore, the data can be subject to recall error. Their distorted perspectives can also be due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, or just a lack of awareness (Patton, 1990). This is especially true in this study because I was asking participants to recall what professional development was like in the district before the PDS partnership began. In addition, given the researcher’s close connection to the PDS partnership, a choice was made to not ask explicit questions about the impact of the PDS in order to honor the phenomenological nature of the study. This choice is explained in detail in the Methodology section of Chapter 3. This choice might have resulted in under reporting of the impact of the PDS by participants.

Document analysis, as the second method of data collection can be restrictive in that the records are incomplete or inaccurate. The quality of each document can also vary, as some documents will contain great detail while others have limited or missing information. Patton (1990) asserts, “Program documents may be selective in that only certain aspects of a program (that is, positive aspects) are documented” (p. 245). The potential limitations of document analysis were actually increased in this study since only one type of document, strategic plans, was made available to the researcher.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature pertaining to this research study on the impact of a professional development school partnership on a school district’s professional development program. The first section of the chapter provides an in-depth discussion of professional development schools as a special case of school reform. The original goal of the second part of the literature review was to document the impact of professional development schools on the function of professional development within partner school districts. However, no studies could be located that addressed that question. As a result, the second part of the chapter focuses on the impact of professional development on individual roles within partner schools, i.e. veteran teachers and administrators.

PDS as a Special Case of School Reform

Cuban has pointed out that there are recurring cycles of education reform in which particular ideas and approaches keep reappearing. He submits that educators’ reform again and again and again although not much changes. These waves of intense public scrutiny of schools reappear because conflicting values are hidden within particular agendas of economic instability, political processes, and schools themselves (Cuban, 1990).
The school reform literature is dotted with a myriad of improvement approaches and programs to address the major problems of America’s schools. As with most issues, they can be simply stated but in reality they are complex problems requiring complex solutions (Levine, 1994). Professional development schools are one part of the solution and can be the vehicle to embracing and implementing these reform efforts. Professional development schools have the “capacity to cut across several other approaches, both supporting and being supported by them” (Levine, 1997, p. 3). Levine also claims, that it may be necessary to utilize “a portfolio of approaches and that some reform efforts depend on other reform efforts for their success” (p. 1). In essence, professional development schools strive to bring together many of these reform efforts.

Darling-Hammond (1994) notes that, “professional development schools are a special case of school restructuring: as they simultaneously restructure schools and teacher education programs, they redefine teaching and learning for all members of the profession and the school community” (p. 5).

**History and Characteristics of Professional Development Schools**

Professional development schools gained momentum as a vehicle for improving schooling in the United States during the mid-1980s when a number of significant reports and studies of the era emphasized the necessity of linking improvements in teacher education to school reform if substantial improvements in public schooling were to be accomplished (Carnegie Forum, 1986; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1990). Real schools that could provide “authentic contexts” for inducting new teachers into the teaching profession were seen as the necessary link to renewing teacher education.
In the 1970s, portal schools were introduced and designed to serve as a focus for “school/university interaction in order to establish a point of entry for promising new curricula and practices” (Stallings & Kowalski, 1990). The laboratory schools of earlier decades focused on pre-service education but were isolated from the public school. As a result, laboratory schools lacked “authenticity.” There was much rhetoric with this idea of portal schools but little action, and by 1980 the portal school had been short-lived and disappeared from the scene. Both the laboratory school and the portal school did not contain the element of simultaneous renewal that was a characteristic of the current reform movement. However, through the concept of the professional development school (PDS) simultaneous renewal could be embraced.

**The Holmes Group**

The Holmes Group, founded in 1986 as a reform group of education deans at research universities, advanced the concept of a professional development school parallel to the teaching hospital of a medical school.

Early visions for professional development schools were influenced by the medical profession’s teaching hospitals, in which those who are in training are placed with those providing medical service and care in authentic contexts, working alongside of and interacting with medical researchers. (Benson & Larsen, 1999, p. 71)

Essentially, the teaching hospital became an early model for the concept of the professional development school.

The term “Professional Development School” (PDS) originated in the work of the Holmes Group (1986) in *Tomorrow’s Teachers*. In the Holmes Group proposal, a Professional Development School:
would provide superior opportunities for teachers and administrators to influence the development of their profession, and for university faculty to increase the professional relevance of their work, through (1) mutual deliberation on problems with student learning, and their possible solutions; (2) shared teaching in the university and schools; (3) collaborative research on the problems of educational practice; and (4) cooperative supervision of prospective teachers and administrators. (p. 56)

The Holmes Group proposed the Professional Development School as a way to connect school reform and teacher development—key issues that drive school improvement.

The first report of the Holmes Group (1986) *Tomorrow’s Teachers* presented a new vision for school reform and teacher education. They not only outlined the goals for teacher education reform but also a process to achieve them. The goals included: (1) making the education of teaching more intellectually strong; (2) recognizing differences in teacher knowledge, skill, and commitment in their certification, education and work; (3) creating standards of entry into the profession; (4) connecting institutions to schools; and (5) making schools better places for teachers to work and learn. The Holmes Group clearly points out that these goals have implications beyond universities and departments of education. These reforms encompass schools—communities where teachers practice, learn, and where inquiry into teaching takes place.

The Holmes Group recognized that there are obstacles to these goals; however, they also maintained that these changes must be extensive. These changes require the commitment and cooperation of all stakeholders—communities, parents, and educational settings. They connect schools, universities, state departments of education, as well as state legislatures.

The Holmes Group was awarded a grant by the Ford Foundation to study how schools could collaborate to improve the teaching profession. As a result, the Holmes
Group published *Tomorrow’s Schools* (1990), a report that outlined a process for improving teacher education using school/university collaboration, and the principles upon which professional development schools should be developed. According to the Holmes Group (1986, 1990), the professional development school embraces the belief that teacher education is a task of both the university and a school district. An effective professional development school is organized around six principles: (a) promote significant teaching and learning; (b) create learning communities for large numbers of students; (c) serve everybody’s children; (d) continued learning by teachers, teacher educators, and administrators; (e) foster inquiry about teaching and learning; and (f) forge new types of partnerships between K-12 and schools (Holmes Group, 1990). Members of the Holmes Group and a number of other universities were embracing these principles and beginning to actualize such an institution.

A number of reform minded groups and organizations contributed to the evolution of professional development schools. The Task Force on Education and the Economy followed by the Holmes Group, as well as Goodlad’s studies of teacher education called for innovative schools that support novice and experienced teachers learning in the course of teaching, schools in which teachers anchored their work in a professional knowledge base (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1986, 1990, 1995). The ideas that came from these groups emerged from a strong philosophical base. Key concepts in professional development school programs such as the school being the center of inquiry and the professionalism of teaching were embedded in the progressive movement of the twentieth century. As noted by Levine (1992), “John Dewey thought of teachers as students of learning who could and should reflect on their
own practice and learn from one another” (p. 8). Moreover, Dewey placed extreme importance on the role of knowledge, experience, and practice in the development of the thinking individual (Dewey, 1904).

Professional development schools had to be in clinical settings that paired practice with theory for prospective teachers and personified exemplary practices to maximize student learning and achievement. At the time, it was recognized by education reformers that these exemplary schools were in short supply. To that end, Abdal-Haqq (1999) claimed that, “the schools that came closest to being exemplary were found in more affluent communities, which were increasingly atypical when compared to the population and conditions that existed in the majority of urban and rural schools” (p. 5). Therefore, if professional development schools were limited to those exemplary schools, not only would there be a shortage of sites but the less affluent communities would be denied the existence of professional development schools. So the concept of exemplary settings had to be expanded to include restructuring schools that were trying to be “exemplary” (Abdal-Haqq, 1999).

In 1995, the final report in the Holmes Group Trilogy—Tomorrow’s Schools of Education was published. The report tackled “the problem of uneven quality in the preparation and selection of educators” (Fullan et al., 1999, p. 41). As Fullan et al. noted the quality of teachers is connected to the quality of their preparation and the places where teachers are prepared. The report focused on “why and how” schools of education must reorganize and redefine themselves to meet the new challenges. Within this report, a set of characteristics was included defining a high-quality professional school of education. Fullan et al. (1999) argued that Tomorrow’s Schools of Education created
considerable controversy within the Holmes Group although it generated little professional reaction. Tyson (1995) called the report “a curious mixture of scathing self-criticism, high ideals, revolutionary talk, timid reform proposals, and stunning omissions” (p. 3). Tyson concluded:

There are many true and good ideas in Tomorrow’s Schools of Education, and certainly the Holmes Group should be credited with bold self-determination and a measured step toward profession building. But it seems to be caught mid-way between its old view of itself as the elite cadre that spreads excellence over the landscape and its new view of itself as the servant of practitioners and the children they serve. (p. 6)

By the year 2000, it was apparent that colleges of education were becoming invested in the professional development school movement and were attempting to transform teacher preparation for prospective teachers.

National Network for Educational Renewal

The National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) was established in 1986. It extended the work of the Center for Educational Renewal (CER) founded in 1985 by John Goodlad, Kenneth Sirotnick, and Roger Soder to study and facilitate the simultaneous renewal of schooling and the education of educators (Clark, 1999). A blueprint for the simultaneous renewal of schools and the education of educators was put forth in Goodlad’s, Teachers for Our Nation’s Schools (1990) and Educational Renewal: Better Teachers, Better Schools (1994). Educational Renewal provided additional explanations of some of the concepts introduced in the previous section focusing on key relationships that needed to be built among teacher educators, arts and science faculty, and school based educators (Clark, 1999).
The National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) was committed to the redesign of professional development schools in order to achieve the goal of simultaneous renewal. Goodlad (1994) referred to professional development schools as “partner schools.” To become a partner school, universities and schools had to be willing to critically examine a school’s structure and performance and address the four goals of partnerships: (1) educate children and youth, (2) prepare educators, (3) provide professional development, and (4) conduct inquiry. Partner schools in the NNER shared a commitment to the nineteen postulates described by Goodlad (1984) in *Teachers for Our Schools*. In addition to the nineteen postulates, NNER contexts shared common values that influenced the ways in which they approached the overall mission of simultaneous renewal of schools and the education of educators (Clark, 1999).

**NCATE Standards**

In 1995, The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) championed the PDS movement by developing National PDS Standards and Developmental Guidelines and thereby sustaining the original vision of school/university partnerships (Neapolitan & Tunks, 2006). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education is a coalition comprised of more than thirty education organizations that are focused on teacher education. It is the only national professional organization to grant accreditation to teacher preparation institutions (Levine, 1998). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2005) described professional development schools as “standards bearing institutions” that:

have a unique role in the preparation and development of professionals and in school reform. They are dedicated to the support of good teaching
and learning and are committed to implementing standards for professionals, curriculum content standards, and institutional standards for schools and universities. (p. 5)

NCATE’s interest in professional development schools is highly significant because it “provides credibility and quality assurance to the PDS concept” (Balach, 2006, p. 44). NCATE worked with hundreds of practitioners and teacher educators to design and pilot standards for professional development schools. The draft standards were developed based on extensive input from experts in the field (Levine, as cited in Teitel, 2003). The draft standards were piloted for three years by twenty diverse partnerships that were in various stages of development. The goal of NCATE was to create standards that would strengthen and support professional development schools and to access their growth and development. The standards were field tested by single school and multiple school partnerships, and were applicable to these different configurations (NCATE, 2001). To facilitate this process, developmental guidelines accompanied the standards. The guidelines provided a kind of “scaffolding” for PDS development. The standards were published with descriptions of their components and rubrics that could be applied to determine whether a PDS community met the standards at a “beginning,” “developing,” “at standard,” or “leading level.” According to the NCATE standards (2001), there are five standards that address the characteristics of professional development schools: (1) Learning Community; (2) Accountability and Quality Assurance; (3) Collaboration; (4) Diversity and Equity; and (5) Structures, Resources, and Roles. These specific characteristics distinguish PDS programs from previous partnerships in both function and structure. Although, the Holmes Group and other organizations embraced the PDS
characteristics, they had not taken a position advocating one pedagogical model over another for the PDS design (Murray, 1996).

The standards were developed for particular reasons. First, NCATE recognizes that professional development schools have the “potential power to support continuous improvement in both schools and universities” (NCATE, 2001, p. 2). However, NCATE claims that although the growth and development of school/university partnerships had increased over the years, there were still some concerns because many partnerships were “in name only.” Consequently, the PDS standards were intended to bring “rigor” to the concept of professional development schools so its potential would not be diminished. Second, the standards were to support PDS partnerships as they developed and to help develop leadership within the partnership itself. Thirdly, the standards and guidelines were created to provide feedback to the partners about their work. Fourth, national, state, and local levels could use the standards to support PDS partnerships. Finally, the standards provide an important framework for conducting valuable research to address the critical and extensive work of a PDS partnership (NCATE, 2001).

Benson and Larsen (1999) emphasize that the Professional Development Standards are concrete guidelines that have an essential place in the landscape of school reform. Levine (2002) maintains that professional development schools are partnerships created by K-12 schools, and teacher preparation programs intent on sharing a vision and a responsibility for the preparation of prospective teachers, experienced teachers, and an overall commitment for improving practice with the over-arching goal of increasing student learning. The combination of both these entities holds potential for enhancing learning not only for prospective teachers but also all the students they may serve.
NAPDS Nine Essentials

In the eight years since the publication of the NCATE standards, the term professional development school has come to be used by some to describe any school/university partnership engaged in preparing new teachers. The term Professional Development School became a “catch all” for many partnerships and therefore, began to lose its authenticity as schools and universities climbed on the bandwagon. Since PDSs have been recognized in recent years as being “the most effective models for furthering educational goals,” it has become vital to distinguish a genuine PDS from any other school/university partnership (www.napds.org).

In her 2006 report Educating School Teachers, Levine cited PDSs as “a superb laboratory for education schools to experiment with the initiatives designed to improve student achievement” (p. 105). Additionally, Levine claims that a PDS can “offer the strongest bridge between teacher education and classroom outcomes, academics and clinical education, theory and practice, and schools and colleges” (p. 105). In response to Levine, the president of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) states that PDSs are “emerging as particularly effective, evidence based school/university partnership models in many sites across the nation, providing academic content and pedagogical instruction that is well integrated with extensive, closely supervised, hands-on in-school clinical experience” (Robinson, 2007, p. 2).

Consequently, The National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) provided a specific set of essentials so educators would know whether they were working in “authentic” PDS partnerships. In 2007, the NAPDS Executive Council and twenty-two PDS educators met for a two-day summit on Professional Development
Schools entitled “En Route to a Common Understanding.” The summit produced *The Nine Essentials*, a document that describes the elements necessary to ensure a PDS partnership. Without these nine essentials, a school/district college/university partnership, no matter how effective, would not be a genuine PDS.

The professional development school model has been painted as innovative, comprehensive, and ambitious. The literature reveals how professional development schools might support school restructuring or renewal through organizational and role changes. Professional development schools are organizations that cannot be established by either universities or public schools single-handedly. Each partner develops and depends on collaboration for their existence and each brings a critical component to the relationship. Teitel (2005) describes the creation of the professional development school as “innovative types of school/university partnerships designed to bring about the simultaneous renewal of schools and teacher education programs—restructuring schools for improved student learning and revitalizing the preparation and professional development of experienced teachers at the same time” (p. 6).

**Demonstrated Impact of Professional Development Schools**

As noted above, the original intent of this review was to document the impact of professional development schools on the function of professional development within schools as organizations. However, no studies could be located that examined that question. Thus, this section of the chapter reviews the literature to date that has examined the impact of professional development schools on the individual school personnel, i.e. teachers and principals, who have participated in PDS work.
Impact of Professional Development Schools on In-Service Teachers

Professional development for in-service teachers in PDS settings has painted a different picture in the literature than has been offered in the past. These professional activities have taken on different forms than have been observed in more conventional staff development. In a PDS context, the teachers themselves are involved in the design and implementation of professional development activities. The activities are much more connected to local needs and priorities and are more likely to be identified by school personnel (Wiseman & Cooner, 1996 as cited in Abdal-Haqq, 1998) as well as “district or state directives” (Houston et al., 1996). According to Crow et al. (1996), as cited in Abdal-Haqq (1998), professional development in PDS settings is “intended to increase the capacity of teachers to actively participate in the change processes associated with school and teacher education renewal” (p.21).

Early attempts to document the impact of professional development schools centered on teacher outcomes. The abundance of research on teachers in professional development schools has been through attitude surveys, interviews, personal narratives, reviews of reflective journals, and a number of case studies (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). Much of the literature indicates that significant numbers of in-service teachers benefit from their involvement with professional development school programs. Some of these benefits include taking more instructional risks, opportunities to conduct school-based research, and engagement in non-traditional roles (Collinson et al., 1995; Houston Consortium, 1996; Trachtman, 1996).

It has been reported by teachers that they have experienced “greater satisfaction, improved morale, and empowerment,” as a result of working in professional development
schools (Jett-Simpson, Pugach & Whipp, 1992). Trachtman (1996) conducted a study of 28 PDS partnerships that documented several outcomes for in-service teachers. These outcomes included changes in classroom practice, confidence in their own knowledge, and determining their own professional development needs. Trachtman adds, “that it appears as though teachers’ growth comes from and through teachers’ practice; learning takes place in the context of thinking and acting as a teacher” (p. 24).

Over the last several years, reviews of the literature on outcomes for experienced teachers focused on teacher leadership and the challenges of assuming new roles and responsibilities within this new hybrid PDS organization. As Teitel writes:

> the inter-organizational aspects of PDS partnerships means teachers need to serve as liaisons and ‘boundary spanners’ working to bridge gaps between the world of schools and colleges…leadership in PDSs is more broadly inclusive and presumed for many teachers. At work is nothing less than a redefinition of what a professional teacher does…one that calls for a substantial role outside of the classroom. (p. 13)

Another aspect of the impact on experienced teachers as a result of participation in professional development schools is the enhancement of new or expanded roles in teacher leadership. Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster & Cobb (1995), examined the potential for utilizing these new forms of teacher leadership by reviewing case studies of seven PDSs that were the more seasoned of these new institutions. In their analysis of teacher leadership in professional development schools, they made three major claims:

1. teacher leadership is inextricably connected to teacher learning; 2. teacher leadership can be embedded in tasks and roles that do not create artificial, imposed, formal hierarchies and positions…and that such approaches may lead to greater profession-wide leadership as the ‘normal’ role of teacher is expanded; 3. the stimulation of such leadership and learning is likely to improve the capacity of schools to respond to the needs of students. (p. 87)
Teacher leadership looks very different in professional development schools than it does in traditional structures, “that slot individuals into different limited functions and that place them in super-ordinate and subordinate relation to one another” (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995, p. 93). The leadership that emerges in highly developed PDSs is more like Sergiovanni’s (1987) concept of cultural leadership…the power to accomplish as opposed to power over people or events and responsibilities dependent on school purposes and needs. In professional development schools, leadership emerges in “organic ways” (Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster & Cobb, 1995). These “organic ways” resemble Howey’s (1988) idea of “career lattices rather than career ladders—a more dynamic interchange of roles and responsibilities dependent on school purposes and needs” (p. 29).

Engaging in teacher inquiry, which is a core activity in many professional development schools, also impacts teachers’ role conceptions. Participants in both formal and informal action research plays a crucial role in helping PDS mentors to see themselves as both knowledge generators and knowledge consumers (Francis, 2004). According to Francis, teachers who see themselves as knowledge generators are in a powerful position to address the theory-practice dichotomy that professional development schools were intended to bridge. In essence, combining two vital activities—mentoring interns and participating in teacher inquiry—creates a synergistic positive effect on the master teacher’s sense of professionalism (Giles, Wilson & Elias, 2009).

Snow-Gerono, Dana and Nolan (2003), in their study of novice teacher leadership, conceive of leadership as “teachers’ taking initiative within their classrooms and schools to continuously reflect on practice, question the status quo, gain respect of
their colleagues, and lead and share in collaborative efforts towards curriculum, instruction, and assessment which ultimately benefit pre-K-12 students” (p. 59). The Holmes Group advocated the transformation of the traditional support role of teachers in the preparation of pre-service education. Classroom teachers as teacher educators help to bridge the disconnect between instruction at the university and the genuine problems confronting students and teachers in schools. Teachers and university faculty who plan collaboratively to develop and teach pre-service curriculum, and supervise novice teachers create a community of shared purpose and method (Holmes Group, 1990, as cited in Valli, Cooper & Frankes, 1997).

While evidence of new and different roles of teacher leadership are thriving in the PDS literature, there appears to be a lack of evidence as to those teachers who are in professional development schools but are not engaged in PDS initiatives and activities. Therefore, Valli et al. (1997)—and this researcher—question whether “professional development opportunities within PDSs are reaching those teachers who would most benefit from participation” (p. 271). It is important to note, that in theory everyone in a PDS is a learner and that professional development in a PDS applies not only to teachers but also to administrators at both partnering organizations. This study will only address public school administrators.

**Impact of Professional Development Schools on School Principals**

Teitel (2003) maintains that administrators are usually left out or play minimal roles in the level of engagement of professional development schools. He argues that even when administrators are “more deeply involved, they are often seen as supporters or
leaders, but not necessarily as individuals who are learning and growing as a result of their involvement” (p. 131). Teitel cautions that when starting new professional development schools, it is vital to bring professional development policy into alignment. Specifically, “schools, school districts, and universities with PDSs need to tap into professional development talent, energy, and planning capacity of PDSs and those participants in the PDS to figure out how to shape the larger professional development (PD) agenda” (pp. 131-132). Additionally, Teitel (2003) proposes that this imbalance of professional development suggests the likelihood that there are differing perceptions of the value of continuing professional development for all participants in the PDS.

The research on the impact of professional development schools on school principals is limited compared to that of K-12 teacher impact or for that matter university faculty. Nolan, Grove, Leftwich, Parks & Peters (2011) maintain that the literature on PDSs impact on school principals, centers largely on two questions. The first question entertains the impact of principals engaged in PDS and the effect on the school as an organization. The second question considers the impact of PDS on the individual principal. Nolan et al. (2011) report that the literature suggests, “principals do vary in levels of engagement depending largely on whether they view the professional development school partnership as central or peripheral to the school’s mission” (p.392).

Trachtman and Levine (1997) reviewed and analyzed data from a National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) survey of PDS administrators and suggested several metaphors for the different types of leadership that can occur in PDSs: “the parent, the cheerleader, the ostrich, the storyteller, the gardener, the juggler, and the jazz player” (p. 85). Trachtman and Levine claim, the last four metaphors
embody the roles that support professional development school-work, while shifting administrators beyond their more traditional roles. In completing their analysis, Trachtman and Levine recommend administrators developing leaders’ characteristics consistent with the needs of PDS that redefine roles and opportunities for leadership creating an organizational culture that enhances and supports professional development schools.

When principals embrace PDS partnerships and see viable connections between PDS goals and their vision for the school, this connection permits PDS work to become a part of rather than apart from the mission of the school (Tilford, 2007). In sharing the lessons from his study, Tilford explains that the principal in one study (Ambrose et al., 1999) “touted the benefit of ready access to a host of experts” as a result of being connected to a university or other professional development schools (p. 6).

One of a principal’s major responsibilities related to PDS work is establishing and maintaining a supportive school culture as well as all the internal and external relationships connected to the school and the partnership. In their study of PDS leadership, Trachtman and Levine (1997) state: “A PDS needs more than the principal’s blessing. It is not merely an ‘add on’ program, but represents a change in the school culture and demands organizational and structural changes” (p. 86). Their findings highlight the significance of the role the school principal plays in promoting and extending PDS work.
Summary

Professional development schools have been envisioned as a significant part of the educational reform movement for the last two decades. They have the potential to embrace and promote the professional growth and development of prospective teachers, encourage and support inquiry and research into educational practice, and induct new professionals into the teaching profession (Holmes Group, 1990). As indicated in this review, professional development schools appear to provide the vehicle for ongoing and embedded opportunities for professional development and embrace the characteristics of high-quality professional development at all levels for all educators.

Although the literature on how professional development schools benefit prospective and experienced teachers is fairly abundant, the PDS impact on school principals and other administrators is limited in scope. Despite the literature that examines the impact on particular groups of individuals, there appears to be a significant gap in the literature on the impact of PDSs on professional development as a school or school district function. The purpose of this study is to begin to address that gap by examining the effects of a PDS partnership on a school district’s professional development program, and to understand the meaning that veteran educators have attached to the function of professional development as a result of the PDS model.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

The focus of this chapter is the methodology that was used to answer the proposed research questions. This chapter begins with a discussion of the type of theoretical framework and the research design, and their appropriateness, for the research questions being addressed. The subsequent section of the chapter discusses the methods employed for data collection and interpretation. The final part of this chapter addresses the issues of reliability (trustworthiness) and validity (credibility) as they pertain to this research study.

The central research question framing this study is: What has been the impact of an elementary Professional Development School partnership on the professional development program of the school district at the elementary level?

In attempting to answer this central research question, the following sub-questions were addressed:

1. As individuals in a variety of roles and contexts perceive it—has the elementary professional development program in the school district changed as a result of the PDS partnership?

2. If changes in professional development have occurred at the elementary level, in what areas have the changes occurred?
   a) Assumptions underlying professional development
   b) Goals for professional development
   c) Delivery of professional development
   d) Outcomes of professional development
3. What factors explain the changes that have occurred?

