

2016

A Case Study of a Professional Development School in Rural West Virginia

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**A CASE STUDY OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL IN
RURAL WEST VIRGINIA**

**A dissertation submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education**

**In
Curriculum and Instruction
by**

Cheryl Ann Terry Jeffers

Approved by

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**Marshall University
December 2016**

APPROVAL OF THESIS

We, the faculty supervising the work of Cheryl Ann Terry Jeffers, affirm that the dissertation, *A Case Study of a Professional Development School in Rural West Virginia*, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the Curriculum and Instruction and the College of Education. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my loving parents Rev. Thomas Harvey and Sarah Ellen (Dolen) Terry who instilled deep in my soul a love of learning, a never give up attitude, and a keep a smile on your face and a song in your heart philosophy. To the memory of loving grandparents I dedicate this dissertation - my paternal grandparents Hartsel Ray and Dorothy Lorraine. (Sydenstricker) Terry and maternal grandparents Rev. Leonard Basil and Mary Esta (Nida) Dolen I also want to dedicate this dissertation to my family who has truly supported me from the onset of this journey and stepped in to help even more when I became ill in 2014. I realize without their help this degree would not have been completed. Therefore, this dedication must also extend to my husband, Randy who was my childhood sweetheart and has continued to be a true friend. He pushed my wheelchair so I could interview participants and complete my research. In addition to my husband, I dedicate this document to my precious daughters, Denise Ellen (Jeffers) Napier and CarolAnn Ellen (Jeffers) Williams who have filled my heart with pure love from the moments they took their first breaths. They were constant encouragers and kept me writing. I dedicate this dissertation to my sons-in-law, Bill Napier and Josh Williams who are just like sons to me. The four, especially Bill, helped me when I had technical difficulties and proved more valuable than the Microsoft support team. I also dedicate this dissertation to my grandchildren, Grace Ann and Isaac William Napier and Trinity Ann Williams, who hold a special place in their Grammy's heart. In addition, I dedicate this dissertation to my sister, Carol Turley and niece Sarah Turley because they too bring joy to my life. I also dedicate this dissertation to my sweet cousins, aunts, and uncles. My former administrator Mrs. Virginia Parsons and her husband, Jim offered a tremendous amount of support and encouragement. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my church family who has consistently lifted me up in their prayers throughout this educational journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. Linda Spatig, who extended her commitment to serve on my committee well beyond her retirement. I am deeply grateful for her professionalism and tutelage. She continually encouraged me to revise and rethink my work; thereby, helping me create a stronger version of what I originally thought was my best work. Her patience and dedication is appreciated. I thank her for consistently raising the bar and helping me complete this dissertation.

I want to acknowledge Dr. Stan Maynard for the part he played in providing the opportunity for me to pursue my terminal degree when he offered me the 21st Century Fellowship at the university. I appreciate Dr. Maynard's vision and dedication to the children and teachers in what he often calls the, "educational vineyard of West Virginia." He retired during my research project, but still remained on my committee. I also want to thank his wife, Dr. Barbara Maynard, because she always had a smile, offered positive words of encouragement, and validated any lapse of memory on my part by a quick glance into her planner.

Dr. Thelma Isaacs was my colleague and office neighbor while I worked at Marshall University. I appreciate her remaining on my committee after she moved to her new position as Associate Dean to the College of Education. I always enjoy our heartwarming conversations about family and am grateful for the support she has given me.

Dr. Robert Bickel has helped me maintain a steady layer of self-confidence as I pursued this degree. He also retired during this process, but agreed to stay on my committee. I am appreciative of his frankness and encouragement to help me move on and not stay out in the field gathering data too long.

I also want to acknowledge Dr. Paula Flaherty for taking me under her wing and demonstrating how to conduct student focus groups. Our work on another research project helped to lay the foundation for the essential work of collecting data via student voices and analyzing their perceptions. She provided the opportunity to emulate her technique which strengthened my ethnographic skills.

Dr. Mindy Allenger stepped up and generously offered to substitute for a committee member who could not attend my defense due to a family emergency. Without her graciousness and inclination to participate, my defense would have been postponed. I am deeply appreciative of her kindness. Dr. Allenger and I served on the reading team at Marshall University with now retired, Professor Annette Irvin. I enjoyed the camaraderie of these colleagues during my work at the university and appreciate how they continued to encourage me as I moved through the educational journey required to obtain this degree. I am thankful for their friendship.

Dr. Pittenger and Dr. Teresa Eagle graciously extended the deadline for me to submit my dissertation and allowed me to reschedule my defense date due to a family emergency regarding the birth of my third grandchild. Their consideration helped relieve a tremendous amount of stress and permitted me to truly focus on my family. I deeply appreciate their kindness and understanding.

I want to express my gratitude to the participants of this study both school-based and university-based. I realize without their willingness to allow me into their lives this research project would have never been accomplished.

Finally, I want to acknowledge my omnipotent Saviour, Jesus. I realize, “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13, King James Version).

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ABSTRACT

A CASE STUDY OF A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL IN RURAL WEST VIRGINIA

Cheryl Ann Terry Jeffers

The focus of this qualitative research study is the Professional Development School (PDS) partnership between a university and an elementary school in Central Appalachia. Data were collected through participant observation, individual and focus group interviews, and document analysis. The research focused on the participants' experiences and perceptions of the Professional Development School and any enabling and/or constraining factors related to its effectiveness. Participants included school-based individuals — students, teachers, and administrators of Dolen Elementary (pseudonym) — as well as university-based participants. The most significant finding was a genuine willingness to learn that was exhibited by participants, both school-based and those based at the university. Additional findings were represented by three themes: enthusiasm, collaboration, and leadership. Enthusiasm was demonstrated by the students' excitement in trying the Harless Center initiatives, the teachers' eagerness and grass-roots efforts to search out strategies to individualize instruction, and the Harless Center's eagerness to make sure the project fit the needs of the school by conducting a needs assessment at the start of the partnership. Collaboration involved the blending of inside and outside (beyond the community) resources to enhance the PDS partnership. Leadership was exhibited by the school-based teachers as well as the encouraging, playful principal who was identified as the most important factor enabling the success of this partnership

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity – it is a pre-requisite.... We know the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow” (Obama, 2009). There is a sense of crisis in education today and a growing concern to prepare our children to effectively communicate, participate, work, compete and thrive in a global economy. United States, Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan stated, “Education is the most pressing issue facing America... Education is also the civil rights of our generation.” Based on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), student test results revealed the United States ranked 24th globally on their math in 2009, but slipped to 29th place by 2012. Student test scores in science fell from 19th to 22nd and reading scores dropped from 10th to 20th. Bill Gates warned, “Unless the schools of the U.S. find the tools to bring students up to the highest level of accomplishment it places the nation at risk in the international economy of the 21st Century” (Hanushek, Perterson, & Woessmanin, 2010).

In the midst of the nation’s education reformation, a collaborative approach between public schools and the education department of universities, Professional Development Schools (PDSs), have emerged and seem to be making a difference in student and teacher learning (Rainer & Hooper, 2010). The partnership between a small rural Appalachian elementary school and the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development (Harless Center), part of the College of Education at Marshall University is the focus of this case study.

BACKGROUND

One of the most compelling initiatives taking place in the reformation of education today is the creation of Professional Development Schools (PDSs). The history of PDSs dates back to John Dewey, head of the departments of Philosophy, Psychology, and Pedagogy at the University of Chicago. Dewey created the first University of Chicago Laboratory School in January 1896 to “support education as a scientific discipline” (Campoy, 2000).

The Holmes Group (1986) introduced the term Professional Development Schools (PDS), comparing them to medical institutions where upcoming teachers learn by studying under experienced mentors in a hands-on academic setting (Campoy, 2000; Holmes Group 1986, 1990, 1995; & Levine, 1988). There is no universal definition for PDSs; however, there is a general agreement that a PDS is a partnership between the public school district and university (Snyder, 1999 & Smith, 2013). Attempts to define this educational phenomenon are found through vision statements, goals, principles, or narratives based on participants’ experiences (Teitel, 1998, 2001, 2003; NAPDS, 2008; NCATE, 2001; & Metcalf-Turner, 1999). To date, approximately thirty percent of the 525 NCATE accredited higher education institutions are affiliated with Professional Development Schools (Levine, 2002). Standards were designed and tested by NCATE in an effort to help PDSs remain consistent and to evaluate the effectiveness of their partnerships (Doolittle, Sudeck, & Rattigan, 2008).

There is evidence PDSs are having an impact on teaching and learning for mentor teachers, preservice teachers, principals, and public school students (Holmes Partnership, 2007). The literature reveals teachers feel having the university partnership and working with a preservice teacher candidate helps with pressing time constraints and provides the necessary support needed to initiate new programs (Williams, 2003). The culture of a school changes when

teachers are provided the opportunity to share their thoughts with colleagues and reflect on their teaching techniques (Scheetz, Waters, Smeation, & Lane, 2005). Participating in a PDS has helped teachers become leaders who are willing to share ideas and make suggestions for others to consider when forming a PDS agreement (Pellet & Pellet, 2009). Sharing their knowledge with preservice teachers has helped teachers gain confidence and become student advocates (Scheetz, Waters, Smeation, & Lane, 2005).

Student teaching is the most prominent element of a teacher education program and the mentor teacher has the most influence on a preservice teacher (Schussler, 2006). Preservice teachers enhance the classroom by designing their own action research projects and sharing the latest teaching techniques with their mentor teachers in order to enhance student learning (Ambrose, Natale, Murphey, & Schumacher, 1999; Shroyer, 2012 & Antonek, 2005). Belonging to a PDS can significantly increase test scores for preservice teachers. A comparison of test scores between West Virginia University's PDS and non PDS preservice teachers' test scores revealed preservice teachers who participated in a PDS scored higher than their non PDS peers (Levine, 2002).

There is also evidence of a positive PDS effect on teacher retention when preservice teachers were placed in a year-long assignment in a PDS in North Carolina (Ware, 2007). Elizabeth City State University created the School-Teacher Education Partnership (STEP) project in response to the 2006 figures stating there was a 12,730 or 12.58 percent teacher turnover rate in their state, constituting a dire need to retain education students. The project was deemed successful as evidenced by the fact that all fifteen preservice teachers enrolled in the program remained employed as classroom teachers and were still teaching for the state eight

years later. The participants stated they felt more confident and better prepared for their classrooms because they participated in the STEP program (Ware, 2007).

The principal is the vessel for reform (Lezzotte, 1990). Resilient leadership is necessary to fostering credible PDS partnerships. Without strong leadership, a partnership could vanish (Tilford, 2010). Principals who encourage teachers and let them know their craft is valued can make a difference in their schools (Barth, 2001). By understanding the value of listening to their teachers' input and encouraging them to take on leadership roles, principals can change the culture of their school (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Evidence that Professional Development Schools have made an impact on P-12 students is lacking (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Castle, 2008; Campoy, 2000; Rainer, 2010). However, one report states additional hands in the classroom make a difference in P-12 students as evidenced by their test scores (Campoy, 2000). Increased student performance and test scores submitted as evidence to prove their success led to one PDS being sustained without funding (Foster, Hope, & McGinnis, 2009). An additional report revealed PDS students who had been in the program the longest time scored better than their non-PDS peers, especially the third grade PDS students. These students also scored higher than the school, district, and state scores (Spatig, White, Flaherty, Jeffers, & Arneson, 2011).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Professional Development Schools (PDSs) are enhancing learning by “develop[ing] authentic relationships” (Doolittle, Sudeck, & Rattigan, 2008) where “everyone, including the K-12 students, benefits” (Teitel, 1997). There is evidence students are having success in PDSs (Holmes Partnership, 2007). In light of these positive outcomes, the National Council for

Accreditation of Teacher Education (2001) designed a set of standards to measure the “PDSness” or “level of implementation” within a PDS (Castle, Arends, & Rockwood, 2008).

Whereas we have increasing evidence of the merits of Professional Development Schools, we lack knowledge about how they accomplish those beneficial outcomes. According to Ziechner (2005), “the particular aspects of Professional Development Schools that are responsible for these effects, under what specific conditions they occur, and how long they persist” are missing elements. Furthermore, Castle (2008) warned that PDS research is inadequate; it is missing studies comparing PDS to non PDS, and does not provide exact details of activities leading to student learning. Another area worthy of exploring is, “why an identified impact occurred” within a PDS (Teitel, 2004a).

PURPOSE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this case study was to delve into the “PDSness” (Castle, Arends, & Rockwood, 2008) of a successful Professional Development School by observing and interviewing students, teachers, and administrators, and by asking participants how they experience and perceive the program, in order to enlighten others on “the particular aspects” (Ziechner, 2005) instrumental in student and teacher success. In order to achieve this, the following research questions were addressed.

1. How do participants experience and perceive the model Professional Development School program?
 - a. School-based Participants – students, teachers, administrators
 - b. University-based Participants – Harless Center administrators and staff
2. What components do participants view as necessary for success in this model program?
 - a. Enabling factors

b. Constraining factors

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study was to contribute to the Professional Development School literature by identifying the “particular aspects” (Ziechner, 2005) that can be contributed to the cause of successes found within a partnership, based on evidence of observations, and more importantly the voices of participants. In addition to contributing to the PDS literature by narrowing the “gap of knowledge” (Merriam, 2009) on this educational phenomenon, information gained from this study could be useful for stakeholders of the PDS when determining funding and may be significant in the sustainability of a partnership.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The terms used for teachers and students must be operationally defined because they are used interchangeably in the PDS literature. The distinction must be made between a student at the university or the public school and a teacher at the university or public school. The literature uses the term teacher when talking about public school classroom teachers and teachers who adjunct or teach a class at the university level. Throughout this case study, teacher was operationally defined as follows.

- 1) *Classroom teacher* was used for the teacher working in a public school setting.
- 2) *University teacher* was used for the teacher working at the university level.
- 3) *Mentor teacher* was used to describe a public school teacher (usually a teacher with at least three years of experience) who has been assigned a preservice teacher candidate.

- 4) *Veteran teacher* was used for the teacher working in the public school who has at least ten years of experience. This teacher may mentor preservice teacher candidates or take a leadership role within the PDS.

The literature on PDSs uses the term student interchangeably when referring to the public school student or university student. In this study, the term student was used as follows:

- 1) *Student* was used when referring to the P-12 public school student.
- 2) *Student teacher, teacher candidate, or preservice teacher* was used when referring to the university student entering a clinical setting or public school to complete university required hours to observe or student teach.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DOCUMENT

This document is organized following the guidelines in the Marshall University doctoral student handbook. This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one consists of an introduction to the study. The elements of chapter one include an introduction or overview, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, operational definitions, and research methods. Chapter two is an extensive literature study on Professional Development Schools. Chapter three outlines the research methods for this qualitative study. Chapter four provides a description of the participants and setting for this study. Chapter five is reserved for a discussion of the findings based on emergent themes and the analysis of the participants' voices. Chapter six explores the findings in relation to the analysis of enabling and constraining factors. Chapter seven discusses the interpretations, implications, and conclusion of this research project.

RESEARCH METHODS

The goals for this research project lay within the realms of qualitative phenomenological case study (Merriam, 2009). Ethnographic skills were used to gather data via participant-observation and in-depth interviews in order to construct “thick descriptions” of the PDS collaborative efforts and gain insight into the impact on student achievement (Glesne, 2006). In order to thoroughly investigate and understand the circumstances surrounding this case study (Stake, 1995), I asked the participants questions regarding their perceptions of PDS life and of any enabling and constraining factors of participating in a PDS program. Qualitative designs are naturalistic and take place in real-world settings (Patton, 2002); therefore, I observed and interviewed participants in the elementary school setting during and after any school events. Documents analyzed were newsletters and student portfolios.

The participants of this study were students, teachers, and the principal of Dolen Elementary (pseudonym) and the administrators of the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development (Harless Center) at Marshall University. Honoring the traditional village storyteller (Breault, 2014), I believe this genre allowed me to share the voices of the participants as they told their stories of living and learning within the realms of a Professional Development School. The project added to the search for the missing “particular aspects” (Ziechner, 2005) that are needed in the literature in order to deepen an understanding of how PDSs are influencing student and teacher learning.

Gathering data systematically and rigorously (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) via observations, teacher, student, and administrator interviews, both individual and focus-group, and document analysis of multiple artifacts provided “fat data” (Glesne, 2006). This also provided an opportunity to learn from the participants (Spradley, 1979) and gain a genuine firsthand look into

the culture of the school and university partnership. Emulating the structure put in place in prior research with an elementary PDS, I conducted individual interviews with teachers and administrators and student focus group interviews with third, fourth, and fifth graders (Spatig, White, Flaherty, Jeffers, & Arneson, 2011).

Inductive content analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) began while I was still in the field as themes emerged from early analysis of data. “Member checks” (Merriam, 1995) and “triangulation protocols” helped to ensure the validity of my research.

Preliminary findings from my first visit to Dolen Elementary as a guest and liaison for the Harless Center reveal there is a strong camaraderie among the school and university colleagues and a sense of admiration and respect for the administrators of the school and the Harless Center. The evening had a relaxed atmosphere filled with laughter and food. Thought provoking discussions were held on future plans for the school. Breakout sessions and activities were conducted to provide participants the opportunity to share in small group and then to the whole group. Observing multiple classrooms the next morning, touring the school, and talking with the principal confirmed my initial impressions that the school personnel truly do work together and seem to have a common goal, to see the culture of their school improved and to continue strengthening the successes of both students and teachers. I learned the school has strong buy-in from the county which was planning to invest heavily in the school’s computer laboratory. I also learned the state had granted the Innovation Zone status to Dolen Elementary which opened the door for the school to be creative in their daily scheduling and to implement suggestions and strategies offered by the Harless Center.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study are in the time constraints, location, and change in my position as professor with the College of Education at Marshall University and my position as a 21st Century Fellow with the Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development. Substantial data for this study were collected at the end of the 2010 school year. My experience as a classroom teacher allows me to assume I did not see a typical school day. Year-end plans filled with celebrations, presentations of yearlong portfolios or projects, field trips or other types of functions alter the traditional school day. Another limitation to this study is that the location is over three hours from my home so I was not able to stop by or drop in for additional interviews or observations as easily as I could have when researching a local PDS near the university.

SUMMARY

Professional Development Schools entered the educational realm in 1986 when the Holmes Group introduced them as an innovative opportunity to provide professional development for teachers, a hands-on clinical setting for teacher candidates, and support for the young public school student through a partnership with a local university. The literature reveals PDSs have a positive impact on teachers, administrators, preservice teachers, and young students. Narratives from stakeholders provide insights about the positive and negative facets of life within a PDS. The missing components are the specific aspects regarding the particulars that contribute to the impact PDSs have on their participants. This phenomenological case study will investigate those specifics by focusing on the experiences and perceptions of participants in a rural elementary school in Appalachia.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A surfeit of literature dating back to Dewey's laboratory schools has yet to present a unified paradigm for Professional Development Schools (PDSs). The Holmes Group (1986) suggested Professional Development Schools (PDSs) be created as sites where teachers and university faculty could partner in order to provide an avenue of communication and experiences for student teachers by offering realistic classroom opportunities. The Holmes Group envisioned a different type of academic setting. Rather than John Dewey's on-campus laboratory schools (Mayhew & Edwards, 1965), the group suggested placing student teachers within the public school system with the vision of a partnership between university and public school faculty that would enhance the experience of the novice teacher – where teaching, learning, collaboration, and research could flourish (Holmes Group, 1986).

A query on Professional Development Schools produced vast numbers of articles and books, yet careful review of the literature revealed the topics were on professional development for teachers and a significantly smaller amount on the specific components and workings of Professional Development Schools. The review showed Professional Development Schools have multiple characteristics, encompass multiple goals and missions, and yet, we still lack a universal definition (Metcalf-Turner, 1999, Teitel, 1997, Smith, 2013).

The themes found within the literature were the history of PDSs and attempts to define what constitutes a PDS by listing principles, goals, and missions. In addition to the definition of PDSs, literature on the unification of universities and public school systems and the processes or stages involved in designing the framework for a Professional Development School is included. Following the history or background information, the emphasis in the literature moves on to the

processes involved in creating a PDS, along with a full description of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards stakeholders can use when forming or evaluating a partnership. The influx of an accreditation organization, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), created by the consolidation of NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) is briefly discussed, specifically regarding its influence on the PDS scene which is scheduled to be fully operational by 2016. Following a review of the accreditation process for Higher Education Institutions and the need for assessing or evaluating a Professional Development School, a discussion on standards led to a discussion of literature on the sustainability of a PDS. After the standards, sustainability, and assessment of a PDS are discussed, literature about the dynamics of leadership and the impact PDSs have made on teaching and learning is presented in the following categories: Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), administration/principal, preservice teachers, veteran/mentor teachers, and elementary students.

There is evidence the Professional Development School phenomenon is having a positive effect on teachers and students, but there are two missing components from the PDS literature. The first component missing from the literature is “the particular aspects of professional development schools that are responsible for these effects, under what specific conditions they occur, and how long they persist” (Ziechner, 2005, p.5). Often the only aspect shared in the literature is information on how preservice teachers are placed in PDSs. Therefore, additional information regarding specific information will be a contribution to the literature. The second component missing from the PDS literature is “why an identified impact occurred” (Teitel, 2004a). The focus of my research will be on the perspectives or voices of participants learning in a Professional Development School as to whether an impact has been made, and if in fact an

impact has been made, what do they think is the cause for the effect of this educational outcome. This literature review points out the obvious “gap in the knowledge base” (Merriam, 2009, p. 68) on Professional Development Schools, accentuates the need for additional research in this area, and warrants the research questions for this study.

BACKGROUND

John Dewey’s work with the University of Chicago in 1896 experimented with providing the progressive education parents were looking for to enhance their children’s academic future. This experiment provided the opportunity for the university’s department of psychology to research best practices in teaching and learning (Mayhew & Edwards, 1936). Dewey’s laboratory school was designed in essence to be a facility where research could be conducted and disseminated in order to enhance learning for student teachers (Campoy, 2000). Goodlad (1984) reported Dewey’s laboratory school had five goals: 1) to educate children according to the best established practices, 2) to develop new and innovative methods, 3) to promote research and development, 4) to prepare new teachers, and 5) to include the in-service education of experienced teachers. The popularity of the program grew to where the university needed additional space for their student teachers (preservice). In an effort to obtain additional work space for their preservice teachers the university reached out to the public school system and asked for help in housing their clinical students. Moving into the public school system eventually led to the laboratory school closing its doors (Campoy, 2000).

The Holmes Group (1986) suggested a union be formed between universities and public school systems and were the first to present the term Professional Development School. PDSs were considered to be the new institution and were primarily used in restructuring (Abdal-Haqq, 1991). The Holmes Group provided the theoretical framework of a PDS comparing them to

teaching hospitals where veteran teachers could mentor new teachers while partnering with university faculty. The union would enhance the learning of preservice teachers and students in the public school system. The group hoped to develop a replicable model of “exemplary practice” seamless between the classroom and university where the ethos was for all teachers/professors, administrators, and preservice teachers to join forces to teach, research, assess and create an environment where students, teachers, and administrators learned from each other.

MULTIPLE DEFINITIONS

One definition of a Professional Development School is the institutional setting where the roads to better teacher education and teaching practice intersect to benefit children (National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future, 1996). Professional Development Schools are also defined as, “innovative institutions formed through partnerships between professional education programs and P-12schools” (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], n.d., “What is a Professional Development School?” para.1).

The Professional Development School model moved the study of education and learning to a new venue linking the university to the public school. The National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST) offered a vision statement to further define a PDS:

A professional development school is both a place and an idea. Professional development schools are collaborative school/university partnerships that provide models of exemplary programs for the preparation, induction, and professional development of prospective, novice, and experienced teachers. Professional development schools are characterized, in part, by inquiry, documentation, and dissemination of new knowledge, developed through the collaborative partnership, toward the improvement of educational services to children and families. They are committed to the transformation of both school and university structures and practices on behalf of improved teaching and learning. (Vision Statement 1993, p. 3)

Teitel, (1998) offered his definition of Professional Development Schools as the:

complex partnerships formed by two or more institutions engaged in mutual renewal and simultaneously trying to expand professional development opportunities at both institutions, engage in research and development, and improve the education of children, adolescents and prospective teachers (p.10)

Collaboration between the university and public schools seemed to be the, “hallmark of professional development schools” (Abdal-Haqq, 1998, p. 6). Professional Development Schools began to grow and participants began publishing their stories. However the literature describing the partnerships was perplexing to read. Every institution defined PDSs differently based on their unique partnership which further confused the concept. PDSs were said to be elusive due to how the work in each institution manifests different experiences for each participant (Whitford & Metcalf-Turner, 1999). Metcalf-Turner (1999) believed flexibility to be the most unique characteristic of the PDS model and offered four goals as an attempt to define the Professional Development Schools network: Goal 1) educator preparation, Goal 2) professional development, Goal 3) curriculum development and Goal 4) research and inquiry. The Holmes Group (1990, p.7) in their publication, *Tomorrow's Schools: Principles for the Design of Professional Development Schools* provided six principles to further define and lead to the development of PDSs:

Principle One – Teaching and learning for understanding

Principle Two – Creating a learning community

Principle Three – Teaching and learning for understanding of everybody's children

Principle Four – Continuing learning by teachers, teacher educators, and administrators

Principle Five – Thoughtful long term inquiry into teaching and learning

Principle Six – Inventing a new institution (p. 7)

Dolly and Oda (1997) suggested the development of a list of traits or characteristics to lay credence to the term PDS stating, “Unless we do this, the language will overwhelm the

concept, and it will be impossible to sort out what is or is not a PDS....Unless everyone using the term starts to operationally define it, the articles and papers about PDSs will be meaningless” (p. 181).

Levine (2006) defined PDSs as, “a superb laboratory for education schools to experiment with the initiatives designed to improve student achievement” (p. 105). Pepper, Hartman, Blackwell and Monroe (2012) believed the term PDS was being placed on any school-university relationship involved in training new teachers, and cautioned this might result in the term PDS “[losing] its authenticity” (p.76).

Maryland’s Department of Education redefined the term Professional Development School in their 2007 budget report as follows:

A Professional Development School is a collaboratively planned and implemented partnership for the academic and clinical preparation of interns and the continuous professional development of both school system and IHE [Institutions of Higher Education] faculty. The focus of the PDS partnership is improved student performance through research-based teaching and learning. A PDS may involve a single or multiple schools, school systems and IHEs and may take many forms to reflect specific partnership activities and approaches to improving both teacher education and PreK-12 schools (p.1).

Field et al. (2010) shares the story of a twenty-year partnership of the University of South Carolina’s (USC) Professional Development School network. The University of South Carolina contributed to the “furtherance of education by taking a leadership role in the expansion of the PDS initiative” (Field et al., 2010, p. 41) when they stepped back to analyze their mission statement after NCATE released their PDS standards in 2001. The University of South Carolina’s (USC) network revised their mission statement to focus on the preparation of “all learners for the future,” and the promotion of “best educational practices, meaningful collaboration, and democratic ideals” (Field et al., 2010, p. 42). One resource USC used while revising their mission statement was the National Network for Educational Renewal’s (NNER)

website which offered a mission statement and governance structure. Adapting materials from the NNER's agenda to the school's culture meant a commitment to ensuring equal access for all learners, engaging in nurturing pedagogy, enculturating the young into a democratic society, and serving as stewards of the schools and school communities. The most significant contribution from USC was providing a setting for educators to share their PDS work and learn from each other by sponsoring the PDS National Conference in March 2000. The conference was considered a success with around 600 educators attending and was the basis for five more years of PDS conferences. The conference moved from South Carolina to Orlando, Florida in 2002 and had nearly 800 PDS educators from almost every state in the nation. It was determined by attendees that there was no other place to share PDS ideas or concerns with so many P-20 educators. In 2003, after listening to the educators' requests for another venue for PDS dialogue, the University of South Carolina orchestrated two years of dialogue and planning which led to the development of the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) in 2005. The association along with the support of the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) and the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) worked together to publish a policy statement on April 12, 2008, "What It Means to Be a Professional Development School," with the sole purpose of sharing their definition of the term PDS. The association stated the term PDS was being used as a catch-all for models of school-university partnerships and suggested that a PDS should have specific fundamental qualities. The National Association of Professional Development Schools (2008) believed a true PDS would embrace their mission statement which included the Nine Essentials:

1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education profession and its

responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community;

2. A school-university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community;
3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;
4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;
5. Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants;
6. An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating the roles and responsibilities of all involved;
7. A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection and collaboration;
8. Work by college/university faculty and P-12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; and
9. Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structures (p. 2-3).

The National Association of Professional Development Schools awarded the first NAPDS Award for Exemplary Professional Development School Achievement in 2009 and has to date recognized 20 additional PDS partnerships. They awarded their first “Doctoral Dissertation Award” in March 2015. This year the National Association of Professional Development Schools restructured to become its own entity free from the University of South Carolina and plans to hold its first annual PDS conference in 2016 in Washington, D.C. The

NAPDS membership consists of nearly 5,500 PDS professionals from 50 states and nine countries. Their website, their magazine “PDS Partners” published three times a year, their journal *School-University Partnerships*, and their Stories from Field blog posts provide credible material and information to the educational community.

STANDARDS

Zimpher (1990) envisioned standards being created from a national level that could be used by others when designing or evaluating a PDS. She wrote about challenges PDSs incurred from inception to assessment in the areas of a lack of resources, ineffective collaboration, and unequal or unfair placement of preservice teachers. Zimpher stressed the role of a PDS in diminishing the experience of teachers working in isolation. She suggested teachers should team teach, share in the decision making, and that teachers should be sought as advisors in matters of curriculum and instruction.

In an effort to further clarify and unify information being published on Professional Development Schools, NCATE initiated the PDS Standards Project from 1995-1997. Levine (1998) codified information from the project into a literature review stating PDSs compare to teaching hospitals whose mission is to provide the best knowledge and practice available. An additional product of the PDS Standards Project was the development of standards for Professional Development Schools. NCATE released the *Standards for Professional Development Schools* in 2001 after field testing them in 16 PDS sites. The standards focused on learning community; accountability and quality assurance; collaboration; diversity and equity; structures, resources, and roles. Teitel, (2003) applauded the standards provided by NCATE as the “clearest and most comprehensive summary of what it means to be a PDS” (p. xix).

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), a new agency for accreditation of Higher Education programs, entered the accreditation for Higher Education teacher preparation programs in 2009 when NCATE (who founded in 1954 as a non-profit, non-governmental accrediting body) and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) (founded in 1997 to work to fulfill their mission to improve academic degree programs for professional pre-K through twelfth grade educators) consolidated upon the recommendation of the Design Team. According to its website: <http://caepnet.org/about/vision-mission-goals>, the mission for CAEP is to advance excellent educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation that assures quality and supports continuous improvement to strengthen P-12 student learning. Its vision statement is, “Excellence in Educator Preparation.” CAEP focuses on the principles that there must be “solid evidence that the provider’s graduates are competent and caring educators,” and there must be “solid evidence that the provider’s educator staff have the capacity to create a culture of evidence and use it to maintain and enhance the quality of the professional programs they offer.” CAEP presented five standards to ensure these principles were met: Standard One – Content and Pedagogical Knowledge; Standard Two – Clinical Partnerships and Practice; Standard Three – Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Selectivity; Standard Four – Program Impact; Standard Five – Provider Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement. CAEP proposed four levels of Accreditation Decisions to the institute of Higher Learning: Denial of Accreditation; Probationary Accreditation; Full Accreditation; and Exemplary or “gold” Accreditation. In 2010, Ohio signed an agreement to partner with CAEP in order to gain accreditation for the educator preparation programs. By 2013, CAEP became fully operational and the newly created standards were approved. CAEP now stands as the “sole

accrediting body for educator preparation providers” and will be implemented in full by 2016, NCATE and TEAC will no longer be accreditation entities.

SUSTAINABILITY

One of the most significant concerns of a Professional Development School is sustainability (Foster, Reed, & McGinnis, 2009). “The core challenge is growing institutional and policy conditions that support and sustain the work of true believers while providing opportunities for learning that transform deep roots of skepticism into blooms of belief” (Snyder, 1999, p.140). Maintaining a strong record of successes is one of the best ways to sustain a PDS partnership (Walmsley, Butkin, & Rule, 2009). In order for Professional Development Schools to become sustainable, attention must be given to the frustrations of the participants, such as the lack of time, buy-in, and a mutual philosophy of stakeholders that weigh heavily on partnerships. Based on his experience and research on Professional Development Schools since 1989, Teitel favors “simultaneous renewal” (2003, p.114) as the best path for achieving a sustainable PDS. Teitel further encourages PDSs to be aware if they see themselves backing off from their goals when problems arise and not to lose sight of the prize or PDS mission. He further suggests PDSs reevaluate the relationship between partnership members in order to determine if the “core enterprise” goals, plans, and values from the inception are still worthy of maintaining or if changes are necessary.

Professional Development Schools have reported successes in sustaining their partnerships. Sargent, Gartland, Borinsky, & Durkan (2009) detailed how one special education PDS shared its challenges and evidence of successful sustainment within their partnership. The challenges that needed to be worked through by stakeholders were difficulties in recruiting and retaining mentor teachers. Additional challenges acknowledged by the stakeholders were the

need to design rigorous field experiences, connect all PDS sites in order to create a sense of community, and entice nontenured university faculty to participate. The authors cited the consistently high enrollment, a large percentage of graduates staying to work locally, and mentor teachers signing on for several years as evidence of success in their partnership's work (Sargent, Gartland, Borinsky, & Durkan, 2009). Beaty-O'Ferrall and Johnson's (2010) study found the PDS teachers were enthusiastic, yet expressed anxiety when the PDS tried to expand in order to include Saturday sessions for students who had not passed their state-required algebra test. Teachers were concerned the positive results could not be duplicated in a weekend class. However the students' scores ended up being the highest in the city. Despite the successful test scores the county struggled to find teachers willing to work weekends. Finally, a thirty-year journey shared by faculty of the University of Mississippi described the pull away from the PDS partnership and the process of reorganization that led them back to becoming a PDS. The research describes the process participants went through in order to redesign the framework of their partnership. The research led to the implementation of the Six C's for Effective Partnerships; communication, collaboration, continuity, choice, community, and consideration. The authors state this framework should be beneficial for other partnerships who are thinking of revitalizing their PDS (Pepper, Hartman, Blackwell, & Monroe, 2012).

As stated earlier by Teitel (2004b), Professional Development Schools have become a cornerstone in implementing improvement in the educational system. Professional Development Schools (PDSs) are enhancing learning by developing authentic relationships (Doolittle, Sudeck, & Rattigan, 2008) where everyone, including the K-12 students, benefit (Teitel, 1997). According to Ziechner (2005), in order to understand the effect of a PDS we need to know "the particular aspects of Professional Development Schools that are responsible for these effects,

under what specific conditions they occur, and how long they persist” (p.5). We need to narrow the “gap in the knowledge base” (Merriam, 2009, p. 68) in order to learn the effects PDSs have on their participants and on the perceptions of those teaching and learning within the PDS. In addition to determining pertinent details related to the PDS, another area worthy of exploring is why an identified impact occurred within a PDS (Teitel, 2004a). According to Abdal-Haqq (1996) mostly what we need in PDS research are “studies that document the effect that PDSs have on children’s academic achievement” (p. 239). Empirical research is needed to determine how elementary students’ experiences change in a PDS (Schussler, 2006; Breault, 2010; Rainer & Hooper, 2010; & MHEC, 2007).

EVALUATING/ASSESSING

There are no specific guidelines to follow when designing a PDS program and “few are being systematically evaluated” (Campoy, 2000, p.10). Teitel (1998) cautioned there is no one “optimal governance model” (p. 4) available for evaluating or assessing the effectiveness of a Professional Development School. PDSs are moving targets with no universal definition. There have not been a substantial number of studies conducted where the NCATE standards have been used to explain their value. Teitel (2001) further stated assessing PDSs prematurely could cause irreparable damage if relationships are not nurtured and are even more difficult to evaluate because participants are often handpicked.

The National Association for Professional Development Schools’ (NAPDS, 2008) policy statement, *What It Means to Be a Professional Development School*, was developed because the term PDS tended to be used as a catchall for numerous representations of partnerships involving universities and schools. In addition to their policy statement, NCATE (2001) created developmental guidelines that provided criteria for partnerships to use when assessing their level

of progress. The levels are divided into four phases – beginning, developing, at standard, and leading levels. Walmsley’s (2009) framework for developing and accessing a PDS is divided into five distinct stages of development: exploration, formalization, action, institutionalization, critical growth, and sustainability. He further stated an established PDS is seen by most involved as a venue necessary in order to offer the best education for preservice teachers, school children, and both faculties in regards to professional growth. Thesis and Grisby (2010) reported the results of a two year study where a PDS designed its own assessment tool to help determine the effectiveness and accomplishments of eleven-year partnerships in four sites. The assessment tool was aligned with NCATE standards. Data retrieved from the study served as a baseline for future studies regarding the growth of their interns, was used to help with program decisions, and to help set up a systematic system for further evaluation.

Professional Development Schools have grown in number and have “become a cornerstone of serious attempts to simultaneously improve teacher education and public schools” (Teitel, 2004b, p. 401). Teitel (2000) further states, “Credible, systematic documentation of the impacts of Professional Development Schools is critical to the growth and sustenance of the partnerships themselves and of the PDS movement” (p.10). According to Teitel, it is important to document the impact of PDSs in order for participants to make improvements and for stakeholders to assess the wisdom of continued funding of the initiative. However, he states it is difficult to document the impact of PDS outcomes because there are multiple stakeholders with varying perceptions. Participants find themselves wrapped up in promoting the PDS. They seldom attend to documenting their work and often rely on outsiders to evaluate their programs. In reviewing the literature, Teitel stresses that most studies focus on start-up stories, the levels of satisfaction, or the relationships of the participants, and lack concrete evidence regarding how

the quality of learning for students and teachers have been affected by the changes. Teitel (2001) designed a concept map with categories that stakeholders or researchers could use for assessing the impact of PDSs and provided suggestions of various types of concrete evidence stakeholders could use to assess the quality of teacher and student learning. The concept map offers the following categories: partnership development; adaptations in roles, structures, and culture; best practice in teaching, learning, and leadership; and desired outcomes for all students. The suggestions Teitel offered that could be included as documentation or concrete evidence for the categories listed above were: minutes of meetings, collaborative agreements, histories, calendars of partnership events, surveys of stakeholders, press clippings, copies of newsletters, and annual progress reports (pgs. 5-7).

IMPACT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

There are a number of studies regarding the impact Professional Development Schools have on teaching and learning. The literature includes research on how the framework of the PDS provides a platform for creating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). In addition to Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the research focuses on teaching and learning of administrators/principals, preservice teachers, mentors/veteran teachers, and students.

PDSs as Professional Learning Communities

The enhanced pedagogy of the teacher can be obtained via quality professional development and the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Doolittle, Sudeck, and Rattigan (2008) suggest PLCs provide occasions for enhancing teaching and learning methods and PDSs provide the venue and structure for teaching and learning to take place. One of the most important facets of determining how schools become learning communities is to understand the role of the principal (Zepeda, 2004). The principal in Zepeda's

study encouraged inquiry, reflection, and dialogue between teachers which eventually led to a new culture among colleagues. One teacher described how she felt like a professional; others stated they learned to trust, recognize, and appreciate the skills and knowledge of their colleagues; and another realized the value of working as a team in order to accomplish goals set for their kids.

One study by Lujan and Day (2009) found four items Professional Learning Community members determined were significant to the success of their PLC: the first item was to guard the PLCs from outsiders who may have their own agenda, the second to save meetings for discussions regarding assessment or scheduling, the third to ensure training is provided for new faculty and that they have buy-in to the PLC, and fourth to set time aside for non-classroom teachers, such as speech pathologists, counselors, and other support staff to participate in team planning during the regular school day at least once a month.

The culture of a school can be changed when leadership is distributed or shared with community members, stakeholders, or teachers. Louis and Wahlstrom stated, “Schools need to build strong cultures in which the many tasks of transforming schools require many leaders” (2011, p. 52). Their findings focus on three elements: organizational learning, professional learning community, and trust. The first element, organizational learning, strengthens the learning culture of a school where the principal and teachers share their experiences and knowledge with each other then synthesize the new knowledge and apply it within their core curriculum. The second element, professional learning community, speaks of the impact on student learning when the principal looks to PLC members who share the same values, asks for their input, and then offers them the opportunity to carry out their ideas. The third element focuses on the importance of having trust and using it as a foundation for organizational learning

and PLCs. Bondy (2001, p. 11) writes of the “PDS mindset” being the core of a PDS learning community as evidenced by the manner in which teachers observe their students’ behaviors and reflect on their observations. Sharing teachers’ reflections of their experiences during the PDS Morning Meeting project participants found themselves observing their students’ behaviors and reflecting on their observations. Bondy concluded that participating in and developing an inquiry stance to teaching could have profound implications on a teacher’s career.