**Research Design and Theoretical Framework**

This study used a qualitative case study approach. Qualitative research has an interpretive character with the goal of unveiling the meaning that events have for individuals who experience them and the interpretation of those meanings by the researcher (Creswell, 2003). Researchers using a qualitative approach strive to understand a phenomenon as a whole. The holistic approach assumes the whole is understood as a complex system that is greater than the sum of its parts (Patton, 1990).

Merriam (1988) defines a case study as “an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, an institution, or a social group” (p. 9). The phenomenon of interest in this study was the elementary professional development school partnership between the school district and the university and its subsequent impact or lack of impact on the professional development program at the elementary level within the school district. She adds that the case study, in its attempt to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon, seeks holistic description and explanation.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) cite the following advantages of utilizing a case study for the naturalistic researcher:

(a) it is better suited for emic inquiry (reconstruction of the participant’s constructions); (b) it builds on the reader’s tacit knowledge by presenting holistic, lifelike descriptions that permit the reader to experience the context vicariously; (c) it allows for the demonstration of the interplay between the researcher and the participants; (d) it provides the reader an opportunity to probe for trustworthiness; (e) it provides ‘thick description’ requisite for judgments of transferability between the sending and receiving contexts; (f) it provides a grounded assessment
of context by communicating contextual information that is grounded in the setting being studied. (p. 359-360)

As a research design, the case study offers richness and depth to the information being collected. Case studies can identify how a complex set of circumstances come together to produce a particular manifestation (Yin, 1994). In this study, a case study approach provides the reader with information regarding the impact of an ongoing elementary professional development partnership on the elementary professional development program of the district, using the experiences and perspectives from participants who played a variety of roles within the school district and the partnership. This approach permitted the researcher to capture data that emerged from the participants. As Merriam (1988) explains, “A case study offers insights and illuminates meaning that expands its readers’ experiences. These insights can be construed as tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence, case study plays an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base” (p. 32).

The case study also embraced a phenomenological perspective or stance to guide the conduct of the study. Phenomenology emanates from the discipline of philosophy. It seeks to focus on exploring how human beings “make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). The researcher captures and describes how people experience some phenomena through their senses. The collection of data in phenomenology requires the use of in-depth interviews directly with the participants that experience the phenomenon being investigated. They have “lived experience” as opposed to secondhand experience (p. 104).
This study is not a phenomenology per se; however, a phenomenological framework guided the collection of and interpretation of the data. The intent was to capture participant experiences and perceptions that can be useful in illuminating the impact or lack of impact of the PDS partnership on the elementary professional development program within the school district.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to illuminate the meanings and perceptions of personnel in various roles and their experiences with elementary professional development practices before PDS and subsequently.

The Context

School District

The State College School District is situated in the center of Pennsylvania, also home of Penn State University, and draws its students from a 150 square mile attendance area encompassing the Borough of State College and surrounding townships, totaling an enrollment of approximately 7,200 students. The district has ten elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school, housed in two buildings. It employs a faculty and staff of approximately 1,400. In addition, students in grades 5 through 12 may select to enroll in the Delta Program, an educational option that serves about 150 students. The Delta learning experience includes classroom activities in the school district and Penn State University, seminars, independent studies, extended field trips, career internships, and community service projects (www.scasd.org).
The Partnership

In line with the national movements in education, Penn State University and the State College Area School District worked together to create an elementary Professional Development School (PDS). The inception of the elementary Professional Development School in the 1998-99 school year was the result of a long-term effort to build a trusting partnership between the State College Area School District and the Penn State College of Education.

The original partnership was initiated in 1994 when both partners received funding through a series of Goals 2000 grants offered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. This grant and additional funds provided by the school district and university supported the conception of a collaborative partnership and the creation of Professional Development Schools. During the first year of the partnership, the grant funds were used to establish a steering committee and a Professional Development School framework. In 1995, study groups began to implement different components of the PDS concept by collaborating on numerous smaller projects such as a summer reading program where faculty and university students worked on-site with teachers to provide elementary school students with a summer reading tutorial (www.ed.psu.edu/pds).

As the partnership developed into the third year, it became evident that two areas needed particular attention—the deliberate effort to reform the teacher education program, and emphasis on making teacher inquiry a central component of the schools. The plan for a full school year, inquiry-oriented internship for prospective teachers with mentor teachers earning graduate credits for their work with interns came together when the local leadership attended the initial Holmes Partnership meeting. Therefore, the fourth
year of this new partnership was marked by a series of meetings between Penn State faculty and teachers at two elementary schools (Ferguson and Matternville). Together, these district teachers and university staff members collaboratively created a vision for this Professional Development Partnership. The vision conceptualized three main goals for the program, recognized by the partners as the “Three E’s”:

1. **Enhance the educational experiences of all children**
2. **Ensure high quality induction of new teachers into our profession,** and
3. **Engage in furthering our own professional growth as teachers and teacher educators** (www.ed.psu.edu/pds).

A fourth goal—Educating the next generation of teacher educators—was added to the original three goals in 2007. In addition to the Three E’s, the partnership’s efforts are steered by the Teacher Education Conceptual Framework of Penn State’s College of Education. The framework denotes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of novice teachers who graduate from this program. This framework is centered on the core theme of Educators as Life-Long Learners, which emphasizes an inquiry focus for beginning teachers that permits them to be critically reflective about their work and the multidimensional contexts in which their work takes place. As a result of this yearlong internship, interns and their mentors develop the capacity to engage in teacher inquiry and to conduct their inquiry projects. The results of these projects are presented at an Annual Teacher Inquiry Conference held in the spring. The interns and mentors’ presentations of their inquiries at this conference demonstrate their ability to critically reflect on and transform important attributes of the teaching and learning process.
In 2002, the Professional Development School was named the Distinguished Teacher Education Program from the Association of Teacher Educators, an award given to recognize programs that exemplify collaboration between colleges and school districts and to stimulate innovation. Then in 2004, the PDS won another prominent award, the Nancy Zimpher Outstanding School-University Partnership Award, presented by the Holmes Partnership Group. Most recently, the Penn State/State College PDS was named the recipient of the Exemplary Professional Development School Achievement Award, given by the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS). The NAPDS is recognized as the premier national organization focused on professional development school initiatives. This was the third time in eight years that the Professional Development School (PDS) collaborative between Penn State’s College of Education and the State College School District had received a major national award (www.ed.psu.edu/pds).

The Collaborative began as a pilot program in 1998-99, with only 14 interns in two elementary schools. In the 1999-2000 school year, the partnership expanded to four elementary schools with 27 undergraduate interns. Over the next several years, the PDS collaborative expanded slowly until 2004, when it encompassed 62 interns who were placed in all ten elementary schools. In 2007-08, two middle schools were added to the partnership after a year of planning for expansion in 2006-07 (www.seasd.org).

This study explored how a school district’s twelve-year partnership with a local university has impacted its professional development practice. By reviewing the historical and current context of the district’s professional development program prior to and during the PDS partnership, the researcher was searching for any changes or
transformations in the assumptions, direction, or delivery of professional development that may be related to or a result of the ongoing PDS partnership.

One of the aspects of the context that made it ideal for a study that focused on the impact of the partnership on the function of professional development is the unique way in which this partnership conceptualizes the notion of a professional development school. In most PDS sites across the country, partnerships define “professional development school” as pertaining to one individual school. Thus although there may be an umbrella structure that connects PDS schools in loosely coupled ways, typically if a university works with eight elementary schools within a district, the university would claim that it has eight professional development schools. However, in the context for this study, this was not the case. This partnership defined the professional development school as one community geographically dispersed across the eight elementary and two middle schools. Thus, it is one district-wide PDS. This definition makes it an ideal context for studying the impact on district functions.

**Participant Selection**

Merriam (1998) contends a good respondent is one who not only understands the culture but also what is happening within it. Central to qualitative research is purposeful sampling. According to Erlandson et al. (1993), “purposeful sampling through human instrumentation increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researcher’s ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual conditions and cultural norms” (p. 82). Patton (1990) explains:
The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. (p. 169)

In order to achieve a holistic picture of an educational program, this study examined the perceptions of a wide array of people. In an effort to understand the influence of the PDS on the district’s elementary schools as a whole, the researcher interviewed faculty and administrators, and curriculum coordinators with varying perspectives and roles. The participants were classified into three separate categories. The first category was comprised of district level personnel who are responsible for professional development at the elementary level. Therefore, the first category of interviews included central office administrators, curriculum coordinators for mathematics and language arts, a former superintendent, who had been in the school district from the inception of PDS, and a building principal who chaired the Act 48 professional development committee for the school district. The next category of school personnel interviewed included the building principals at the elementary and middle school level. The third and last category of interviewees was comprised of teachers from several buildings within the district.

Teacher participants were selected using a two-step process. Initially, a survey concerning professional development as well as personal involvement in the PDS partnership over the ten-year period was sent to all elementary teachers in the district (a copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B). Forty-six teachers from 10 buildings responded to the survey. Although originally, the intent of the research plan was to select 10 matched pairs of teachers from the same buildings with at least ten years of experience in the district, the responses to the survey did not allow for this structure. Instead, twelve teachers from six buildings were selected purposively for in-depth interviewing based on
their level of involvement in PDS partnership activities. Six of the teachers demonstrated high involvement in the PDS partnership activities while six showed low involvement in PDS activities. The number of years of experience of the teacher interviewees ranged from 10-39.

The highly involved teacher participants participated regularly in professional development opportunities through the PDS such as mentoring an intern, teaching methods courses with university faculty, attending PDS community retreats, participating in graduate courses on inquiry and mentoring, attending workshops, presenting at conferences, and in one case, serving as a professional development associate (PDA). Only one of the low involvement participants had ever served as a mentor and not on a regular basis, while another offered his classroom as a partner classroom. The low involvement group participants took part in very few, if any, of the other activities supported by the PDS. More detailed information concerning the characteristics of the teacher participants can be found in Chapter 6.

Because the three categories of participants represented a variety of roles as well as varying levels of involvement, the researcher believed there would be significant variation in their perspectives of the impact of the PDS partnership on professional development.

Data Collection

Two data collection strategies were used in this study. The primary data collection strategy was interviewing. The secondary data collection strategy was document analysis. Through interviews, the researcher was able to attain in-depth information regarding each
participant’s perception of the impact of a PDS on that individual’s professional growth and development as well as the effects on the school or district as perceived by the three groups of participants. Interviews take a variety of forms, including those that are open-ended to those that are very focused or pre-determined (Erlandson et al., 1993). In this study, the researcher employed the semi-structured interview, which is loosely based upon Seidman (1998). The proposed interview protocol is contained in Appendix C. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. In addition, Yin (1984) states:

Most commonly case study interviews are of an [open-ended] nature in which an investigator can ask key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the responder’s opinions about events. In some situations, the investigator may even ask the responder to propose his or her own insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry. (p. 83)

A decision was made at the beginning of the data collection process that impacted the substance of the interview protocols. The interview protocols do not contain any questions that ask explicitly about the impact of the PDS on professional development in the district. This may seem like an odd decision to some readers and requires some explanation. Given the phenomenological nature of the study in which the authentic experiences and perceptions of the participants are of paramount importance, asking questions directly about the PDS impact may have suggested responses that surfaced only as a result of being asked the question. This danger seemed particularly noteworthy in this context because all of the participants knew the researcher personally or by reputation prior to the study and were aware that she had been working in the PDS for a number of years and was a strong PDS proponent. Consequently, it probably would have seemed to them that the socially acceptable responses to questions about the PDS impact and responses that would have been most pleasing to the researcher would be responses
that affirmed the positive impact of the PDS. Thus, instead of asking explicitly about the PDS, the decision was made to focus the questions on professional development experiences in general and to see whether the participants discussed the impact of the PDS without prompting.

This interview strategy has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, when participants mentioned the impact of the PDS without prompting, one can assume that the PDS did indeed have an important impact as the participants saw it. On the other hand, when participants failed to mention the impact of the PDS, one cannot automatically assume that the PDS had no impact. It could be that the participants either forgot to mention it or just chose not to. Those who are more familiar with the quantitative paradigm might see an analogy here to attempts to minimize the risk of Type I errors (false positives). The goal was to exert the least amount of influence from the researcher in obtaining authentic responses. It seemed like an appropriate choice given the researcher’s connection to the PDS and the phenomenological nature of the study.

An alternative strategy that could have been used would have been to not ask explicit questions about the impact of the PDS but to ask probing questions later in the interview that asked this question directly. Following the strategy may have lead to additional insights about the impact of the PDS, but would also have necessitated an analysis strategy of some sort in which the researcher discussed responses about PDS impact that were unsolicited as opposed to those that were directly solicited.
Procedures

Semi-structured interviews occurred during the spring of 2011. A semi-structured interview involves “certain steps” as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These steps included:

1. ‘Preparing for the interview’ necessitates ‘practicing’ with a stand-in to help decide on an appropriate sequence of questions, and to help the interviewer decide upon his/her role in this process.
2. ‘Initial Moves’ is the asking of general questions to give the respondent time to adjust to the interviewer and to ‘organize his/her head’ for the interview questions.
3. ‘Pacing the Interview and Keeping it Productive’ entails creating a rhythm of questioning and encouraging responses that create ‘talk turns’ for the respondent as well as calling for reactions or ‘more’ to further illustrate a point.
4. ‘Terminating the Interview and Gaining Closure’ occurs when the interview becomes redundant, and/or the participants are both fatigued. At this point, the interviewer should engage in a ‘member check’ with the participant to validate the constructions of the interviewer. Closure requires that the interviewer thank the participant and provide additional opportunities for contact. (p. 271)

The spontaneity of the interview and the flexibility permitted by the semi-structured format enabled the interviewer to interpret as she navigated through the interview to fill in the gaps or omissions that can increase the depth and detail of the data (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The strength of the interview as a technique for data collection is the ability to interact.

As described previously, there were three main categories of participants to be interviewed—district wide personnel, building principals, and teachers. The researcher began the interview process with district wide administrators and curriculum coordinators, since those participants have the system-wide perspective when it comes to professional development. Second, I interviewed building principals as they represent the
individual school, and finally the third category—teachers. The order signifies moving from the larger unit (the school district) to the single unit (the individual teacher).

The purpose of an in-depth interview is to understand the experience of other people and the meaning that they make of that experience (Seidman, 1991). An interview is a useful way to obtain large amounts of data quickly, but the pertinence of the information can only be obtained if the researcher has constructed meaningful, thought-provoking questions (Erlander et al., 1993; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The in-depth interview gave the researcher the opportunity to travel back and forth in time. The same interview questions were asked of each participant group. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained the consent form to the participant and asked the participant to sign it (A copy of the approved IRB process is contained in Appendix A).

In addition, the researcher explained to each participant that although pseudonyms would be used, it is not possible to promise complete confidentiality. Any individual who reads the research report and who is an insider in the district or the partnering university will be able to figure out who the participant is.

**Document Analysis**

Documents constituted another form of evidence in this study. The term *document* refers to the wide range of written and symbolic records, including historical or journalistic accounts, photographs, memos, brochures, meeting agendas, notes and speeches from teachers, administrators and others (Erlandson et al., 1993). Document analysis is a flexible but also a systematic process that permits one’s hunches and tentative hypotheses to serve as guides in the discovery of valuable data (Merriam, 1988).
The only documents that I was able to attain that pertained to professional development were district strategic plans from the years 1995 to 2013. Some of the central office personnel and a few principals mentioned these documents as being the “blueprint” or “catalyst” for the professional development goals for the school district. However, the PDS partnership was never mentioned by any participant as being a part of the strategic plans.

Data Analysis

The interpretation of qualitative data is an ongoing process as opposed to a one-time event. A qualitative study involves interaction between data collection and data analysis; it is one of the major features that differentiates it from non-interpretive research, and cannot be overemphasized. Data analysis is the researcher’s process of systematically searching and arranging interview transcripts, memos, and other sources to increase one’s understandings of those data and to portray the discoveries to others (Bogdan & Biklen 1992). Strauss and Corbin (1990) contend that analysis of the data represents operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized and put back together in new ways.

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), the goal of data analysis is “to come up with reasonable conclusions and generalizations based on a preponderance of the data” (as cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 139). The amount of interpretation is determined by the purpose of the study as well as the end product desired. As suggested by Goetz and LeCompte (1984), the researcher began the analysis by reviewing the research proposal. They add, the research proposal reminds the researcher of the “audiences for whom the
study originally was intended” (p. 190). The data in this study include my reflexive writings and verbatim transcripts.

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a wealth of collected data (Marshall & Rossmann, 1999). It is a search for general statements about relationships, and patterns among categories of data. Data analysis is an on-going process of continuing reflection while using open-ended data (Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

In the first phase of the analysis, the researcher listened to the recordings of each interview at least twice. The participants’ voice inflections and tones helped to capture the meanings of the words and statements used by the participants to describe their perceptions as it pertained to professional development. Next, the researcher read and reread the verbatim transcripts numerous times. Electronic folders and manual folders were used to store each participant’s data as well as whole groups (central office, principals, and teachers), which helped to manage the data and provide a means to find, sort, and compare information. In addition, data reduction charts were developed as working documents during this process for the analysis of data when potential themes had been identified. The data reduction charts created for themes and categories helped to solidify the findings and clarify where the data fit into the findings. One example of a data reduction chart, the one for the role of the teacher, is included as Appendix D. During these readings, the researcher made notes, observations, and queries of the data. Merriam (1988) points out that this is the stage the researcher is “virtually holding a conversation with the data” (p. 131). The next step of the analysis is to unitize the data, labeled “open coding” by Strauss and Corbin (1998).
Glesne (2006) emphasizes that “coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data that are applicable to your research purpose. By putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps, you create and organizational framework” (p.152). Once specific themes and categories were determined, the information obtained from each of the interviews was merged into one document, which contained the research questions with all supporting themes, phrases, and quotes made by each participant group. As I merged concepts from each interview, concepts were merged into categories, some were placed under sub-headings and others were excluded.

The basic cut/paste technique was implemented to determine which parts or segments of the transcript were critical to the research questions. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), this type of content analysis “determines which segments of the transcripts are important, develops a categorization system for the topics discussed by the group, selects representative statements for the topics from the transcript, and develops an interpretation of what it all means” (p. 105).

A three level process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding was employed as a strategy to identify specific themes and categories that emerged from collected date (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding was the first level of analysis for this study. With every interview, every word, sentence of the transcript from recorded interviews were read and reread numerous times—with the aim of determining the overall meaning of the data. During this process, words and phrases that emerged as patterns or themes were listed on a computer document. With the next level of axial coding, the data was pieced together in new ways after open coding to allow for linkages
and connections between categories and making comparisons. The process of axial coding specifically involved generating categories and examining any correlations in individual interviews. A constant-comparative analysis was used to determine similarities and differences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Finally, once the preliminary coding process was completed, the data was reviewed for selective coding. In this stage, all categories were merged around core or central categories. This process permitted the researcher to provide descriptive details with major categories that emerged during analysis of the data. Through this systematic process of data analysis, categories, patterns, and relationships became transparent.

Patton (2002) identified triangulation of sources as a feature of credibility. Patton (2002) defines the triangulation of sources as “checking out the consistency of different data sources within the same method” (p. 536). In terms of analyzing and reporting perceptions—each group was reported separately. First were central office personnel, second were building principals, and last were the teachers—high involvement and low involvement. The final section of the analysis compares perceptions of all three groups to each other in terms of the answers to the research questions.

**Researcher’s Role and Perspective**

In a qualitative study, “the researcher is the instrument,” therefore, it is imperative that the researcher is aware of her beliefs and interpretive lenses and is explicit about how they may influence the study (Patton, 1990). Having been in education for more than three decades may have created some possible biases. Serving as an elementary teacher in a rather small district in Pennsylvania marked the first part of my career. Although the
school district was geographically isolated, professional development was always at the forefront. In addition, a major university was only 25 miles away from the district and many staff members took advantage of this in order to advance their learning and their career. During my tenure in that district, I had numerous leadership opportunities such as representing the school district in an International Collaborative with two Intermediate Units, two colleges, and another school district; chairing a professional development committee; and being a team leader. For a few years, I served on an Advisory Education Board Committee at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania as well as a cooperating teacher for 15 years. These leadership roles allowed me to connect and network with others in the education field, which eventually led to future opportunities outside of the school district.

In 1990, I transitioned from elementary teacher to elementary principal. My long-term goal here was to effect long-term change, and be able to reach more students on a wider scale through school-wide instructional leadership and by providing leadership opportunities for all staff. It is my belief, that if educators are growing and learning, then so are the students they are teaching.

In the last school district where I was employed, I had the dual role of being principal as well as curriculum and staff developer for the school district. Since I have always had the belief that professional growth is the key component to school reform and improvement, I embraced this responsibility with considerable vision and enthusiasm. This opportunity gave me the chance to facilitate a system-wide committee on Differentiated Instruction, and also serve as the facilitator of new teacher induction, and the Act 48 Professional Development Coordinator. The position of curriculum and staff
developer included writing federal grants for Title One, Two, and Five. I was fortunate in that every school district in which I have worked placed significant emphasis on professional development practices.

Currently, I am involved in the Elementary Professional Development School Program with the Penn State University/State College Area School District PDS Partnership. With this partnership, I have been involved as Professional Development Associate (supervisor) for the past few years. As a Professional Development Associate (PDA) and course instructor, I am in schools on a daily basis for an entire school year. I have invested a great deal of time supporting student interns as well as the continued success of the PDS partnership wanting to guarantee that any impact on the program was effective and positive.

My experiences and interests in professional development and teacher education for more than two decades in the public schools are sources of motivation for this study. Having held different positions as a teacher, principal, and staff developer has aided me in viewing schools and school organizations from different perspectives. Being involved in a Professional Development School Partnership over the past couple of years, and utilizing my varied professional experiences has given me a genuine opportunity to see the “big picture” of a comprehensive school/university partnership. However, from my experiences, I know that issues from the study can arise that could lead to possible bias including my positive connection to PDS work particularly in this partnership, as well as my inclination for professional development, teacher leadership, and the change process.

The purpose of this last section is to openly identify the perspective of the researcher embarking on the study. A researcher’s perspective plays a significant role in
designing the study, collecting the data, and analyzing it. According to Patton (1990), “The ideals of absolute objectivity and value-free science are impossible to attain in practice and of questionable desirability in the first place because they ignore the intrinsically social nature and human purposes of research” (p. 55). Therefore, Patton believes that a researcher’s ability to remain impartial with regard to the phenomenon under study is a crucial issue. Instead of trying to manipulate data to reach or get at a particular perspective, the researcher has a commitment to understand the world as it is, to recognize the multiple perspectives as they emerge from the data, and to balance the reporting of the data by including the negative case(s) with the evidence.

When considering my views and perspectives on Professional Development School Partnerships and Professional Development, I believe that a Professional Development School Program can be a vehicle to change, school renewal, and professional development practices within a school or school organization.

In conclusion, I realized that I had to bracket my own views and focus on understanding and portraying the perceptions of the participants in my study during both the data collection and data analysis processes.

**Trustworthiness**

Both quantitative and qualitative research are concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner (Merriam, 1988). Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that the basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is the following: “How can the researcher persuade her audience that the findings of the inquiry are worth taking note of,
worth taking account of? What arguments can be made, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive of this issue?” (p. 290).

In a qualitative study, the researcher avoids controlling the conditions and concentrates on noting the complexity of situational contexts and interrelationships as they occur (Marshall & Rossman 1995). Erlandson et al. (1993) contend that trustworthiness is established in naturalistic inquiry by using techniques that “provide truth value through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through confirmability” (p. 132). Patton (2002) states, “while the credibility in quantitative research depends on instrument construction, in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument” (p. 14). Therefore, the credibility of interpretive inquiry depends on the researcher.

An essential question for any inquiry relates to the degree of confidence in the “truth” that the findings of a particular inquiry have for the subjects with which—and the context within which—the inquiry was carried out (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Erlandson et al. (1993) assert that credibility is “the compatibility of the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the inquiry’s respondents with those that are attributed to them” (p. 30). Patton (2002) explained that credibility in a qualitative study depends on three elements: rigorous methods, credibility of the researcher, and the philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry. To address credibility, the researcher used triangulation of sources. In this study, triangulation of sources was accomplished by conducting interviews with three different groups of participants—central office personnel, principals, and teachers. The use of interviews across groups allowed the researcher to analyze the data looking for consistencies and inconsistencies.
The next criterion of trustworthiness, transferability, refers to how applicable the findings are to another setting or group of people is transferability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that the establishment of transferability in naturalist inquiry is very different from the establishment of external validity in a quantitative study. They write:

…while the conventionalist expects (and is expected) to make relatively precise statements about external validity (expressed, for example, in the form of statistical confidence limits), the naturalist can only set out working hypotheses together with a description of the time and context in which they were found to hold. Whether they hold in some other context, or even in the same context at some other time, is an empirical issue, the resolution of which depends upon the degree of similarity between sending and receiving (or earlier and later) contexts. Thus, the naturalist cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility. (p. 316)

Transferability can only be possible through rich, thick description and then only if the circumstances would enable the reader to consider the possibility of transfer with the conditions provided. This study included contextual information about the school district, the partnership, and the participants, as well as including direct quotes and numerous examples from the interviews. The rich, thick description allows the reader to determine the level of transferability to his or her own context. Maxwell (2005) indicated that to arrive at internal validity, a researcher must help to foster an understanding through thick description of the interpretations, concepts, and analysis of the findings. Additionally, the thick description provides the detail and clarity to the data in the form of analysis and research reflection.