Principals

Strong principal leadership is a critical ingredient to fostering powerful school-university partnerships” (Tilford, 2010, p.72) and the effects seem to be reciprocal. Tilford reports that principals in his study were motivated to participate in PDS work for multiple reasons, entered at multiple career points, and willingly embraced the PDS work because of the connections between the PDS goals and their other leadership work. The PDS work became part of the beliefs, experiences, and goals that underlined their current leadership. His study revealed lived experiences valued by principals throughout their careers are closely tied to the leadership style they use as PDS principals. He further stated principals must be open and willing to change if the PDS work is to be integrated into the culture of the school. When PDSs engage in inquiry into student learning, inquiry serves as a tipping point that increases principal commitment to the partnership (Tilford, 2010). An additional study, by Shiveley and Pribble (2001) declared PDSs were just starting to be noticed as a primary focus for research. The principals in their study shared stories related to building trust within the partnerships. Relationships formed took on an “entrepreneurial effort” where participants seemed to realize the importance or value of the partnership. The authors warned if the leader of the PDS was lost, the partnership could “evaporate” (p. 293).

Rieckhoff and Larsen (2012) document the impact PDSs have on principals. In their study, principals gained an understanding of their leadership ability and provided opportunities for others to participate in decision making by allowing time for collaboration and communication. Changes in a school's culture can be made when leadership is distributed or shared with community members, stakeholders, or teachers (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Rieckhoff and Larsen (2012) further report that principals were able to obtain funding, create goals, and develop a professional development plan for their schools by adjusting their leadership skills and valuing their teachers' input. Louis and Wahlstrom (2012) stated, "Schools need to build strong cultures in which the many tasks of transforming schools require many leaders" (p.52). Barth's (2001) research on teachers stated the principal needs to realize teachers can become leaders and can significantly improve schools. He stated teachers will actively draw in outside research and other sources of expertise when they feel that their craft knowledge and skill is valued. "A central part of the work of the school-based reformer is to find ways to honor, reveal, exchange, and celebrate the craft knowledge that resides in every schoolhouse" (p.62).

Preservice Teachers

Preservice teachers benefit from participating in Professional Development Schools based on evidence of teacher retention, surveys, teacher reflections, and opportunities for research. The positive effect PDSs have on preservice teachers spills over to the public school student evidenced by their improved academic performance and employment opportunities.

A study by Rebecca A. Ware (2007) evaluated the PDS partnership between the teacher education program at Elizabeth City State University and three local public schools. The partnership created a program to encourage preservice teachers to stay within the area after graduating from the program. The partnership extended the preservice teachers' assignment

beyond the traditional semester placement to a year-long assignment. The preservice teachers believed the year-long assignments were beneficial because the opportunity provided them time to develop stronger technology and classroom management skills. The teacher retention program was effective in retaining preservice teachers after they graduated from the program as evidenced by the fact that all fifteen teachers were still employed as teachers eight years later. The report stated preservice teachers from the PDS program were better prepared, more self-confident, and had a better understanding of what it means to be a teacher than preservice teachers in the traditional teacher training program.

A study by Shroyer (2012) revealed that one Professional Development School enhanced learning as evidenced by the analysis of surveys, scores on the state test of the public school students, and national test scores of preservice teachers. Results from 857 surveys from the 22-year partnership provided evidence that administrators, teachers, student teachers, and university faculty agreed or strongly agreed that student teachers were developing the skills needed to have success as a beginning teacher.

Antonek, Matthews, and Levin (2005) shared the benefits and shortcomings teacher education faculty experienced with their theme-based PDS cohort approach in an elementary school. The initiative proved advantageous according to evidence from their annual PDS program evaluation data. Preservice teachers, and especially doctoral students, benefited because they were able to design their own unique theme-based research.

Participating in Professional Development Schools benefited preservice teachers by providing them more self-confidence and helping them get prepared for the classroom. Their national test scores were higher than their peers who did not participate in PDSs. Preservice

teachers were beneficial to their mentor teachers because they shared the latest teaching techniques and to the young students by providing extra assistance in the classroom.

Veteran/Mentor Teachers

Research suggests that teachers participating in a PDS partnership gain confidence to become leaders in their school as evidenced by their offering to lead professional development sessions, mentor or share their knowledge gained to their peers, and becoming advocates for student learning (Carpenter & Sherretz, 2012). Dewey's (1936) article, "Education and New Social Ideals," praises teachers and speaks favorably of the role they play in bringing about change. He suggests teachers need to be in an environment where they are encouraged to contribute to the development of the curriculum or the selection of the subject matter. Williams' (2003) study showed a mutual benefit or simultaneous renewal between the university and public school faculty was evident by one veteran teacher's description of the relationship as seamless or commonplace when referring to the university's presence in their school. Mentor teachers praised preservice teachers for implementing effective teaching techniques. One teacher felt the partnership opened doors of opportunity by helping with time constraints and setting up a new program in the school. Scheetz, Waters, Smeation, and Lane's (2005), analysis of 20 case studies revealed PDSs have a positive impact on mentors evidenced by the fact that every mentor interviewed stated they would continue in the program. The mentors felt the culture of their team or department had changed because they were given the opportunity to converse and reflect about their pedagogy.

Teachers could enhance their pedagogy, change teacher education, and make an impact on student learning if the inquiry stance of teaching and researching is embraced (Snow-Gerono, 2005). Snow-Gerono further shared research from a Holmes Partnership PDS collaborative

between a Northeastern university and four elementary schools. The participants were interns/preservice teachers, and mentor and non-mentor teachers who were said to be living an inquiry stance toward teaching by researching issues or problems in their classrooms. Participants implemented knowledge gained into their respective classrooms in order to enhance learning for their students.

Pellett (2009) shared the success of the physical education PDS model of Minnesota State University-Mankato (MSUM) in hopes their program could be replicated in order to enhance learning for student and teacher. The author reports teachers have moved from just supporting the program on the side lines to actually becoming advocates of the program. The partnership offered the following suggestions based on NCATE's standards and their experiences when implementing a PDS: 1) Seek School Community Partners; 2) Build Relationships; 3) Be Flexible; 4) Enhance Professional Development; 5) Establish Organizational Structure; and 6) Demonstrate Accountability. In addition to the implementations suggested above, MSUM suggested PDSs visit the NCATE and NAPDS websites for additional support and provided a copy of their Memorandum of Agreement to use when entering a PDS agreement.

Professional Development Partnerships can increase the quality of teachers, enhance student achievement, and enhance schools (Carpenter & Sherretz, 2012). Schussler's (2006) study of how experienced teachers' roles change in a Professional Development School concludes student teaching is the most influential component of a teacher education program and that the mentor teacher has the most influence on student teachers.

Elementary Students

Empirical data about the effects Professional Development Schools have on elementary students is lacking. In a study by Campoy (2000), only three out of eighteen PDSs from thirty-

four colleges and universities offered evidence that a positive impact was made because of PDS involvement. Evidence revealed PDS students in grades P-12 perform better than other students on common measures of student learning in basic subjects such as language arts and mathematics, P-12 students in PDSs increased hours of adult attention in comparison to similar students in other schools, and PDSs helped businesses secure better workers because P-12 students are better educated by teachers prepared in Professional Development Schools (Campoy, 2000).

A positive impact on student learning in grades P-12 was evidenced by the Maryland School Assessment test scores in a 2007 report to the Department of Education by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). Student achievement improved significantly in Allegheny County, according to the principal of John Humbird Elementary School, due to their association with Frostburg State University. The principal stated his school had moved from a school that needed to be monitored by the state, due to low test scores, to a top performing school because of his school's participation in a PDS relationship. Within the same report, the Superintendent of Schools for Worcester County, Dr. Jon Andes, recognized the success of Professional Development Schools within the county. Dr. Andes pointed out the increase in test scores of the PDS during 2003-2005. Schools within Worcester County participating in PDS partnerships had an increase on their Maryland School Assessment test scores of 15%-70%, compared to Worcester County's overall test scores increase of only 3%-37%. In a separate study by Shroyer and Yanke (2012), success was reported in their 22-year PDS partnership as evidenced by their students testing higher than their state's average scores.

An additional study by Spatig, White, Flaherty, Jeffers, and Arneson (2011) reported students who participated in a model elementary PDS scored higher on the state test compared to

their peers within the same school who did not participate in the PDS. Scores for the third grade students who had been enrolled in the model PDS program since kindergarten were substantially higher than the students within the same school whose parents had chosen not to have them participate in the model school program. The third grade scores were higher than the school, district, and state. One hundred percent of the students scored at or above mastery in math. Students scored 94% in reading, 89% in science, and 94% in social studies. It is important to note that parents had the option to choose whether or not their children participated in this PDS program. High scores in social studies and math could be attributed to the PDS's school's emphasis on global studies and the *Investigations* math program. In addition to test scores, evidence of student learning was based on observations during classroom visits where students were collaborating in teams, using problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. Another study showed K-5 students' learning was enhanced due to the individualized and differentiated instruction provided by the additional hands in the classroom from the preservice and doctoral students (Antonek, Matthews, & Levin, 2005).

In an attempt to document the effect PDSs have on student achievement, Campoy's (2000) book, *Professional Development School Partnership: Conflict and Collaboration*, provides valuable insight into the issues and benefits PDS stakeholders may encounter. Campoy repeated benefits of the partnership for the students, university, and teachers. The elementary students enjoyed the tutors sent by the university. Most students who received one-on-one tutoring sessions in the classroom or in the library spoke of how the tutors brought games and made learning fun. However, some of the students involved in small group instruction led by the tutors complained their classmates argued causing the lessons to take too long and it would have been easier to do the work all by themselves. Despite the positive comments from students, data

were not collected to show an academic impact on student learning; therefore additional funding was not incorporated into the budget by stakeholders. Castle, Arends, and Rockword (2008) reported a positive impact on student achievement in their PDS based on state test results. The authors analyzed the test scores of the PDS and compared them to the district and a non-PDS control school. The results revealed the PDS increased the percentage of students who scored at mastery by 75% compared to the non-PDS control school and 42% higher than the district test scores. The PDS had the highest mean at 17% in reading with the county at 3% and the district at 13%. Both writing and math scores of the PDS were higher than the district scores. However, the authors suggest further research be conducted using other factors or learning outcomes in order to examine the effectiveness of a PDS in regards to student achievement instead of simply relying on state test scores.

There is a call for additional studies on the impact Professional Development Schools are having on children: “PDSs need to be studied as related to student achievement” (Rainer, 2010, p.90). Not much is known about the particular aspects responsible for contributing to student successes and achievements in a Professional Development School. PDS literature lacks rigor and there is a need for empirical research on PDSs (Breault, 2010). Additional research could be helpful by focusing on how elementary students experience change when they are involved in a Professional Development School (Schussler, 2006). The primary topics of Professional Development School literature focus on preservice teachers’ experiences, start-up stories, and projects within a PDS rather than on, “what is most needed – studies that document the effect that PDSs have on children’s academic achievement” (Abdal-Haqq, 1996, p. 239). Rainer and Hooper (2010) believe, “A qualitative study can provide a deepened understanding of teaching practice; however, large-scale research on the effects of instructional approaches on child

outcomes in PDSs is also necessary to guide practice in schools” (p. 97). Castle, Arends, and Rockword (2008) suggest PDS research would be more beneficial if the research focus was on other factors or learning outcomes instead of just state test scores, and they recommend additional research that focuses on determining the outcomes in a robust and sensitive manner. Campoy (2000) stressed the importance of gathering data on student learning in order to maintain funding from stakeholders to sustain the Professional Development School.

SUMMARY

In summary, this literature study addressed the history of laboratory schools dating back to John Dewey’s hands-on laboratory approach to learning, and then moved to the introduction of the term Professional Development Schools by the Holmes Group and the multiple attempts to explicitly define a PDS including a description of the creation of standards. The literature about the sustainability of a PDS was reviewed. The review detailed attempts to analyze the effects PDSs have in the following areas – on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), principals, preservice teachers, veteran/mentor teachers, and elementary students.

The definition of a Professional Development School (PDS) can differ due to the dynamics of the partnership formed. Organizations such as the National Association of Professional Development Schools, National Network for Educational Renewal, and American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education, along with NCATE’s creation of standards, and the organization of a new accreditation entity, CAEP, helped to further define the phenomenon as well as provide material to assist with assessing the sustainability of a PDS partnership.

There is evidence PDSs have an effect on teaching and learning for those involved in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), including principals, preservice teachers, veteran/mentor teachers, and the elementary student. PDSs provide a fitting venue for

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to flourish. Principals who learn to share the responsibility of leadership and are open to suggestions from their teachers can help change the culture of their school and strengthen the PLC. Evidence shows that principals can be, “a critical ingredient to fostering powerful school-university partnerships” (Tilford, 2010, p.72). PDSs make a difference in the knowledge and practice of preservice teachers’ opportunities as evidenced by their increased test scores. In return, preservice teachers contribute to the classroom by providing additional assistance in the classroom and sharing their knowledge on the latest teaching techniques. Veteran/mentor teachers lead professional development sessions, share their knowledge with colleagues to support student learning, and are an influential component of the teacher education program. Elementary students benefit from participating in PDSs evidenced by increased test scores.

What is missing from the literature is evidence on the particular aspects that are making these differences in Professional Development Schools, in particular from the perspectives of participants. This study attempts to provide such evidence by featuring the voices of students, teachers, and administrators working and learning in a Professional Development School.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter provides details of the qualitative research methods for this phenomenological case study (Merriam, 2009). An ethnographic approach to studying the Professional Development School (PDS) via participant-observation and in-depth interviewing will help to create “thick description[s]” (Glesne, 2006) necessary for understanding how participants construe the collaborative efforts of their colleagues and the impact on student achievement. A description of the case study research design initiates the chapter and includes the research questions and overall focus of the study. The second section is a description of the research setting and participants. The third section of this chapter explains the data gathering for this research project and consists of participant observation, which includes two types of interviews – individual and focus group interviews, and documents. The fourth section is reserved for data analyses and interpretation. The fifth section discusses efforts to ensure the validity of the study.

DESIGN

The research design for this case study is a qualitative case study where via interviewing I learned "people's interior experiences" (Weiss, 1994, p. 1) including their interpretations of their perceptions. My responsibility during an interview was to lead the participant through the topics pertinent to the study and analyze when adequate information has been disclosed or if it is necessary for a more elaborate response. The design is considered an emergent design study because as I interviewed students and teachers my questions were revised based on the findings of a particular observation or interview. This emergent case study, “is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important

circumstances” (Stake, 1995, p.4). In an effort to focus on the particularity of this professional development school the following research questions were formulated:

1. How do participants experience and perceive the Professional Development School program?
 - a. School-based participants – students, teachers, administrators
 - b. University-based participants – Harless Center administrators and staff
2. What components do participants view as necessary for success in this program?
 - a. Enabling factors
 - b. Constraining factors

Qualitative designs, according to Patton (2002) are, “naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (p. 39). Therefore, data from this qualitative case study was gathered on-site at the elementary school. I attended before and after school events that took place during the study. I tried my best to blend in and observe without becoming too involved in the daily routines and activities of the school; yet converted to a participant observer when appropriate in order to truly understand the phenomenon I was studying.

RESEARCH SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

Stake (1995) suggests choosing a case that is “easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry” (p.4). Following his suggestions, the research participants of this case study are students, teachers, and the administration of Dolen Elementary (pseudonym), a small elementary school nestled in a historic district in the rural Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia. This school was suggested as a possible site/subject for a dissertation topic due to my connection with the Harless Center. My position as a 21st Century Fellow granted me the unique opportunity to pursue my doctoral degree and work as an Assistant Professor in the College of Education while

simultaneously serving as a liaison for a local Professional Development School. The role of liaison led to an invitation by the Harless Center's staff to visit another PDS in their consortium. Dolen Elementary was being led through the Retrofit process offered by the Harless Center which promises to strengthen schools to excel in the 21st century. With the support of the Harless Center, Dolen Elementary had already been awarded a federal grant and had been declared an Innovation Zone. My plan was to focus my research on the fifth intent or purpose of House Bill 109 which is to document the particular aspects that enhance student successes, specifically the particular aspects that can be contributed to the affiliation of the elementary school and their partnership with a local university. During my initial visit, I spent the evening with the PDS vision team, a school leadership team composed of school administrators, county representatives, and teacher leaders — one teacher from each vertical team. The following morning I visited the school and was provided a tour of the building by the principal. He took me to every classroom and introduced me to the students.

Another reason I chose to do my research in this school was that the odds seemed to be stacked against the school. Prior to becoming a PDS, the test scores fell well below the state's required fiftieth percentile (2010 Westest Data Chart – Appendix A). In addition to low test scores, compared to the county and state scores, the school also had a high percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunches due to their low socioeconomic status. The principal informed me he came to the school several years ago when the school was on the brink of being taken over by the West Virginia Department of Education because of low test scores. He said the school has since been making steady progress.

The school formed alliances with multiple partners, including the Harless Center, to help transform their school into a 21st Century Professional Development School. Since the school

had been awarded the coveted Innovation Zone grant (WVBE policy 3236) the principal was permitted the freedom to divert from the state's standard educational policies and laws in order to allow teachers the opportunity to creatively design their own schedule free of state guidelines to suit their school's unique needs. The Innovation Zone grant allowed the county the freedom to invest significant monies in this rural school's 21st Century Learning Project.

Purposeful sampling involves selecting a case because it is "information rich and illuminative.... [and] offers useful manifestation of the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 40) being studied. After meeting the principal, teachers, and students, observing the enthusiastic manner in which they were relating to the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development staff, and hearing the innovative plans they had made to enhance student learning, I decided this would be a site where access would be granted, open-ended questions could be posed, and I could easily become a participant observer in order to conduct research. More importantly, I felt this was a place where I could learn more about Professional Development Schools and gain experience in becoming a stronger ethnographer. There were opportunities for me to observe and interview participants within the school system which enabled me to study the experiences of students, teachers, and the administration in this particular PDS. It seemed the veteran teachers I observed during my initial visit were committed to enhancing their craft. The principal shared with me that before he had arrived at the school this same group of teachers had already taken the initiative to improve their pedagogy by writing a grant to attend a professional development conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. When he first arrived at the school, the teachers informed him of their plans to attend the conference and hopefully learn some innovative ideas that could be implemented into their curriculum. He said, "I responded by simply asking what they needed and how I could help." I believe the grass-roots

movement initiated by dedicated teachers of this school, combined with the initiative of the principal to seek out additional resources for support and professional development through the Harless Center, is a story worth telling because we will be hearing the perspectives of innovative teachers and administrators working to create an environment conducive to learning for themselves and their students.

Breault (2009) suggests the genre of storytelling easily emerges in the academic literature on PDSs as participants share their start up stories along with partnership successes and failures of the movement. Breault (2014) further proposes we can honor the traditional village storyteller by allowing the story to tell itself when we use the voices of the participants. I believe asking the administration, teachers, and students about their perspectives of what school is like for them and delving into the experiences they are having or have had while participating in the PDS paradigm provided insights about the “particular aspects” Ziechner (2005) calls for and are necessary to enhance the study of the impact Professional Development Schools have on students and teachers.

DATA GATHERING

“Data ground you to the empirical world” and provide the “particulars you need to think soundly and deeply about the aspects of [the] life you will explore” when gathered in a systematic and rigorous manner (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 117). My data collection plan (Data Gathering and Storage Plan – Appendix B) for this case study involved on-site classroom participant observations, teacher interviews, school-based administrator interviews, and focus-group interviews with sets of two to six or more students from grades kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth, as well as university-based interviews with at least five Harless Center staff members. In order to gain deeper insight into the phenomenon occurring at the elementary

school I analyzed several documents such as the Innovation Zone Grant, newsletters, and pamphlets.

Participant Observation

Glesne (2006) states, “Participant observation provides the opportunity for acquiring the status of trusted person” and sets the stage for the researcher to be “a part of a social setting” (p. 49). Once in the field, I incorporated Glesne’s suggestion to “look for patterns and to abstract similarities and differences across individuals and events” (p. 54). Participant-observation at this elementary school provided the opportunity to see firsthand how the participants’ actions correspond to their interview responses. My researcher role fell in the middle of “observer as participant” and “participant as observer” continuum while I was in the field collecting data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Bogdan and Biklen state it is acceptable to become a participant observer because “becoming a researcher means internalizing the research goal while collecting data in the field” (p. 93). They caution researchers, however, to be careful about keeping research goals in mind while interacting with subjects.

The researcher must provide an “incontestable description” (Stake, 1995, p. 62) of the observations for referencing during the analysis and reporting phases of the case study. In other words, time must be set aside to record field notes, including descriptive notes, as well as reflective notes, and memos after each observation while it is still fresh in the researcher’s mind. The duty of the researcher is to find “good moments to reveal the unique complexity of the case” (p. 62). Observations should provide a “balance between the uniqueness and the ordinariness of the place” (p.63). In addition to maintaining descriptive notes, it is important to include observer comments or memos by reflecting on analysis, methods, ethical dilemmas and conflicts, and on the observer’s frame of mind. I observed every classroom at Dolen Elementary during my three-

week visit. I retreated to a quiet place such as my car or motel room and jotted down my reflections on the details of my observations. Therefore, when depicting the activities, I paid particular attention to the description of behaviors. I treated myself as an object of scrutiny when I described my behavior in order to ensure that I was recording my own thoughts and opinions and that I was staying aware of how my behavior could affect the data.