The third strategy to judge trustworthiness is how it assured that the findings be replicated if the study were conducted in the same setting with the same participants. Dependability is the researcher’s attempt to account for changing conditions in the
phenomenon chosen for the study and changes in the design that are created by the increasingly refined understanding of the setting (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Marshall and Rossman (1995) expound:

The difference in terms of quantitative and qualitative research is as follows:

Positivist notions of reliability assume an unchanging universe where inquiry could, quite logically, be replicated. This assumption of an unchanging social world is in direct contrast to the qualitative interpretive assumption that the social world is always being constructed, and the concept of replication is itself problematic. (p.145)

Dependability and confirmability are established through an audit trail. Erlandson et al. (1993) contend that an accurate trail should be left to enable the auditor “to determine if the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are supported by the inquiry” (p. 35). In this study, the steps in the research process have been identified from the selection of participants, the formation of questions, data collection, to data analysis in order to maximize the chance that others could replicate the study. An audit trail leads to dependability and confirmability by permitting an auditor to determine the trustworthiness of the study (Erlanderson et al. 1993). Following the suggestions of Lincoln and Guba (1985), I kept the following materials: audio recordings of interviews; word-for-word transcripts; data reduction and analysis procedures; initial and final categories on computer printouts; ideas for themes and any notes on themes; procedures of data analysis; and a reflexive journal.

Finally, an inquiry is judged on whether its findings are “reflective of the participants and the inquiry itself and not the product of the biases of the researcher” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Erlanderson et al. (1993) also point out that the naturalist researcher does not attempt to “ensure that observations are free from
contamination by the researcher but rather to trust in the “confirmability” of the data themselves” (p. 34).

Creswell claims, “validation of findings occurs throughout the steps in the process of research…validity does not carry the same connotations in qualitative research as it does in quantitative research nor is it a companion of reliability…or generalizability” (p. 195). “Validity, on the other hand, is seen as a strength of qualitative research, but it is used to suggest determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant or the readers of an account” (p. 196).

The maintenance of a reflexive journal of the research process also served as a strategy for demonstrating trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (2002) wrote the following about reflexivity and its importance to the qualitative researcher:

“Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one’s own perspective and voice of those one interviews and to those whom one reports” (p. 65). According to Erlandson et al. (1993), the reflexive journal supports not only the credibility of a study, but also the transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The journal helped me generate further questions or come to a deeper level of understanding as the study was conducted (one example from the reflexive journal is included as Appendix E).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the reflexive journal can be used as way to record information pertaining to self-reflection:

With respect to self, the reflexive journal might be thought of as providing the same kind of data about the human instrument that is often provided by the paper-and-pencil or brass instruments used in conventional studies. With respect to method, the journal provides information about methodological decisions made and the reasons for making them—information also of great import to the auditor. (p. 327)
The reflexive journal becomes the place where the researcher writes her ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about possible emerging patterns. Glesne (2006) tells us that when recording details, strive for accuracy but avoid being judgmental. The journal was used not only to document the research process, but also to help clarify what was happening with the data as the study was being conducted, which increased the probability for presenting valid data from the actual participants’ perspectives (a second example from the reflexive journal is included as Appendix F).

Finally, to further the consistency and reliability of this study, the researcher utilized the strategy of “peer review and debriefing to validate the trustworthiness of the data collected and analyzed. Glesne (2006) recommends, “peer review and debriefing” and “external audit” as a means to extend the opportunity for validating data analysis (p. 167). Glesne (2006) suggests that the researcher ask them to work with portions of the collected data “developing codes, applying your [the researcher’s] codes, or interpreting field notes to check [your] perceptions” (p. 167). I did peer debriefing with my advisor, Dr. James Nolan, we both coded data separately and then discussed what we coded.
Sharing the data with my advisor to determine if he interpreted the data with the same perceptions was another critical component for data analysis. When our codings differed, we met to discuss these differences and come to some mutual understanding of the coding that should be used. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), using peer review/debriefing to review findings increases the credibility of the study.

In summary, I tried to establish trustworthiness through: (a) triangulation, (b) thick description, (c) peer review/debriefing, (d) audit trail, and (e) the use of a reflexive journal.
CHAPTER FOUR

CENTRAL OFFICE PARTICIPANTS

This study was designed to portray and compare the perceptions of three distinct groups: central office personnel, principals, and teachers concerning the impact of the professional development school partnership on professional development as an organizational function with the school district. This chapter depicts the perceptions of the central office personnel who were participants in the study.

The central office participants included a former Superintendent, Paula; a former Assistant to the Superintendent, Carl; a Language Arts Coordinator, Nanette; a Mathematics Coordinator, Maria; and Penelope, the Director of Education. In past years her role had been labeled as Supervisor for Program, Planning, and Evaluation. The perspectives of central office personnel are significant because the viewpoints come from those who are responsible for providing oversight for the professional development needs of all staff, and who at the same time must comply with regulations and mandates such as No Child Left Behind.

Defining Professional Development

The central office participants in this study were first asked to define or describe professional development. This was done to determine what professional development meant to each individual in order to set a foundation for the remainder of the study.

Coding and analysis of the central office responses for defining professional development
resulted in the emergence of three distinctive themes: organization purposes and goals, characteristics of professional development, and connections to role and responsibilities.

Focus on Organization Purposes and Goals

When defining professional development, three of the central office participants focused on the purposes and goals of the district as a key component of professional development in their responses. The Director of Education in particular used the words “purposeful with great intent.” She added,

It’s certainly professional growth. I think when it’s most effective is when it is authentic and connected to practice. I do think that the focus needs to be around the goals of the role, the responsibility, and the goals of the organization, which is on improving student learning. And so I do think there is a goal there—how does professional growth—what I’m developing in my own practice as an adult, what is the relationship between what I’m doing and what I’m learning and the results I can evoke for students.

The Director of Education held a very integral position for professional development in that her responsibilities included the planning and monitoring of curriculum and professional development for the entire district. This was made evident in her very detailed and highly specific vocabulary when giving responses. As the interview progressed, it also became clear that she possessed the “big picture” of the district in terms of professional development and curriculum initiatives. The former Superintendent also mentioned the Director of Education in her interview as someone I should be sure to check with on some things when it comes to curriculum and professional development.

The Language Arts Coordinator believed that the bottom line to professional development was “bringing teachers together with other professionals in the field of some
sort. Learning about current best practices. What we need…what our research currently tells us about what the best practices are in terms of how students learn best.”

The Language Arts Coordinator had been in the district since 1980 and held positions as a Title One reading teacher, a curriculum support teacher, and finally as a Language Arts Coordinator. She has worked with all elementary staff as a group and also with many on a one-to-one basis. Many times she worked with a teacher in the teacher’s classroom for six weeks. The Language Arts Coordinator was supportive of all teachers, implemented numerous initiatives over her tenure, and was held in high regard by faculty and staff.

Much has been written that professional development and school improvement is a process that involves all stakeholders including teachers, school administrators, curriculum and support staff, parents, community, and business leaders. In the state of Pennsylvania, these are the stakeholders that come together to write the district’s strategic plan, which the Assistant to the Superintendent mentioned as being the “blueprint for the district.” He stated that although the strategic plan was the learning guide for the district, “I’m pleased to say that over the decades, we’ve evolved and we’ve had…some very good ways to get this done and without losing track of what’s most important…that’s the learner.”

The Director of Education also discussed how the district tried to connect professional development to the strategic plan while working with past superintendents.

That [the strategic plan] has really been the driving force—the catalyst—within the district. And so it would make sense that professional development, professional growth then, is focused around what those goals, those initiatives are within the strategic plan. That…I tell you is the intent.
All participants except the two curriculum coordinators mentioned developing, implementing and providing professional development centered on professional learning that is aligned with goals and initiatives from the district strategic plan. Being that central office administrators have the responsibility of accessing, analyzing, interpreting and mediating state and federal policies with local policies—these responses are not surprising. The curriculum coordinators saw their role as the people who actually operationalized those goals and initiatives for professional development.

**Characteristics of Professional Development**

In defining professional development, the central office participants also focused on key characteristics of professional development including differentiation and continuous learning.

*Differentiation* was suggested by two of the participants as another important characteristic when defining professional development, though they did not necessarily believe that the district was always able to differentiate effectively. One participant asserted that professional development comes in multiple forms—it can be formal or informal, however, “it always needs to be based on what we currently know about what effective teaching means.” This participant emphasized that professional development should also enhance and extend what teachers are learning in their graduate work as well. In addition, she discussed how the needs of novice teachers are different from those of experienced teachers and how professional development should reflect those stages. An example she gave for providing professional development with new teachers in a formal way was releasing the teachers for a half day and possibly taking a reading approach such
as guided reading, and how they would teach it to kindergarten students, or how they would help students understand the reading process.

The former Superintendent explained that her definition of professional development was probably “broader and more generic, than most people.” However, even though she frames professional development in the very broadest sense, she still believes that “professional development certainly consists of activities and lessons and different ways of learning.”

A few years ago, the district concentrated on how teachers should differentiate instruction for students—one of the coordinator participants revealed that during this initiative of teaching teachers about differentiating instruction she became frustrated and stated, “How well were we differentiating for them [the teachers]?” She pointed out that if she were going to be in the district the following year (she was retiring) differentiating for professional development is what she would be doing not only with teachers but also with principals.

The characteristic of continuous learning focused on the notion that the complexity of teaching and learning in professional development is incompatible with short-term, episodic, one size fits all traditional professional development.

One of the curriculum coordinators noted that when she was a curriculum support teacher, she would work with both new and experienced teachers for long periods of time. The example she provided was the integration of writing workshop into the Language Arts curriculum and how she did a lot of model teaching followed by reflective conversations and follow-up observations. She stated, “Most of this teaching was not through a one-shot deal.”
The Assistant to the Superintendent felt that the district was always one to demonstrate “a continuous improvement process through which the adults in school settings are engaged in educating students, actively engaging them in learning experiences with the idea that it will result in effective learning.”

The participants discussed *continuous learning* in their definitions of professional development centered on active learning, grounded in daily practice, and a sustained focus over a period of time. The Assistant to the Superintendent also felt that professional development must be consistent with constructivism, which holds that learners connect new information to existing knowledge in order to create new knowledge. He summarized it this way: “If you want children to experience active learning in a constructivist sense, it’s sure nice if you have adults who have experienced it. And we found that made a difference rather than just talking the talk.”

*Connections to Role and Responsibilities*

All of the central office participants in this study had long careers in the educational field and have held numerous roles in their tenure. These central office leaders suggested that although a focus on organizational goals is an important component of professional development, professional development for them was also connected to their individual roles and responsibilities. All five participants commented on professional development in two different ways. Sometimes they commented on how professional development affected them personally as a learner; and at other times how they led initiatives, processes, or activities that contributed to the learning of all educators.
The Language Arts Curriculum Coordinator commented on her role as a curriculum support teacher before becoming the coordinator and how the role of curriculum support teacher was “all about professional development”. She did one-on-one professional development for new and experienced teachers, but also planned and facilitated in-service days related to language arts and social studies curriculum units of study.

The Director of Education shared that professional development in her position became more role focused according to what her responsibilities were. “What information, what skills do I need…would I need to carry out that responsibility or directly related to initiatives.” She asked herself, “What do I need to know in order to support or to carry out my responsibilities and my role? And how do I sustain that? But also to help me develop my own learning.”

The Assistant to the Superintendent mentioned his role as elementary principal in a few examples he provided.

When I was in the principal role…of course…it was a supervisory experience but it was also working with faculty and with curriculum support staff to provide the opportunities for teachers to learn new methodology…again throughout effective ways of working with students. But it was always one of being part of a team. I guess I would say, the facilitator in some ways, and occasionally, you know just having to say this is the way we need to do things. But basically, it was a supportive role working collaboratively with colleagues.

For the math curriculum coordinator, math education was a “hot button” but “it was just a topic and not necessarily a long-term goal.” However, when she got into the curriculum office as a curriculum support teacher, she began to do some of the planning and facilitating of professional development sessions. But according to her,
I just played a role in executing what the district had decided or what the principal group had decided. And it wasn’t until probably the last four years as a coordinator that I played more of a planning role and really started looking at professional development as something—with a big picture.

The math coordinator later admitted that when she thought of professional development…her mind went directly to teachers. However, as a coordinator, she went to some retreats for her own professional development and attended monthly meetings.

Paula, the former Superintendent, discussed how she grew in her own professional development as she took on different positions that had “more scope to them and more systemic responsibilities.” She commented that as a guidance counselor, she was focused on her own content and skills. But as she moved to other positions, in particular when she became responsible for:

…the coordinating the professional development across the district and working with principals, curriculum coordinators, and classroom teachers to some extent, and beginning to see K-12, the biggest learning for me in that truly was coordination and what an incredibly complex task that is. It was very difficult to…in working with principals, division leaders or curriculum coordinators, not to see value in what they were doing or what they were proposing. But when you looked at all of it, it was…you know a coat of many colors sometimes. And while that can be very attractive, it isn’t always the best thought out way to put things together. So I began to think of professional development in a broader fashion, but also in a more coherent, coordinated fashion so that all of those parts really did make something greater than the whole.

Overall, the central office personnel felt that their role and responsibilities influenced their vision of professional development and any subsequent changes.
Professional Development and Change

As part of the interview, the central office participants were asked to discuss changes that had occurred in professional development over time in terms of goals and initiatives, delivery and outcomes, and the role of teachers. In response to these questions, the participants mentioned the influence of inquiry and the role of the District/University Partnership.

Goals and Initiatives

Whenever the Assistant to the Superintendent spoke of goals and initiatives of professional development, he was anchored by the district’s written strategic plan. In particular, he stated:

I think it’s the school district as an institution…in some ways…we continue to make progress. But I think we’ve had this strategic plan as our roadmap. We’ve also had interventions at the federal and state levels, which could be blown off course, or you could sort of see how you could make them work, you know to continue to meet the goals of improving student achievement. And I think here again in this district…the strategic planning process was always very inclusive of the community, of the staff, of the administration and everybody involved. Teams of 40-50 people involved in this and by having that kind of active involvement you begin to see the bigger picture. A lot of our initiatives came out of that and are supported by the plan.

In part, the former Superintendent agreed with the Assistant to the Superintendent and contended:

I don’t think that the goals have changed in terms of the broadest goals…you know, enabling practitioners to be more skilled and more effective in what they do, so that student learning can improve. I mean that is kind of the general goal and I don’t think that goal has changed.
However, Paula did point out that in the last few years, the mandates around the kind of professional development that would be approved for certification or continuing credits had changed immensely. She explained further that 10 to 12 years ago, the district had inservice days that offered “mental health topics rather than professional preparation.”

I think with Act 48 and a number of other things…we’ve come around to targeting professional development to practice and the Professional Development School (PDS) is a perfect example of that—where professional development is embedded in your work.

When commenting on goals and initiatives, Maria, the Math Coordinator believed that because of some turmoil in the district over the last year with the elimination of curriculum support teachers, and not replacing the Language Arts Coordinator or the Director of Education, that it was not really clear what the goals and initiatives were. The responsibility of professional development shifted to a new Director of Curriculum and the elementary principals.

The Director of Education shared the same views as the former Superintendent and Assistant to the Superintendent in terms of the district professional development goals and initiatives. Specifically and emphatically she submitted,

What we have tried to do over the years certainly is to connect professional development to the strategic plan…it has been the driving force. And so it would make sense, that professional development, professional growth then…is focused around what those goals, those initiatives are within the strategic plan.

However, she added, “We need to have a clearer picture about what we are trying to accomplish and how our roles and responsibilities fit with that mission and those goals.” One of the continuous concerns for the Director of Education was the fragmentation in professional development as it related to district and building goals as
well as goals of the individual. This sense of fragmentation was conveyed throughout her responses, as she consistently referred to the system as very “complex.”

**Delivery of Professional Development**

The next component of change related to professional development is the *delivery methods*. Although the former Superintendent believed the overall purpose and goals of professional development had not changed, she alleged the *delivery methods* had changed. Specifically, the delivery methods had moved away from the “one size fits all” and there were also more options available. The former Superintendent highlighted the fact that she looked at professional development as an “in-house program and an external program.” The “in-house” program consisted of in-service days designated for professional development, which according to her, many other districts did not have. The “external program” was tuition support with university coursework for teachers. She affirmed:

> The other part of things that we sometimes don’t put into professional development was a very good tuition reimbursement support for teachers in terms of their own professional development with university courses and coursework. So those things were in place—an ‘in-house program’ and an ‘external program’ for professional development at that time.

By and large, the former Superintendent felt that the *delivery methods* had changed dramatically over the last 10 to 12 years and as she confirmed, “for the best.”

Both the Language Arts Curriculum Coordinator and the Math Curriculum Coordinator planned and delivered professional development for the district for many years, however, they both responded to the component of *delivery methods* differently. During the last few years, the Math Coordinator experienced changes in leadership roles
related to professional development, structures, and the planning process due to internal leadership changes at the district level.

The Language Arts Coordinator emphasized that the *delivery methods* had changed dramatically. She further explained,

the way that it has changed is that it is specifically targeted, we (curriculum coordinators) targeted it toward their grade level…so through funding and through some outstanding professional development materials that we have purchased…been able to…really target the teachers in terms of being more specific about strategic teaching.

The Language Arts Coordinator asserted that the delivery was more focused, more deliberate, and consistently done throughout the grades.

In direct contrast, the Math Coordinator commented that the *delivery methods* had not really changed but mentioned that they were going to have to change because of new district leadership changes. She explained that any changes in delivery and follow-up would depend on the school and principal and supported this claim with the following:

Under our old curriculum structure, we (curriculum coordinators) would introduce new programs or new ideas or ways to enhance curriculum in buildings where principals made it a point to make sure they followed up and knew what was going on, then I think methods did change. Practice did change in some of the buildings. I can think of one elementary school where almost all of those teachers taught math conceptually.

The Math Coordinator pointed out that if the principal was immersed in the implementation of a new program or initiative with a united front, then the initiative was embraced more readily. Now that the district leadership had changed with a Director of Curriculum and the principals being in charge of curriculum, there was some confusion as to who would be delivering the professional development and how it would be delivered. In the past professional development was delivered through released time
workshops by the Language Arts and Math Coordinators. Both curriculum coordinators expressed that the professional development structures they had utilized in the past were very effective with teachers and felt the loss of these structures would diminish the delivery of professional development.

**Influence of Inquiry**

When discussing how professional development had changed in the last decade, all five participants mentioned how inquiry influenced professional development in some way. Three of the five participants specifically related the influence of inquiry to the Professional Development School Partnership.

The Director of Education broached the component of inquiry as she described the different types of professional development opportunities offered by the school district including:

- support for graduate school, support through evaluation, looking at different aspects of the practice; sometimes identified by the individual, sometimes by the principal, and sometimes collaboratively. Building goals and initiatives, district goals and initiatives, teacher induction for novice teachers, and then individual teacher’s interest and inquiry. Those are all the different aspects of this complex system we were talking about. And the question is...how do you bring focus and alignment to those different opportunities? How do you support those kind of informal or small group inquiry action research kind of projects in which teachers can choose to participate with others...it goes back to time and attention?

Although, the Director of Education included and embraced inquiry as an essential element or option of professional development, the continuing challenge of aligning options to prevent fragmentation confronted her.

The former Superintendent discussed the practice of inquiry as a “substantial change in terms of the ongoing application of learning.” She highlighted the Spring
Inquiry Conference presented by the Professional Development School Partnership as a way to “effectively share what we have learned across buildings.” She affirmed:

The conference in the spring is incredible…I wish every K-12 teacher could be a part of that. I would leave those mornings [inquiry conference] just so invigorated and so thrilled by what people were doing and just so proud of their investigations and how they went about it and what they did.

Paula also mentioned that not everyone had to have an intern to be a part of the PDS or to be a part of the Inquiry Conference. It was apparent that the former Superintendent supported the practice of inquiry and envisioned it as a viable option for ongoing professional learning.

When discussing changes in professional development, the Math Coordinator connected her view of inquiry to the teaching of science. She commented on how the teaching of science shifted from teaching science units to “inquiry science”, and the “science standards contain a huge piece of inquiry. That (inquiry) came from the PDS. That did not come from the district. And for science, those two things (standards and inquiry) were probably major impacts on where we are right now with science.” The Math Coordinator also highlighted the fact that the science classes offered by one particular science professor from the university partnership had “an impact on where we [the district] were going with science.” It was not surprising that the Math Curriculum Coordinator saw the influence of inquiry through a curriculum lens.

The Language Arts Coordinator conceptualized the influence of inquiry in a much broader context and noted,

I think the whole idea of inquiry was something that was really coming into play in this district in a small and now well understood way when the PDS came into play with us. And I think that is probably one of the most powerful things that had occurred. What is inquiry? What is inquiry on the part of the teacher? What does
that mean? How do we do inquiry with young children? And I really believe that without the PDS program we [the district] would not be where we are. I think Penn State has pushed us…to be a little bit more up to snuff ourselves.

It was pretty transparent that the central office participants articulated the influence of inquiry as having a positive impact on professional development.

**Role of the Teacher**

The *role of the teacher* was discussed by the central office personnel as an element that has changed with the evolving landscape of professional development. According to the Language Arts Coordinator, the *role of the teacher* had changed and she attributed it to a “whole bunch of stuff.” She pointed out that the Professional Development School (PDS) was instrumental in enhancing these change opportunities in a number of ways. One of those avenues of change was working with a novice teacher for a full year. “The responsibility of working with a novice teacher for a full year is a tremendous thing.” However, the Language Arts Coordinator admitted that at the beginning of the PDS partnership, she had concerns about the yearlong experience; but she shared that a very wise administrator reminded her that sometimes it means “coming through the back door with teachers…that some teachers will actually learn through their interns.” Nanette confirmed that after many years of observing these yearlong mentor/intern relationships—“I thought boy…that is pretty powerful.” The next two factors that Nanette attributed to the changing teacher role were courses offered through the PDS and “probably one of the most powerful things that has occurred…is the whole idea of inquiry.”
As noted previously, the former Superintendent was a strong advocate of the practice of inquiry. From her perspective, “practice with inquiry puts the teacher in charge of his or her own growth and development. It links that very directly to what they are doing with students and helping them to accomplish more.” Subsequently, she felt the practice of inquiry was far superior to being observed by an administrator every few years; and that the ongoing practice of inquiry allows the teacher to design her own professional development.

Keeping in line with the role of teachers and teacher leadership, Penelope, the Director of Education pointed out that the PDS partnership has “given many teachers a chance for leadership and leadership responsibilities within the district.” Although, she pointed out, “This district has always tried to do that and has always tried to incorporate teacher voice.” She mentioned that an earlier superintendent,

used to show an inverted pyramid where the students were at the top of the structure; and teachers and every one of us…then would say…how does my role support the important work that our faculty does every day with students?

Penelope felt that the pyramid framed the sense of importance of the role of the teacher and their voice in the decision-making process in the district. She asserted: “That’s been a distinction in this district that I do not think is in every school district. The Professional Development School (PDS) supports and facilitates that level of professionalism among our elementary faculty.” Overall, the Director of Education believed the PDS partnership honored the expertise of teachers and expanded their leadership capabilities beyond the individual classroom.

When describing how the role of the teacher has changed over the last decade, Carl, the Assistant to the Superintendent commented not only on the role of curriculum
support teachers within the district; but also the teachers that were released from their classroom teaching for a few years to become a Professional Development Associate (PDA) with the PDS partnership. He explained:

The more we got into this (the PDS), the more it spread, the more willingness there would be...in addition to our curriculum support people...it would be a support to have that kind of involvement. And the one thing that we recognized right away was...the power of having one of our classroom people rotate out to be a...PDA (Professional Development Associate). They came back a very changed person, because they saw their role and what they were doing...other than being a classroom teacher—working with other adults who were learning. And we found it has been very powerful.

As Carl reflected on his former role as a school principal, he pointed out that astute principals would get these teachers when they returned to the classroom and involve them in anything they could within the building. He noted that:

in some cases if there were district positions like curriculum support teachers that would become available, these people would have an extra leg up going into these roles. But as I think again from a supervisory perspective—I think a principal has to individualize to a degree with the individuals on his or her staff. And it seems to me, that people bring an experience to it...when you are working on improving something or getting teachers to be collaborative with each other. They’ve been there...they have seen both sides of it. But I think the opportunity to go into other roles has made a difference. And I can see that happening.

Lastly, the Assistant to the Superintendent felt the role of thematic unit chairperson also advanced the changing teacher role because as a unit chairperson you appreciate each other’s expertise; and the principal can capitalize on that expertise in his or her building. Carl also cited the fact that those teachers who had experienced the PDA role and dealt with adult learning were more comfortable in being in the role of a unit chairperson.

With the elimination of the curriculum support teachers looming over the head of the math coordinator, Maria viewed the role of teacher as paramount to what she needed to accomplish in terms of curriculum implementation. In order to pick up where the
curriculum support teachers left off, teacher leaders were tapped and recruited for their expertise. More than ever before, fifteen teacher committees were formed with teachers and principals leading the committees. The math coordinator came to the conclusion that there was “more teacher involvement at more of a decision-making level doing the work and that was a positive thing.” From a curriculum perspective, this was an example of how the role of teachers changed.