As I strove to obtain “fat data” (Glesne, 2006) by maintaining detailed field notes, I implemented some of Bogdan and Biklen’s (2007) suggestions about the content of descriptive field notes. I created portraits of my participants by describing their physical and personality attributes. When reconstructing the dialogue of a participant, I wrote – “the participant said something like this,” in place of trying to quote the participant verbatim. I sketched, drew, photographed, or videotaped the physical layout of each room in the school in order to provide a detailed description of the research site. When describing accounts of particular events, I listed the participants, the role they played, and the purpose of the event.

Since I had been provided access to the entire school by Principal Thomas (pseudonym) for this research project, I took advantage of his generosity upon my return in May to visit the pre-k classroom and both classes for every grade level from kindergarten through fifth. I also had the opportunity to observe a music class. I observed children playing outside on the playground during their recess and inside the cafeteria while they were eating their lunch. While in the classroom I took note of the organization or arrangement of the students’ desks and any information posted on the walls or outside of the classroom doors. I noted posters, paintings, or student work hung or posted on the hallway walls. I also had the opportunity to attend an after school dance, the school Talent Show, an assembly/celebration, and observe/participate in the end of the year Student Led Conferences.

Interviews

Individual Interviews

The individual interviews for this case study were with administrators, both university and Harless Center staff and Dolen Elementary, as well as classroom teachers. The goal of the interviews was to obtain additional information from the participants regarding how they experience and perceive the PDS or the “native point of view” in order to describe the culture, setting, and participants in the most vivid and accurate manner. Spradley (1979, p.3) states, “Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people.” I followed his advice while interviewing the participants of my study. Spradley (1979) described four stages an ethnographer must move through, along with the informants, in order to develop rapport and obtain valuable information during an interview — apprehension, exploration, cooperation, and participation. I moved through these stages, initially by helping informants feel less apprehensive by asking descriptive questions. I “make [made] repeated explanations” as to why I was conducting research and what I was looking for, restated the informants’ comments, and asked for the use of a word instead of meaning, by having informants use their language when describing events. I believe this approach helped informants have confidence and trust in me as a researcher and enabled me to lead them through the final stage – participation – where the informants became so comfortable and interested in the interviewing process they began to “teach” the ethnographer by sharing information about their culture.

I designed the interview guides for this study using Spradley’s model as a guide (Sample Interview Guides: Administrative and staff – Appendix C and Elementary Teacher Appendix D) in hopes that I would be able to move quickly and smoothly through the four phases of an interview. I asked the informant grand tour questions that led to rich descriptions of their school

and events. For example, I asked informants to describe their favorite event at the school. Then I moved beyond general descriptive questions and asked for specific examples of what took place during the informants' favorite event. Finally, in order to remain cognizant of the informants' native language I incorporated their language into my questions wherever it was appropriate and I asked them to elaborate when necessary to ensure I understood the culture of the participants.

Dr. Linda Spatig introduced the acronym, W.A.I.T during our advanced qualitative research class — Why am I talking? One of my obvious personality traits is that I am a talker. I love to share my thoughts and engage in healthy conversations. During an interview, I needed to be a listener, not a talker. I placed the acronym, W.A.I.T across the top of each interview guide to serve as a reminder to let the informant do the talking and for me to listen so I was able to make cultural inferences based on my informant's words and gestures.

The interview is the main road to understanding “multiple realities” (Stake, 1995, p. 64). These realities can be preserved if the researcher immediately following an interview takes the time to reflect and prepare a “facsimile and interpretive commentary.” In an effort to understand and preserve the “realities” of the professional development school, I built time into my timeline to immediately reflect after each observation or interview. There was a nook reserved for me at the school where I could quietly slip in and record my thoughts before entering another classroom or event. I conducted an observation, typed up a brief reflection of my thoughts while still in the building, observed another room, and then retreated to my motel room where I expanded on my descriptive notes and wrote a more extensive reflective memo. I worked towards finding the balance Bogdan and Biklen (2007) spoke of between “reflective and descriptive material” (p. 122) to ensure I had accurate records of the data collected and my

evolving thoughts or assumptions as the study progressed. I had the privilege to interview every teacher at Dolen Elementary and the principal.

Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews are “group interviews that are structured to foster talk among the participants about particular issues” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p.109). The purpose is to “stimulate talk from multiple perspectives from the group participants so that the researcher can learn what the range of views” are on a particular topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 109). The focus group interviews (Student Focus Group Interview Guide – Appendix E) I conducted were of heterogeneous groups of elementary kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grade students from the school. The principal determined the members of the groups. I requested that each grade-level group consist of an equal number of boys and girls, a mix of academic abilities and socioeconomic levels, and willingness to share or talk with the researcher.

Krueger and Casey (2000) warn that young people often speak in phrases and concepts that come from their family members, teachers, or church members and researchers need to be aware of their naivety (p. 177). They offer ten tips for conducting focus group interviews with young people and I planned to incorporate several during each session. A few tips from Krueger and Casey I used were to keep the age range of the focus group participants within two years, be aware of age-related behaviors, and to adjust the length of the interview to an appropriate length based on the grade level of the participants. I also tried to get the participants talking to each other, asked age-appropriate questions, and interviewed in a comfortable location where students were free to hang loose and converse. My experience with focus group interviews has been that students will provide fresh and honest insights into the phenomena being studied once they have been assured it is safe to share their thoughts (Spatig, White, Flaherty, Jeffers, & Arneson, 2011).

As is true with individual interviews, focus group interviews rely on the facilitator's skills. Discussions during focus groups are not set up to have students take turns or raise their hands, but instead are dependent on the "interaction within the group, stimulated by the researcher's question(s)" (Glesne, 2006, p. 102-103).

Originally, I had requested the teachers and principal to choose three groups with six students each from grades third through fifth. I asked the students be mixed gender, academic ability, and to choose students that would be willing to talk with me. To my delight, the principal copied the Parental Consent forms I had electronically sent to him for his approval before I arrived, distributed them to every student in the school, and had the teachers gather the signed forms. The form letter to the parents explained the interview process and my purpose for the research. When I arrived at the school signed Parental Consent forms had already been collected for me. I had more than my requested six students from every grade level, including kindergarten. A first grade teacher stopped me in the hallway and asked if it was too late to submit two more forms. She said her students turned them in that morning and she did not want them to "miss the opportunity to participate in the interview." I remember feeling how supportive the administrator, teachers and parents in this school must be.

Documents

I analyzed documents in order to enhance my understanding of the phenomenon being studied at this elementary school. I also analyzed documents gathered throughout my visits at the school and documents that were given to me by the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development. Additional documents gathered by the researcher during observations and school visits consisted of data obtained via observations, such as paintings in the hallways, posted classroom rules, posters of coming events, or samples of student work

hanging in the hallway. I also analyzed documents such as the school's newsletters, brochures, and the local newspaper and samples of student work presented to me by Principal Thomas.

I analyzed documents from the West Virginia Department of Education's website, the Innovation Zone grant application, and materials used by the Harless Center. The West Virginia Department of Education's website was a substantial source of demographic and test score data that contributed to understanding the context of the school. The Innovation Zone grant application was studied and shed light on the proposed school reform plan devised by the elementary school and the Harless Center. The RETROFIT planning guide used by the Harless Center helped me understand the protocol the center follows once they are invited to work with a school. The literature used for the school's book studies were: *Restoring School Civility* (Vincent, Wangaard & Weimer, 2005, 2007), *Shouting Won't Grow Dendrites* (Tate, 2007), *Teaching for Tomorrow* (McCain, 2005), *The Leader in Me* (Covey, 2008), and *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Covey, 2004). These books were documents I studied to help me better understand the program or process as well as the philosophy the center and the school used and is still using to bring about reform and provided additional information regarding the staff development, climate, and culture of the school.

Innovation Zone

The first document I analyzed was the Innovation Zone Designation Competitive Grant Application that the Harless Center helped Dolen Elementary complete in order for them to request a release from the West Virginia Board of Education's Policy 2510. Requesting a release from Policy 2510 gave the school the opportunity to reorganize their time allocations in order to facilitate the 21st Century Content and Skills. The Harless Center and Dolen Elementary started the foundations necessary in order to restructure their school's educational platform on the

Framework for 21st Century Learning which is endorsed by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) Global 21 initiative insists West Virginia students deserve to be trained in 21st century skills in order to be competitive in today's global economy. This initiative is built upon six elements: 1) Focus on Core Subjects, 2) Emphasis on 21st Century Content – Global Awareness; Financial, Economic, and Business Literacy; Civic Literacy; and Health and Wellness Awareness; 3) 21st Context, 4) Using 21st Century Technology Tools to Gain Information and Communication Technology (IT) Literacy, 5) 21st Century Assessments, and 6) 21st Century Learning Skills. (Retrieved from http://wvde.state.wv.us/titlei/Framework_Classrooms_Elementary_000.pdf.pdf).

The release from time constraints through the Policy 2510 waiver allowed the school to teach subjects throughout the day interconnected with no beginning or ending, but a natural flow of language, math, reading, global studies, and science in the manner in which the project, theme, or lesson called. Further analysis into the Innovation Zone grant application revealed that, in addition to requesting release from the time constraints by the WVBOE, the grant also requested Dolen Elementary be allowed to keep two classrooms at each grade level in order to maintain the Vertical team designed to maintain data and determine the student progress by holding students in common all the way through elementary school. The school also requested the County sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Dolen Elementary applicable to any new employee of the school and to ensure sustainability of the project. New hires agreed to participate in all professional development, implement the initiatives outlined in the Innovation Zone project, and agreed to video conferencing and taping of lessons in the classroom. The Innovation Zone grant application also provided background and insight into the plans and

timeline agreed upon by both the Harless Center and Dolen Elementary staff, specifically the RETROFIT planning guide.

Retrofit

Retrofit is a term created by the Harless Center involving the strengthening of schools to excel in the 21st century and aligns itself perfectly with the center's mission statement: "Our mission is to design a replicable 21st century learning experience that transforms 20th century classrooms into 21st century learning environments by building teacher capacity to produce successful global citizens." The RETROFIT planning guide for Dolen Elementary consisted of four goals that were to be implemented within the year through spring, summer, and monthly staff development sessions. The first Retrofit goal was to create a physically, academically, and emotionally safe environment for all learners. Objective one was to implement a school wide character education plan by setting time aside to shape the school's philosophy and offer school climate staff development via book studies of Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and *The Leader in Me* and the formation of a Professional Learning Community with Dolen Elementary staff. The teachers from Dolen Elementary and the Harless Center staff developed common area norms. Via videoconferencing, the Harless Center trained teachers with *Shouting Won't Grow Dendrites*, a professional development session on classroom management techniques throughout the year. Spring and summer professional development sessions were held to plan and implement the Character Education plan. In addition to curriculum changes, the Innovation Zone grant requested the county make physical changes to the old building in the area of bathroom upgrades to ensure privacy and safety for the students. Objective three was written that the Harless Center would provide support for the Dolen Elementary staff to be able to implement and assess 21st Century content and best practices throughout the year by offering

staff development sessions in the Investigations math curriculum, Teaching for Tomorrow, and Best Practices Institute for the summer of 2010. Objective four was to increase access and availability to resource materials by helping teachers organize the manipulatives provided by the Harless Center and help parents organize the school library. Objective five was to support the Dolen Elementary staff in technology integration by providing half day professional development sessions every month.

The second Retrofit goal of the Innovation Zone grant was to increase parent and community involvement. There were four objectives planned to help Dolen Elementary achieve goal two. First, to expand the parental involvement program by conducting surveys to determine parents' strengths, interests, and availability as well as teacher needs; second, the principal to appoint a parent coordinator, and to have the Vision team of Dolen Elementary devise a plan for expanding the parent program. Next, the objective was to have the Vision team educate parents and community on the curriculum, technology, and school initiatives two to three times a semester, if needed. Finally, in an effort to improve communication between home and the community, technology that would link the school via Edline and a Polycom was to be installed.

The third Retrofit goal was to create an organizational structure where collaborative decision making is valued. There were three objectives necessary to achieve this final Retrofit goal. The first objective was to form Vision and Vertical teams. The Vision team is a leadership team where grade level representatives and a parent representative come together to make decisions for the good of the school. The team typically helps with scheduling issues and planning events throughout the school year. The Vertical team was created by holding students in common throughout grades K-5 in order to track their progress by gathering data. The team members are one teacher from every grade K-5. Since there are two classrooms for every grade

there are two Vertical teams at Dolen Elementary, Team Wildcat and Team Dolen. In order to meet this first objective, after the teams were created, meeting protocols were established, regular meeting dates were set, and a commitment to continue meeting monthly was made by the staff and stakeholders. The second objective to goal three was to create opportunities for student voices to be heard. The plan called for the Vision team to devise a plan for continuing to be committed to hearing student voices, particularly by continuing to hold student focus group interviews. The third objective was to utilize the PTO as a vehicle for parent voices. This objective was met by placing a parent as a member of the Vision PLC.

The fourth Retrofit goal was to incorporate 21st Century activities to support students in becoming productive 21st century global studies. The objective for this goal was to create a School Banking program through a community bank, Citizens Bank. All resources and materials were to be provided by the bank.

A significant portion of the grant monies was allocated to train and hire their own substitutes to guarantee the continuity of the project so teachers could attend professional development sessions. Stipends were set aside for teachers to attend training outside of contract terms, for travel expenses to see schools within the Harless Center consortium, conference fees, and professional development materials. Grant money was also used for consultation fees and expenses for the Harless Center to provide professional development sessions on Dolen Elementary's campus two to three days per month and to pay for the Best Practices Institute during the summer 2010.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

I followed Bogdan and Biklen's suggestions regarding data analysis and interpretation by beginning data analysis while I was still in the field during the data collection phase of the study. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) warn the novice researcher to maintain strong records by carefully labeling or numbering each tape, interview, or observation while in the field.

I followed Glesne's (2006) advice during the data analysis process of this study and recorded everything my senses took in regarding the research site or the participants. I described, created explanations, posed hypotheses, developed theories, and linked my story to other stories by organizing the data, looking for patterns, and interpreting findings (p. 147-148).

I heeded Maxwell's (2005) warning against letting data pile up unanalyzed which is a common problem with qualitative studies. He states data analysis should be discussed during the design phase. He also suggests creating a concept map to help theorize the study.

In an effort to make sure I kept up with the data analysis process, I balanced my data gathering opportunities — observations and interviews — with analysis and memo writing sessions. I paid to have my interviews transcribed by a reputable transcriber with whom I had worked in the past, so my time was spent on recording my thoughts about the data collected and reflecting on my experiences. I analyzed my data inductively following Bogdan and Biklen's (2007) advice by developing my theory of what was happening at the professional development school while I processed the data.

According to Goodwin and Goodwin (1996), coding is the “heart of data analysis in qualitative research” (p.143). To facilitate this process, I created a coding tool, using Teitel's (2000) PDS assessment concept map as a guide (PDS Impact Assessment Concept Map - Appendix F). The concept map is a matrix designed to serve as a master guide or a record of the

labels assigned for each type of data to be collected, i.e., interviews, observations, and documents. The map may also be helpful during the coding process and act as an organizational tool to help keep track of observations and reflections and how they correlate with participant interviews and relevant documents.

Data analysis was thematic as I sifted through pieces of data collected and analyzed and found themes to categorize the observations and interviews of the participants. As I analyzed the data, I coded the data in search of themes. A theme is a concept or theory that emerges from the data. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest the researcher look over the data collected, analyzed, and coded then determine which theme has the greatest amount of data. Maxwell (2005) suggests categorizing themes because it is too hard to hold a lot of data in your head. He suggests the researcher design a formal system to organize and retrieve data during the planning stages of a research project. I had my data transcribed, printed, hole punched, and compiled into binders. I organized my data by grade level, interviews (individual and focus group), and observations. As I analyzed the data, I coded the data in search of themes. Later, I reorganized the data themes and aligned them with my research questions.

Once the themes were constructed, I discussed the themes in relation to the literature and my interpretation of their meaning. “Often the qualitative researcher makes much of his or her interpretations from personal experiences with the people studied” (Stake, 2010, p.151). Interpretation means the act of explaining the meaning of something. In data analysis, interpretation of data comes after all data have been coded and analyzed. I interpreted my themes or findings according to their relevance to the literature reviewed and to my research questions. I delved into whether my findings confirmed or invalidated my assumptions prior to entering the field. I discussed whether the data gathered changed my understandings and in what ways.

Finally, I shared any new information gained from analyzing the data and comparing it to the studies in the literature review.

VALIDITY

According to Glesne (2006), “trustworthiness or research validity” of one’s study should be considered during the design phase. Further, Stake (1995) reminds the researcher, “we deal with many complex phenomena and issues for which no consensus can be found as to what really exists —yet we have ethical obligations to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding” (p. 108). Therefore, I feel a “deliberate effort to find the validity of data observed” (p.109) was demonstrated to the reader. In order to conduct a phenomenological study that was valid, I used the following strategies: triangulation, researcher’s bias, participant reactivity, and member checks.

Stake (1995) offers, “triangulation protocols” (p. 112) in order to validate, gain the needed confirmation, increase credibility in the analysis, or to validate cohesiveness of a statement that the data gathered is valid. The protocol this researcher used was the “data source triangulation” where the phenomenon is comparable to another “time, in other spaces, or as persons interact differently” (p. 112). For example, a first grade classroom observation was compared to another first grade classroom to assess the assumptions made by the researcher.

“Understanding how a particular researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of a study” (Maxell, 2005, p. 108) or researcher’s bias is the first step in protecting the validity of a research study. The second step to ensuring the validity of the conclusions of a qualitative study is the participant reactivity to the researcher, or “how you are influencing what the informant says, and how this affects the validity of the inferences you can draw from the interview” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 109). I heeded Maxwell’s words in order to protect

the validity of my research study by being aware of researcher bias and participant reactivity. I was careful to not allow my opinions to color my perception and to ensure I gathered trustworthy data when I observed and analyzed the participants and setting. My interpretations or judgements of the administrators, teachers, or students were placed on hold during my observations or interviews. Because I have been an elementary teacher for years it is easy for me to relate to the classroom teacher. I can readily see myself in the classroom and easily place myself in the same situation as the teacher. As a clinical supervisor, my position often called for me to offer suggestions or lend a hand to both the preservice teacher and the classroom teacher. During an observation or an interview it was imperative that I remained cognizant of how I was acting and that I kept my thoughts and impressions separate from the situation and simply observed and recorded what I actually saw. I restrained my ever-present willingness to help out a colleague. I was aware of how my behavior affected the participants in this study. I felt this was essential and important in guarding the study against Maxwell's second validity threat, participant reactivity. I checked the reactivity level of the teacher and the students while I was present in the classroom. I strove to stay aware in order to determine how my presence might have caused participants to change their behaviors. I made note of any changes I felt the teacher had made because he/she knew I was coming in to observe. For example, I checked to see if she changed her schedule or lesson because she was being observed. I remember as a teacher when we were observed by an assessment team at the county or state level we were always asked if they were seeing a typical day or lesson. I believed asking the teacher and children this question was helpful in determining the reactivity of participants.

“Member checks” where data collected from the participants and the researcher's interpretations are returned to the participants for validation and verification that the findings

“ring true” is a strategy discussed by Merriam (1995). I implemented Merriam’s strategy once a substantial amount of data had been collected, coded, and analyzed to ensure that I understood the participants’ perceptions accurately. Merriam further suggested that peer/colleague examination can strengthen the validity of a study. This strategy involved having peers or colleagues examine data and make remarks on the credibility of the developing results. Colleague-checks to strengthen the validity of my study were conducted by the university-based administration. Another strategy that strengthened the validity of my study was when I submerged myself into the “research situation by collecting data over a long enough period of time to ensure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon” (p. 54). I spent several weeks gathering data via interviews and observations on-site then made an additional visit five years later to discuss any notable differences. I drew on preliminary findings from an earlier visit to the site in January 2010 with the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development staff to answer the questions put forth in this study.

SUMMARY

In summary, to answer the research questions proposed in this phenomenological qualitative case study, I gathered data via interviews, observations, and documents. I conducted individual interviews with teachers, staff, and administrators – school-based and university-based. I conducted focus group interviews with students from kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grades. I observed in the classroom as well as any activities before or after school that took place during the study. As a participant observer, I gelled with research participants in order to gain the firsthand experiences necessary to answer my proposed questions. I wrote descriptive field notes and reflective memos to ensure the details and findings were recorded accurately. I analyzed and interpreted data as themes emerge in order to prevent

me from drowning in my findings. I also used the coding tool I created to help analyze, interpret, and triangulate the data and incorporate peer and member checks to ensure my findings were valid. I paid attention to my own bias and the reactivity of the participants. Using these methods helped me accomplish the purpose of this study, which was to determine the particular aspects responsible for the notable events at this rural elementary school. The findings from this phenomenological case study, will hopefully enhance or contribute to Professional Development School literature and shed light on the nuances of “doing school” (Pope, 2001, p.4) that are making a difference from the student, teacher, and administration’s perspective.

CHAPTER FOUR

DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

The participants in this phenomenological case study are involved with the Professional Development School partnership between the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development and Dolen Elementary (pseudonym). One set of participants consists of the administrators and staff of The June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development (Harless Center), a part of the College of Education at Marshall University, in Huntington, West Virginia. The other set of participants consists of the elementary school students, teachers, staff, and administrator of Dolen Elementary, a small school in rural Appalachia. The setting is a small rural elementary school in the Appalachian mountains of West Virginia. The school, located in a historic district full of rich Civil War artifacts displayed in a local museum, is surrounded by historic buildings that gave shelter to Union soldiers, and lies in the shadow of a mountain where a significant battle was fought to end slavery. The school embraces the community's pride in preserving and sharing the history of their area by partnering with local historians, businesses, and The Harless Center. By collaborating with these entities, Dolen Elementary designed Placed-Based learning activities to enhance the basic skills, reading, writing, science, social studies, music, physical education, arts, and character education curriculum for their students.

PARTICIPANTS

June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development

The June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development (Harless Center), a part of the College of Education at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia, is physically located in Jenkins Hall, yet its outreach spreads throughout the rural counties of the

state. The Harless Center was made possible through the philanthropic commitment and devotion of benefactor, Mr. James Howard “Buck” Harless, (1919-2014) born in Taplin, West Virginia, who lovingly created the center in honor of his deceased wife, June (Montgomery) Harless (1920-1999) born in Holden, West Virginia. In addition to honoring his wife, Mr. Harless had a sincere desire to see that rural Appalachian children are provided the same opportunities as all the children in West Virginia. Dr. Stan (Arthur) Maynard, Executive Director of The Harless Center, spoke of Mr. Harless’ contributions to West Virginia:

I believe he understood that the economic gap that we see in West Virginia could best be narrowed by education...Buck Harless was a ‘bridge builder.’ He built bridges for individuals, so they could journey from where they are to where they could be. The bridge he chose to build was a bridge of education, compassion and belief in the spirit of our West Virginia heritage.

According to Dr. Barbara Maynard, Director of Professional Development at the Center, Mr. Harless felt compassion for the children in rural West Virginia. Mr. Harless shared the story of the day he decided to become a benefactor for the children of rural West Virginia. He reminisced of driving behind a school bus one afternoon watching the children as they stepped off the bus and ran into their poverty stricken homes. Realizing these children needed more than a mediocre education if they were to survive in today’s competitive world, he contacted the Maynard’s and offered to help finance a 21st century education for the children of rural Appalachia.

Dr. Maynard, often called the “visionary” of The Harless Center, works alongside his wife, Dr. Barbara Maynard, Director of Professional Development, in order to complete a charge that was handed down by West Virginia’s Superintendent of Education to design and implement a model school for teachers of West Virginia to have a place to observe and learn optimal

research-based practices and enhance their pedagogy. The couple has steadily and tirelessly worked to design and create the model school while simultaneously providing support to the teachers and children of West Virginia. The Harless Center's model school is a research-based center where best practices in curriculum and delivery of instruction are shared with both teachers and children. The curriculum is aligned to ensure participants are knowledgeable, caring, and confident 21st Century trained and educated Global citizens (West Virginia Department of Education, 2008). The goal is to have both teachers and children working with the finest resources in environments where experimenting with the latest cutting-edge technology and highly effective instruction are the norm. The mission statement for the center is, "to provide leadership in education initiatives for rural West Virginia educators and students and offer a support system that addresses educational problems, sustains school improvement, and provides positive growth in all educational factors."

Dr. Stan Maynard, Executive Director of the Harless Center had been charged by now former State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Steven Paine, to create a model 21st Century school or demonstration site where research-based, best practices would be implemented and teachers throughout West Virginia could visit (in person or via telecommunication due to the rural landscape of the state) to observe, be provided professional development, and go back to their classrooms to implement strategies learned, reflect on the impact of the newly gained professional development on their students and teaching skills, and share their experiences with their colleagues and the Harless Center staff. Often called the visionary, Dr. Maynard shared how the model school could be compared to a hospital:

The analogy of such a center would be based on the medical model of the Cleveland Clinic – the research center (Incubator School) will become the "Cleveland Clinic of Education." Not every hospital needs to be the Cleveland Clinic, but every hospital needs a Cleveland Clinic to visit and learn the most

effective strategies and techniques for medical care. The Incubator will serve as a location for an educational “residential” program for educators to spend a period of time learning the most effective strategies and techniques for educational care. After the residency program is completed and the educators return to their school site, the Harless Center staff will support their efforts in replicating what they have experienced. I believe that this process will transform how professional development is conducted in the years to come.

The Harless Center opened its first incubator school in a wing of a former middle school that was not being used for anything except storage. The Harless Center staff went to work to clean and organize the small wing and opened its doors to take in the first students — a class of kindergarten and first graders fall of 2005. The school operated for two years in this building designing their curriculum, classrooms, and lessons to depict 21st Century classrooms based on the state’s Global 21 initiative. Due to the generosity of James “Buck” Harless, the Benedum Foundation, Verizon, and support from the West Virginia Department of Education, the 21st Century Model/Demonstration Site moved their model school into a newly constructed wing at Terry (pseudonym) Elementary in 2007. The move enabled the Harless Center to add one class for each grade of third through fifth. The model school was described as a school within a school because there was one class for each grade, kindergarten through fifth, which came to be called the Harless wing, inside of the larger school which held four classrooms for each grade level kindergarten through fifth grades. The Harless Wing students excelled in state testing, but also in their ability to work cooperatively and think as global citizens. Dr. Linda Spatig, Professor of Marshall University’s College of Education and Qualitative Researcher, had been asked to conduct an analysis of the model school program and to make recommendations, comments, or suggestions that could contribute to the success and sustainability of the program which is where I began my preliminary study that led to the current research project at Dolen Elementary.

The Harless Center's role eventually changed from a partnership to more of a consultant role at Terry Elementary and therefore; the center moved their focus from Terry Elementary to other rural counties throughout West Virginia by the end of the 2009-2010 school year where they continued to offer their assistance as determined by the needs of each individual school. According to the Harless Center's website their work and accomplishments, at this point could be described in three phases. Phase one was the work at Terry Elementary, a local school near the University. Lessons learned during this phase were the importance of weekly embedded professional development, the significance of teacher and administrator leadership, worth of foreign language and global studies, and the prominence of response to intervention. Phase two of the Center's educational leadership journey has been the agreements and partnerships with Innovation Zone schools where the Harless Center staff walked the schools through their center created, Harless Retrofit process. This phase is where the research for my case study began. The Harless Center had begun a partnership with the school and was moving Dolen Elementary through the Harless Retrofit process. The third and current phase of the Harless Center's work or accomplishments in their organizational history has been to actually meet their goal and complete the charge given to them by the former West Virginia State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Paine, which was to create an incubator or laboratory model school. (It is important to note the Harless Center is still committed to the PDS partnerships discussed in phase two and continues to offer their support to the nineteen PDS schools within their consortium throughout West Virginia.)

Dr. Maynard's vision for a model school was finally realized by partnering with Cabell County schools in the fall of 2015, when the Explorer's Academy opened its doors. The new school is referred to as an Incubator School, a term determined between Mr. Bill Smith,

Superintendent of Cabell County Schools and Dr. Stan Maynard, Executive Director of the Harless Center, which was taken from author, Ron Berger's philosophy and book, *An Ethnic of Excellence*. The Expeditionary Learning (EL) students will participate in authentic, hands-on learning activities that can make a difference in their school, community, or home. Berger holds his students to a high standard of learning and insists on beautiful, powerful, important work. Superintendent, Mr. Bill Smith, describes the new school as being,

the first in the state of West Virginia to implement the Expeditionary Learning model. This model actively involves all students and staff as members of a "crew", giving students greater responsibility for their learning. It is also different from traditional schools in that there are less lectures and more active engagement. Content standards are embedded into expeditions which help students learn through hands-on experience.

Staff members of the Harless Center are individuals who have expertise in offering professional development due to their experiences and training through Carnegie Mellon, Dr. Stephen Covey, Dr. Ruby K. Payne and other prestigious organizations. The staff also brings years of classroom experience in the areas of elementary and middle school math teachers, a language arts and reading specialist and two former middle school science teachers, one who now serves as the STEM Coordinator for the center. The staff as a whole seems to share the same philosophy and dedication to support the teachers and students of West Virginia. During this research project the staff significantly changed. Duties of staff members were to take the lead to present professional development sessions, to lead book studies, to help with grant writing, and worked to with the Vision team to design and adjust schedules for the school day in regards to lunch and recess duties, computer lab, specials (gym and music), and holiday or special events. Five years later, the staff members continued to support teachers specifically by mentoring them to design Place-Based Learning activities throughout their area, provide FOSS

science kit training and implementation to the teachers, and writing a grant to enhance the school's gardening program by purchasing a high tower or greenhouse.

The Harless Center's partnership with the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation has enabled the center's outreach to encompass the students and teachers of Cabell, Wayne, Lincoln, Putman, Kanawha, Mason, Mingo, Logan, Randolph, and Nicholas counties. The Harless, Community Robotics, Education and Technology Empowerment (C.R.E.A.T.E) satellite lab offers Arts & Bots summer camps and professional development with the Huntington Museum of Art. The Harless Center also supports the Marshall University Statewide 21st Century Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Academy.

Dolen Elementary

The principal, teachers, and students of Dolen Elementary participated in this research. The staff has changed throughout this research project due to retirements, the death of a second grade teacher, and students growing up and moving on to middle school. The principal of this school, Mr. Thomas (pseudonym), began his career as a music teacher. He wanted to try his hand at being an administrator so he took a part-time position as a principal and worked in a nearby school within the county half day and spent the rest of his day teaching music. Mr. Thomas realized he would enjoy being an administrator so he decided to apply and was hired as the principal for Dolen Elementary seven years before I began my research project. Mr. Thomas took the position with his eyes wide open to the fact the school was struggling and the county had already begun the paperwork to implement the process that would place the school on an improvement plan. When asked why the school was being placed on an improvement plan, Mr. Thomas simply responded, "The school was such a low performing school, and has been on program improvement and has shown no improvement...that's where it was when I applied."

The principal was energetic, busy, and a fast moving leader. One example that shows how he seemed to thrive on always moving is his peculiar desk chair, a huge blue, rubber ball! While posing, only long enough for a quick photograph, Mr. Thomas gave me a big toothy smile and answered my question, why he used a ball for a desk chair, by saying; he was a former music teacher with lots of energy so sitting on the ball allowed him to bounce and squirm while he worked.

Most of the teachers in this school have been here for years and seem truly dedicated to seeing the students succeed - including a husband and wife team who shared how the teachers always work together to come up with ideas to meet the students' needs. There are two classes per grade level in this small school, kindergarten through fifth grade, with the exception of only one pre-k class. Each grade level was designated as a Vertical Team, initiated by the Harless Center in order to hold students in common for research purposes as they move throughout their elementary years. In general, students stay in the same class unless an issue prompts the administration or teachers to move someone around. The principal named the Vertical Teams, Team Dolen and Team Wildcats. The school staff also included a Talented and Gifted (T.A.G) teacher, a nurse, three cooks, a custodian, and secretary when I began the research. Additional participants of this research project are the members of the Vision Team, also initiated by the Harless Center and created to provide stakeholders a voice. Members typically are the Harless Center and Dolen Elementary administrators, one teacher from each grade level, a county representative, business partners, and community stakeholders. Five years later, the staff has changed due to three teachers retiring, one teacher passing, and one transferring due to graduate work at the time of this project. The Vertical Teams are still in place with two classes per grade level and only one pre-k class. The Vision Team is also still in place. Young classroom teachers

and a Title I teacher fresh out of college have been hired to replace the retired teachers and other vacant staff positions. The school still has eighteen full-time teachers, as well as art, music, physical education teachers, a Talented and Gifted (T.A.G) teacher, and a recently added Title I teacher. Enrollment at Dolen Elementary in 2010 was 270 children. The enrollment five years later is 250 students. Of the 250 students at Dolen Elementary, 130 of them receive free lunch and 32 qualify for reduced lunch. Additional demographics showed there were 92.4% Caucasian students, 5.3 % Black, 1.0% Hispanic, .07% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 0.4% of the children have two or more races.

Parent Comments to Website

Communication with parents to determine their perceptions of the PDS partnership was not designed into my research plan. My contact with parents consisted of a few positive conversations and three comments posted by parents to the school's website. The first conversation with a parent was casual and in the parking lot after school one afternoon. The parent stated she felt welcomed at the school, informed, and pleased with her child's academic progress. A few more positive comments came one morning from parents who were moving books from the room that used to be the school's library to the stage in the cafeteria which was being converted to the library. The old library room was being converted into the new computer lab and I was assigned this location to conduct my interviews. Parents remarked how they did not mind helping the school out by volunteering to set up the new library because they realized the importance of a library to elementary children. They wanted their children to have access to plenty of books so they could reach their Accelerated Reader (A.R.) goals. The parents also shared how they were helping to put shelves together and organize books by genres. The rest of my information regarding parental involvement came from interviews with the Harless Center

staff, principal, and teachers. The school's website had three comments from parents during the 2003, 2004, and 2006 school years noting the school was trying to reach out to parents, the need for physical updates to the facility, and a sense of hope for the school's future. One post to the website, by a parent on November 5, 2003 seemed upbeat as a parent stated they felt the school was working to raise the bar on curriculum and also trying to involve parents more. The post read:

This school is a family-like environment that is working to succeed in strengthening the curriculum to exceed national standards. The PTO is striving to get all parents involved in their child's education. I feel this is an upcoming excellent school.

The most discouraging post came on October 20, 2004 when a parent complained about the lack of technology, there were no band or choir programs for the students, and some teachers not being enthusiastic about their students. However, the parent noted there seemed to be an emphasis on the school trying to involve the parents. The post was as follows:

Dolen Elementary is a family/community based school. There is emphasis on trying to get and keep the parent involved in their child's education. There are a few teachers that care about the students; however, there is a lack of enthusiasm about educating the pupils. A lack of technology exists in this institution. There is a strong special education resource and the school does offer band for 5th grade and choir. If the school were to receive more funding and some of the teachers would remember why they became educators, this school could become above average.

Finally, the last post to this website was on October 15, 2006 stating only positive comments about Dolen Elementary:

The Dolen Elementary School is a family/community oriented type school. It has a child-centered atmosphere where students are encouraged to express themselves. The test scores are going up and the potential is there to become a school of excellence.

SETTING

The setting of this case study is Dolen Elementary which is a small elementary school nestled in a historic area of the central eastern section of West Virginia. The school is located where Civil War battles were fought. The children are aware of the significance of the school's history and have recently spent two years participating in Place-Based Learning activities in order to learn more about their historic community. Students have shared with me how they once discovered a bullet casing and fragments of a cannon ball on their playground. An analysis of the expenditures indicated Dolen Elementary has the support of the county as there was \$8,623 spent per student. In comparison, the West Virginia Department of Education expenditures are noted to be \$9,611 per student. Since Dolen Elementary was awarded the Innovation Zone status by the United States Department of Education, the county was able to invest \$97,000 in the school for technology in order to enhance the computer lab by using funds set aside for Title I and Special Education purposes.

My first glimpse at Dolen Elementary seemed to come from a page in AB Combs, *The Leader in Me* because of the student greeters stationed at the entrance of the school. This served as evidence Covey's Seven Habits were being used to enhance the culture of school. Dr. Stephen Covey's books; *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, *The Leader in Me*, and his son Sean's book, *The Seven Habits of Happy Kids* were used during book studies by the Harless Center as tools to provide the professional development sessions to change the climate of the school. The atmosphere at Dolen Elementary seemed friendly as I walked through the hallways looking for the principal because the adults and students were smiling and welcoming me or were laughing and talking with each other. The principal, Mr. Thomas, greeted me with arms outstretched as he offered, "All of this is at your disposal!" I realized Dolen Elementary was

exactly where a doctoral student could gather the data and information necessary to answer the overarching research question, What are the perceptions of the participant's' experiences when working or learning in a Professional Development School?

The grand tour of the school started with the history of the physical building which originally was a high school until an addition was added to the building and it was turned into the elementary school. The school was old and in need of renovation. The newer section of the building had a long hallway for the third, fourth, and fifth grade classes, a small teacher's lounge with a restroom, and a computer lab with two offices to the side occupied by the school nurse and special education teacher. The second hallway of the school was a little shorter than the intermediate grades and held the first and second grade classrooms. The secretary's and principal's office were close to the primary classrooms. The cafeteria/gym was in the old section of the school. Past the cafeteria/gym doors are two kindergarten classes, a huge pre-k classroom, music room, and a counselor's office with two desks or working areas.

The students have raised their test scores significantly in the seven years Mr. Thomas has been their principal. When he started his position as principal, the school was on the watch list for being placed on an improvement plan which basically meant the West Virginia Department of Education was on the brink of taking over the school. When asked how the school was performing academically since the PDS partnership and how Dolen Elementary compared to other schools within the state, Mr. Thomas shared he used STAR assessment tests for math and reading because of the inability to compare test scores since the instruments for assessment have been changed so frequently,

What I can do is I can give you some data with the STAR assessment to show growth because it becomes difficult when you start looking at [test scores] you have the first version of the WESTEST, then they changed it to the next version of the WESTEST2, and then this year we had the SMARTER BALANCE

Assessment. There's no continuity with the testing so I've been at a real loss as far as standardized testing to compare from year to year to year. I've been working at looking at those star assessments and where the [students] were and how much growth.

When I first sat down with Mr. Thomas and started my preliminary research of this project in January of 2010 the test scores were lower at Dolen Elementary compared to the state scores, but as stated earlier, the school itself had shown improvement since their new principal had arrived. When I visited the school again, near the end of the school year, students were on their last full day of testing. Teachers were expecting good test scores. They felt the students had done their best. Most of the teachers spoke of how next year was going to be better because they felt they had really spent this year as a "learning year" where they worked hard to learn and implement the new PDS initiatives. They felt by next year the teachers would be more comfortable implementing the new teaching techniques and initiatives in their lesson plans and students would receive stronger test scores. The 2010 WESTEST scores depicts the school scored 33% overall on their math scores which is ten points less than the county's 44% and the state's scores overall math score of 44%. Teachers believed 2010 was a "learning year" for the school and were hopeful test scores would be strong by the next year once participants became acclimated to the new PDS initiatives. Math test scores for the 2011-2012 school year showed the students scored 7.4% more than students within their county and 2.9% more than the state.

An analysis of the West Virginia Accountability Index (WVAI) for the school year of 2012-2013 depicts Dolen Elementary was designated as a Focus School because it did not meet its required Index Target score of 49.594. However; the school did meet at least fifty percent of the math and reading targets and the participation rate indicator. The school's actual index score was 48.516 or 1.078% less than the assigned Index Target score of 49.594. The total WVAI score has 100 points possible. The overall index score for Dolen Elementary is 50.68% which is

while 2.16% points higher than that state's score of 48.52%. The following year, West Virginia Accountability Index (WVAI) for the school year of 2013-2014 school year designated Dolen Elementary once again as a Focus School because it still did not meet its required Index Target score of 53.176, however; once again the school met at least fifty percent of the math and reading targets and the participation rate indicator. The school's actual index score was 43.806 or 9.37 points under the required index score. Of the 20 points possible for the adequate growth points, Dolen shows 40.% of their students are on track to reach grade-level expectations which is 1.72% higher than the state's 38.38% score.

The principal sat down with his teachers and analyzed the data depicting the gap between the lower socioeconomic group's scores compared to the rest of their students' scores in the school, and then compared those scores to the state's scores. Mr. Thomas reached out once again to the Harless Center regarding their new Focus School designation asking, "What can we do," to help close the gap we have due to the poverty level at Dolen Elementary?" The Harless suggested professional development on Dr. Ruby K. Payne's, *The Framework for Understanding Poverty*. The teachers accepted the suggestion and have been gifted the book by the Harless Center. Plans are set for professional development sessions regarding Payne's work in the spring of 2016.