**Outcomes**

The last area of change associated with professional development that was discussed by these central office personnel focused on the *outcomes*. Outcomes could be conceived as the component that contains evaluative attributes. With this particular component, the participants gave less detailed responses than when describing other components.

According to the former Superintendent,

I have no studies to support this…but I’d like to think there is more satisfaction with it [*outcomes*] because teachers are more engaged in what we are doing. There are more options for them. And they are more closely linked to classroom practice.

While Maria felt that the *outcomes* of professional development were mostly dependent on a united effort from individual buildings. The Assistant to the Superintendent believed that holding different roles helps to see the “big picture” and ultimately that helps to see *outcomes*. 
Out of the five central office participants, three of them associated the outcomes as being enhanced through the PDS partnership. One of them stated: “the PDS makes us [the district] think more globally” while another participant summarized it this way:

There is a sense of importance around being more grounded in the classroom, more authentic and ongoing…certainly through the PDS as well as other initiatives…the appreciation and the importance for that. And there is a sense of wanting to make some other changes within the system to increase that kind of professional growth and decrease the more fragmented silo type of growth.

**Nature of Changes**

The central office perceptions of the nature of changes in conjunction with professional development were mixed. However, the former Superintendent and the Assistant to the Superintendent both expressed that some changes were positive, some negative, and some were inconsequential. Paula, the former Superintendent noted, that changes due to different kinds of programming and Response-to-Intervention were positive changes, whereas the overemphasis on standardized test scores were more negative. She also mentioned, “within our own educational ranks, we sometimes squabble over things that really are inconsequential.” The Assistant to the Superintendent also articulated the positive, negative, and inconsequential aspects of change. He contended:

There have been some interventions at the state and federal level which could blow you off course, but you could sort of see how you could make them work to continue to meet the goals of improving student achievement. And I’d say those are aspects…that have been positive.”

He quickly added the negative side of that—“the negative being that in some ways…I think it forced us (the district) into trying to deal with some issues that did not necessarily have good payoff but you still have to do it.” Finally, Carl asserted, “The changes in a
sense have also been inconsequential in that we [the district] have been able to keep some of these things going and improve them.”

For the Director of Education and the Language Arts Coordinator, the nature of the changes was largely positive. While, the Director of Education accentuated the fact that the “system is highly complex especially when you are talking about multiple structures or aspects of a system and some of which are not in alignment to support what you are trying to accomplish.” In particular, she pointed to the constraints of the school calendar and how it is an obstacle to change.

When commenting on the nature of the changes, the Math Coordinator felt it was hard to categorize the changes as positive or negative. Maria contended:

When you’re thinking about this many teachers—some of them welcomed some of the changes and probably would have thought some were positive. I think for the last couple of years the district has been in a lot of turmoil. I try to be a positive thinking person. I hate to say that people would view them as negative…but you know…negative may be too strong a word but I think we [the district] are certainly in flux and that is discomforing for teachers to wonder about how things are going.

Summary

This chapter examined the perspectives of the central office personnel concerning the impact of the professional development school partnership on professional development as an organizational function with the school district.

When defining professional development, the central office participants stressed the significance of goals and initiatives as designed in a district strategic plan in order to realize the maximum benefit of professional development. It became evident that the central office personnel felt that the characteristics that influence the effectiveness of professional development are multiple and complex; and that continuous professional
development is more beneficial than episodic sessions held sporadically throughout the year. Moreover, all the central office participants explained how their role and their responsibilities in that role influenced their vision of professional development. All of the central office participants revealed a keen understanding of their role in the professional development process. The role of teachers and the practice of inquiry were two elements that the central office personnel articulated as bringing fundamental changes to professional development in the last decade. The Professional Development School was mentioned by all participants as having enhanced these changes; and in some cases, the PDS was responsible for being the catalyst for the changes.
CHAPTER FIVE

PRINCIPALS

This chapter portrays the perceptions of the eight school principals who were participants in the study. The principal participants included six elementary principals and two middle school principals. Principals are key players who provide leadership in professional development through their support and influence. As educational leaders, principals are responsible for encouraging, creating, and sustaining a positive productive learning environment in their schools. Because one of the primary tasks of school principals is instructional leadership, their perspectives are critical to the area of professional development.

The first section explores the participants’ definitions or descriptions of what is meant by professional development. The three themes that surfaced from the principal responses on describing professional development were: life-long learning, individualization, and teaching and learning.

Defining Professional Development

Life-long Learning

The terms life-long learning, ongoing learning, and continuous learning were used most frequently when defining professional development and were mentioned by six of the eight principal participants. One principal, Lori, compared the importance of professional development to the process of change. She stated: “To me, professional development is ongoing, lifelong learning because the world is in a constant state of change and so we are never there. You never arrive.” At this point, Lori alluded to the
fact that the school district was currently in a state of flux because of changes at the central and curriculum office. Specifically, she mentioned the loss of the curriculum coordinators and curriculum support teachers and how that loss affected professional development in the district. She also felt that losing these curriculum positions increased the responsibilities of the principals. Lori had a long tenure in the district, therefore, had acquired a great deal of history and experience with the district.

One of the middle school principals described professional development in terms of career changes. Specifically, he asserted: “I think it is basically another way of saying—just ongoing learning no matter where you are in your career. Things change, things evolve, it is what you do for yourself as a professional to grow.” Another principal further added to this idea and affirmed: “In terms of professional development, it is ongoing, it is lifelong, it is an expectation, it is part of who we are and what we do, no matter what role we are in.”

Two of the elementary principals focused on the conception of “learning” and the “learner” when discussing professional development. One of them explained it this way:

Professional development is looking at the learner…which I perceive…all of us…as being learners, which is why I call myself a lead learner. I see myself as a lifelong learner and I want teachers to be lifelong learners. And I want them to instill lifelong learning in the students they have. So…if we are not all continually learning, then we have become stagnant…and the sustainability factors are not there. So I really think lifelong learning is really essential. So looking at learning…professional development has people being learners. You know it is honoring them as a learner and a leader too.

Ben, another elementary principal, described professional development as the 

*continuous learning* that takes place in regards to best practices in teaching. He was emphatic that professional development should always be occurring. “It should be
ongoing…it shouldn’t be just a one day, one week, or a one-session type of experience. It should be constant. It should be ongoing…all the time.” By and large, Ben pointed out that all educators “whether you are an administrator, leading teachers, or a teacher in the classroom…you are a part of the process.”

Although Ben was currently an elementary principal, he had also been an elementary classroom teacher, and a curriculum support teacher (CST) in the district for a period of time. Over the years, Ben had worked closely with curriculum coordinators, principals, and the elementary staff. While in the role of curriculum support teacher, he had numerous opportunities to plan and conduct professional development for the elementary faculty. Having held the different roles and positions that Ben has, it is not shocking the level of importance he assigns to professional development.

Ben also discussed professional development as having evolved in two different avenues in the district—“the unstructured piece” and the “structured piece.” He explained how the professional development school (PDS) provided the “structured piece” by describing how structures like mentor meetings, mentor retreats, etc., or grants that helped to pursue other ideas or avenues for professional development which otherwise would not have been available. Ben further expounded, “that through the PDS opportunities came available to build on these relationships.” As a teacher, he also remembered having a positive learning experience sharing an intern with another teacher during the second year of the PDS.
**Individualization**

As another important characteristic of defining professional development, *individualization* was mentioned by five of the eight principals. One principal articulated the fact that defining professional development was pretty broad because “it can happen in so many different ways.” He explained:

Many people think of professional development in terms of someone going to a conference or somebody going to a workshop or some ‘expert’ coming into a building or a district and presenting some new program or some way of teaching something. Sure those are professional development. That’s only one mode in which it could be. Professional development can be highly individualistic. One teacher can be involved in professional development for his or her own benefit that really does not impact anybody else except him or her.

Jerry, one of the middle school principals expressed it this way—“Attending a workshop or reading on your own could be individual development…so I think it’s pretty all encompassing.”

Dinah, one of the elementary participants believed that *individualization* in professional development was achieved through “voice and choice.” She discussed that teachers develop according to what they believe their needs are. Kathy, another middle school principal felt that it was “providing folks with opportunities to connect with areas of interest, and allowing people to choose what areas they want to grow with.” However, she also revealed that there are areas in which “we are forced to react to—and provide that type of professional development. For example, PSSA tests, No Child Left Behind, you know, the ‘must haves’ in terms of professional development.” Some of the areas that educators are forced to react to—in the name of professional development might be called “system-determined demands.”
Another elementary principal reminisced on how she experienced professional development when she was a classroom teacher in another school district. She recalled that,

there was a district wide professional development plan and every teacher went through the same sort of process. So…for example…you went through classroom management. And, so I know…that’s been criticized in the past because it wasn’t differentiated. Everybody had the same kind of professional development. But there are some strengths to that kind of approach. The strengths are that everybody has this common language…we all have some similar background. And so I think there are some strengths to professional development like that. But I also think…then you need to veer off in different paths. Different teachers might have different interests in professional development. Professional development…has lots of different meanings.

Although, this principal felt that at times a more “structured approach” to professional development was necessary—she promptly added:

I think teachers can benefit from that [a structured approach] but, I agree with the critics of it being too restrictive and not differentiated enough…and that not all teachers fit the same mold…just like not all students fit the same program.

Teaching and Learning

Three of the principal participants described the hub of professional development as being clearly focused on the teaching and learning process. One of the retired principals, Janet, believed professional development centered on teaching and learning and how children learn best. She mentioned that the best professional development occurred during the actual act of teaching.

Two of the principal participants referred to professional growth as having more “tools in the toolbox.” Cynthia, an elementary principal, summed it up this way:

Professional development is your growth, your growth as a teacher, your growth as an administrator. The fact that you are learning…looking at ways in which to
do things that may be different but might suit you...and not be so different...that you are not supplying the education that the district expects you to give. That you are staying within what the district expectations are. But at the same time maybe finding ways in which you can deliver what you have to teach in a way that more children are either excited...or you now have a toolbox for those children who are struggling...or even a toolbox for those children that are advanced and how do you make it more exciting for them? So, that you are not just teaching to the middle of the road. But you have your own personal growth too in that regard.

In alignment with teaching and learning, Ben contended,

the PDS allowed us opportunities to come together as teachers and reflect upon our practice and continue to learn about teaching and learning. At one point, there were numerous grants through the PDS and there were many different classes and opportunities that were presented to us that were either low cost or free.

Moreover, Ben added, ten or so years ago

my thinking of professional development would be someone really isn’t learning unless they are learning from somebody. My image of professional development at that time was the conference, the workshop, or the class. I didn’t really see the learning that can take place within practice.

In summary, the elementary principal participants conceived of professional development as being focused at the individual level, either as individual teacher or administrator. They did not, for the most part, focus on professional development at the organizational level. They did discuss the potential of professional development to transform groups of individuals or the entire school.

**Professional Development and Change**

All of the principal participants were asked to discuss professional development and change in terms of goals and initiatives, delivery and outcomes, and teacher roles. However, many of the principals mentioned the District/University Partnership and the influence of inquiry as fundamentals that influenced change in the district.
Goals and Initiatives

The principals’ responses to goals and initiatives of professional development were wide-ranging and diverse. They ranged from not having changed, not changing much, definitely changed, to not being clearly defined. The two middle school principals both expressed that the goals had changed but were specific to teachers and building. One of the middle school principals stated:

I think the goals certainly have changed. But again we do not get a lot from the district…It’s not like you all work on this. So I would say that our goals have changed based on organizational levels. Elementary might be working on this, middle school might be working on that, and high school might be working on this. That evolves based on the needs of each level. So I would say they certainly change but they change to basically address whatever needs we are finding at the time.

Dinah discussed the goals in relationship to the district’s mission statement. “The goals have really been what we as a district believe will have lifelong learning occurring. That is our district’s mission statement.” She also mentioned that Paula, the former Superintendent as having been skillful in having the “district’s strategic plan be a living plan and how that plan was fluid because as times change, you have to change some of the pieces of it.”

Ben believed the goals had not changed because the goals had not been defined and emphasized, “I don’t think we have a broad goal of professional development as a district.” Another elementary principal named Dara, mentioned that clear goals were needed and gave an example to illustrate that “if you walked down this hallway and asked every single teacher in my building what is the district’s goal for professional development, you would get equally as many answers.” She pointed out that until a few years ago—the planning for district in-service days was essentially planned and delivered
by the district curriculum coordinators. Although, she mentioned that the coordinators did
a good job—this approach to professional development was “reactionary and not part of a
systemic plan.” Furthermore, she claimed that two years ago, the elementary principals
got together and decided they needed to have a more long-term plan for professional
development. A subcommittee of principals was formed and this year they were using it
to focus on professional development in math, since the district had just purchased and
derived a new math program. Even though there was now a curriculum goal, Dara felt
the committee was limited because there weren’t any teachers on it and “professional
development wasn’t at the caliber that it needed to be at this point.”

Lori, another elementary principal, who like Ben held similar prior roles in the
district before becoming a principal, emphasized that the district focused on too many
things at the same time, which in her view caused fragmentation. She contended:

The majority of the professional development in the last several years had been
district driven with much of it being…technology…through either laptops or
iPads. Prior to that there was a lot of professional development related to
curriculum. Math Investigations was huge. So there was a lot of professional
development related to the Math Investigations Program as it was implemented.

Although, many of the principals had mixed views concerning goals and
initiatives, a few of them recognized and expressed that technology and math were
district initiatives over the last couple of years and that much of their in-service time was
devoted to those initiatives. Jerry mentioned that technology was also a middle level goal
pursued at the building level.

Additionally, Dara offered the example of Response-to-Intervention [RTI] as a
district-wide professional development goal that eventually became an elementary school
wide goal. To Dara, this was also an illustration of a clear goal that was achieved. She affirmed:

All the elementary schools are certified by the state to use the RTI process to identify for a specific learning disability. That is pretty impressive. There are very few districts where that is the case. So, I think there is a lot to be said for setting a goal for the district or the elementary level…or whatever…and then bringing it to the building level to implement. Not to say, that you might have an additional building goal…that is fine. But I think if you want to build that cohesiveness across schools you need one or two big goals. Math is another building goal across the district.

Delivery Methods

Most of the principal participants agreed that there had been some degree of change in the delivery methods over the last few years. However, when discussing methods of delivery, Ben did not believe much had changed at the district level but pointed out there had been specific changes in his particular building.

Our [building] focus on professional development is an on-going process that is embedded in our day-to-day teaching and…you know…I do what I can to provide the means for teachers to learn from each other and to learn themselves through whatever avenue fits them best, and to encourage reflection and inquiry. The Professional Development School (PDS) has been a conduit for that. It has provided…I don’t want to say a structure, but it has provided a foundation for us as a building to continue that practice. And what I see happening now through PDS…what we are doing as a building is being disseminated into other buildings…being shared through the PDS program.

Kathy, a middle school principal, alleged that one change was in the fact that professional development was not a “one size fits all. It’s more specific to your building, to your teachers.” She accentuated that when it came to the delivery of professional development “it went from having big names to our own folks” and felt there needed to be a balance of the two. Kathy attributed these particular changes to a decrease in budget funds for professional development. These budget reductions also limited travel
conference requests for teachers. Two other principals also cited a significant cut to budgets as being an obstacle for bringing in consultants for in-service days and for staff attending state and national conferences. Jerry believed that technology had changed the way we teach and deliver professional development. When discussing the role technology played, he stated:

You can create on-line courses for people that they can do on their own time. You can bring them all together into one room if you like. Technology provides a lot of different avenues for doing it that way. But…certainly technology is a huge piece of that.

While Kathy indicated that the delivery of professional development was not a one size fits all, Dinah believed that “some of it…was still the one size fits all.” Ironically, she used the example when the district began to look at differentiated instruction, and brought in a speaker to talk about it to 150 people at one time. In direct contrast, Dinah described some additional professional development experiences being delivered by some teachers on staff. She described it this way:

We have had some opportunities…where teacher expertise is used to train and do things…like I’m thinking of RTI (Response To Intervention), a committee of people formed together…Cindy Lago (IST teacher) did a lot of work with teachers, with the IST teachers, and how you start RTI.

Cynthia, an elementary principal and also the district coordinator for the Act 48 state professional development plan noted, that the delivery of professional development had changed from having in-service days with more choices for professional development than they currently have.

Dara believed the delivery methods had changed somewhat. She mentioned that the
PDS offers professional development…but it has not really changed how the district offers professional development. And I think all the elementary principals…and I’d be surprised if anybody disagreed with this—that we need to completely change how we do these whole days…where everybody attends the same session thing. Those days are just not working.

Furthermore, Dara pointed out the loss of the curriculum coordinators and how that loss impacted professional development as a whole.

Finally, one principal, specifically explained change related to delivery of professional development in connection with the District/University Partnership.

In terms of professional development for the district, there is a lot more collaborative planning with the university for how we are going to deliver our professional development. So…once we got to the point in the partnership, where we figured out how to use the curriculum people…initially it went from that.

**Role of the Teacher**

The role of the teacher was one element in which almost all of the principal participants believed there had been visible changes over the last decade or so. One elementary principal mentioned a number of changes at his building just in the last few years:

Teachers have taken a more active role in their own professional development. They…we’ve—created a climate or an atmosphere of questioning our practice. So…if teachers are constantly looking at what they do and looking at…well…how can I do this better? Well…they are more engrossed in their own professional development…seeking it themselves through you know…different means. You know—readings, attending conferences and workshops, then bringing it back to the building, and sharing and collaborating with others in regards to that. We have co-teaching going on. We have peer-coaching going on. We have teachers in each other’s classrooms. We have inquiry constantly happening in the building. So the role of teacher has really changed in terms of getting out of your realm, out of your classroom, and seeing what the opportunities are.
As with goals and initiatives, Jerry, believed that any changes with role of teachers depended on the organizational level of the district. In his view:

I would say that I have involved teachers more. So that has increased for me in this building. I would think...at the middle level, we involve teachers in almost everything, and I think...that’s kind of the middle school team atmosphere. I’m not sure...I think the elementary and high school involve teachers but to what degree...I’m not sure.

Kathy agreed that the role of teachers had changed and many teachers were “delivering professional development in their building based on their own individual strengths and expertise.”

Janet, one of the elementary principals who had recently retired, and who had been a principal of two buildings believed that the role of the teacher had changed and was influenced by two factors. The first was experienced teachers who were willing to take a student intern for a full year; and the second factor was that classroom teachers were teaching with university faculty or curriculum support staff.

These teachers were in classrooms all the time...their colleagues listening to them and showing them—that this is how children learn. So we had to give release time to a lot of teachers to do multiple training sessions. It’s very powerful when you have people on board who are actually training other teachers.

Dinah felt that the role of teachers had changed within her own building because the “teachers had empowered themselves”, and how she supported the notion of “teachers being in charge of their own learning.” This particular principal emphasized the fact that as a principal she had been “entrepreneurial in finding grants that would help support the work I wanted to do in this building.” Although, Dinah directed most of her responses concerning the teacher’s role to her individual building—she did mention that the PDS had helped with the role of teachers on a wider scale.
When discussing the role of teachers, Dara pointed out that if I (the interviewer) interviewed teachers, I would hear from them,

the empowerment they feel from the PDS and how it helped them make changes in their classroom that really supported positive instruction for kids, the empowerment is…because the teachers feel a high degree of respect from the PDS folks, that they feel trusted…I think the PDS has helped teachers grow.

Dara also indicated that teachers who had been Professional Development Associates (PDAs) for three years…and had returned to the classroom had been “an untapped strength, an untapped reservoir, I think of the experience that we have not really utilized.” Moreover, she accentuated the fact that PDA leaders were recently being utilized to work with new teacher induction in the district. Dara felt this pairing of mentor teachers and new teachers “built a little cohort of professional development and that these conversations were professional development.”

Lori agreed with Dara, in the sense that classroom Professional Development Associates were finally being tapped for their expertise in the area of teacher induction, and this had been a “significant change in the broader thinking of professional development.”

**Outcomes**

Overall, outcome indicators of professional development offered by the principals were few and sometimes brief. Only four of the eight principals responded specifically to the component of outcomes. One principal, Dinah, asserted that the outcomes had changed in her building “because of the work that people had done. I mean there is self-motivation over things that they (teachers) are doing and accomplishing with their kids.”
Specifically, this principal pointed out a unit of study that the fifth grade teachers were teaching on the exploration of the garden and wetlands. The fifth grade teachers studied this topic in a study group and felt that the teaching of this unit was meaningful to them and their students. Another outcome Dinah highlighted in her school was “student learning and the motivation the kids have towards learning and the excitement that they have.” Lastly, she acknowledged there were “pockets of change in schools because of leadership in the schools.”

Janet believed the biggest outcome was student learning and how it had changed in her building. “Whenever I observed in classrooms I would see children actively learning, more so, than it might have been in the past in particular classrooms.”

Dara expressed the fact that “we (the district) do not measure outcomes…unless we look at the Act 48 evaluation sheets.” Dara again reminisced how things were accomplished in her previous school district and submitted:

Where I taught—we were taught EEI…we had a classroom management strand and when I left, there was another strand that followed. I can’t remember what it was. Teachers were coached by a peer coach. It was a colleague, not a principal—on the different elements your principal observed based on that model. And so there was that piece…that you know you need…accountability. You know this can’t just be to feel good for everybody. It…that accountability piece whether people like it or not needs to be part of the plan. And so that accountability piece is something that I feel is missing in this district, compared to the other two districts I worked in beforehand.

Dara also clarified how this lack of accountability can affect the role of the principal. Without clear expectations and accountability, “the principal doesn’t really feel directed in what he or she should be supporting.”

According to Ben, the outcomes had certainly changed because,
we are seeing more of an on-going idea of professional development. But that’s looking at it building wide. District wide…I’m not really seeing that yet, though, I think we can move in that direction because as I said with—professional development and the professional development school (PDS) acting as a conduit—those opportunities that we have presented here at the building can then be pushed out into the district.

Over the last few years, changes were made at Ben’s building by replacing teachers’ yearly evaluations with individual inquiry projects, which were then presented by all teachers during a district-wide in-service day. Ben had been trying to make some changes with professional development at the district level by sharing the new experiences and changes that were occurring at his building—through “teacher-led and teacher-generated professional development.” In light of these recent experiences, Ben believed the school principal definitely influenced the professional development of teachers at the building level.

**Nature of Changes**

Five of the eight principal participants characterized the *nature of changes* in professional development as largely positive—and offered their varied perspectives for the positivity. However, one of the middle school principals felt the changes overall were rather inconsequential. He attributed some of the changes in professional development to the following:

The demographics of our district have changed a bit. So…we’re meeting the needs of different kinds of kids. We sometimes have to increase the ‘toolbox’ teachers have or use to meet the needs of these kids. Demographic shifts, population shifts, state and federal mandates, technology, those are the big ones I think.
Additionally, Jerry underscored the importance of deliberately planning for professional development by stating:

all of these things can be going on…but it is the way you react to those things that provide the professional development. So I think that what happens in one building in one district might be very different from what happens in another building…even the same district…let alone…you know a different district. I think that…the profession has become more complex over time.

One of the biggest changes in professional development mentioned by half of the principals was a decrease in resources to support professional development opportunities that had been available in the past. Kathy, a middle level principal submitted, “Like I mentioned…you know…I think if we could have a hybrid of having the big name people come…as well as your own professional development occurring from within…you know…I think that would be utopia.” A few of the principals mentioned, that in past years, the district would bring in educational experts for professional development such as Jay McTighe but due to a lack of resources, this type of professional development was no longer happening.

Cynthia, who was also the District Act 48 coordinator, had a different perspective on the changes that had occurred over the last 10 to 12 years. She felt the changes in professional development were largely negative, but quickly clarified that this was due to the state’s changes in the Act 48 Professional Development Plan and had nothing to do with the school district. The state’s Act 48 professional development plan was in the process of limiting options for accruing professional development credits for all educators.
Janet, a retired principal, characterized the changes not only as extremely positive but also attributed many changes to the PDS.

As I said from the beginning—the PDS is like the ultimate staff development…I can’t say enough positive things about it. It was ongoing…and it changed. It never stayed the same, and they were constantly evaluating the effectiveness of it and changing quite a bit.

Janet offered an illustration of a change, by describing how the curriculum support staff became involved with the professional development school (PDS), which eventually resulted in the Greenwood Furnace trips. According to Janet, these field trips benefited not only the PDS interns, but also all fifth grade district students.

When commenting on the nature of changes over the last decade or so, Dara felt that “district sponsored” professional development was inconsequential and at times negative. She claimed,

Because of budget issues and our elimination basically of the curriculum department, that there’s some negative feelings out there from teachers because of that. They look at it…as you took our curriculum support teachers (CSTs) away. You took our curriculum leaders away. And there’s only one person out there and she’s got to do it all—K-8. And it’s impossible.

On the positive side, Dara added,

I think…again…the PDS…but that’s not district sponsored, PDS sponsored professional development has been largely positive. Teachers really like choices with professional development. And I think we need to do a better job. I think we need to focus it and not do everything under the sun. It has to be that next year we are going to implement a new reading program. The new reading program is going to look like X, Y, and Z…what do you need to implement that program?

Dinah felt that the changes were largely positive, although, she specifically viewed those changes through the lens of her own building. She responded: “Well, in my
building it’s changed the culture. It has moved us to a culture of learning. So it’s hugely positive here. I would love to see that be hugely positive for the district.”

Likewise, Ben for the most part agreed with Dinah that the changes were positive, however, he expressed “the loss of the curriculum support teachers was a negative among the teachers in the district.” But he also noted, that the role of the school principal and teacher leaders could help with this loss in that

the principal takes a more active role in the professional development because that office (curriculum office) that once put that together, no longer exists. So now it falls on the principals to provide it…I’m not saying that the principal has to do it. The principal can provide the leadership and the resources and the time to allow teachers to step into that void…to allow teacher leaders to step forth. To allow individuals within PDS to step forth and provide professional development with our teachers that used to come from the office that no longer exists.

Ben believed that “focusing on teachers continuing to learn their craft without resources they once had was a fact for school districts everywhere.” He humbly acknowledged his own influence on professional development at his particular building and noted, “Definitely, the principal plays a role in the professional life of teachers in a building.”

Lori was another principal who characterized the changes in professional development as,

Largely positive—No doubt about it! People are more willing to take risks because the environment is less threatening. They are much more open…much more willing to say I don’t know anything about that…you know…I’d like to learn more about that…and so I think that there is this sense of collegiality, where we can all be valued for what we do well and also recognize that we could all learn something else.
In summary, Lori contended that “a powerful impact of change in professional
development were the courses offered onsite by the PDS.” Prior to teachers taking
courses onsite,

a lot of people were comfortable because in this district you could move up the
salary schedule just by acquiring credits…and there was a time where you could
apply credits with silly things like Munson Bus Tours in the summer. It (onsite
courses) gave teachers a focus and it made their coursework more purposeful.
And I also think that having classroom teachers become professional development
associates (PDAs) and co-teachers with professors, enhanced leadership
capacity…a huge cohort of people have gone out now and become wonderful
leaders.

Influence of Inquiry/Partnership

Although the participants had not been asked specifically about inquiry as an
element of change, three of the eight principals referred to inquiry as having an influence
on professional development, at different times during the course of their interviews.

Janet discussed inquiry as it related to inquiry courses that were offered onsite.
She mentioned how other specialists took these courses as well, such as the physical
education teacher, the school nurse, and the school principal. She explained,

we (the faculty) had faculty meetings where we shared our inquiry projects…and
it would be like a little mini-inquiry. Before the real inquiry conference—it was
just our building. To me, that is very powerful—because then teachers really want
to take these courses. As we were involved with the PDS…there were more and
more people…you know…no one forced anyone to do anything. No one forced
them to take an inquiry course.

Lori commented on how differentiated supervision and inquiry worked hand-in-
hand to support and enhance professional growth and development for both experienced
teachers and novice teachers. She further explained how the PDS partnership gives more
options for professional development through the inquiry process. For example,
many times someone may choose as their goal for the year to work side by side with an intern on something… and do an inquiry project and presentation together. So supervision for example, Erin (an experienced teacher) is very different than supervision with a brand new teacher. I also have teachers who were interns and are now teachers who understand inquiry. So I’m not always saying—this is what I’d like you to work on. I’m saying—tell me what you think you need to work on. Tell me what you think you need to grow.

The term “inquiry mindset” was a term that Ben used numerous times throughout his responses. In addition, he indicated how his prior experiences as a teacher and mentor with the professional development school (PDS) affected his mindset when becoming a principal. Ben affirmed:

I saw as a teacher…the value of the partnership that we had with the PDS. And as a principal, I brought that mindset into this building. I actually recall when I came here [Easterly Parkway Elementary] the PDS was not…a big part of what happened at Easterly Parkway. And it was a goal of mine to make it a bigger part of what we do because as a teacher I saw the opportunities and the value of it, because as I said earlier going into PDS initially…I didn’t see how I would grow as a teacher. But then once experiencing it for a number of years, I saw how I changed as a teacher and I thought about…how…you know…what a great opportunity that would be for us as teachers and as a building to use that mechanism for us to grow.
CHAPTER SIX
TEACHER GROUPS

This chapter portrays the perceptions of twelve elementary school teachers who were participants in the study. Ten of the twelve participants were female and two were male. In the demographic areas aside from gender, the twelve participants represented a diverse range of age groups, years of experience, and teaching experience in previous school districts. One of the twelve participants taught previously in a private parochial school and one taught in private Montessori schools. Currently, ten of the twelve participants are classroom teachers, one is a school librarian, and the other is an instructional support teacher (IST). Six of the twelve participants were selected to participate because they have been highly involved in the Professional Development School Initiative (PDS). In contrast, the remaining six participants have been minimally involved in the PDS.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first two sections describe the high involvement teacher group and the low-involvement teacher group according to participants’ characteristics, and levels of involvement in PDS activities. The second section reports the perceptions of the two groups of teachers regarding professional development, specifically their definitions of professional development, their perceptions of changes over the previous decade in professional development related to goals and initiatives, delivery and outcomes of professional development, the role of the teacher in professional development and their perceptions of the general nature of the changes that
occurred, if any. A comparison of both groups is provided in the third section of the chapter.

Characteristics of Participants and Levels of Involvement

The years of teaching experience in the high involvement group ranged from 10 years to 39 years. All participants are classroom teachers. One was a professional development school intern in the PDS program prior to teaching in the district, while another teacher in this group had been released from the classroom for three years to serve as a professional development associate (PDA) in the professional development school. All of the participants in this group but one have taught in previous school districts, three of them in different states. Five of the participants are female and one participant is male.

The years of teaching experience in the low involvement group ranged from 10 years to 35 years. Four of the participants are classroom teachers, one is an elementary school librarian, and the other is an Instructional Support teacher. The Instructional Support teacher returned to teaching only ten years ago. She was a kindergarten teacher for one year, and spent the last nine years as an Instructional Support teacher. She is currently enrolled in a Master’s Program in Teacher Leadership at the local university. Five of the six participants taught in other school districts in Pennsylvania, two of them in other states. Five participants are female and one participant is male (as indicated in Table 6.1).
TABLE 6.1

Characteristics of Participants and Levels of Involvement

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<th>Characteristic</th>
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<th>Low Involvement</th>
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<td>Former Professional Development Associates</td>
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Although many of the teacher participants were aware of the professional development school partnership, the levels of involvement between the two groups were very different from each other. The highly involved participants were committed to professional development opportunities through the PDS such as regularly mentoring an intern, teaching methods courses with university faculty, attending PDS community retreats, participating in graduate courses on inquiry and mentoring, attending workshops, presenting at conferences, and in one case, serving as a professional development associate (PDA). The highly involved teacher participants demonstrated a high level of
commitment and contribution to the development and influence in shaping the direction of the PDS.

Only one of the low involvement participants had ever served as a mentor and not on a regular basis, while another offered his class as a partner classroom. At times, taking an intern in a partner classroom can be a point of entry for a teacher to become a PDS mentor in the future. The low involvement group participants took part in very few, if any, of the other activities supported by PDS.

**Perceptions of Professional Development**

**Defining Professional Development**

As with the central office personnel and school principals, the twelve teacher participants were also asked to define or describe professional development. Since the two groups of participants did not differ substantially in how they defined professional development, their responses will be discussed together for this sub-section of the chapter. The three themes that emerged from the teacher responses on describing professional development were: *goals and outcomes, formal and informal experiences, and individual and collaborative nature.*

Since the two groups of participants did not differ substantially in how they defined professional development, their responses will be discussed together for this sub-section of the chapter.
Goals and Outcomes

Several participants believed that goals and outcomes of professional development centered on expanding current skills or learning new skills. One veteran teacher, Gary, described it this way: “When I think of professional development… I think of it as development that nurtures or educates a professional in his or her field and also learning best or current practices based on the latest research.” While Anne, a participant with ten years of experience who also taught in public and private schools felt that “professional development would be any sort of continuing educational experience that I would go through in order to make my teaching in the classroom and my work with children more effective, more purposeful and more informed.”

Formal and Informal Experiences

Several of the teacher participants discussed that professional development takes a wide variety of forms and can be offered through multiple opportunities in the field. Beth, a teacher who had taught for more than two decades in her present district; and sixteen years teaching in another state stated:

Professional development can be looked at in a number of different aspects. Of course, the formal—such as taking courses and doing different in-service opportunities or different Association opportunities—all of that is professional development. I also view networking with other teachers whether formally or informally is certainly professional development and areas like that.

Natalie, a participant with thirteen years of teaching experience in three different school districts in two different states recalled her formal and informal professional development opportunities as it pertained to the districts in which she previously taught. Some of those experiences included peer coaching, mentoring student interns, co-
teaching, attending state and national conferences, involvement in school and district committees, and most recently attending graduate school. However, Natalie quickly pointed out that in the first school district in which she taught, professional development was kind of top-down and directed at us and...I didn’t feel like we had much flexibility. But then in Alaska we had a differentiated plan and so we could have different opportunities to meet our professional development needs.

Danielle, who taught for two decades in both a parochial and public school district also agreed that professional development opportunities could be *formal and informal* but believed that “teachers need to be willing to seek out the opportunities.”

*Individual and Collaborative Nature*

Four of the twelve participants viewed professional development through the lens of *individualization* and *collaboration*. Carol, a teacher with thirty years of experience in both middle school and elementary, believed professional development is obtained through “people and ideas.”

Julia, a former professional development school intern, articulated that her professional development started with the Professional Development School (PDS), everything that we did...we were focusing on obviously how to be the best teacher we could be. I used to think professional development was somebody who was paid to teach me something. But now, I realize...working with PDS...that it’s not like a conference you go to...but often—professional development is working with other teachers...collaboration...or in my instance...having Ben as a principal. During our staff meetings...we did lots of professional development...book clubs...and even in our one-on-one meetings with him.
Professional Development and Change—High Involvement Group

As with the former two groups of participants, the teacher participant groups were asked to describe changes that had occurred in professional development over the last decade or so in terms of goals and initiatives, delivery and outcomes, and the role of the teacher.

Goals and Initiatives

The high-involvement participant’s responses to goals and initiatives of professional development ranged from not having changed, not being sure if the goals changed or even existed, to definitely changed. Three of the participants believed the over-arching goals had not changed but evolved from being “less structured to more specifically targeted.” Two of the participants were not aware of goals, and one believed the goals had changed particularly for teachers.

In her first year in her current district, Natalie felt that the district professional development goals were not known or as transparent to her as they had been in the first school district in which she taught. However, she pointed out that with the arrival of a new principal in her school, the building goals became very apparent. The new principal made it evident to all the teachers that he wanted them to take ownership of their own professional learning and to develop an “inquiry mindset.” Danielle concurred with Natalie in that she wasn’t sure if the goals had changed because she didn’t know if the goals existed. Coincidently, Danielle who also taught in the same building as Natalie mentioned how the new principal had influenced the building staff and the way they now viewed professional development.
Prior to this experience, Danielle regarded university courses and in-service as the means of receiving professional development but now contended, “If I was an administrator, I would take advantage of those opportunities (at school level) just like Ben (school principal) did…to try and grow a culture of professional development within a school because now I could see that you need people who are interested.” In general, Danielle believed that everything at the school had changed in the last few years under Ben’s leadership.

Julia asserted that the goals and initiatives had definitely changed because teachers could for the first time this school year attend six hours of professional development according to their interests and needs—and these hours could be used towards district in-service days. Julia stated:

It’s giving us choice; it’s giving us power. If we look at where we are headed…it seems to me like the goal has definitely changed. The goal is more to focus on the teachers and what they need…whereas…I think originally—it was like…as a school district…what do we need?

Beth, a veteran teacher, indicated that the “district goals really had not changed by insuring that teachers are doing the best they can with the materials they have.” She did highlight the fact that although the goals had not changed, they were more “specifically targeted” and mostly focused around curriculum. For instance,

for the last several years, kindergarten children were only expected to learn the letters of the alphabet and their sounds and that was it! But now we need to have…the average child…reading at a certain grade level…and at a certain level in the right group. So we had to be trained for that. So…it’s things we need to know. So I don’t think their goals are really different. But what we are focusing on has been a little bit narrower.
Two of the participants stated that the district professional development goals were presented at in-service days especially at the beginning of the school year. Gary, another veteran teacher affirmed,

The goals are made clear to us when we go to these different in-services. I think they are clear but I don’t know that I’ve ever seen any long range plan. Not that if I didn’t ask for it—they wouldn’t show it to me. But I feel a lot of it is principal directed…the administration team meets…and they…you know…make these decisions about what they want us to focus on…to help us be better teachers…to meet students’ needs…and I feel they are kind of in the driver’s seat.

Moreover, Gary alleged that the majority of professional development offered by the district had to do with curriculum initiatives while Carol claimed that one initiative was solely driven by technology and impacted professional development extensively. Gary chronicled some curriculum initiatives and offered some of the following examples:

You know…as our district has adopted new programs in the curriculum…they have been really good about giving us professional development to become familiar with the curriculum. When we started to do some new language arts things…they gave us professional development to practice doing running records…and that kind of thing…which some of us weren’t familiar with. Math has had a lot of curriculum development because the district has gone through several different programs since I have been here. For a while…a year or two…there was always curriculum development around the idea of differentiated instruction…and to make us familiar with that. Then we adopted the Response-To-Intervention model so we had some curriculum development with that. And…the latest one…one of the last ones we had…the district is now interested in reading workshops like Reading Café/The Daily Five.

Additionally, Gary also emphasized that for a few years, the district had another component related to professional development and ‘it was driven by a wellness committee…we would have professional development opportunities…to sort of nurture our whole selves…rather than just everything being based on curriculum. But that seems
to have fallen by the wayside.” Ultimately, Gary felt that if teachers were nurturing themselves—they in turn would take better care of students.

In summary, all but one high-level involvement participant believed the district goals had not changed but were either expanded or made target specific. Nevertheless, two of the participants felt the professional development goals at the building level had changed due to the new principal’s school vision of professional development.

**Delivery Methods**

Three of the high involvement participants agreed that there had been some changes in the delivery of professional development. Julia acknowledged that the delivery methods had changed from a “one size fits all” to a more differentiated approach. For example, she believed that within a differentiated approach—a teacher could possibly choose to learn how to differentiate reading instruction in a particular grade level, and that these type of choices “allows you to really choose what is going to help you professionally.”

Natalie associated delivery methods with the change from curriculum support teachers (CST’s) to instructional coaches and emphasized,

> It was a big change from when I first started in the district…they had curriculum support teachers…and that was more like…I’m going to show you how to do this. And now…it’s changed…we have these instructional coaches…and it’s…I’m going to work with you to do this. So that is a very deliberate change.

Beth claimed that professional development has always been delivered by “district people”—such as the curriculum support teachers in language arts, math, science, and social studies.
But…for the last couple of years…since those positions (CST’s) have not been in the district…each principal…I think…is assigned either a grade level or a division level. So we have a principal who is in charge of the meetings, but it is being taught by a math person. It is more of a seminar sort of approach to introducing curriculum.

One of the participants submitted that some professional development was provided through technology, but for the most part the delivery methods had not changed. Carol wasn’t quite sure if the delivery methods had changed, because she had witnessed and been a part of many permutations of professional development throughout her experience; and assumed that some of the changes might have been due to the district calendar or schedule. All in all, four of the high-level participants saw some changes in delivery methods, one had not seen any changes, and one participant was not sure if there had been any changes.

**Role of the Teacher**

Most of the high involvement participants believed there had been some changes in the role of the teacher, although one participant was not quite sure if there had been any changes. Julia perceived changes in the teacher role through the changes that occurred in her building over the last few years. She maintained that,

> Teachers are always learning—and we’re headed in this direction of a community of learners…where the principal is involved…the teachers are involved…everyone is trying to get better. What else is out there? What else can we try? What seems to be working and what isn’t…and let’s keep moving forward.

As Julia reflected on this response, she added, “I think it’s just…our views of ourselves have changed.”
One of the more veteran teachers, Beth, concurred with there being changes in the teacher role but for different reasons. She believed that some of the changes were due to No Child Left Behind and offered,

I look specifically to kindergarten…and with No Child Left Behind…the push for academics has changed our focus in kindergarten. She gave the example of running records…and it’s just far more academic. At the beginning of my career…I taught first grade for years and years…and what I am teaching now in kindergarten is very similar to what I taught as a first grade teacher. So I have seen kindergarten move from being primarily a social function with academics…to the focus primarily being…academics. And it’s just the way it is. And children are able…to adjust. But…that’s not saying what I think is best for five and six year olds.

With Beth having a very child centered approach to teaching, it was evident this change was problematic for her. However, in a more positive realm, Beth indicated that being a mentor and having an intern in her classroom through the Professional Development School (PDS) afforded her the opportunity to get to know her students better and had a positive influence on the students of the district.

Danielle viewed professional development changes through her experiences at her school, and as a professional development associate (PDA) a few years earlier with the professional development school. She mentioned that the teachers at her school often took advantage of professional development opportunities.

But as for myself…I think I am probably taking advantage of more than I did before because of my experience as a professional development associate (PDA). I think I have more confidence now than I did before—and since then I have been more willing to be involved. So I don’t know if it is just me that has changed…or have teachers always been involved?
Natalie believed the *role of the teacher* had changed immensely since she first arrived in the district, and enthusiastically offered numerous illustrations of what those changes looked like:

There are a couple of ways the role of teachers has changed. I see more of an interest in doing collaborative teaching and people learning about co-teaching…the co-teaching study group has also been interesting. I have seen other teachers ask for co-teaching literature. So that’s more collaborative. And with peer coaching as well. That would be another example. And…having that carry from the professional development school into more of a general school setting. I think…teachers see themselves more as researchers. So…with this idea of inquiry…it’s kind of being more formal about it…and with the principal encouraging us to actually pick a question…go through the process…and then having a way to celebrate with the inquiry conference.

Natalie noted how teachers’ voices have been heard through the teachers’ writers group. “Teachers come together…have a space to write, freedom to write, to have their voices really be heard, valued, and shared with the larger community.” Finally, Natalie described the *role of the teacher* changing through teacher leadership and empowerment:

The role of mentor is taken very seriously…they (the mentors) don’t see it as I’m going to let someone come in and just take over my class and sit back. They…take it as a serious contribution to the profession. It’s a way to grow themselves. It’s a way to…you know…to learn together. So it’s much more of…you know…a leadership position. And with that the role of teachers has changed…so with teachers’ voice, the role of mentors, the PDA, the hybrid role, and the instructional coach…there seems to be a lot of opportunities in the district to be a leader.

Natalie had embraced and also participated in many of the leadership opportunities that she specified in her responses. In addition, she was also enrolled in a doctoral program in education at the local university. Overall, five of the highly involved teacher participants concurred there had been changes in the role of the teacher over the last few years and one was not sure.
Outcomes

The last component of change related to professional development discussed by the high involvement participants centered on outcomes. Four of the six participants acknowledged there had been changes in the outcomes of professional development within the last decade or so.

Beth pointed out that she viewed professional development through a dual lens:

I’m looking at professional development in two different ways…because I am looking at the requirements that the district has for professional development and I think No Child Left Behind has been the ‘push’ for that totally. And then…if I look at the professional development opportunities through the PDS…those are still things that teachers have the opportunity to do…and can select things…that they really want to do. And I think the PDS program has had a huge influence on our district and on opportunities for teachers and administrators. I am so thrilled that Ben is the person who is in charge of curriculum now, because he comes from a strong PDS background and I know at Easterly Parkway—he has utilized the interns in a unique way.

While Beth had described the outcomes of professional development through a dual lens—Julia, a former PDS intern, defined the outcomes through changes at her own school. She explained that when she first arrived at her school—there wasn’t much conversation about education in general among staff. But quickly added:

Now there is constant conversation about who we are as teachers and…just getting better. Just a few weeks ago, Katie sent an email saying, ‘I want to read Readicide. Anyone want to do a book club on it?’ And it’s kind of like how PDS has instilled that whole ‘inquiry mindset’ in you…and by constantly having professional development in smaller chunks…you become someone who seeks out even more professional development opportunities.

Natalie also commented on changes through her perception of the staff, “I think an outcome I have personally witnessed is that I see teachers being more open-minded,
using a variety of approaches, and…maybe…being less judgmental.” Inquiry emerged as another \textit{outcome} as Natalie claimed: “Another outcome is this idea of inquiry…I mean inquiry has kind of always been talked about—but I see it as…maybe more transparent now—and I see teachers talking more openly about it.”

According to Danielle, the \textit{outcomes} had not changed, “I think…we probably end up in the same place, except like I said…in the past…some of the options we had were not always relevant to what I’m understanding is the umbrella right now for professional development.”

Carol felt it was difficult to respond to the \textit{outcomes} because “it was such a big picture.” However, she did discuss \textit{outcomes} in terms of the professional development school (PDS) and how she thought they were valuable to her. Carol indicated she would not have known about things like inquiry or morning meetings (Responsive School Classroom) if it had not been for the PDS. In short, Carol believed that the PDS offered her opportunities in professional development that she otherwise might not have had.

\textbf{Nature of Changes}

When commenting on the \textit{nature of changes}, Natalie expressed that there were two factors that came to mind and viewed those changes through the lens of her school: the school principal and the professional development school.

I mean Ben (school principal) really understands the importance of building relationships and with strong relationships—you build trust. And with trust…you build a community where you’re able to take risks. So I think…both the professional development school and the school principal—both see that vision and that’s what has allowed these changes to occur…both have built communities—both have built and encouraged relationships that have led to increased trust…that led to people being able to take more risks. I think those are the big things.
Furthermore, Natalie explained how the questioning of practice and the visiting of each other’s classrooms became more customary and familiar among staff members and offered the following:

I think sometimes we get this idea of this is best practice or this is the way to do things and sometimes we begin to look at other approaches as not being good. But what I have seen happen is that...with all this about inquiry...and questioning practice...plus being in others’ classrooms...having interns and having them pose questions...we are beginning to challenge some of these initial assumptions...like...this may be best practice but is it best practice for everyone in my class. So I think through those conversations...through inquiry...having someone in your classroom all the time to make you think about that...I think that has broadened people’s perceptions—that—yes...there could be more than one approach...and that is okay to use in the classroom. So...this has rid us of...you know judging classrooms and practices. So I think that is one of the things I have seen change the most.

Danielle, a recent Professional Development Associate (PDA) with the professional development school, believed that the partnership between the university and the school district had a positive impact on the district and submitted:

I feel...every year the partnership grows stronger—and with that I mean there is a tight relationship with principals, curriculum teachers, and because of that...there has been more of...I don’t want to say a PDS flavor...but I do feel PDS is impacting professional development in a positive way. And I feel like...we have had more opportunities for courses like mentoring or the inquiry course.

Although, one of the highly involved participants believed there had been immense changes in professional development, he felt these changes negatively impacted the entire field of education and described the changes this way:

The changes have been major and they have certainly changed the face of education. I mean...No Child Left Behind has been kind of a double-edged sword. There have been some positive things about it...but I think by far it that it got out of hand. It had good intentions and things...but I think I would circle largely negative because I think overall; it has made people lose the whole course of what education should be about. Everything is based on test scores and I think there is a lot of burnout from it...and like I said, there is no such thing anymore
about educating the whole teacher. You know...we are all expendable...it’s all about scores.

Julia, a former professional development intern, agreed with Danielle, in that she also believed the PDS highly influenced professional development in the district. She offered the following:

When you are around people who want to keep learning and getting better—like people in PDS...I mean I think from the beginning with Jim...Bern wasn’t there when I went through...but Jim and other people that were there...Carla...and there were all of these incredibly intelligent people that were continuing to learn—were continuing to question. So then moving out of that environment...and having PDAs that come in the classroom and are asking questions and are wondering things. I mean even Bill...who is retired...coming in and asking questions and figuring things out. I think...when you are surrounded by people who do that, then you do too. And it seems to me—like right now those people are filtering to important positions, and I think Ben (school principal) is one of them. I think he questions and wants to learn himself. By taking chances like this new position, he’s encouraging other people—myself, Gail, to take a chance and try something new.

In concert with Natalie, Beth also perceived professional development with a dual lens as she stated:

I’m looking at professional development in two different ways because I’m looking at the requirements that the district has for professional development...and I think No Child Left Behind has been the push for that totally. Then if I look at professional development opportunities through the PDS...those are still things that teachers have the opportunity to do and can select things that they really want to do. I think the PDS program has had a huge influence on our district and on opportunities for teachers and administrators. I am so thrilled that Ben is the person who is in charge of curriculum now, because he comes from a strong PDS background and I know at Easterly, he has utilized the interns in a unique way. And that is being branched out a little more in the district.

All in all, most of the high involvement participants’ perceptions of the nature of changes associated with professional development were largely positive.
Low Involvement Group

Goals and Initiatives

The low-involvement teachers’ responses to goals and initiatives of professional development ranged from changed to not being sure they existed or were never clearly defined. One of the participants contended, “That he wasn’t sure what the goals were initially. I would think the general goal was to provide a diverse opportunity for people to develop professionally based on their interests and needs and I would hope that overall goal hasn’t changed.” One other participant stated that she could not say that the goals had changed because she “didn’t know what the goals were and did not know what they are right now.”

Diane believed the goals for professional development had changed due to the standards; therefore, “changes had to be made in the curriculum, whether it was math, reading or writing, so I think that it became in some ways more rigid.”