PDS Initiatives

Attending a professional development session while visiting the school helped provide insight into the PDS partnership, specifically in the area of reform regarding the initiatives the school had decided as a team or school to implement. Topics during the professional development session were in the area of the substitutes that would be used by the school during professional development sessions, the Seven Habits book studies, the right for teachers to move

out of the school and bid somewhere else if they did not want to commit to the PDS partnership requirements, and the discussion to plan for a parent night.

The first topic was the substitutes that would be needed when teachers were called out throughout the year. The plan was for the Harless Center to provide at least two professional development sessions per month. The teachers had voted they would not stay after school to implement this PDS partnership. They requested all professional development sessions be embedded throughout the school day during the school year, on early release days, and be held to short sessions throughout the summer. The Harless Center staff suggested training five or six substitutes in the procedures and philosophy at Dolen Elementary so when teachers were pulled out for training the school day would continue in the same manner the students were accustomed to. These substitute teachers could still teach throughout the county, but would be called in and reserved explicitly for Dolen Elementary on professional development days.

In addition to training their own substitutes, another topic was the continued implementation of the Seven Habits in order to help enhance the culture of the school. The principal told me that the initiative to incorporate the Seven Habits to help change the climate of the school was a direct result of the parent and student surveys administered when the Harless Center first partnered with Dolen Elementary. The survey revealed the students felt uncomfortable to share their work. Once the teachers heard the students were uncomfortable sharing their work they discussed their concerns with the Harless Center and determined their first priority or goal would be to work towards changing the culture of the school.

The next topic brought up by the principal was the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the staff, administrator, and Harless Center. A discussion was held as the principal reminded teachers they still had the time and the right to bid out of the school if they

did not want to commit to the required large number of professional development sessions planned. The teachers also needed to consider the agreement that their classrooms would be observed by other teachers and visitors who were interested in learning about the PDS partnership and initiatives implemented throughout Dolen Elementary. After discussion of the Memorandum of Understanding was complete, at the suggestion of the Harless Center, the teachers broke up into small groups to discuss how to create more parental involvement in the school by asking themselves; “What do parents want?” Once the discussion teams came back together and shared their results everyone was in agreement a parent night was needed and the Harless Center agreed on their next visit to help the teachers devise a plan for a parent night. An evening session was held with the Vision Team, another implementation suggested by the Harless Center. The Vision Team consisted of the principal, one teacher from each grade level, Harless staff members, a county representative, and a parent. This session was more or less an informational meeting. Time was spent reviewing the plans that would be implemented if the Innovation Zone was granted, discussing the need to keep the enrollment up to twenty-two per grade level in order to maintain the Vertical teams in order to conduct research, and the desire from the parent representative for more opportunities to come to the school.

Physical evidence of the PDS partnership were paintings on the wall in the foyer entrance and student hallways of a huge tree with seven branches labeled for each one of Covey’s habits. In the teacher’s lounge there was a huge Post-It note, the size of a poster board labeled, Parking Lot hanging on the wall. There were comments posted for the Harless staff and teachers to consider and suggestions for the next meeting with their colleagues. The library had recently been replaced by the new computer lab and at the suggestion of a Harless staff member was

being moved to the stage in the cafeteria/gym. I observed parents laughing and talking with each other as they moved stacks and boxes of books to its new location.

SUMMARY

In summary, chapter four provided details for the setting and participants of the phenomenological case study. The setting of the research project is in a small historical community in the rural Appalachia Mountains of West Virginia. The actual research site is an older elementary school building, Dolen Elementary. The participants are the staff and administrative members of The Harless Center for Research and Professional Development and the staff, administration, and students at Dolen Elementary.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS/ANALYSIS – PARTICIPANTS’ VOICES

Chapter five is reserved for sharing the data discovered during this research project and is formatted in the following manner. The chapter begins with an overview of the data collection which includes the number of interviews, focus group interviews, observations, and documents that were analyzed over a five year period of time expanding from the spring of 2010 and ending with the winter of 2015. During the data analysis phase of this research project an overarching theme was discovered that encompassed both school and university-based participants. The overall theme is the participants’ genuine willingness to learn based on their perceptions expressed during interviews. They were willing to listen to each other and step out of their comfort zones in order to experiment and try new initiatives. The participants’ responses are divided into two groups, school and university-based and have some overlapping themes. The first group discussed is the school-based group and is designated by student, teacher, and principal participants. The second group, the university-based participants’ responses follow and are separated between the administrator’s responses and the staff’s. The first research question focuses on the perceptions and experiences participants shared when asked to explain what it was like to work and learn in a Professional Development School setting. The second research question concentrated on any factors, enabling or constraining that could have been attributed to the success Dolen Elementary experienced once they partnered with the Harless Center. The school-based and university based participants reflected on their experiences and provided several factors, both positive and negative that they felt were worth mentioning regarding the reformation at their Appalachian school.

The research questions for this phenomenological research project were designed to feature the experiences and perceptions of the participants and to explain enabling and constraining factors that played a role in the success of this PDS partnership:

1. How do participants experience and perceive the model Professional Development School program?
 - a. School-Based Participants – students, teachers, administrators
 - b. University-Based Participants – Harless Center administrators
2. What components do participants view as necessary for success in this model program?
 - a. Enabling factors
 - b. Constraining factors

OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION

This research project began in the spring of 2010 with a quick visit to the school followed by an extensive three-week period of observations and interviews near the end of the first full year of their partnership, and finished with a five-year later glimpse of the status of the partnership in the winter of 2015. The overall data collection consisted of ten individual interviews with teachers, five focus group interviews with teachers, ten focus group interviews with students, and two interviews with the principal. University-based interviews consisted of one interview with Drs. Stan and Barbara Maynard, administrators of the Harless Center, one interview with two Harless Center staff members, and one focus group interview with both Harless Center administrators and two staff members. The data collection also included fifteen classroom observations and computer lab observations of eight different classrooms. In addition, I observed recess time on the playground for the primary and intermediate classes; a school-wide

assembly; fifth grade students practicing and then presenting their data notebooks; students at the front door serving as door greeters before and after school; the cafeteria before school and during lunch for all grades; an after-school dance; a Vision team meeting; and a full-day professional development session led by the staff of the Harless Center. Finally, I also collected written documents such as school newsletters, pamphlets, and flyers.

PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS

Research question one was written to help me obtain the perceptions of the participants regarding what it is like to work and learn in a PDS school. The school-based participants are discussed first followed by the university-based participants. As stated earlier, there is a central theme of a willingness to learn between all participants. Under this umbrella of a willingness to learn there are several themes that overlap between participants.

Willingness To Learn

The overarching theme determined during the data analysis was a willingness of the students, teachers, and the principal to learn or step up to the new challenges presented by the Professional Development School partnership. The participants spoke of being willing to work on changing their mindsets or attitudes in order to learn or accept the new initiatives presented by the Harless Center. Even the Harless Center administrators and staff spoke of their willingness to adjust their presentation of professional development based on lessons learned and from listening to the teachers at Dolen Elementary.

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

Research question one, how do participants experience and perceive the Professional Development School program, was designed to determine how participants experience and perceive the model Professional Development School program and what it is like to work and

learn in this PDS partnership. I asked interview questions to understand the perceptions of the participants. Emerging themes were coded, then categorized into themes and divided between school and university-based participants. As stated earlier the overarching theme of this research project stresses the willingness of all participants, both school-based and university-based, to want to learn.

The final segment under the research question one section is a discussion of all the school-based participants' responses that I received during an end of the follow-up interview which took place five years later. This final theme has two subheadings: increasing student voice and the teachers and principal make school fun. The first subheading has three topics under it: P.A.W.S.; seven habits; and data notebooks-student conferences. The second subheading has the topic special stuff.

SCHOOL-BASED PARTICIPANTS

The school-based participants consist of the students, teachers, and principal in the little Appalachian school of Dolen Elementary. All participants showed a willingness to learn or change their way of thinking in order to try the initiatives suggested by the Harless Center.

Students

The first of the four themes that demonstrate the students' willingness to learn shows how they were willing to participate in the Seven Habits initiative, as evidenced by one of the younger participant's response to my question where he happily shouted, *Welcome to the Seven Habits for happy kids!* The second theme was based on the students' description of how they incorporated the Harless center initiatives and incorporation of Ron Berger's data notebooks and student led conferences to help them set and meet their goals, document their progress, and share their academic successes with their parents. The third theme, students as encouragers is based on

a conversation I had with one of the upper grade focus groups regarding my dissertation. The students were genuinely interested in reading my work once it is completed and had the foresight to ask if they would ever be interviewed again. I was actually privileged to interview some of the same original first grade students who had moved to the fifth grade, during my final visit in 2015. The final theme is school is a fun place and provides additional insight into why the participants were so willing to learn and is based on the students' descriptions of their school. These descriptions have been broken down into two subheadings; fun stuff and nice teachers and a humongous principal.

Welcome to the Seven Habits for Happy Kids!

A third grade student's response to being asked to describe his school as if he were describing it to a new student was, "Welcome to the Seven Habits for happy kids!" The students could easily articulate why they used the Seven Habits and how the habits were helping change the culture of the school. When asked why they used the habits one student replied, "Because we like to be nice and set goals." Even the youngest students could use the terminology when speaking about the habits, "When we work together as a team, [it's] like synergizing" Another focus group quoted in unison an excerpt of a poem, "Sharpen the saw, don't be dull. Eat your food, and you will be tall, Exercise and get lots of rest, and you will always do your best." Then the students sang part of a song, "Be proactive, be proactive, every day, every day. I won't be a victim, I will make good decisions, every day, every day" to the tune of *Are You Sleeping?* One student smiled and quietly said, "That's the one that encourages me to remember the most." However, one student's response to the poems and songs was, "They drill it in us almost every day." That said, it seems from the interviews that the Seven Habits were not drilled into the students, but rather embedded into the curriculum and modeled by the teachers so students would

see their value as one teacher explained, “You kind of live it; it just kind of becomes a part of your life.” There was evidence the habits were making an impact on the lives of the students, especially in the way they handled social events and in becoming more responsible. For example, one student described how the habits can help you with your behavior while playing sports, “If we win in baseball and we go over and rub it in the competitor’s faces, we are being reactive.” Another student described how you are being responsible when you use the “put first things first habit because you do not go outside and play until you have finished your homework.” In regards to the effect the habits had on the school, one student commented, “Seven Habits is like a whole lifestyle. You are supposed to do those and you will have a good life. When you sharpen the saw, you exercise, and you are good, and when you are proactive you will have a lot of friends.”

Data Notebooks and Student Led Conferences

The Harless Center suggested Dolen Elementary use Ron Berger’s (2003) Expeditionary Learning (EL) ideas in order to incorporate the use of data notebooks to help students learn to set goals and maintain a record of their academic progress. Students from the fifth grade mentioned the data notebooks during focus group interviews. One student shared that his teacher used “synergize papers (a document students used to self-evaluate whether they were implementing the habits) every day so we can rate ourselves on how well we synergize with others.” In addition to Berger’s (2003) data notebooks, the Harless Center also trained the staff and students to use student led conferences to share their academic progress in every grade level. The conferences were held twice a year at Dolen Elementary and were scheduled to take the place of the traditional parent-teacher conference. The teacher still attended the conference, but the parents listened as the student took the lead and shared his/her accomplishments, progress, and

goals. My visits coincided with the scheduled end of the year presentation of the data notebooks when the school reached out and opened to the community members. These presentations were extended beyond just presenting to the parents and were called Transition Points because the fifth grade students were transitioning from elementary to middle school and the second grade students who were moving from the primary to intermediate grades. Students presented their data notebooks in student led conferences to county board members and other stakeholders. I observed the struggle teachers and students went through trying to complete their notebooks in order to have them ready in time for students to practice their presentation skills with their peers so they would be prepared to present. On presentation day, I served as a community member or panelist and sat in on some of the students' conferences. The students did extremely well. They were confident speakers. The only rough spot I noticed for any of the students was that some of the fifth grade students did not have any documentation for the math section of their notebook, but that did not seem to faze them; instead they went on to verbally describe how they were doing in the subject, described any weaknesses, and their plan to improve or strengthen their math skills. Later, Dolen Elementary discontinued the Transition Points conferences due to the time involved with obtaining panelists and community members to sit in on the presentations. However, since the school appreciated the value of the speaking and listening skills learned from making the presentations, they kept the student led conferences for the parents.

Five years later, the Seven Habits are still being used in the fifth grade, but the students explained they were not taught anymore, "because you mostly learn the Seven Habits whenever you're in the lower grades because by the time you're in like fourth or fifth you already know them all." One student said you know how to start, "acting different. You know how to be more mature." The students described that by the fifth grade, "You know what to do in the school. You

know how to do your work first and everything else you put off to the side until you're done with your work." Another student explained how a particular habit has made an impression on him. "I think, first things first helps me. If you want to hang with your friends but you have to do your work, you would want to do your work first" Agreeing with his friend another student added, "I play videogames but I always do my homework first." One student explained he felt the seven habits would affect the younger students more than his grade level peers because they were not introduced to the seven habits until the ages of, "eleven and twelve years old" but "the preschool...started school with them." Another student explained the seven habits are, "not just a lifestyle in school it is a lifestyle out of school." I asked the students if they used the Seven Habits out of school and they all nodded their heads yes. One student shared, "I taught my mom."

Data notebooks were still being used as portfolios to maintain student work and as a tool during student led conferences. The third grade students told me they are using their data notebooks to store, "papers that we're really proud of. If we got 100 percent...we use them to display...achievements and life goals." One student described the process, "We've had these since first grade. Each year we make a new picture to put in the front of the binder and then we just keep moving up." The fourth grade students described how they use the data notebooks to store their bi-weekly tests and their reading scores to use during student led conferences, "we had one [student conference] not too long ago." Another fourth grader shared a computer glitch he encountered during his conference with his parents and how he just ignored the glitch and continued with his presentation, "I showed them what I had been typing and then I accidentally clicked on this thing and a creepy screen popped up, but I just kept on showing them stuff." The

fifth graders are still maintaining their data notebooks, “but we mostly keep tests...that way on a parent-teacher conference we [can] show our parents.”

School Is a Fun Place

Students from every grade level focus group consistently used the word ‘fun’ to describe their school, activities, lessons, and their principal. I asked students from a first grade focus group to describe their school to me and a small first grader chimed in, “I like this school very much and our teachers let us do fun stuff.” The fifth grade students described Dolen Elementary as fun. “There is a lot of fun activities...they are starting a new thing called the Seven Habits.” Another student said the school is, “Fun and always comfortable and you can talk to the teachers.” This section is divided into two themes that emphasize what the students said made the school such a fun place. The themes are special stuff and nice teachers and a humongous principal.

Special Stuff

In addition to doing, “fun stuff” I asked the students to provide more details about the stuff that made learning and going to school at Dolen Elementary so much fun. One reason the third grade students believed the school was fun was because of their “Accelerated Reader [A.R.] trips, where we read books and if we get enough points we get to go on these trips, and one time in one trip we went swimming, to the park, and we had pizza.” Other A.R. trips the students made were to go tubing and to see the *Peanuts* movie. The points students need to earn in order to attend an A.R. trip are usually based on grade level, but at Dolen Elementary the A.R. program is individualized; therefore, the points students need to earn are based on their individual reading level. As one student explained, “I had to get six points and my friend had to get eight.” In addition to A.R. trips, one student said, “I like when we go on field trips like

walking around the historical sites of [name of the town].” Another student told me he, “enjoyed the field trip to the oldest cemetery on the west side of the mountain.”

Holidays are made special at Dolen Elementary by the teachers and principal contributing all the more to the “fun” the students seem to be having while attending their school. One teacher shared how he loved working with another teacher because, “She sings. We’re going Christmas caroling and we’re going down to the nursing home to Christmas carol. We made cards.”

Another student enjoyed, “the Christmas programs... We sing songs and we have to practice them, and then we go up on stage and sing. It’s fun.” Fifth grade students stated the fun they have at school can be attributed to their teachers, “because they’re really funny and we get to play with them a lot.” One fifth grader offered an example by saying the teachers would:

take us to the gym and we would answer any problem that they would give us, and we would play hockey with them. We would have a trash can as a goal and then he has these little balls that we can hit into the trash can, and if you hit it into the trash can you get a point...the questions were mostly social studies...1800 Civil War.

The fifth graders said another reason the school was fun was because of all the assemblies and activities, such as the when the animals were brought to the school and, “we got to touch a kangaroo and you could get pictures with snakes.” Another fun assembly was, “when the all-star basketball players came in and we got to play with them...and they threw free gifts at us.” One student shared, “Field Day is every year. It is coming up. Everyone in the school participates. We run across the field and whoever wins gets a ribbon.” Another student chimed in to say, “We have a balloon toss.” One more student said his favorite part was, “where we get in a team and take a ball and toss it to each other.” Other activities that were fun for the students were the opportunity to perform on stage at a local college and attending the basketball tournament.

The students also mentioned their GigaPan project and how much fun they had dressing up in Civil War era costumes, posing for a photograph, uploading the photo to the computer. They described their plan to respond on the Internet to questions posted by global participants. The students explained the program to me saying, "GigaPan is like a robotic platform and you set the corner of it and it takes about 500 pictures. Then you take the software and zoom in and it will be clear as day." One student actually set the robot to take the pictures; "Me and (another student) went up there and took pictures." Another student told how the memory card was placed into the computer and the GigaPan Software program stitched "all the pictures together." The students continued to describe the research project by saying they logged on to the GigaPan site and were told to, "find the Union or Confederate soldier you were assigned and pretend you were them and type what you thought they were thinking." Finally, one student proudly concluded the GigaPan conversation with, "People all around the world could see us."

Nice Teachers - Humongous Principal

The second grade students agreed with their peers saying, "It is really fun" to go to school at Dolen Elementary. They said the school was, "really fun here, you get to play outside," and "we have nice teachers and we get to do special stuff." For example, second grade students said their second grade field trip was to the Pittsburgh Zoo on a school bus and they made it back to school at 8:00 in the evening. Third grade students described their teachers as nice and sometimes funny and mentioned one who "does the chicken dance." Fourth grade students described their school as a fun place where the teachers are cool and nice and their principal "is humongous." One student said the school is, "A little unusual....Principal Thomas wore a turkey hat at Thanksgiving....You can talk to him and not be afraid." One student who has been at the school since pre-k said, "It is my sixth years going here....I have had an awesome experience."

A student who had recently moved and still tried to continue attending Dolen Elementary announced he was going to have to leave the school because the long commute caused him to be, “missing breakfast a lot.” He continued, “They do all these fun things. I never had any trouble here and it stinks this will be my last year.” Another student said, “I think it has been a really good experience. All the teachers that I have, have been good...From my experience it is a fine school.” One student said not only was the teachers nice here, but “even the cooks” were nice.

Students at Dolen Elementary still seemed to truly enjoy attending school because the teachers and principal made learning fun. A third grade student shared, “Sometimes it doesn’t even feel like school it’s so much fun.” A kindergarten student said he would describe the school to a new student who was walking through the door by saying, “We feel good. We feel safe. We have friends.” A fourth grade student agreed the school was, “really fun and you can learn a lot.” Another fourth grader described feeling, “happy that I get to be among my friends all day.” A kindergarten student stated, “A lot of people wouldn’t want to move; they’d have a hard time moving from this school to another.” Another kindergartener said, “I feel good because all of us are happy in the school and when we graduate we can still remember this school.” The teachers at Dolen Elementary were described as, “really kind and they’re there when you need them.” One student went so far as to say that, “every single teacher every single year is nice.”

The principal himself was still the most discussed topic from all the student focus groups five years later. Principal Thomas was the main reason, according to the participants, that the school was such a fun place. Students continued to describe him as, “nice and funny.” Students shared how he made Christmas special, “Last week he started wearing a Christmas lights necklace.” The students said “he lit it up for us” and “was walking around like a tall Christmas

tree with those lights on him.” He helped raise money for the playground on Halloween by allowing the students to, “duct tape him to the wall” for “a dollar per strap of tape.”

Teachers

Grass-Roots

The findings of this research project on the participants’ perceptions of what it is like to work and learn in a PDS setting, revealed the impetus behind the reformation at Dolen Elementary was the combined grass-roots efforts of a group of veteran teachers who had been working in the same the school with each other for over forty years. Their desire to seek out and try unique initiatives that would help prepare their students to become effective twenty-first century learners drove this assemblage to eventually write and receive a grant large enough to cover the expenses for the teachers to travel together and attend a national conference that focused on individualized instruction. The staff’s willingness to learn and to collaborate with each other, combined with their constant seeking out new initiatives to enhance their pedagogy, seemed to be enhanced when they received new leadership. The extremely engaged principal seemed committed and supported his staff, as evidenced by his leading them into establishing a PDS partnership with the Harless Center, an organization experienced in delivering highly effective professional development to Appalachian teachers throughout the state of West Virginia. His eager and sincere responses to any of the teachers’ concerns, requests, or suggestions were usually a, “What can I do to help you?” attitude that, according to teachers convinced them they were heard and supported in their efforts to move their school into the twenty-first century and provide the atmosphere for their students to experience academic successes.