Kristin claimed that the goals of professional development had changed but thought they were much more “specifically targeted” than what she had experienced in her previous teaching experiences. She added, as an example,

Now we are going to use MAP—so let’s have an in-service about how to best use it. So I feel like the switch has been rather away from the art of teaching—to now because we are using this particular program, or this particular assessment…let’s look at how we are going to use that particular assessment or whatever. So it’s a real kind of a how to—rather than it be a part of teaching.

Despite this, she did not view this as something negative “because if we are going to use this new program—then let’s delve into it and see what works and what doesn’t work—and thank goodness our district gives us permission to say that will never work.”
Lisa felt the goals had definitely changed since she first started teaching, which was the first year that the Act 48 State Professional Development Plan came into play in Pennsylvania, and mentioned that soon after that No Child Left Behind followed. As Lisa reflected on the last decade, she contended, “In looking back now in the last ten years or so, certainly education is more data driven and also some more of these pieces are quantified and that has been reflected in professional development.”

Another participant, Anne, who had been in the district for a relatively short time believed that school districts were “trying to treat teachers more as professionals and informed participants.” She further implied, that she felt more like an “informed participant” now than she had before she came to State College,

but again I don’t know if that is the district or if that is my principal…and I don’t know if that is something that is now bleeding out into the district. I think the principal is the one who most definitely steers the ship, and I mean in the role as principal—it’s my understanding—that you are the person whose job it is to help teachers be teachers. You know…you’re the instructional coach; you’re the instructional leader.

Anne explained further that professional development was going in the direction of it not being imposed on teachers, but giving teachers more options and in turn more empowerment over their professional choices.

In summary, four of the six low involvement participants believed there had been changes in professional development over the last ten years or so. These four participants offered a myriad of reasons for these changes such as No Child Left Behind, standards, and the state’s Act 48 Professional Development Plan. However, one participant felt that the changing role of the school principal played a large part in the changes of professional development in the district. Some responses echoed that the professional
development changes were due to the educational field becoming more data driven. Two of the six participants could not identify any changes in professional development because either the goals did not exist or were never clearly defined.

**Delivery Methods**

When discussing delivery methods of professional development, the low involvement participants were evenly divided. Three of the low-involvement participants thought the delivery methods had changed, while the other three participants believed that there had not been any changes.

For Diane, the delivery methods changed dramatically with the loss of the curriculum support teachers (CST’s).

> It (delivery methods) changed majorly when they took away those professionals. I would say the last two years maybe three when they took away our CST’s, who we really trusted…I could trust that person when they told me something about science…I knew they had done their research.

In addition, Diane contended, that the school board had hired one person to handle curriculum and believed the job was too much for one person to handle effectively.

In regard to delivery methods, Mike believed they had not changed dramatically,

> In that, those opportunities are available to us during in-service days. Those opportunities are available to us during the summer, and we still have those courses that are offered through the intermediate unit. So I think all of those professional development activities, workshops, what have you, are still available to us.

Lisa believed that in terms of delivery methods, she was seeing less being offered in-house but more professional development being delivered through technology. She mentioned that some staff was receiving staff development through released time, but she
was not being offered that opportunity because she was not a classroom teacher. Although, she claimed that school librarians and Title One Reading teachers were on the fringe when it came to professional development and at times felt underutilized, she further implied that her school principal was doing some outreach to these roles so that all staff would be equally informed and feel a part of the broader fabric of the school.

Anne asserted that the *delivery methods* currently offered more choices than they had in the last decade or so:

It seems like now when there are professional development options given—everyone is required to participate, but there seems to be more choices given so you can lean in a certain direction. There might be two workshops that are given or two discussions that are happening, or two books that you were supposed to have read and come to have a discussion about—so that teachers can have more of a powerful role and think about what’s happening in their classrooms and where they need to improve. If I don’t need to get better at writing, if I feel that I am a stellar writer and teacher of writing to children, then I am not going to be able to buy into a workshop on writing as well as I am if I had a choice of picking math because that is my weak area. So I mean…if teachers had more choices…and the way professional development is set up now, there seems to be more choices.

**Role of the Teacher**

The responses of the low-involvement participants concerning the *role of the teacher* were mixed. While three of the participants believed there had been changes, two were not sure if there had been any changes, and one participant felt that teachers needed more professional development options.

One participant, Lisa, felt that the demands and expectations of teachers were greater than ever before due to federal mandates, parents, and community, but didn’t feel that teachers necessarily have more say about professional development. Since this
participant was not a regular classroom teacher, she wasn’t sure from her perspective, if this was the general response or because of the role she presently held.

Anne believed the *role of the teacher* had definitely changed and highlighted the fact that teachers feel more empowered now and described it this way:

> So it’s not just…I’m going to wait for professional development to happen to me. I think that’s the way it used to be. But now…today, I think it’s a lot more where educators are feeling more empowered…and thinking…I’m going to go out and seek out professional development because I see how it affects my classroom.

While discussing the changing *role of the teacher*, Anne also equated the changing role of the school principal by submitting,

> The role of the principal has seemed to change a little bit…they seem to be less of a cog in the wheel and more like an instructional leader at a school. I think that the tone of whatever the principal sets—trickles down to the teachers. I mean the teachers at this school have been jazzed and excited about inquiry and questions, and trying something new…you know…What in the world is Café? How can we do that? Because he is the person who has this policy of well let’s try it.

Anne felt that with an open and trusting school climate—teachers are encouraged to look for professional learning opportunities and are inspired to investigate new questions.

According to Mike, there had been some changes with the *role of the teacher*, especially in the area of curriculum. In particular, he offered the new math program as an example. Rather than have curriculum support teachers (CST’s) provide professional development with the new program, teachers who were now more involved with the program shared their information with the staff.

In sum, although three of the low involvement participants agreed there were changes in the *role of the teacher*, only one of them believed the role had dramatically changed and really empowered teachers to seek their own professional development. The
other two participants felt the changes in the role of the teacher were due to the release of other professionals from their positions as curriculum support teachers; and teachers with expertise in specific subject areas were filling the void as teacher leaders.

**Outcomes**

When commenting on the component of outcomes, the low-involvement participants gave less detailed responses. Three of the participants acknowledged there had been changes in the outcomes, one participant was not sure, one felt the outcomes stayed the same, and one believed the only changes in outcomes were curricular.

According to one participant, the outcomes of professional development had changed because now “you’re expected to take action, change something, or implement something, not just put it in your bag of tricks.” However, Kristin added, that possibly the outcomes had changed because teachers were now expected to “use MAP data to make decisions about what you are teaching.”

Although, Lisa agreed there had been changes in the outcomes, she viewed the outcomes through a dual lens: the perspective of the district leadership, and also how it affected her as a professional. From the district leadership,

> I’m sure they want to ensure greater consistency across the board amongst your faculty…or if they are feeling the pressures, or whether it’s NCLB, or just Pennsylvania and the current administration kind of issues. But as for me, as I mentioned earlier…I feel bring it on (professional development) I need more. I want more. You know…I seek more. More is better.

Another participant mentioned that she felt “much more empowered about attending workshops, trying to seek them out, trying to find professional development and feeling like I can go to one and do it, and then come back and have the benefit of it.”
However, she felt that procuring funds for professional development was a deterrent: “the red tape that a teacher has to go through in order to get the money to pay for the professional development.”

Mike contended that the outcomes of professional development for the most part had stayed the same with one exception: “One thing that I think has changed in our district is…I remember as a new person on the staff here, that we attended lots of conferences, many conferences.” As Mike reminisced, he recalled going to state and national conferences, and in particular the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. He mentioned how expensive these conferences were but how it provided a diverse group of presenters especially at the national level.

In conclusion, only three of the six low involvement participants definitely felt there had been changes in the outcomes of professional development but all with different accounts as to why those changes occurred. The participant who believed the outcomes stayed the same also mentioned how a lack of funds for professional development over the last couple of years could be a possible reason.

**Nature of Changes**

The low-involvement participants’ responses to the nature of changes were wide and varied from largely positive, somewhat positive, largely negative, to not being sure what has caused the changes. In contrast to the responses of the highly involved participants, the low-involvement participants’ responses were more mixed.

According to Lisa, there had been changes in professional development due to changes that were happening in the educational field and so the focus of professional
development had changed. However, as Lisa has noted previously, she also viewed professional learning as an individual experience and highlighted changes at her school with the arrival of a new principal. She explained how the staff meetings turned into professional development opportunities with the leadership of the new principal, and prior to his arrival that had not been her experience.

Anne concurred with Lisa in that the changes in professional development were definitely positive and how encouragement from the school principal has, helped to create an atmosphere of teachers, a school of educators who are jazzed about learning and who are active and vibrant, turned on and interested and who are on-going learners and who want to know more and ask another question. And I think that the more administrators who can be on-going learners, who can be inquiry based, who can ask questions, who can be open-minded and encourage their staff to do so…it is…I mean it’s electric, it’s contagious.

Additionally, Anne explained how, teachers have changed their methodology of teaching in the classroom to be more hands-on, more inclusive, more choice-based, more open-ended, more investigative…you know as…teachers teach children in these ways—it seems like people have realized that this works with kids and so…you know let’s try this with grown-ups…like maybe if children are more effective if given a choice of things to work on…they are more passionate and engaged in their work. Well, then maybe we should give grown-ups a choice to be able to…you know…have a decision and feel power in their participation in some sort of a workshop instead of feeling like something is being done to you.

Diane characterized the changes as largely negative due to the focus of professional development becoming much more rigid and narrow and also budget cutbacks. From her perspective, this negativity did not stem from the school district but from what was occurring in the broader terrain of education.

From Kayla’s perspective, the changes over the last decade had been largely inconsequential with some “glimmers of positive.” She pointed out the Professional
Developmental School (PDS) as one of those positive changes and indicated its value, and how in the past, it had offered inquiry courses, CIG’s, and mentoring courses. She remembered,

flyers always going around the schools, saying—in the spring we are offering this course…I’m sure part of it was self-serving…in that…let’s get more people on board…we’ll have more people interested in being mentors or have our inquiry process mindset way of looking at the whole thing.

**Comparison of High Involvement and Low Involvement Participants**

Although there were not extensive differences in the way both groups defined professional development, there were some variations between the groups in the way in which they perceived the changes or lack of changes in professional development and what led to those changes.

In the component of *goals and initiatives*, both participant groups’ range of responses was diverse and varied. Although two of the six high involvement participants felt the district *goals and initiatives* were not known or made clear to them, they did not have any difficulty identifying their building goals of developing an “inquiry mindset” or to take ownership of their own learning. Three of the more veteran participants in the high involvement group described that curriculum initiatives were driven by the school district and were made clear to teachers at in-service days. Two of the participants in the high involvement group taught in the same building and believed the school principal influenced how they now perceived professional development. One of the high involvement participants specifically pointed out that the *goals and initiatives* were “principal directed…and they make the decisions about what they want us to focus on.”
Although, three of the highly involved participants mentioned the role of the principal, they did not perceive the principal’s role in professional development in the same way.

Half of the low involvement participants believed the goals and initiatives for professional development had changed due to the advent of content standards, No Child Left Behind, or changes in the state Act 48 Professional Development Plan. Since the educational field had become more data-driven—professional development was seen as going in that direction. There was one participant in the low involvement group who was highly experienced but fairly new to the school district; she alleged the professional development changes were due to her school principal. It should be noted that this participant was also on the same elementary faculty as the two high involvement participants who also rendered this similar claim.

For the most part, the high involvement participants believed that changes in professional development occurred at their building and the principal was a definite influence. Due to this influence, the teachers felt more like empowered members of a team with the overall goals of shared decision-making and everyone having the responsibility of developing professionally. Conversely, the low involvement participants believed the changes in goals and initiatives for professional development were solely due to outside state and federal mandates and influenced what the school district and teachers had to do to comply with the mandates.

In the area of delivery methods, three participants from the high involvement group believed changes had occurred. Specifically, the changes these three participants referred to was a one size fits all to a more differentiated approach in delivery, the change from district curriculum support teachers to instructional coaches, and lastly, the use of
technology taking a larger role in delivering professional development. Participants from both groups pointed out that one of the biggest changes was the elimination of the curriculum support teachers and other curriculum positions. Although, both groups acknowledged this change, one participant from the high involvement group who was somewhat new to the district saw this change as a different professional development growth opportunity. For example, she explained the transformation from the curriculum support positions to instructional coaches as showing teachers—how to do something—to co-teaching with them.

Three of the six low involvement participants also recognized changes in the delivery of professional development, but some cast these changes in somewhat more of a negative light, particularly when it came to the elimination of the curriculum support teachers. One of the more veteran participants, Diane, viewed the loss of the curriculum support teachers as an immense loss to all staff, since the teachers had come to rely on these professionals to plan and deliver professional development for well over a decade. She added, that the teachers really trusted the curriculum support teachers “because they had always done their research.” Although, Anne also believed there had been changes in delivery, she perceived the changes more positively, because there were more choices being offered. One of the low involvement participants felt there hadn’t been any changes in delivery of professional development because it was still being offered at in-service days and the intermediate unit, as it always had been.

When discussing changes in the role of the teacher, it appeared there were some clear distinctions in the responses of each group. The majority of the high involvement participants believed there had been definite changes and the examples they provided for
these changes were specific. Only two of the low involvement participants mentioned changes in the teacher role—and for very different reasons. One of the low involvement teachers attributed the changes to reactions to federal mandates, parents, and community, but she also wasn’t sure whether her own role as librarian was responsible for the perspective she embraced. The other low involvement participant, Anne, credited the changes to the empowerment of teachers and through this empowerment—teachers were seeking professional development opportunities on their own. It should be noted that Anne was also new to the school district and taught in the same building where there was also a new principal whose vision of professional development reflected some of these changes. Another recurring theme from this particular participant was the role of the school principal and an open and trusting school climate, and how these elements encouraged and supported changes in the role of teachers.

On the other hand, the high involvement participants were providing specific illustrations they had personally experienced such as a professional development associate with the professional development school (hybrid role) or the importance of a teacher serving as a mentor, being part of a teachers’ writing group, researcher, co-teacher, or the opportunity to be an instructional coach within the school district. One particular participant highlighted the fact that her experience as a professional development associate (PDA) afforded her more confidence, which eventually led her to being further involved in professional development than she had been prior to that experience. Although, most of these professional opportunities and leadership positions were offered through the school district and PDS partnership, another high involvement participant who was a veteran teacher concurred with these changes, but also added that
some teacher role changes were still due to No Child Left Behind. She also emphasized that having an intern through the PDS allowed her to get to know her students better and how overall the PDS influenced the students positively. Lastly, one high involvement participant who was a former PDS intern viewed the teacher role changes through the lens of her school—and indicated that her school staff was heading in the direction of becoming a “community of learners” and submitted that as a result “our views of ourselves have changed.”

Four of the six high involvement participants felt that the professional development outcomes had resulted in changes, whereas only three of the six low involvement participants believed there were any changes in the outcomes. Some of the explanations of the outcomes for the highly involved participants included: the idea of inquiry and it being more transparent in an individual school, how the professional development school (PDS) instilled the “whole inquiry mindset” in teachers, or the extended opportunities offered through the professional development school (PDS) for teachers and administrators. One of the high involvement participants witnessed changes in her individual staff as being more open to a wider variation of instructional approaches.

In contrast, the low involvement participants verified outcome changes as teachers now making decisions about teaching based on MAP data. One of the low involvement participants who was not a classroom teacher—perceived professional development outcomes through a dual lens: how it affected her as an individual, and through the perspective of district leadership who want to ensure consistency between and among staff.
Overall, the responses describing the nature of the professional development changes over the last decade or so revealed some definite contrasts between the high involvement and low involvement participant groups. Although, the majority of the responses from the high involvement group were mostly positive, there was one high involvement participant that believed the changes negatively impacted the field of education, and felt No Child Left Behind was the culprit for the negativity. Another high involvement participant viewed the positive changes through two factors—the first factor being her school principal and the second was the professional development school. She believed that the principal and the PDS shared the same vision and that combination allowed the positive changes to occur. Danielle, a recent PDA (professional development associate) offered that the professional development school impacted professional development in a positive way as evidenced by tighter relationships between principals and district curriculum people. Moreover, she also emphasized that courses like mentoring and inquiry affected the district positively and extensively.

While the high involvement teachers expressed overall positivity for the nature of the professional development changes, the low involvement participants’ responses presented a wide range. Three of the participants attributed the changes because of the changing landscape of the educational field. One of these three participants specifically mentioned factors such as budget cuts and the narrowing of the professional development focus. Another low involvement participant, Lisa, concurred that the focus of professional development had changed, but she described professional learning as an individual experience and highlighted changes at her school with the arrival of a new
principal. Anne, who was new to the school district also agreed with Lisa in that the changes were positive and how encouragement from the principal made this possible.

Although, one low involvement participant articulated the nature of the changes as inconsequential, she also pointed out that the professional development school was a positive change and offered valuable professional development through inquiry courses, CIG’s, and mentoring courses. However, she also stated that offering these courses could be considered self-serving.
CHAPTER SEVEN
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter compares the perceptions of four distinct groups: central office participants, principals, high involvement teacher participants, and low involvement teacher participants, concerning the impact of a professional development school partnership on professional development as an organizational function within the school district. A constant comparison method was used to uncover trends and patterns in interview responses from each participant group as it pertains to the research questions of this study. In addition, the chapter provides a discussion of the comparison in view of the existing literature on professional development schools and professional development as well as discussing implications and directions for future research.

Comparison Among Participant Groups

All participant groups were asked to discuss whether any changes had occurred in professional development at the elementary level in terms of the goals and initiatives, delivery of professional development, the role of the teacher, and outcomes over the last decade or so. In addition, all participants were asked to describe the nature of the changes when they perceived that changes had occurred.

Goals and Initiatives for Professional Development

In the area of goals and initiatives, the central office participants concurred that all professional development offered to the district was anchored or connected to the strategic plan as set forth for the school district. Specifically, some subsequent words or
terms that were used by central office participants were that the goals and initiatives were aligned with the strategic plan, or the strategic plan was a catalyst or the driving force for professional development. One particular central office participant stated, “We’ve had this strategic plan as our roadmap”. It was also noted by central office participants, that the district was responsive to all state and federal mandates and that professional development was planned accordingly to meet those mandates. Although, all central office participants had similar responses to goals and initiatives, one of the curriculum coordinators explicitly mentioned that with the loss of some recent curriculum leadership positions, the goals and initiatives of professional development had become unclear. The Director of Education emphasized that she was concerned that the professional development goals and initiatives were somewhat fragmented in terms of meeting district, building, and individual goals. The former district superintendent noted that although professional development goals and initiatives were driven by the strategic plan and guided by state and federal mandates, they were also more specifically targeted to instructional practice and embedded in the daily work of teachers. She cited the professional development school as an illustration of demonstrated embedded practice.

While the central office participant responses to goals and initiatives were fairly similar, the responses to goals and initiatives from the principal participants ranged from goals not being clear, to goals being building based, to goals being part of a living strategic plan for the district. One principal believed that the overall approach to professional development was reactionary, not part of a systemic plan and that there needed to be a broader set of goals for professional development. Only one of the principal participants specifically mentioned the strategic plan as it related to goals and
initiatives, and spoke of the strategic plan as a “living plan” so necessary changes could be made as needed, but credited the district superintendent as having conceived of the strategic plan in this manner. The two middle school principals believed that goals and initiatives were specific to teachers and buildings, therefore, based on organizational levels. One principal mentioned fragmentation of goals and initiatives, but in her view the fragmentation was due to focusing on too many goals at once.

The high involvement teacher participants indicated that the professional development goals and initiatives had become narrower and were explicitly targeted to curriculum initiatives. One notable trend that emerged from half of the high involvement participants (who all happened to teach in the same building) was the influence of the school principal, and how district and building professional development goals and initiatives were made visible to the faculty via the principal. Only one of the highly involved participants was unsure of the existence of district or building goals and initiatives.

As a group, the low involvement teacher participant responses to goals and initiatives ranged from the uncertainty of goals and initiatives, to not being clearly defined, to becoming narrow but specifically targeted. Several of the low involvement teacher participants tended to explain changes in goals and initiatives for professional development in reference to No Child Left Behind, content standards, changes in curriculum, or changes in the state’s Act 48 Professional Development Plan. One of the low involvement teacher participants felt she was an informed participant when it came to knowing the goals and initiatives, however, she wasn’t sure whether it was the district or her principal who made her feel confident about that. It should be noted that this
particular low involvement teacher participant was also a new faculty member in the
district and on the faculty of same elementary school as the three high involvement
participants who made a similar claim about their school principal.

**Delivery of Professional Development**

Several of the central office participants believed the *delivery methods* for
professional development were more focused, offered more options, and specifically
targeted all grade levels. The former superintendent specifically described two types of
professional development—the in-house option—that was delivered through district in-
service days, and the external option, which was tuition support for those wanting to take
graduate courses to expand their professional learning. It was specifically pointed out by
central office participants that the delivery methods of professional development would
be diminished due to the loss of the curriculum support teachers, curriculum coordinators,
and the established professional development structures in the district. The loss of the
curriculum support teachers and curriculum coordinators was a response made by all
participant groups and viewed as a negative factor in professional development in the
district. Another trend that emerged from all four groups of participants was that the
delivery methods were moving in the direction of more choices or more options being
available for teachers. Three elementary principals mentioned the Professional
Development School (PDS) as having an impact on the delivery of professional
development. One of the elementary school principals mentioned the PDS as a conduit
for inquiry and reflection and believed that a foundation was being created in his building
for these practices, which he believed could branch out to other schools in the district.
Another elementary principal discussed how the PDS offered professional development opportunities to the teachers, but did not believe that these opportunities changed the way professional development was delivered in the district as a whole. Three of the high involvement teacher participants did see some definite changes in the delivery of professional development, one had not seen any, and one wasn’t sure. The low involvement teacher participants were evenly divided—three believed the delivery methods had definitely changed and three believed there weren’t any changes. It should be noted that both teacher participant groups expressed the fact that the delivery of professional development was affected by the loss of the positions of the curriculum coordinators and the curriculum support teachers. Additionally, responses from both teacher groups in the area of delivery were more limited in comparison to other sections.

**Role of the Teacher in Professional Development**

When participants were asked if changes in professional development had occurred at the elementary level in terms of the *role of the teacher*, there were numerous similarities among the responses of the central office participants, elementary principals, and the high involvement teacher participants. Many of these changes were specifically related to the impact of the professional development school. Several areas of impact were noted among the central office participants, principal participants, and high involvement teacher participants. These areas of impact included: the impact of the yearlong mentorship, establishing a culture of inquiry, promoting collaboration, the professional development associate role (PDA) and other teacher leadership opportunities, and increased participation in professional development. All participant
groups with the exception of the low involvement teacher participants framed the overall changes in relationship to the role of the teacher as palpable, visible changes at the building level, and change opportunities promoted through the professional development school (PDS).

Many of the principals, central office participants, and high involvement teachers cited the professional development school (PDS) as being a factor that influenced the changes in the role of the teacher.

In contrast, the low involvement teacher participants did not mention any aspects that pertained to the PDS, but attributed changes to other factors. The specific ways in which the PDS had impacted the role of the teacher are discussed individually below.

**Yearlong Mentorship.** The yearlong mentorship emerged as a factor that impacted the role of the teacher in a dynamic way from the perspective of central office personnel, principals, and high involvement teacher participants. One particular central office participant stated:

> The responsibility of working with a novice teacher for a full year is a tremendous thing. A very wise administrator, who I could speak to very honestly said, part of this, (the yearlong internship) is coming in through the back door with teachers. There are lots of ways to learn. And some of these teachers will actually learn through their interns. So I think about that…and I watched that over the years. It’s a two-way street. And I thought…that’s pretty powerful.

Additionally, the former superintendent affirmed, “There isn’t a mentor around who wouldn’t acknowledge how much they grow in mentoring a newcomer or someone less senior than they are.”

A high involvement teacher participant, Beth, conveyed that being a mentor not only had a positive influence on her, but also on the students of the district. She
explained, “the opportunity of having an intern in your classroom means we are able to know our children so much better now than we did when we were the only teacher in the classroom.” She also elaborated on the impact of the PDA (Professional Development Associate) in the classroom: “By having another teacher (PDA) come in and be able to co-teach or to be able to fill in—so that I could just observe the intern. So there is one more flexible aspect of another teacher being able to be utilized in the classroom.” Julia, another high involvement teacher participant and former PDS intern concurred with Beth on working and collaborating with other professionals coming into her classroom. She stated, “I’ve learned so much from having additional people in my classroom and talking with, questioning and wondering about things…it keeps you going…keeps you motivated. We’re all sharing and learning…and seeing how…they cross all the time is fascinating.” Finally, one high involvement teacher participant summarized it this way: “The role of mentor is taken very seriously. They (mentors) take it as a serious contribution to the profession. It’s a way to learn together…it’s a leadership position.”

**Culture of Inquiry.** The central office participants, principals, and high involvement teacher participants reported the practice of inquiry as being a substantial component that changed the teacher’s role over the last decade. While it was apparent that all the central office participants were advocates of the practice of inquiry, one particular central office participant believed “inquiry positioned teachers at the helm of designing their own professional learning, thereby, generally enhancing and extending professional growth and development.” When articulating how the practice of inquiry affected the district, the former superintendent submitted, “The practice of inquiry has made a substantial change in terms of the application of learning.” The math curriculum
The principal participants’ responses described the role of the teacher as changing through the practice of inquiry by observing changes in the school culture. One elementary principal stated, “Inquiry was creating a climate or atmosphere of questioning our practice”. Another elementary principal reported how she supported the notion of “teachers being in charge of their own learning”. One elementary principal mentioned that “the practice of inquiry was beginning to work hand-in-hand with differentiated supervision in the district.”