Teachers described their willingness to learn was present before the PDS partnership and that the quest to enhance their pedagogy led them to a national conference which helped the staff become more cohesive. Even though the teachers' willingness to learn was evident before the PDS partnership, my research shows that the teachers expanded their desire to learn in order to incorporate the Harless Center initiatives as evidenced by their responses to research question one regarding what it is like to work and learn in a PDS setting. I organized my findings into a few themes. The first theme was based on one teacher's comment that they were lifelong learners and was divided into several subheadings: we became more cohesive; we changed our mind-set; we incorporated more group work; and we accepted the new technology offered through the Harless Center. The teachers also shared some of the conversations that helped bring about change within their school. These conversations are divided by the following subheadings: will you just give it a try, conversations that helped with classroom management, and conversations with team members is a big plus. Teachers shared their experiences in implementing the Harless initiative to use Ron Berger's data notebooks and student led conferences. Additional themes were: it's been a learning year and we are all family here.

We Are Lifelong Learners

We Became a More Cohesive Staff

Teachers were asked about the experiences they had while working and learning in this PDS program. Once they began sharing their history together before the partnership, I realized the teachers of Dolen Elementary already had a willingness to learn before they became involved in the PDS partnership with the Harless Center. The veteran teachers had taught together for years and had a finger on the pulse of the school. They knew the students' weaknesses and needs and sought out programs or specialists who could help them learn how to help their students

achieve. The camaraderie among the veteran staff led them to seek out opportunities that would enhance their pedagogy. These teachers had worked as a team to write a grant, several years before this research project, which gave them the unique opportunity to travel to Las Vegas as a staff to attend a professional development conference on how to individualize student learning. One teacher stated that, “As a staff we became more cohesive” by traveling together and attending the conference. Another teacher explained that the techniques learned and materials provided at the Las Vegas conference were still being implemented throughout the school. The staff’s history of working together stretches back and includes learning to work under the direction of four different principals, as one teacher indicated:

Most of the staff have been here through four principals...Principal Thomas is the fourth principal that I’ve had here...We had a lady...a few years, [and] it was just kind of, my way or the highway type thing...more of a dictator than an administrator. And we learned a lot from that. That’s the year we were put on probation.

The teacher went on to describe the good that came from the school being put on probation was “all kinds of training” that was offered to the staff.

We Changed our Mind-Set

When describing their school to me, most of the teacher’s descriptions consisted of an explanation of what it meant to be designated as an Innovation Zone or a description of how the Seven Habits were being used to transform the climate or culture of the school. In regards to being an Innovation Zone teachers explained that Dolen Elementary was a model school because they were an Innovation Zone which meant they had asked for concessions from the state regarding their hiring policies, release from the scheduling time constraints in reading and math, and teachers needed to be willing to be take additional professional development classes and agree to be videotaped. One teacher described the Innovation Zone by saying:

We asked that anyone who is hired at this school would agree to sign something called a Memorandum of Understanding, which meant that they would be able to say, Yes, I'm willing, able to do all the training that you have. Yes, I'm willing to be videotaped and share what I'm doing in my classroom with other people....Implement any practices that you have deemed appropriate underneath your innovation zone...and [also] our collaboration with the Harless Center is part of our innovation zone.

When speaking of the Seven Habits one teacher stated, "It's just more of a changing the mindset so the behavior takes care of itself, fixing the problem before it happens...That's what we're trying. It's an attitude change rather than opposed to a correction or remedial step." Another teacher described the school's willingness to use the Seven Habits to, "work on develop[ing] the leadership skills with the children" and to continue, "working on global studies" in hopes the students will have studied all the continents by, "the time the kids get to fifth grade...so they will really understand our world more, because I think it's important nowadays because it is such a global society." One teacher shared the work they have set out to do in this program, "We are working on, we're still in the beginning stages, but we are working hard on changing the attitudes of people, some discipline issues, we went to work on making things habits, instead of rules and I feel that's a good thing." Another teacher said, "We're just trying to become more proficient in our studies and become lifelong learners."

We Incorporated More Group Work

Teachers shared how they were willing to begin doing group work in order to provide their students opportunities to work cooperatively with their peers because their "future employers would be looking for employees who can perform group tasks." Another teacher reinforced her colleague's statement by informing me:

I'm doing more group work, more cooperative learning with the kids. I'm trying to step back from being the teacher and allow the kids to learn more by asking questions and helping one another. I think that's a big part of it. That's what we're really trying to do, because we've heard businesses want what they call

interdependence, instead of just being independent, they want the kids to learn how to work together in groups to solve problems.

We Accepted New Technology

Learning to embrace technology was a mindset teachers and the principal were willing to develop. Teachers seem thrilled with the training they received as one teacher shared, “That was like the most fabulous time that we’ve had. We really felt like we got something...that we could bring back to our classrooms and actually utilize.” The Smartboard training by a Harless Center staff member was especially helpful as one teacher noted, “She took us clear back to where, how to set up for the notebook...things I didn’t know. And showed us how to create, like we’re doing money, and I can put money up on the smart board, and we can duplicate it and count...It was amazing. I loved it.”

Conversations that Brought about Change

Teachers shared several conversations that helped bring change to their school. They shared conversations such as, one discussion between a teacher and a Harless Center staff member who asked the teacher to just try a strategy for her, conversations that helped with classroom management situations, and how learning to converse with their team members became a big plus.

Will You Just Give It a Try?

Another teacher shared how her willingness to try new strategies made a difference in her teaching when she opened up to having the Harless Center staff in her classroom to model specific lessons, observe the classroom teacher as she tried to emulate the technique modeled, and then offer suggestions, about teaching methods. She went on to share the conversation that helped her decide to try a math technique the way a Harless Center staff member suggested:

I developed my own thing that was working in my classroom, and we had a day with her, and she said, ‘Have you thought about doing this?’ ...I didn’t change,

because I liked what I had developed; that was working for me. And then the second time we met with her, she said; 'I'd really like you to try it.' She said, 'Just try it and see what you think.' Well I tried it, and it works too. There are aspects of it that I would still tweak... but I like her way better. I wouldn't have tried it if she hadn't have said, "Will you at least try it for me?"

Conversations that Enhanced Classroom Management

One teacher shared her willingness to stop everything and just have a conversation with her students in order to increase her students' ability to communicate with their peers regarding their negative behaviors:

I have a little boy who's kind of quiet, doesn't really say a lot. However he's becoming more vocal as the time goes. And we were having a discussion yesterday, and we have a couple of boys in there who have been kind of bringing us down....And we were getting ready to go to gym....We were in the process of lining up....He said, "Yeah, but sometimes we don't get to have fun in gym." And everybody just stopped and looked at him, and he said, "You two are always fighting, and because you're always fighting, we get in trouble, and we don't get to have fun." So then the class just had a conversation, and we were about five minutes late for gym. We had a conversation about why that bothers them, and what we can do to make that better.

The same teacher provided another example of how she was willing to incorporate tools and a technique learned from a professional development session to initiate a discussion that took care of a bullying incident between the two girls in her class:

We had used Baldrich tools in reading class....I initiated the [graphic organizer], "Let's use this and see what we can do with it." They did small groups; they chose their own groups. And it was funny because the girls who were feuding paired up together, which was a great opportunity for them to see, "How am I going to fix it?" After that we had a whole class discussion just about getting along and social skills, because that's a part of getting them ready for next year when they're in a whole slew of new kids....After that, honestly, I have not had issues with my girls.

Conversations with Staff a Big Plus

Increased communication skills have not been limited to just students; one teacher shared how the teachers were able to communicate and become more familiar with each other once they were willing to start "working together in our Vertical teams...is what started more of the

communication and just familiarity with all the other teachers.” Another teacher shared how meeting as a staff, “is a big plus. Being able to discuss what’s working, what’s not working, getting ideas from each other, and being able to plan for...different activities during the holidays...we come up with some pretty creative things to do.”

Seven Habits and Data Notebooks

According to teachers the school was, “using the Seven Habits...to develop the leadership skills with the children.” Evidence the Seven Habits were changing the culture of the school was provided by one teacher’s comments during an interview:

I think we put our students more in charge...In other words...[the students] have stepped up and become a part of the school community, in terms of school greeters. So they’re there each morning to see all the different kids come in, and they’ve also been a part of the bus leaders...They’re seen in a leadership role, which I feel... [is] important for them. It makes them feel cool and important, but it also puts the pressure on them to understand that they really are the role models in this school for the little people, so they need to make sure that they behave in that manner. I feel like it puts them more in charge of their learning, put[s] a little bit more responsibility on them. There is less, not teacher direction, because we do still give direction, but they are kind of in charge of what they take from it.

Teachers spoke of how the Seven Habits were being utilized to change the culture in their school. One teacher said we are “trying to work” them into “every facet that we do.” Another teacher stated, “The whole Seven Habits is the idea that they’re [the student] responsible for what’s going on...so that they see that whatever they do affects other people.” Another teacher shared how the professional development training prepared the teachers to teach the habits to the children by stating how they, “start[ed] at the beginning of the year...we worked with *The Seven Habits of Happy Kids* and we went over that and each of the steps of each habit with them and gave them an idea of how they can be more proactive, to be able to synergize.” A different teacher described how the students have the ability to apply the habits when the teacher is reading aloud to the class: “They’re very good at recognizing the habits...They’ll say, ‘Oh, this

character was sharpening her saw.’ Noticing a difference in student attitudes, one teacher commented, “The kids are focusing on the Seven Habits. They’re learning what it means to set goals and to work towards those goals, which is something that they’ve never had before.”

A tool the teachers learned to use to help their students set goals was Ron Berger’s (2003) data notebooks, an initiative the Harless Center trained them to implement. One teacher described how the data notebook process works:

The kids set goals throughout the year. And then they try to meet these goals...The data notebook is going to show the progress they made, the goal they set, and then it should have a finished product where they met that goal...It’s been rough this year because...we didn’t get a black and white sheet at the beginning of the year that said this. We’ve sort of been all year long getting a little bit here, a little bit of information there. I think it’s going to be a lot better next year because now we’re seeing what they [the Harless Center and principal] want for a finished product...they’re [the students are] going to present these to community members.

Teachers described how the data notebooks affected their students and themselves. One teacher explained:

Doing our data notebooks...that’s been something different...At the beginning of the year, the kids set their goals...We set a class mission and then set personal goals...Throughout the year, we’ve been putting things in our data notebooks to show that they’re...meeting their goals...We’ve revisited, we’ve evaluated ourselves...[on] how we’re doing...what goal would you like to work on;... what goals are you weak in;...if you’ve accomplished this goal;...prove and list ways...how they met that goal...or how they’re practicing the Seven Habits.

When I asked the teacher how he/she thought maintaining a data notebook made the children feel, she responded, “I think...it’s making them aware...and it makes them feel good...It’s been really good as far as homework this year. Kids have been good about bringing the homework in.”

When asked about data notebooks, one teacher said she would do a better job next year and was worried how the kids would do this year because, “they kind of had a goal at the beginning of the year and we worked a little on that, but we really haven’t done enough.” The pre-k teacher described what I would see if I looked inside one of the data notebooks:

You would see their mission statement and our class mission statements that they help us develop. You would see some artifacts of things that they worked on, their description of the Seven Habits that we've been working on as a school-wide project, which is kind of interesting to see from a four year old standpoint. They were actually pretty good about describing how they think of each habit.

Another teacher stated how she would, "do things differently" next year and realized she needed to, "do more long-term planning" in order to complete the data notebooks because:

I think it's important, and I think it's great. The first day of school they did a self-portrait...I have a bunch of stuff that we still have to put in...What was interesting...[was] the first week of school I asked the kids...If it was 20 years from now and they would be 28 years old, what do you think you would be doing? What's your goal; how do you see your life? The first week of school...they said get married, have babies, be a couch potato...I did it again in January and some of them were still the same...but some of them had really changed. They had been thinking more substantial goals such as, "I want to go to college."

Another teacher shared the process of how she made data notebooks work for her,

I was clueless...All of that data...I've figured out along the way...I guess there was no clear direction for me. I'm...one of those people who, you almost need to show me first. I guess I never got the connection with all those things that we did this summer; I never got the connection of how we were going to take it on that level and bring it down to the kid level. So mine is probably not what they want. It's what I have developed on my own...I am rather pleased with what they've done. I didn't do it exactly the way they probably wanted; I did it the way it worked for me.

I asked one teacher how her data notebook was coming along and she said, "I was really good until last month and then I've sort of fallen apart." One teacher described how the Seven Habits helps the school to, "get on the same page" and how that implementing the program whole school will help because teachers will be able to, 'Tell the kids – 'okay, this is how we're going to start doing things.' And then they'll have that expectation throughout the school with academics and discipline and with their social networking."

It's a Learning Year

The end of the 2010-11 school year brought teacher reflections on the year they were finishing up and their plans for 2011-12 school year. I heard teachers talk about how they were willing to learn and implement the new initiatives suggested by the Harless Center and those required since they were awarded the distinction of being an Innovation Zone. However, by the end of the year and on the last couple days of testing, which is when I arrived to do my field work, I observed exhausted and overwhelmed teachers. They were worn out and stressed from testing. They were tired from the end-of-year activities and practices. As a former classroom teacher and professor who taught upcoming teachers, I easily related to the after testing, end-of-year battle worn status devoted teachers often feel, and kept that in mind as I analyzed their responses to any enabling or constraining factors that could have influenced the PDS partnership. I understood the questions teachers often ask as they reflect on a school year, such as: did I make the right choices for each of my students this year, was this program beneficial to my students, or what can I do to make it better next year? Teachers shared they felt the new initiatives implemented by the Harless Center and the Innovation Zone were, “putting too much on our plate[s]. They shared that, “the word overwhelming seems to be brought up quite a bit.” Teachers seemed to be exhausted with end of the year testing and activities. The teachers realized they were going through a “learning year” and seemed to feel they had “pulled through” as explained by one teacher, who summed up their experiences:

We're in one of those years right now where it's a learning year. It's like those bell curves, but it's getting better. The staff, even through the crazy things that we've gone through, the being out of our class a lot for professional development and all the extra time in the summer...I think that we've still stuck together and pulled through, and it's just the way it is.

Teachers asked to be allowed to, “figure out how to get the handle on one aspect of what you are after instead of throwing another in right after it. It's kind of been like that...things just kind of

keep on coming.” One teacher described what it has been like during this first year of fully implementing the partnership:

This will kind of be our first year in the full force...It started last year with some professional development...This is the first year with the kids, we are trying to just become more of a community. So therefore we are enforcing...the Seven Habits, making those a part of our day. It’s been a challenging year; I think that we’ve had our ups and downs. However, I think it’s been successful and I think next year we’ll see even more success. I can say personally in my classroom I’ve seen it work in more ways than one....and I think it’s going to be okay.

Speaking of the challenges the school is having by trying to implement the Seven Habits into their curriculum, one teacher stated, “It’s a little more time consuming because we’re actually taking chunks of time to teach those Seven Habits. And we’re learning. It’s a learning curve for us.” One teacher, pleased with the results of the Seven Habits implementation up to this point, shared:

I think it...was a reality check for us, as a staff, as to how you can take these values...and incorporate them more into your classroom on a daily basis. And that’s the key with those things, is it’s not a thirty minute lesson on being proactive. It’s a, “You have to do it all day, every day.” You kind of live it; it just kind of becomes a part of your life...We’re not there, but didn’t really expect it to be one hundred percent, but I have seen a marvelous change in my class.

One teacher described how the Math Studio professional development sessions offered by the Harless Center helped the teachers learn how to, “question the kids, and [teach them] how to explain their answers....That’s been a big help.” Another teacher commented on the learning experience the teachers have been through as they embraced the virtual technology made available through the Harless Center’s professional development training sessions on how to use a Polycom: “We’re going through Williamsburg...they have online field trips. They have one a month...[and] they also have teaching materials that go with it...It’ll be a learning year for me... I think next year is going to require a lot of integration, but that’s where we’re heading.” Despite the school going through a learning year, teachers were still optimistic and seemed content with

their place of employment. They seemed to see their colleagues as family and shared their feelings under the following theme, we are all family here.

We Are All Family Here

The teachers at Dolen Elementary spoke of the school being like, “just one big family,” and how they felt comfortable and free to make decisions because they worked with a caring staff:

It is wonderful to work here...I have felt like I was valuable to this school from the time I stepped in the door and was welcomed....I was asked – ‘what ideas can you share, what can we learn from you? Here, let us show you. I didn’t have that at my other schools....I told Principal Thomas one time, and you can put this in there, I don’t care, I told my husband; If I wasn’t in love with my husband, I’d be in love with you, because you’re kind, you’re thoughtful, you appreciate everything we do, no matter what.

A teacher who travels to other schools during the week day offered input from one who can compare Dolen Elementary to five other schools in the district; “It’s a positive atmosphere here...I can feel it when I walk in the building. I can almost smell it. It’s a very positively oriented place for children...It’s the culture; it’s here in this school culture. And it’s the people here, it’s the way they work with children...It’s a happy place.” Another teacher simply stated,

I think it’s a very nice place to work and the principal is...just such a nice human being.” Another teacher echoed her colleagues’ comments; “I think the whole staff is very supportive of each other, very supportive, just one big family. It’s amazing. We have such a supportive environment, the teachers all get along well. We’re really cooperative together. I couldn’t ask for a better school to work at, to be honest with you.

Another teacher shared her experiences while working at Dolen Elementary, “We’re all family. We’re all supportive of the one another, and you couldn’t ask for a better place to work.” Finally, one teacher summed up how she felt about working at Dolen Elementary simply by saying, “Went to school here, going to retire here, I hope. I love it; everyone works well together.”

Five years later, there had been an influx of new teachers due to retirements, a death of

one teacher, and one teacher moving in order to continue her education. The Harless Center reflected on a staff and the principal who were still willing to learn new things and change their mindset or attitude if need be to enhance their pedagogy at the school, “The new folks have been very accepting – first and second-year teachers – willing to take those risks and try new things. There are opportunities and challenges with having these young teachers.”

Currently the center is still offering staff development to Dolen Elementary’s newest staff members; “These are young teachers. These are their first years. Three of them are brand new.” The staff explained, “We are actively bringing the Full Option Science System (FOSS) kits” to the school and are training the teachers to use them as a tool to teach science and modeling how the core subjects of reading and language arts can easily be integrated into the STEM disciplines with an overlying science theme.

Principal

The principal explained how he had to be willing to change his mind-set on how he originally viewed the way students approached the use of technology. The principal’s section has only two themes. The first theme focuses on the students’ use and respect of technology regarding how he wanted his students to actually use the technology instead of how in previous school settings he noticed the teacher was the only one working with the equipment. He described how he learned to trust that his students would be respectful with technology from his teachers. The second theme is based on how the staff and Harless Center used the Seven Habits in order to help students become more confident and willing to share their work.

Kids are Users of Technology Not Observers

The principal realized he had to be willing to learn to trust his students with technology from his teachers. He explained how he believed technology to be a useful tool in moving the

school forward, but stressed it “doesn’t [didn’t] need to be the end of what it’s all about, because that’s not it, that’s not where it’s at. It’s in those good solid teaching practices and using the technology as a tool, and to teach those students the responsibility of that technology.” Principal Thomas shared an interesting observation he made during visits to other schools regarding students and technology: “When we go see places...that would have technology with the iPods, or they would have the Intellaboard, or the smart board...One of the things that was very interesting was the students were never using those tools; it was always the teacher that was using.” He asked why the students were never seen using the technology and the teachers told him because the students would destroy the technology or try to steal it. He went on to share how he wanted his students to be able to actually use the technology in this school, not just be observers. He described how the teachers showed him the children of this school could be trusted and shared one of his first experiences with the faith teachers placed in the students at Dolen Elementary:

And I have to say, that was something very unique when I transferred to Dolen from my previous educational experiences...because I never knew the teachers to put out paper clips or rubber bands, thumbtacks, or anything out on their desk because they would come up missing. And then it was the night before the first day of school, and I was going around checking out the classrooms, just looking at the decorations, and I noticed on the teachers’ desks, that they had thumbtacks out, there were paper clips on their desks, and I thought, oh my goodness. The kids are going to take these, and we’re going to have paper clips and objects flying through the air with those rubber bands. And that’s one of the things that I have to say the kids here are very respectful of those items on the teachers’ desks. And those items I’ve never, I better knock on wood, in the time that I’ve been here had an issue with students taking rubber bands or misusing the equipment.