One particular high involvement teacher participant believed that with the idea of inquiry and their principal supporting and encouraging inquiry questions and celebrating with the annual inquiry conference, “teachers were seeing themselves as researchers.” Another high involvement teacher participant concurred with the math curriculum coordinator in that she stated, “How the professional development school (PDS) instilled that whole inquiry mindset.”

**Collaboration.** Both the principals and high involvement teacher participants alike keenly noted an increase in collaboration among teachers. Both groups of participants cited examples of increased collaboration through co-teaching, peer coaching, increased professional dialogue from professional conferences/workshops, the practice of inquiry and extensive collaborative planning between teachers and university staff. For example, one high involvement teacher participant noted a couple of ways the role of teacher has changed—and contended,

I see more of an interest in doing more collaborative teaching and people being more interested in learning about co-teaching. So I see the participation. The co-
teaching groups have been interesting. And, having that carry over from the professional development school into more of a general school setting.

Another high involvement teacher participant elaborated on the “beauty of collaboration” at her particular school. For instance, “I was working with Nicole with peer teaching, but I was also indirectly working with Jill with Reading Café. So in more recent years, we have been a culture of professional development.” She continued to elaborate, “that at our school—we try to find opportunities to collaborate. I think we do a really good job actually with that.”

When discussing the role of the teacher in relationship to professional development, one of the elementary principals believed that much of the professional development in the district was fragmented and needed more of a focus through goal setting. However, she explained,

The professional development school has really helped because of the collaborative spirit—the way PDS makes decisions and the coursework. I look at the science work that Carla has done…I feel very fortunate because I have several teachers here who have worked very closely with her. The science instruction that I see in this building is very strong because of that. And so this was a natural way because it was built out of teachers’ interests—like Judy, Kimber, and Jenn—they are really interested, focused, and they are changing the way science is taught.

Professional Development Associate/Other Teacher Leadership Opportunities

According to the central office participants, principals, and high involvement teacher participants the Professional Development Associate (PDA) position was a role that not only changed the individual but also was empowering to the teacher when she returned to her elementary school. Moreover, the change affected other leadership roles in their perspective buildings and increased teacher leadership opportunities in the school district. The former assistant to the superintendent, who had previously been an
elementary principal in the district observed changes in the teachers who had returned to
the classroom from the Professional Development Associate (PDA) position. He quickly
recognized their leadership skills within the school and how these skills could be utilized
not only in their school but also could be extended out into the district. Another
elementary principal participant believed that one factor that had influenced the role of
the teacher was through staff members co-teaching with university faculty and
curriculum support staff. She specifically stated, “It’s very powerful when you have
people on board who are actually training other teachers.”

It was evident that the high involvement teacher participants had been involved
with the professional development school (PDS) in various ways and had taken
advantage of many of the opportunities offered through the PDS. According to the high
involvement teacher participants, there was increased empowerment by teachers to seek
professional development and more of an ongoing idea of professional development as
perceived through a school lens. One high involvement teacher participant claimed “I
now realize professional development is working with other teachers…collaboration.”
Another high involvement participant stated, “There is constant conversation about who
we are as teachers.”

In contrast, the low involvement teacher participants did not mention any aspects
that pertained to the PDS when discussing reasons why the role of the teacher has
changed. Three of the six low involvement teacher participants concurred that there were
changes in the role of the teacher over the last decade or so, but suggested the changes
were due to other causes such as No Child Left Behind, Content Standards, and the
state’s professional development plan (Act 48). Two of the low involvement teacher
participants alleged that the loss of the curriculum support teachers (CST’s) evoked the increase in teacher leadership in the district because other teachers with specific content expertise were filling the void as teacher leaders.

In direct contrast to the other three groups of participants concerning professional development, the low involvement teacher participants also felt that teachers had increased demands and expectations placed on them and needed more of a voice in professional development. Lastly, there was one low involvement teacher participant (new to the district) who stated, “Teachers are empowered by seeking more professional development opportunities on their own.” This particular participant also believed that instructional leadership from the school principal and the overall school climate were critical components that supported changes in the role of the teacher.

**Outcomes**

The last component of change related to professional development that all participants responded to was *outcomes*. Almost all the central office participants perceived changes in the outcomes, although, the math curriculum coordinator believed the professional development outcomes were dependent upon unified efforts from individual school buildings. Three of the central office participants believed the professional development outcomes had been enhanced through the professional development school (PDS) partnership. Specific responses in relationship to outcome changes and professional development included: more satisfaction, increased engagement, more authentic and ongoing professional development, and teachers holding different roles that promoted seeing the “big picture” therefore, supporting teacher
leadership. The Director of Education expressed that the overall path of professional
development was to increase professional growth and decrease fragmentation in a very
complex system.

In comparison, the essential difference between the central office participants and
the principal participants was the fact that the principals viewed the changes in the
outcomes of professional development mainly through a building lens. Moreover, many
of the principals also described the changes as being influenced by the leadership of the
school. One particular principal pointed out that there were “pockets of change”
throughout the district due to the school’s leadership. Another principal felt that the
professional development school (PDS) was a conduit for professional development in
his building and could envision this as an avenue for the district to pursue. One of the
elementary principals was adamant that the district did not measure outcomes and
believed that was the missing piece of professional development. Some of the changes
observed and expressed by the principals were student motivation and learning, teachers’
self-motivation, an on-going idea of professional development, individuals sharing new
experiences, and teacher generated and teacher led professional development.

Four of the six high involvement teacher participants believed that the
professional development outcomes resulted in changes. While the principal participants
perceived changes in professional development outcomes through a building lens, the
high involvement teacher participants viewed the professional development changes with
a three-way lens: No Child Left Behind, perceived changes within their school, and
through the professional development school (PDS).
Three of the low involvement teacher participants believed there had been changes in the outcomes of professional development. The other three low involvement participants’ responses to the outcome changes ranged from staying the same, not being sure, to the only changes being curricula. Similar to the principal participants and the high involvement teacher participants, one of the low involvement participants (school librarian) also perceived the changes in outcomes through a dual lens: from the perspective of the district, and how the outcomes impacted her as a professional. Although she perceived through a dual lens, she was the only participant who discussed the outcomes through the view of district administration. Some of the changes noted in the outcomes by the low involvement teacher participants were pressures from state and federal mandates, such as No Child Left Behind, district administrative issues, as well as a decrease in monetary funds from the district for professional development.

**Nature of Changes**

Finally, this section describes the similarities and differences in the perceptions of all participants pertaining to the *nature of the changes* or lack of changes in professional development over the last decade or so.

The perceptions of the central office participants pertaining to the nature of the changes were mixed. Some participants believed some changes were positive and some negative depending on the issue. However, all four groups of participants viewed the state and federal mandates that had come about over time negatively. All participant groups with the exception of the high involvement teacher participants noted the loss of the curriculum support teachers and curriculum coordinators as a negative change. One
central office participant explained how it was difficult to categorize the changes as positive or negative. According to the Director of Education:

I think an increased appreciation within the field as far as when staff development works, when professional development is effective. You know…what are the attributes or characteristics of the structures that have to be in place. And the real life experiences of the individuals who have been part of the professional development school (PDS), part of the learning communities, part of the critical friends’ groups at the high school, the experiences to report back. I would think many of our faculty would tell you, they want more of that…and they want more control over that.

When responding to the nature of changes, the Language Arts curriculum coordinator expressed it this way:

I believe having the PDS involved with us has raised the whole level of thinking about education…you have raised the expectation for teachers who assume the responsibility of taking on a novice teacher. And by that very statement—that says that you as a mentor teacher have got to get your game going. You better be thinking about what best practices are and what you learned in professional development. Now I see what they mean because I have to show this intern how to do this. And to that extent…PDS…I think has had a huge impact on what happens in the classroom through professional development.

More than half of the eight elementary principal participants characterized the changes as largely positive. Lori, an elementary principal stressed the onsite courses such as inquiry and mentoring that were offered through the PDS as being a vast change in the type of coursework that had been offered by the district in the past. She felt “courses like inquiry and mentoring made coursework more purposeful.” The last big change that Lori expressed was classroom teachers becoming professional development associates (PDA’s) and classroom teachers co-teaching with university staff and “how these experiences enhanced leadership capacity.”
According to the high involvement teacher participants, they believed the nature of the changes related to professional development were also largely positive. One high involvement teacher participant believed that without the PDS, she would not have known about inquiry or morning meeting (The Responsive School Classroom). The low involvement teacher participants’ perceptions of the nature of the changes were wide and varied. They ranged from largely positive, somewhat positive, largely negative, to not being sure. One of the low involvement teacher participants who was not sure what caused any changes put it this way:

I would say that having many years of experience, those changes have not had a big impact on me because—although, I have profited from a lot of those professional development workshops and presentations and all of those pieces have helped me in the long run…I incorporate bits and pieces from here and there—and make things work well for myself without needing all of that professional development that a new teacher might need.

**Assertions**

Over the last two decades or so, school-university partnerships have emerged and developed, and in many cases have been envisioned as “cornerstones to simultaneously improve teacher preparation, teacher education, and public schools” (Teitel, 2004). Through the maturation and expansion of many of these partnerships, numerous changes have occurred in both teacher education and in K-12 schools. As schools and school districts strive to create structures, programs, and specific approaches for professional development, it is essential to review and assess the type of professional learning that improves and enhances instruction (National Staff Development Council, 2009). Specifically, this study examined the impact of a PDS partnership on a school district’s professional development program at the elementary level.
Assertion 1: There were distinct differences between the high and low involvement teachers in terms of their perceptions of professional development opportunities available to teachers over the ten-year period. The first assertion derived from the analysis of this study’s data revealed that some distinct differences exist between high involvement teacher participants and low involvement teacher participants in their perceptions of professional development in the school district over the last decade or so. In some ways, it is not surprising to have highly involved participants sharing differing opinions from those less involved. However, in this case, these differences were somewhat unexpected considering that the PDS partnership is intended to be a whole school endeavor.

Interestingly, the overall viewpoint from the district regarding the partnership is “Every school a PDS school.”

In the first difference, the high involvement teacher participants believed that the umbrella for professional development was bigger and broader, while the low involvement teacher participants claimed the focus of professional development had become more rigid and narrow. Another difference between the two groups was the component of teacher voice. The high involvement participants felt there was an increase in teacher voice; however, the low involvement participants claimed they needed more “say” in professional development. They did not appear to experience the ownership of their own professional development. The next difference between the high involvement teacher participants and the low involvement teacher participants centered on their overall perceptions of professional development. The high involvement teacher participants acknowledged more professional opportunities through the PDS partnership.
They noted that an expanded variety of roles were being made available and utilized through the partnership including the yearlong mentorship, the role of professional development associate (PDA), teacher writer groups, the option of co-teaching with university faculty, and teacher as researcher. The low involvement teacher participants did not acknowledge any enhanced professional development opportunities or role changes directly attributable to the PDS partnership, but did mention professional development opportunities offered through school district in-service and workshops and courses through the local intermediate unit. As Sandholtz (2002) contends, “school/university partnerships offer a means of expanding professional development opportunities for teachers and moving beyond more traditional models.” (p. 828).

Although, some of the high involvement teacher participants and two low involvement teacher participants expressed their view of professional development through a dual lens—their dual lens was different. The high involvement teacher participants’ lens consisted of NCLB and the PDS partnership. The low involvement teacher participants (in particular the school librarian) viewed professional development not only through an individual perspective, but also through the lens of the district leadership—specifically mentioning the pressures of NCLB through state and federal mandates. Since both the school librarian and instructional support teacher have positions that take them out of the classroom on a regular basis—perhaps their view may include a broader perspective than a typical classroom teacher.

The last difference between the high involvement teacher participants and the low involvement teacher participants was the role the school principal plays in professional development. While most of the high involvement teacher participants acknowledged the
influence, support, and inspiration from the school principal in terms of professional
development and learning individually and collectively, only one low involvement
teacher participant mentioned the school principal or as she stated “the role of the
principal has changed—to more of an instructional leader.” It should be noted that this
particular low involvement teacher participant was not only new to the district and
school, but also a teacher on staff with a few of the high involvement teacher participants
with a principal new to their school but not new to the PDS. This particular low
involvement teacher participant credited her school principal with creating an
environment that encouraged risk-taking and collaboration, making the staff aware of all
building and district goals and initiatives, and supporting teachers’ continuous learning
and professional growth. The principal mentioned by this specific low involvement
teacher was also the principal who alleged using the PDS as a conduit for professional
development and to build upon and extend the structures created by the PDS.

Educational theorists suggest that the school principal plays a pivotal role in
teacher leadership by creating and supporting a climate that fosters teacher leadership.
York-Barr and Duke (2004) submit that: There are three significant categories that
influence teacher leadership and cannot be sustained without principal leadership and
support—“school culture and context, roles and relationships, and professional
development structures” (pp. 269-271). As noted by Sterrett (2015), “principals are the
catalyst for cultivating teacher leadership in the school, a practice that can result in
improved learning for students” (p. 44).

In the 2012 NSSE yearbook, Nolan, Grove, Parks, Leftwich, and Peters found that
the research to date on the impact of PDS engagement on school principals has focused
on two areas of inquiry—the impact of how a principal’s engagement in PDS activities affects the school as an organization, the second area of inquiry examines the impact that a professional development school partnership has on individual principals. The literature suggests that principals do vary in levels of engagement depending on whether they view the professional development school partnership as central or peripheral to the school’s mission. When a professional development school partnership is embraced by the school principal as an integral part of the school’s capacity to impact student learning, PDS becomes a part of as opposed to apart from the daily work of the principal (Tilford, 2007).

**Assertion 2: Those groups that are most directly involved with the PDS partnership perceived that the PDS had directly impacted both teacher leadership and the practice of inquiry in the district.** All four participant groups agreed that the role of the teacher had changed; however, three of the four groups attribute the changes to the influence of the PDS partnership while the low involvement teacher participants attribute the changes to another factor. Three of the four participant groups claimed that the PDS partnership enhanced leadership opportunities within the school district, and that the Professional Development Associate (PDA) role enriched and reinforced other leadership roles in individual schools. They also recognized increased participation in professional development, as demonstrated by teacher-led and teacher-generated professional development in the school district and individual schools. Although, the low involvement teacher participants believed the role of the teacher had changed, they attributed the changes primarily to the loss of the curriculum support teachers (CST’s) and curriculum coordinators in the district. These
curricular positions had been in the school district for many years and were responsible for researching, planning and implementing all professional development for the district. The CST’s and curriculum coordinators were responsible for keeping all staff abreast of all curriculum changes and related state and federal mandates. They were highly respected by all staff, and in some cases, highly dependent on them for professional development support whether curricular or pedagogical. Consequently, the low involvement teacher participants felt that the changed role of the teacher was due to the loss of these curricular positions, and teachers were needed and accessed for their expertise particularly in content areas to fill the void. Surprisingly, while the central office participants, principals, and low involvement teacher participants mentioned or acknowledged the loss of CST’s and curriculum coordinators—the high involvement teacher participants did not.

A core goal of this particular university-school partnership is the development and enactment of teacher leadership both within the PDS community and outside the community. As evidenced through this study, high involvement teachers perceived that teacher leadership opportunities are presenting themselves and they are taking advantage of these extended and expanded opportunities and options. Many of the high involvement teacher participants mentioned being more confident, empowered, and highly supported in both teaching and learning efforts through the influence of the PDS partnership.

The literature has described different ways of conceptualizing teacher leadership and how it has evolved. This partnership’s conception of teacher leadership appears to be aligned with Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan’s (2000) third wave of teacher leadership and second-order changes that focus on “re-culturing our schools and providing space for
teachers to meaningfully participate in our schools as organizations” (Evans, 1996, as cited in Silva et al., 2000, pp. 780-781). Second order changes are described as being “systemic in nature and would lead to fundamental changes in the goals, structures, roles, and norms of an organization” (Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan [2000], p. 781). Wasley (1991), (as cited in Silva et al., 2000), defines the third wave of teacher leaders as those teacher leaders who “help redesign schools, mentor their colleagues, engage in problem solving at the school level, and provide professional growth activities for colleagues” (p. 5). In aligning with the inter-organizational aspects of a PDS partnership—“teachers serve as liaisons and boundary-spanners, working to bridge the gap between the world of schools and colleges” (Teitel, 1995, p. 13). Darling-Hammond, Cobb, and Bullmaster (1995) claimed, “As teachers become mentors and teacher educators, as they assume greater responsibility for the collective profession, they also become more comfortable with the notion that seeking and leading collective improvements in practice are aspects of a professional role” (p. 19).

School-university partnerships provide a wide range of valuable activities and structures to increase not only professional development options but also more organic leadership opportunities, which would not be obtainable in more traditional forms of professional development (Sandholtz, 2002). In the view of three groups of participants, some of the activities and opportunities in which teacher leadership manifests itself within this school-university partnership include: mentoring student teacher interns, designing, co-planning and co-teaching university courses and seminars, creation of critical friends’ groups, grant writing, planning and leading new teacher Induction Programs, and participation in collaborative research. As stated by Boles and Troen
(1994), “Teachers in PDS’s are expected to exert influence beyond their classrooms and play important roles in the larger arena of the school, school district, and professional community” (p. 1). Additionally, Dagen and Bean (2014) recognize the importance of professional growth of individual teachers, their primary goal is professional learning as it affects and extends the capacity of teachers in a school or school organization. Although, collaboration has been mentioned and discussed in earlier studies as a key component of effective professional development ---there has been a robust emphasis on systematic approaches to developing and extending such collaborative efforts.

The three participant groups most directly involved in the PDS also asserted that the PDS impacted the school district by creating a “mindset of inquiry” as a significant form of professional development. When articulating the nature of changes in professional development, these participant groups described inquiry as the impetus for some of the changes. The central office participants, the building principals (with the exception of the two middle school principals), and the high involvement teacher participants described how inquiry influenced the changes through some of the following:

1) Practice of inquiry enhanced professional development;
2) Inquiry practice created a climate of questioning our practice;
3) The whole idea of inquiry came about through PDS;
4) Teachers seeing themselves as researchers;
5) Practice of inquiry made substantial changes in application of learning;
6) The practice of inquiry affects changes in school culture; and
7) Practice of inquiry works hand-in-hand with differentiated supervision in the district.
During the last two decades or so, inquiry has been recognized by a variety of organizations as a fundamental component of PDS partnerships. From the very beginning, the Holmes Partnership (1986) emphasized the importance of research by all participants and submitted “One general guiding principle for creating PDS sites is that they must include a commitment to making reflection and inquiry a central part of the school” (Holmes Group, 1986, p. 71). In order to bring precision and support to PDS partnerships, NCATE developed five standards. Specifically, the first Standard— “Learning Community” defines a PDS as a “Learning-centered community that supports the integrated learning and development of P-12 students, candidates, and PDS partners through inquiry-based practices” (NCATE, 2001, p. 11). Because the PDS partners view the partnership as integral to their individual purposes, the partnership influences change (NCATE, 2011). Further support for the endorsement of inquiry-based research as an essential component of a PDS partnership arose from the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) in one of the Nine Essentials, which states: “Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants”. In concert with the Holmes Partnership, NCATE, and NAPDS, this PDS partnership has maintained that teacher inquiry be a core component of the partnership from the outset. According to Badiali, Nolan, Zembal-Saul, and Manno (2011), “The intention in establishing the PDS was to create a community of practice in which all participants come to embrace an inquiry orientation toward teaching” (p. 324). Moreover, Badiali et al., added, they were aided by the “notion of inquiry as a stance”. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999, 2009) have suggested, to call inquiry a “stance” is to “regard inquiry as a worldview, a critical habit of mind, and a dynamic and fluid way of
knowing and being in the world of educational practice that carries across professional careers and educational settings” (p. 197). This inquiry stance goes beyond the notion of an inquiry project or a series of steps to solve a problem and has the potential for genuine transformative practice for all educational stakeholders. Wei, et al. (2009) concluded:

Professional learning can have a powerful effect on teacher skills and knowledge and on student learning if it is sustained over time, focused on important content, and embedded in the work of professional learning communities that support ongoing improvement in teachers’ practice. (p. 7)

PDS partnerships embrace on-going professional development embedded in the daily work of professional learning communities, while utilizing inquiry-based, research-based practices that require continuous inquiry to inform teaching and learning practices (Holmes Group, 1990). As Shroyer et al. (2007) pointed out, “As schools participate in simultaneous renewal through inquiry, they establish a culture of collaboration, inquiry, and continuous growth” (as cited in Mitchel, Hindin, & Moonan, 2011, p. 216).

The shared perceptions of all of the participant groups with the exception of the low involvement teacher participants imply that the PDS partnership has contributed to the development of a professional learning context. This professional context is a highly collaborative environment; that supports a heightened inquiry while increasing opportunities for teacher leadership capacity. As Lambert avows (2003), “Teachers become alive when their schools and districts provide opportunities for skillful participation, inquiry, dialogue, and reflection. They become alive in the company of others. Such environments evolve and grow teacher leadership” (p. 422). Carpenter and Sherretz (2012) sum it up this way:

Through PDS partnerships, new approaches for examining and improving practices are gained through integrating partners’ expertise and knowledge of
practice. As a result, teachers are assuming more leadership functions in regards to developing the school as a learning organization, which aligns with PDS partnerships potentially serving as instruments for teacher leadership. (p. 97)

Assertion 3: In contrast to central office participants who saw professional development through a district lens, perceptions about professional development were viewed through a school building lens by principals, high involvement teachers and low involvement teachers. These perceptions became evident specifically in participants’ responses in the categories of goals and initiatives and the overall outcomes of professional development. These three groups articulated that the district professional development goals and initiatives were not clearly defined or made explicit; some were not sure that goals even existed. Some of the teacher participants explained that they became cognizant of goals and initiatives through their school principal. A few of the school principals conveyed that the approach to professional development was reactionary and not part of a systemic plan and thereby some fragmentation in professional development occurred. One of the school principals felt there were too many competing goals and that goals and priorities changed too often, which also led to fragmentation. The middle school principals articulated goals and initiatives based on organizational levels. In contrast, the central office reported that the goals and initiatives were connected and anchored by the district strategic plan. However, the Director of Education for the district, whose role was integral to professional development, also believed there was some fragmentation with professional development in the district. Although, she asserted that the strategic plan was the consistent catalyst for professional development. The teacher participant groups and school principals expressed more of an ongoing
conception of professional development through a school building lens as opposed to not observing an ongoing view of professional development at the district level. The school principals were in agreement with this view and believed that pockets of change in outcomes in individual buildings were due to school leadership.

**What Was Not Said**

While the highly involved teacher participants believed they had experienced enhanced professional development as a result of their participation in the PDS partnership, the researcher had expected specific examples of how these experiences changed or enriched their teaching practices. Although, inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and teacher leadership were articulated as positive outcomes of the PDS partnership, more explicit and detailed illustrations of each component were not offered.

Since professional development schools are grounded in best practices and designed to link learning theory to instructional practice, exemplars illustrating these comprehensive elements were not specified. The researcher was aware of and had observed particular practices within this partnership such as increasing a more positive classroom learning environment as promoted through the Responsive Classroom approach, more inquiry-based strategies or techniques to formulate questions that increase engagement, or how to facilitate effective group discussions to increase critical thinking and increase student participation. However, examples of these instructional strategies and how they affected teaching practice were not communicated.

It should be noted that within the last few years, the school district recognized the importance of hiring coaches in helping teachers implement and sustain new practices in
the classroom and perhaps with utilizing coaches ---many best practices can be supported and extended and integrated with the PDS partnership.

**Conclusions and Implications**

This study sought to examine the impact of a PDS partnership on the function of professional development at the district level and the nature of any changes that had occurred as a direct result of the PDS. We can surmise from the responses of the high involvement teacher participants that they believe they are experiencing enhanced professional development as a result of their active participation in the PDS partnership. It is also clear that the high involvement teacher participants believe that their own voices are being heard in relationship to professional learning and growth, which may in turn support school renewal. This is a powerful affirmation that these teachers are viewing themselves as professionals who have a voice in their profession. As revealed from the data collected during this study, all of the participant groups with the exception of the low involvement teacher participants, perceived that the PDS partnership offered and supported multiple opportunities for professional development including enhanced teacher leadership possibilities, generating a culture of inquiry, and empowerment through teacher-generated and teacher-led professional development.

Collaborative and broader approaches to professional development that are embedded in the daily work of educators, view teachers less as a passive recipient of traditional professional development and more as learners actively engaged in activities, that enable them to question, inquire, and make needed changes in instruction. When
teachers are perceived in this light, it opens a new path of professional development that supports teachers as learners and sees professional growth and development as central to school-wide change. A key finding from Wei, et al. (2009) reported that “Collaborative approaches to professional learning can promote school change that extends beyond individual classrooms” (p. 5). In addition, they also claim that “providing teachers with opportunities to participate in extended learning opportunities and productive collaborative communities allows teachers to work together and learn from one another through mentoring, peer coaching, conducting research, and collectively guiding professional learning decisions” (p. 6).

It was clear that those participants who were most directly involved in the opportunities for professional development created by the PDS partnership perceived enhanced learning in collaboration, reflection, inquiry, and teacher leadership. These are positive outcomes for professional development and unlikely to result from more traditional types of professional development offered a few days a year at designated district in-service days. Why then do some teachers choose not to participate? If low involvement teachers get their professional development from a few days of district in-service and high involvement teachers are taking advantage of professional development opportunities and options through the PDS partnership—can this lead to a two-tiered professional development system? How do these different options affect individual schools if the overall goal is to increase self-renewing schools? The very concept of Professional Development School implies that PDS is a whole school endeavor. In this particular setting, after all of the elementary schools had the opportunity to participate in the PDS partnership, the Superintendent at that time emphasized “Every school a PDS
school”. Although, the PDS partnership has been in existence for more than a decade, there are staff members who have only been minimally involved in the partnership and in some cases, not at all.

Consequently, it would behoove both PDS partners (district and university) to learn why some staff members are not becoming engaged with the PDS partnership after such an extended period of time. Since the partnership’s beginning—there has been much turnover in staff from central office—to principals—to teachers. It may be a good idea for all new staff members to have the opportunity to become acquainted with the history and purpose of the existence of the partnership. Additionally, an inquiry could be made as to why some staff members are less engaged and benefiting less from the partnership’s professional development opportunities. It would also be beneficial to include special area teachers in this inquiry in order to increase their participation in the PDS. Two of the low involvement teachers in this study—a school librarian and an instructional support teacher—felt that the PDS partnership specifically served classroom teachers. It would also be beneficial if the school district would ensure that district strategic plans and professional development plans include the PDS partnership so all staff were aware of the partnership’s expectations.

The university also has a stake in this inquiry in that increasing the numbers of teachers who participate in PDS professional development activities can increase the pool of elementary teachers who might serve as mentors for PDS interns. In order to increase the involvement of all teachers in particular schools there are some strategies or avenues that the PDS partnership could also employ. Of course, courting more teachers into becoming mentors, especially newer teachers to the profession and to the district, is
important. The mentoring process could also continue to be deliberately cultivated by offering courses on mentoring and teacher leadership. Some school principals advocated that offering university courses such as these in some of their schools was greatly received by their staff members over the last decade. Courses in subject content would also be beneficial for more experienced teachers. Since teachers relish professional development experiences led by their colleagues, another avenue would be to tap into teachers’ expertise (who are not involved in PDS) and have them share their expertise and illustrate examples of successful teaching practices and co-teaching partners at seminars, courses, workshops, etc. The PDS partnership could host social get-togethers during the course of a school year at individual schools to develop and strengthen relationships with all principals and faculties to build on future social capital.

It is also clear from the literature, that the school principal’s leadership in the area of professional development is crucial to the nature and growth of high quality professional development and the creation of a learning community. Participants in this study also identified the role of principal as crucial. Principals are the key players in providing robust leadership for teaching and learning in a school organization. Highly effective principals work to move teachers toward high levels of professional autonomy. They are instructional leaders, learners, coaches, and facilitators. As one principal in this study stated—she was the “lead learner” in her school. Some of the principals in this study indicated that there were “pockets of change” in some schools, but alleged that school leadership had a lot to do with those changes. This finding suggests that the PDS partnership could work more deliberately with principals in helping them to see the value of the PDS in terms of professional development, and how to utilize the partnership to
advance and achieve not only their school goals, but perhaps to expand teacher participation in the partnership.

There are other PDS partnerships, such as the one at the University of Colorado in Denver, a long-standing PDS partnership that has a Principal Partner Institute that brings together all principals in their partnership for a few sessions a year so they may interact with each other and “to collaboratively build an understanding of the intellectual capital emerging in the partnership” and how they can utilize the assets and resources from the partnership towards their school goals (Gutierra & Field, 2009, p.22). This type of structure would be helpful for all principals, but in particular for principals new to a PDS partnership. Perhaps this PDS partnership might consider looking at other sites to identify promising practices that can be helpful in nurturing principal engagement.

There was also a clear perception that this PDS partnership is evolving into a “culture of inquiry” as expressed by all participant groups with the exception of the low involvement teacher participants. A PDS context is designed and deliberate in creating a culture of inquiry or an inquiry-oriented community. According to Reid (2004), inquiry will only flourish when the right conditions are in place to promote it. The school principal in collaboration with the PDS is situated to create the kind of conditions so the practice of inquiry extends to every school.

This PDS partnership exemplifies the elements as essential for effective professional development, which is focused on instruction, collaboration, grounded in context, continuous, and engages teachers in inquiry and reflection (Guskey, 2003; Hawley& Valli, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Gilles et al. (2010) found that “increased communication through inquiry provides a new lens for authentic
school renewal, illustrating the impact prolonged action research has on professional learning communities” (p.93).

As revealed from the data collected in this study, three of the four participant groups perceived that the PDS partnership supported a culture of inquiry, however, there is a lingering question as to how to extend the practice of inquiry so that all stakeholders can experience the benefits of inquiry. A shift to increased collaborative school-wide inquiry would also support the effort—“every teacher a leader” (Jacobs, Gordon, & Solis, 2013). David (2009) further argues, “Schools and districts need to understand and value collaborative inquiry among teachers and administrators, and needs two assets—leadership and support” (p. 87). Educators who are challenged to pose questions become activists for professional development that is relevant to their own context. Issues and questions that emerge and studied from a particular context—specifically a school, can lead to more strategic participation and connections to programs and partnerships beyond the school and perhaps move an isolated culture to more of a collaborative learning culture (Little, 2006).

Lastly, this study revealed that all participant groups, with the exception of the central office participants, believed the goals and initiatives for professional development in the district were either not clearly defined or made explicit. Most of the teacher participants became informed about professional development goals and initiatives from their school principal which may account for them explaining goals through a school building lens. It would be beneficial for the central office staff to present a cohesive set of professional development goals, which are part of the district strategic plan and the function of the PDS partnership as it relates to professional development. School
principals should emphasize these goals and differentiate between district goals, building goals, and how the PDS partnership can assist the district/school in achieving their goals.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of this study indicate multiple opportunities for future research studies in regards to professional development, school-university partnerships, and teacher leadership and principal leadership in a PDS partnership.

Transforming practices in schools is a complex process. Borko (2004) reminds us that teachers’ involvement in professional learning communities leads to changed practices and professional interactions. As a result of teachers being highly involved in a PDS partnership for an extended period of time—do their beliefs and practices about teaching and learning change as they participate in a PDS partnership? Are teachers who take on leadership roles within PDS partnerships conduits in changing school cultures? These would be interesting questions to pursue in future research.

During the course of the interviewing process, several teacher participants mentioned the role of the principal and the influence that she/he had on their professional growth through structures and options within their own school. Therefore, future studies that investigate the role of a principal’s leadership in a PDS partnership, specifically, how the principal utilizes a PDS partnership as a conduit or mechanism for professional development could provide additional insight for school principals as well as other administrators.

An additional fertile area for future research concerns the impact of PDS partnerships on other school and district-wide functions. Does PDS have an impact on supervision? Curriculum development? Assessment? Instruction? As noted in the
rationale for this study, while there is a growing body of research that focuses on the impact of PDS partnerships on individuals and on roles, there is almost no existing literature that focuses on school and district-wide functions. Such studies could be powerful in assessing the impact of professional development schools.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

APPROVED IRB PROCESS

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The Office for Research Protections The 330 Building, Suite 205 University Park, PA 16802
| 814-865-1775 | ORProtections@psu.edu


Study Title

1. Study Title

The Impact of a Professional Development School Partnership on Professional Development in The Partner School District: A Case Study

2. Type of eSubmission

New

Home Department for Study

3. Department where research is being conducted or if a student study, the department overseeing this research study.

Curriculum and Instruction

Review Level

4. What level of review do you expect this research to need?
NOTE: The final determination of the review level will be determined by the IRB Administrative Office. Choose from one of the following: Exemption
5. Exempt Review Categories:

Choose one or more of the following categories that apply to your research. You may choose more than one category but your research must meet one of the following categories to be considered for expedited review.

[X] Category 2: Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observations of public behavior unless:

**Basic Information: Association with Other Studies**

6. Is this research study associated with other IRB-approved studies, e.g., this study is an extension study of an ongoing study or this study will use data or tissue from another ongoing study? No

7. Where will this research study take place? Choose all that apply.

[X] Other Site(s)

You have indicated that the research study location will include an outside laboratory or other non-PSU site(s).

8. List each site and provide contact information [name & address] for each site.

Dr. Pamela Francis - Contact for State College Area School District Office, Boalsburg Elementary School Corl Street Elementary School Easterly Parkway Elementary School

Ferguson Township Elementary School Grays Woods Elementary School Houserville Elementary School Lemont Elementary School

Mount Nittany Middle School Panorama Village Elementary School Park Forest Elementary School Park Forest Middle School Radio Park Elementary School

9. Do any of these sites have an IRB?
No

If you answer "No" to the above question, provide a letter of agreement/permission from an individual in a decision making position indicating their willingness to participate in the research study.

10. Does this research study involve any of the following centers?

[X] None of these centers are involved in this study

11. Describe the facilities available to conduct the research for the duration of the study.

Classrooms and offices of individual schools previously listed.

12. As this study being conducted as part of a class requirement?

For additional information regarding the difference between a research study and a class requirement, see IRB Policy I – “Student Class Assignments/Projects” located at http://www.research.psu.edu/policies/research-protections/irb/ irb-policy-1.

No

Personnel

13. Personnel List

A. PSU User ID: dag181@psu.edu

Name: Grove, Doris Ann

Department Affiliation: Curriculum and Instruction

Role in this study: Principal Investigator
B. PSU User ID: n78

Name: Nolan, James F

Department Affiliation: Curriculum and Instruction

Role in this study: Advisor

Procedures: Principal investigator- will recruit participants, collect all data, analyze data, write reports for doctoral dissertation

Experience: I am a doctoral candidate. I have taken several courses in research design and qualitative research and have participated in other research projects

Procedures: Dr. Nolan is my thesis supervisor. He will oversee all processes

Experience: Dr., Nolan is a full professor who has conducted and advised multiple research studies.

Funding Source

14. Is this research study funded? Funding could include the sponsor providing drugs or devices for the study.

No

NOTE: If the study is funded or funding is pending, submit a copy of the grant proposal or statement of work for review.

15. Does this research study involve prospectively providing treatment or therapy to participants?

No

Conflict of Interest
16. Do any of the investigator(s), key personnel, and/or their spouses or dependent children have a financial or business interest(s) as defined by PSU Policy RA20, “Individual Conflict of Interest,” associated with this research? NOTE: There is no de minimus in human participant research studies (i.e., all amount must be reported).

No

_Exemption Questions (Prescreening)_

17. Does this research study involve prisoners?

No

18. Does this research study involve the use of deception?

No

19. Does this research study involve any FDA regulated drug, biologic or medical device?

No

20. Does this research study involve the use of protected health information covered under the Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA)?

No

_Exemption Questions_

21. Maximum number of participants/samples/records to be enrolled.

90

22. Age range – Check all that apply:

[X] 26 – 40 years [X] 41 – 65 years [X] 65 + years

23. Describe the steps that will be used to identify and/or contact prospective participants. If applicable, explain how you have access
to lists or records of potential participants. The participants will receive a letter of invitation to participate in the study. (See attachment) All the participants have worked or are currently working in the State College School District whereby their names and contact information have been known, and is considered public information.

24. Choose the types of recruitment materials that will be used.

[X] Letter [X] Email

25. When and where will participants be approached to obtain informed consent/assent? If participants could be non-English speaking, explain how consent/assent will be obtained. If consent/assent will not be obtained, explain why consent/assent will not be obtained. After arriving at the interview site, I will obtain consent from the interviewee to participate in the study and have the interviewee complete an informed consent form for IRB. All participants are English speaking.

26. Provide the background information and rationale for performing the study.

Given the importance of professional development for all educators, it is important to understand how this phenomenon is experienced within the context of a professional development school (PDS) community. As schools and school districts strive to create new structures and models for professional development, it is vital to review and evaluate the type of professional learning that improves instruction (National Staff Development Council, 2009). With the advent of professional development schools, Levine (1997) argues, "school districts, with some exceptions continue to ignore the potential impact that PDSs can have in terms of professional development, recruitment, and new teacher induction" (p. 6). Therefore, the purpose of this study will be to examine the influence of a PDS partnership on a school district's professional development program. More specifically, I will investigate whether or not the State College Area School District represents one of those "exceptions" that Levine highlights, in regard to how professional development, as a function, has been impacted by the PDS
collaborative.


27. Summarize the study’s key objectives, aims or goals.

The central question for this study is: What is the impact of a professional development school partnership on the school district's professional development program at the elementary level?

The specific research questions include: 1. As individuals in a variety of roles and contexts perceive it----has the elementary professional development program in the district changed as a result of the PDS partnership?

2. If changes in professional development have occurred at the elementary level, in what areas have the changes occurred?

   a) Assumptions underlying professional development? b) Goals for professional development? c) Delivery of professional development? d) Outcomes of professional development?

3. What factors explain the changes that have occurred?

28. Describe the major inclusion and exclusion criteria.

All the participants from all three categories Central Office Administrators and Curriculum Personnel, Elementary Principals, and Teachers need to have been in the school district since at least 1998.

29. Summarize the study’s procedures by providing a step-by-step process of what participants will be asked to do.
In keeping with best traditions of a case study, the interviews will be conducted with individuals within the study sample as one means of data collection. The semi-structured interview will be utilized in this study. A semi-structured interview involves certain steps as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These steps include:

1. "Preparing for the interview" will necessitate 'practicing' with a stand in to help decide on an appropriate sequence of questions, and to help the interviewer decide upon his/her role in this process. 2. "Initial Moves" is asking general questions to give the respondent time to adjust to the interviewer and to "organize his/her head for the interview questions. 3. "Pacing the Interview and Keeping It Productive " entails creating a rhythm of questioning and encouraging responses that create "talk turns" for the respondent as well as calling for reactions or 'more' to illustrate a point. 4. "Terminating the Interview and Gaining Closure" --when the interview becomes redundant, and/or the participants become fatigued. At this point, the interviewer will engage in a "member check" with the participant to validate the constructions of the interviewer. The interviewer will thank the participant and provide opportunities for contact. (p. 271) There will be three main categories of participants to be interviewed-- district wide personnel, building principals, and teachers. I will begin the interview process with district wide personnel, and curriculum coordinators, since those participants will have the system-wide perspective when it comes to professional development. Their insights and perspectives may lead to the development of additional questions or areas of interest that could be pursued in interviews with building principals and teachers. Second, I will interview building principals as they represent the individual school, and finally the third category --matched pairs of teachers. The order signifies moving from the larger unit (the school district) to the single unit (the individual teacher). All of the teacher participants in the study will be asked to complete an online survey. The survey will consist of 18 questions and will take 15 to 30 minutes to complete. Since the survey is administered online, an Implied Consent Form will be obtained rather than signed consent. The participants will receive an Informed Consent Form but will not be required to sign the form and return it to the Principal Investigator. The participant's act of
completing and returning the survey would be considered the implied consent to participate. The participants would then keep the Implied Consent Form for their records.

30. **Indicate the type(s) of compensation that will be offered. Choose all that apply.**

[X] Compensation will NOT be offered

31. **Will any type of recordings (audio, video or digital) or photographs be made during this study?**

Yes

32. **What type of recordings will be made (including digital)? Choose all that apply.**

[X] Audio

33. **Where the recordings/photographs will be stored?**

The audio recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's home at 121 South Harvest Run Rd., State College, PA 16801

34. **Who will have access to the recordings/photographs?**

No one will have access to surveys or interview data except the primary and secondary investigators.

35. **How will the recordings be transcribed, coded and by whom?**

All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by the principal investigator's son. After each interview, I will do a preliminary reading of that particular tape and write any questions or notes pertinent to that particular interview. Over the course of the study, I will continue to read the interview transcripts in order to make each subsequent interview contain questions that were specific and probing in light of the previous interview. During these readings, I will also try to begin to understand the story from the participants' perspectives and to bracket
my own preconceived ideas and perceptions.

I will organize each set of interview data based on the different categories of participants, for example central office, building principals, and teachers. I will number each page and line of each transcript. My first step in analyzing the data will be to unitize the data, called "open coding" by Strauss and Corbin (1990). I will also follow Lincoln and Guba (1985) who submit that a unit must meet two criteria. First, it must reveal information that is relative to the study and stimulate the researcher to think beyond that particular bit of information. Second, the unit should be the "smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself----that is, it must be interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out" (p. 345). After reading the interview transcripts at least two or three times, I will begin to cut apart the units and put them into categories of ideas, using labels I will devise for quick reference. Many of these labels will be generated through my reading and understanding of the literature on professional development or by words and phrases that the participants are repeated in the interview transcripts. I will code a unit for a provisional category by comparing it with previous units. At this point, I may also need to start a new category of ideas. I will also keep a notebook for interview transcripts and number the pages and lines on each transcript.

After unitizing with words and phrases from open coding, and rereading literature on professional development, I will axial code. To axial code means to put the data back together in new ways by "making connections between a category and its subcategories" (Strauss &Corbin, 1990). Following the suggestions of Strauss and Corbin (1990), I will do the following analysis: The terms and conditions that will give rise to the phenomenon, the context in which the phenomenon is embedded and the strategies needed to manage and respond to the phenomenon. Lastly, I will utilize selective coding which should evolve from axial coding. This final process will involve my taking all the units that are categorized and reviewing all the properties of each unit again and focusing specifically on categories and themes that have
emerged.

36. Will the recordings/photographs be destroyed?

Yes

37. How and when will the recordings/photographs be destroyed?

The recordings will be erased after five years.

38. Will any data collection for this study be conducted on the Internet or via email (e.g., on-line surveys, blogs or chat room observations, on-line interviews, email surveys)? Yes

39. Does this study involve any foreseeable risks and/or discomforts to participants – physical, psychological, social, legal or other? No

40. Will data be stored securely and accessible only to the research personnel listed on this application?

Yes

41. Describe how data confidentiality will be maintained.

Prior to the interviews, the participant will be asked to sign the informed consent letter. (see attached form) I will keep the identity of the individual and individual school confidential. I intend to use a pseudonym to conceal the participant's identity. Participants will not be identified in any way; if they are quoted --a pseudonym will be issued for each participant. I will label the recordings with the name of the participant, the date, and number each recording. No one will have access to surveys or interview data except the primary and secondary investigators.

Document Upload

APPROVAL LETTER Document 1001 Received 06/10/2011 13:27:27 - Grove Letter of Support

CONSENT FORMS Document 1001 Received 06/20/2011 15:33:34 -
Adult Form Revised Adult Informed Consent form

Document 1002 Received 06/20/2011 15:22:16 - revised online consent form

PROTOCOL DOCUMENTS Document 1001 Received 05/04/2011 12:26:44 - Protocol Interview Protocol Document 1002 Received 05/04/2011 12:30:00 - Participant Survey Document 1003 Received 05/04/2011 12:31:26 - Protocol Survey.doc

RECRUITMENT Document 1001 Received 05/04/2011 12:28:36 - Recruitment Form Document 1002 Received 06/10/2011 13:26:14 - Recruitment Materials Online Recruitment Form

REVIEW - REQUEST INFO

Document 1001 Received 05/19/2011 02:26:09 PM - Returned for Additional Information Document 1002 Received 06/16/2011 06:25:45 PM - Returned for Additional Information Document 1003 Received 06/16/2011 06:30:49 PM - Returned for Additional Information

SUBMISSION FORMS Document 1001 Received 06/15/2011 08:50:15 AM - Application Auto-generated by eSubmission

Approval
APPENDIX B

SURVEY

Part 1- Demographic Information

1. School where you currently teach ______

2. Have you taught in other school in State College during the last ten years? If so, please list.

3. Have you held any other roles (other than classroom teacher) over the last ten years? If so, please list.

4. Years of teaching experience ______

5. Years teaching in State College________

6. Grade level you are currently teaching ___________

7. Highest Degree Held____________________

Part 2- Participation in Professional Development Activities

There have been a variety of professional development opportunities provided by the district or individual schools over the last 10 years, including but not limited to, understanding by design, differentiated instruction, curriculum development and implementation in math, literacy and science, technology, etc. You may or may not have participated in these activities and probably participated in others that are not listed here. In answering the following questions, please think about your own engagement in all professional development activities over the last 10 years or so.

8. What are some of the professional development activities, if any, provided by the school district that you have participated in?

9. What are some of the professional development activities, if any, provided by your own elementary/middle school that you have participated in?

10. What professional development activities, if any, provided through the elementary PDS have you participated in?

11. What graduate level or in-service courses, not provided by your district, have you taken or participated in?
12. What non-school professional development activities have you participated in over the last 10 years?

13. What was the most powerful professional development you have experienced over the last ten years?

**Part 3- Other professional development experiences**

14. How many student teachers have you mentored during the last 10 years? \\

15. How many times have you served as a partner classroom for a student teacher over the last 10 years? \\

16. How many PDS interns have you mentored over the last 10 years? \\

17. How many times have you served as a partner classroom for a PDS intern over the last 10 years? \\

18. If you would be willing to participate in an interview to further talk about professional development in the district, please provide your name and email address below:

   Name________________________________________

   Email Address: ________________________________
APPENDIX C

PROPOSED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How long have you been in your current role? Or how long did you serve in your most recent role before you retired?

2. Did you serve in that role before you came to State College? If so, how long?

3. How do you define or what do you mean by professional development?

4. Tell me about your experiences with professional development over the last 10 to 12 years?

5. Has your thinking about professional development changed over the last 10-12 years? If so, how?

6. Tell me about the professional development opportunities offered by the school/school district over the last 10-12 years?

7. Has the professional development offered by the school/school district changed over the last 10-12 years? If so, how?

   Possible Probes: Have the goals changed?
   Have the delivery methods changed?
   Have the outcomes changed?
   Has the role of teachers changed?

8. If there have been changes in professional development, what has caused those changes to occur as you see it?

9. How would you characterize the nature of these changes i.e.-have they been largely positive, largely negative, or largely inconsequential?
APPENDIX D

ROLE OF TEACHER—ALL GROUPS

Central Office Staff
Yearlong mentorship
Mentor Intern relationships—powerful
Inquiry practice enhances PD and growth
Role of PDA enhances other leadership roles—Central Office
Experience of PDA and other roles
PDS enhances leadership opportunities in district
Releasing teachers to be PDA—Powerful
Change opportunities through PDS
PDS honors the expertise of teachers

Principals
Palpable changes
More active role in professional development
Practice of Inquiry
More collaboration with others
Yearlong mentorship
Teachers teaching with university faculty and curriculum support staff
Teacher roles change in particular buildings
PDS supports teachers in charge of own learning
Teachers empowered through PDS
Respect for teachers from PDS
Teachers delivering PD in own building depending on expertise
Co-teaching
Peer-coaching
PDS helps with PD on a wider scale

High Involvement Teachers
Perceived changes at building level
Increased collaboration
Inquiry—Teachers as researchers
Role of mentor—serious contribution to profession
Increased teacher leadership opportunities in district
Co-teaching study group
More teachers willing to be involved in professional development
Collaborative teaching
Increased confidence

Low Involvement Teachers
Need more say in professional development
Increased demands and expectations on teachers
Loss of CST’s evoked teacher leadership
Role of principal has changed—more instructional leadership
Empowered by seeking more professional development opportunities
APPENDIX E

SAMPLE RESEARCHER JOURNAL ENTRY 1

(U.S. Dept. of Ed.)

Empowering America's Schools:
Turning School Reform
(1992)

Reconsidering Professional Development

Expanded Roles for Teachers

High-quality PD often supports
integration of new, expanded roles as:
- Teacher leaders
- Peer observers
- Teacher researchers

Teacher leaders operate formally, informally, helping:
- Define school improvement programs
- Guide their colleagues
- Develop new roles for teachers

PDS Material: Teacher Leadership
- Glynn, et al. (1992)

Collaborative Inquiry
- Collaboration
- Teamwork
- Peer Support

Identification of needs, problems, and:
- Setting project goals
- Developing project goals
APPENDIX F
SAMPLE RESEARCHER JOURNAL ENTRY 2

B. COONRADT (1891) Reforming Organizations

[Handwritten text]

Applying the model of Robert D. (1963) in the context of organizational change.

[Handwritten text]

Applying the model of Robert D. (1963) in the context of organizational change.

[Handwritten text]
VITA

Doris Grove
dag181@psu.edu

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
2005-Present
Ph.D. in Curriculum and Supervision, Doctoral Thesis:
The Impact of a Professional Development School on Professional Development
In The Partner School District: A Case Study
Interests in Professional Development, Professional Development Schools,
Supervision, and Teacher Education

Penn State University/State College Area School District
Instructor and Supervisor for CI 495B, Elementary Education Field Experience
Supervisor for Elementary Student Teaching (CI 495D)
Professional Development Associate, Graduate Assistant, Professional Development School
Co-Instructor, Professional Development Practicum (CI495F)
Co-Instructor, Practicum in Student Teaching for Elementary (CI495D)
Co-Instructor, Classroom Learning Environments (CI405)
Supervised student teachers in elementary PDS internship (yearlong)

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION

Widener University, Philadelphia, PA
Superintendent Letter of Eligibility

Pennsylvania Department of Education
Elementary Principal’s Certificate /Penn State University

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
M.Ed. Curriculum and Instruction, Emphasis in Supervision

Point Park University, Pittsburgh, PA
B.A Early Childhood Education