Seven Habits

Principal Thomas explained that, the school’s decision to incorporate the Seven Habits into the daily lives of their students was a direct result of the parent surveys conducted by the Harless Center when they first arrived at Dolen Elementary. Looking over the data from the

surveys, the partnership noticed that students stated on the surveys they were afraid to share their work. He further explained, “We decided as a school that we wanted our students to feel more confident to share their work and we felt the best way to do that was to work on the culture of our school. We needed to build a place where students felt safe to share.” The Harless Center suggested the work of Dr. Stephen Covey and offered training sessions for the staff and principal.

Five years later, there is still evidence Covey’s Seven Habits are being used throughout the building to enhance the culture of Dolen Elementary and they have “increased that student voice,” by creating a student council. Covey’s Seven Habits have been integrated into the county’s mandated Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system and are being used as Principal Thomas said, “an umbrella...The core team [a team of teachers and students sent for training so they can return to school and implement the program] went for training two summers ago up in Morgantown...we had two student representatives...This year we have three [student representatives].”

The manner, in which the school decided to incorporate the Seven Habits into the county’s PBIS program, was to create their own acronym, P.A.W.S. and one student shared what each letter represents: “P stands for pride. A stands for attitude. W stands for wise choices, and S stands for safety. Cause we’re wildcats.” In addition to the students at Dolen Elementary having a voice in the PBIS program, the principal stated that, “Through increasing that student voice through P.A.W.S. we have been able this year to have our first student council elections.” The secretary of the student council described what the council does and who serves, “there are six representatives, two fifth graders in it, two fourth, two third...We share ideas about [the school] and one of them was the tree out in the hallway that’s covered in mittens and hats. That’s

called a winter warmth tree. We're going to have new events. We're going to put boxes out in the hallways where people can bring in food and clothing." When the fourth grade students discussed P.A.W.S. one shared, "the W stands for wise choices and means like don't let strangers in, because at the front door if there's a person that no staff or no student or teacher knows we can't let them in." The principal also shared how the school used the student council to visit each classroom in order to teach their peers a different habit each month, "In November we really focused in on being proactive...at the end of each week we [gave] little bracelets with P.A.W.S to the student... [who] demonstrated being proactive throughout the week." In December the council turned their focus to the problem with, "tardiness that the school was having and offered a punctuality challenge after Christmas going into the new year, and the goal was to see what classroom could have 100 percent of everyone on time the most times."

UNIVERSITY-BASED PARTICIPANTS

The university-based participants consist of the husband and wife team, administrators of the Harless Center: Dr. Stan Maynard, Director of the center and his wife, Dr. Barbara Maynard, Director of Professional Development. The Harless Center staff changed throughout the research project, but involved several classroom teachers who were experienced or specialized in language arts, reading, math, science, social studies. In addition to their cumulative years of classroom teaching experience, the staff has prepared themselves via extensive study and practice at their first model school where they delivered proven research-based strategies, techniques, and training to classroom teachers on how to effectively deliver twenty-first century instruction through engaging classroom practices and how to assess the twenty-first century learner. Some of the staff members have traveled and attended training classes that certified them to deliver Stephen Covey's courses on the Seven Habits, GigaPan Trainers, and certified them in

how to deliver Expeditionary Learning experiences to teachers and students. The overarching theme of a willingness to learn by both sets of participants was certainly present in the university-based group participants, as evidenced by the fact that all showed a willingness to learn by listening to the school's staff and administrator in order to determine their needs and expectations. The center also demonstrated their willingness to listen and learn by conducting a parent survey in order to learn their concerns and wishes for the school. The themes under this umbrella of a willingness to learn are divided between the Harless Center administrators and their staff. Under the administrators section are the themes: they're the bosses and lessons learned. Beneath the staff section is only one theme, place-based learning. After the two sections of discussion on the responses from the administrators and staff, the chapter moves on to speak about the changes at Dolen Elementary five-years later. Subsequently, the five-year later section has four subheadings: research, write, lights, camera, action; student authors; movie making technology; and increased parental involvement.

Administrators

They're the Bosses

The administrators shared the value in maintaining an open dialogue between school-based and university-based participants stating, "You need to have that relationship where people sit down at the table at least monthly and all the stakeholders, parents too, and say here's what we're doing. Is it appropriate? Is this what we should be spending our time on? This is why we do it. This is the research behind it." Stating further the value of this communication because, "They're the bosses. They should tell us...it's critical." The administration stated that, "Dolen is a good example of what a collaboration between higher education and public school could be,

should be.” They shared how they start with the Retrofit process once they begin working with one of their schools:

We go in, make recommendations, we do training... We’re getting that 21st century culture embedded in those people, and they’re asking for help, and they’re asking us to come in and model for their classrooms, and they’re asking us to do things in their classrooms.

When asked for specific examples of their work, the administrators shared they have their staff members go into the classrooms and model how to do a, “read-aloud with higher-level questioning.” The staff also attends, “weekly grade level meetings” and provides professional development during the meetings. Comparing the work they do at Dolen Elementary to the other schools in their consortium they stated, “the biggest different is the receptivity,” because they offer, “the same professional development, the same resources available,” but the difference lies “in what one school, how one group of educators perceive that and accept that as compared to the others.” When asked again to be more specific, the administration offered that when they work with Dolen Elementary, “We sit down and we talk about what we’re going to do, and they want to be a part of the planning,” where at some of the other schools in the consortium, “we did all of the planning on our own. We did all of the implementing on our own. We did all the trial and made the errors.” The administration shared that although they, “don’t have any control over the county” where Dolen Elementary is located, “we have credibility in their eyes because of what they saw in our work,” which in turn allows them to continue to be, “a resource for the state of West Virginia.”

Other initiatives the administrators of the Harless Center implemented at Dolen Elementary were data notebooks and student led conferences. These initiatives were observed strategies that had been proven successful and were learned about during their visit to the, “Expeditionary learning network through Ron Berger during our visit to the Odyssey EL School

in Denver, Colorado.” The administrators were convinced these initiatives, coupled with the Seven Habits, would work hand in hand in helping the students become more independent learners. Learners who took charge of their learning and could use the data notebooks and student conferences as the platform necessary to present the evidence that would prove their academic successes.

Lessons Learned

The Harless Center administrators, Drs. Stan and Barbara Maynard, shared lessons they and their staff learned during their work with Dolen Elementary stating, “We learned a lot by going to Dolen Elementary” and “really setting a climate.” They noted that Dolen Elementary was in their first year or “training period” and only time would tell, but they believed the school was, “moving along. They have all the pieces in place.” Reflecting on the research and work this center has done at different schools throughout their consortium, the administrators shared some of the difficulties they experienced in obtaining buy-in from all participants, the importance of communication, and knowing when to move on. Listening to the “lessons learned” and all the experiences the administrators had been through, I asked the Maynards if they felt it was still worth it to continue the work they are doing at the Harless Center. I received a definite, “Yes, it’s worth it!” from both administrators. Dr. Stan Maynard said he still believed it is worth it to continue his research stating the lessons learned will help guide him in selecting where the center will move in the future: “It has been worth it...lessons learned, we have a finite amount of resources of time, and so we want to go where people want to have change.” Dr. Barbara Maynard stated, “It is worth it...we might do things differently, but I’d go right back through it. Even if this is the only way we could do it, I’d do it again because kids can’t wait.”

The administrators view their work at the Harless Center as, “a mission... We believe that we have been able to put together a team of people that have an answer for school reform.” They spoke of retirement stating they realize they could have, “been retired at this point,” of their lives, but believe their work at the Harless Center (with schools such as Dolen Elementary and the Explorer Academy, in Cabell County) is the, “capstone” of their careers. Dr. Stan Maynard stated,

I think our entire lives have been in preparation for this time and this point and this activity and this project. I think all the things we’ve learned in forty-some years of being an educator is based on that point. I think that Barbara and I are a unique scenario in so many ways because we’re together twenty-four seven and we have been that, this summer will be forty-six years (fifty-two years by the time this project ended). I think the idea is that we... would we do it again... Why? [would we do it again] Because the children of West Virginia need it and deserve it and I think the teachers who want to change need it and deserve it. And that’s where we believe Marshall University can be that pivotal innovation point. And so our lives would be different but they would not be as fulfilled.

Five years later, the PDS partnership between Dolen Elementary and the Harless Center is still strong as evidenced by the components of the Retrofit plan that are still intact; evidence parental involvement has flourished; the Vertical teams are still intact; and the Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) voted to continue funding Harless trained substitutes so teachers could attend professional development sessions during school hours and their classrooms would be covered by trained substitutes in order for the initiatives implemented by the partnership to continue to thrive.

Staff

The Harless Center staff was cognizant of the teachers’ concerns and remained in tune to their requests for an alternative to the bi-monthly staff development sessions for which they were pulled out of their classrooms for training. They switched their technique and delivery of staff development, “by using place-based Learning as a venue for change.” According to the Harless

Center staff, place-based learning lent itself easily to the incorporation of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines while simultaneously using social studies themed topics to enhance the core subjects. The administrators and staff wanted to heed the teachers' request for a change in the traditional professional development sessions because, "We had such a good relationship with them."

Therefore, in an effort to change the traditional face-to-face professional development session, which was a scheduled book study, the Harless Center staff suggested the study be conducted via the Internet. Participating in a blog would allow teachers to stay in their classrooms and free the Harless Center staff from traveling to Dolen Elementary for their monthly visits. The online book study was meant to provide teachers the opportunity to obtain professional development on their own schedule. They were asked to read each chapter of the assigned book, reflect on the Harless designed blog, and participate in the group's discussion. However, the teachers indicated they did not want to do a book study online. One teacher explained her reason for not wanting to participate was because, "it was too much like a college course where you respond online for college credit." The teachers asked to be given additional innovative tools and for the staff to model or, "show me because that is what's going to help me." The Harless Center staff member further admitted they had, "made some mistakes" when conducting the professional development sessions. He stated that the staff could relate to the Dolen teachers' requests to be allowed to "stay in their classroom," and be given innovative tools that they could use in the classroom in place of a book study because several of them were former classroom teachers before they were hired to work at the Harless Center. He further commented that, "although not at that grade level, we've taught a long time and they [the Dolen teachers] respect that we have been in the trenches." He continued to explain that being former

classroom teachers helped them to identify with the teachers' feelings of being overwhelmed and needing time to internalize the strategies presented during professional development sessions. He explained, "Right now our biggest proponents in that school are some of the folks that originally were skeptical or not as cooperative...but we have built that gravitas with them by asking, "What if we try this? And what if we do this?"

Place-Based Learning

There was a brief lull of one semester in the partnership with the Harless Center where the school staff did not receive professional development due to the Harless Center's need to reach out to other schools in their consortium. However, the Harless administrators shared that Principal Thomas contacted the Harless Center during their brief absence in the fall of 2012 explaining he was going to have a major turnaround of staff members in the near future and he wanted them to be trained in Covey's Seven Habits and the other initiatives previously instituted by the Harless Center stating, "If you can come back during this transition it would set the foundation for us." A Harless staff member spoke of how once again Principal Thomas realized there was an opportunity to improve his school and, "was wise enough to recognize the challenges" his young staff would face, "and he asked us to come" back and do a walk-through of the school with the Vision Team and the principal. Afterwards the school staff and the Harless Center staff discussed the observations and determined there was an overarching need for "engaging teaching practices" throughout the school. It seemed the teachers were working, but the students were not. The Harless Center staff described what they observed, likening it to, "Harry Wong's description of traditional schools which was a place where students go to see old people work." The partnership agreed that for the next two years the school would use "place-based learning" as the "venue of change" to "teach the math of [Dolen] and teach the reading of

[Dolen], the writing, and every subject using materials available in the community of [Dolen].”

A specific place-based activity that could be contributed to student learning as evidenced by higher math scores at Dolen Elementary was described by a Harless Center staff member where, “We brought someone in to do a math lesson in the cemetery that did Cartesian coordinates with them... We tried to take things that they saw as [having] value and leverage ways of doing that classroom. They were already doing a scavenger hunt in the cemetery. We just created the math aspect to it.”

Five years later, Place-based learning was still being used by the Harless Center to help Dolen Elementary teachers present engaging lessons. Fourth grade students shared one PBL project they participated in, “Last year we dressed up like the people in our district,” and another student added “We wrote speeches.” The students described writing stories about the “historic houses from the 1800’s,” that are in the surrounding area of their school, “getting into costumes,” and then videotaping the speeches to create a “CD and a book.” The students were enthralled in describing the event and spoke as if they were still in costume, “When I was a police officer I drew a picture of a police officer, an 1800 police officer arresting a guy... they used my picture for the cover of our book.” Another child just as enthusiastically laughed and shared how his friend, “couldn’t get right beside his house [to deliver his speech and be videotaped] because there was a Great Dane, a big one!”

Research question one helped provide insight into the perceptions of the participants in this phenomenological study. Analysis of the data revealed the grass root efforts of Dolen Elementary led them on a journey to strengthen their pedagogy by attending national conferences and with the leadership of their principal move into a partnership with the Harless Center. Both school and university-based participants demonstrated a powerful willingness to learn by

accepting new initiatives and listening to their colleagues in order to strengthen their Appalachian school. The next section of this chapter moves on to research question two that asked participants to share any enabling or constraining factors that contribute or inhibit to the successes at Dolen Elementary.

CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS/ANALYSIS-ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING FACTORS

Research Question Two

Research question two was designed to have participants share any enabling or constraining factors that in their opinion contributed to the success or hindered the promotion of their school's PDS initiatives. The themes that fell under the enabling factors of this question were the fact that the Innovation Zone granted the school the immunity to move away from the county's structured reading and math required minutes which allowed them to have a more flexible schedule; technology; Principal Thomas' leadership, specifically the love and respect the participants hold for him; the Harless Initiatives; and an increase in parental involvement. The themes that fell under the constraining factors section were concerns with communication and effectiveness of the leadership teams, the amount of time the Harless Center's staff was in and out of the building and the large amount of professional development sessions, and the need for renovations to the restrooms and update the almost nonexistent air conditioning.

It is important to note that the participants in this study were not satisfied to just discuss enabling and constraining factors. They insisted on making suggestions and brainstorming on ideas that would improve their school or make it a better place to learn. The students and teachers put a lot of thought into their comments and would think out loud as they expressed themselves. It was evident both sets of participants had experienced coming up with suggestions and it was not good enough to offer suggestions without offering a well thought out plan to implement suggestions before presenting them to their principal. During these interviews and focus group sessions it was suggested by participants that the school should make architectural changes and upgrade the park.

ENABLING FACTORS

The enabling factors contributing to the success of Dolen Elementary were the school being designated as an Innovation Zone, the principal, and the Harless Initiatives. Enabling factors that can be attributed to the Harless initiatives were unique technological projects and an increase in parental involvement.

Innovation Zone

The Innovation Zone status awarded to Dolen Elementary was one of the enabling factors that opened the door for the participants to have more freedom in scheduling and planning how and when the curriculum would be delivered, and made individualizing instruction for their students a lot easier. The Innovation Zone status enabled the Harless Center and Dolen staff the freedom to work and communicate together simpler because they were not hindered by the state required ninety minutes of math and reading instruction. Discussions were held, attempts at moving classrooms around, and revamping schedules were explored to determine the ultimate management of time in their busy days in order to achieve optimal learning opportunities for their students and provide time for teachers to meet with their teams to review test scores and determine if they needed to rearrange student academic groups and plan special events for the school. The teachers were also permitted the autonomy to provide individualized instruction more freely by moving students to other classrooms to ensure students were receiving instruction with peers on their grade level. I observed several instances where students were changing classrooms in order to work with peers at their current level. Teachers had paired groups of students together according to where they were academically, such as; below grade level, on grade level, and above grade level based on the DIBLES and STAR scores for reading. The training in Las Vegas had focused on providing new methods for classroom management that

would allow teachers to effectively provide individualized instruction to students in a whole classroom setting. I observed several situations where teachers were still implementing the methods learned in Las Vegas because students were grouped according to their ability and were working with their peers to practice the skills they were struggling with. The Innovation Zone provided teachers the freedom and privilege to teach one particular subject while their grade level partner taught another; for example, the fourth grade teachers traded off between social studies and science and the math and reading/language arts subjects. Students would change classes, just as if they were in middle school. There were very few minutes lost in the transition from one classroom to the other. Students moved quickly and quietly between rooms. I noticed they were smiling, had their materials with them, and knew exactly where they were to sit during the class. The students would go straight to work. It was obvious the students had the routine of switching classes down pat and it seemed to me students knew what was expected of them. They would gather in their group and just pick up where they left off the day before. Their discussions were genuine and sincere. If there was a disagreement or they were not sure what the assignment was, the students would use one of Covey's habits to help them settle the agreement, specifically the win-win habit where they would agree with their teammates' suggestions to complete a particular section of their work and then send a representative to the teacher for clarification on the section they were having trouble with. Every team member had their needs met. They were like miniature adults in their discussions and accomplished their assigned tasks, unlike some adult teams I have worked with who could never complete their assigned task or come to a consensus in order for the group to move forward. The staff used Reasoning Minds, a computer program to increase the math skills of their students. This program allowed the teachers to set the

academic level to meet the individual student's needs and set goals that were attainable in order for the student to obtain success.

The Innovation Zone was only a three year grant. However, when it expired the county realized the successes Dolen Elementary was having and permitted the school to continue with their program. Dr. Maynard shared that the county's superintendent often used the school as an example of how a school can improve not only their scores, but the culture if creativity and initiative is realized within the staff and by forming a PDS partnership. Five years later, during a focus group interview with the Harless administrators and staff, Dr. Barbara Maynard shared the first phone conversation she had with the new superintendent of the county when she called to introduce herself. The superintendent excitedly proclaimed, "Oh, I know who you are! You are the people that are working over there with Dolen Elementary! We are all so excited about the work you are doing there." Students shared how individualized instruction and goals were still being set to ensure the successes of all the students at Dolen Elementary. For example, the AR points students were required to earn in order for them to be permitted to attend an AR trip were based on their individualized reading level and goals were based on students' ability to achieve that goal. One student explained how at his reading level he only needed six points, but his friend needed two more points because he was on a higher level.

The atmosphere for setting goals and providing documented proof that goals were met seemed to be the norm at Dolen Elementary. Students knew their reading, math, and spelling levels. They discussed their goals, how they worked to meet them, how they were documented in their data notebooks, and how proud they were to share with their parents their progress or what specific skill they were weak in and needed to focus on in the upcoming semesters. Another example of how the teachers individualized instruction was the way the teachers incorporated Dr.

Gentry's ideas in order to increase students' spelling scores as one student described, "We have these spelling notebooks...and we've got our words in the back...stapled to the back of a zip-lock bag, and we have two words glued to the top of one page...whenever we want we can just take them out of the bag and sort the words." Another student added, "We have groups...and our level of spelling" for students to use as individuals and in group activities during the reading/language arts section of their curriculum.

Principal

Another enabling factor teachers and students seemed to feel made a difference in their school and the PDS partnership was Principal Thomas. Story after story was told of the "fun" things he has done to make Dolen Elementary a better place to learn. One kindergarten teacher praised the principal by saying, "Our principal is tops. Absolutely tops." The other kindergarten teacher said, "He came down on St. Patrick's Day, we found some Irish music and he danced with them...he's joyful and friendly and happy." Another teacher continued to praise the principal by sharing how students respond him:

He's always there for them. He has a good rapport with them, and he makes his schedule so that he can do that. He does it so he'll do these duties so he's in the lunchroom and he's seeing the kids. And that's a pretty good indication; because they can let their hair down in the lunchroom a little bit...he puts himself out there for that, which is great. So he has a good read on that, and I respect that. But they do like him.

One teacher discussed how much the children care for their principal and how he continually supports his staff,

They love him, we all do. You can't help it. He's an amazing man to work for...It's like what doesn't he do, is a better question. He has your back one hundred percent. He's totally supportive of whatever you do. Whenever you want to try something new, he's like – 'go get it, let's see what we can do, what can I do to help you?

Another teacher said,

I have felt like I was valuable to this school from the time I stepped in the door and was welcomed....I was asked – ‘what ideas can you share, what can we learn from you? Here, let us show you.’ I didn’t have that at my other schools, and I have that here. I told Principal Thomas. one time, and you can put this in there, I don’t care, I told my husband – if I wasn’t in love with my husband, I’d be in love with you, because you’re kind, you’re thoughtful, you appreciate everything we do no matter what.

A traveling teacher shared how in her opinion the principal was the most enabling factor contributing to the overall success of the PDS initiatives and gave the example of a conversation between her and a grandparent regarding Principal Thomas. While working on a project the student ran out of time so the teacher spoke with the grandparent that she needed to go to another school, but would talk with Principal Thomas because he’s very flexible, and maybe she could come back over and help her grandchild complete the project. The grandparent responded, “He’s a wonderful principal, best one we ever had.” The teacher continued with her praise,

I think bottom line for any school to be successful is the principal. I can count on one hand in thirty years the principals that I thought were true change agents, and true leaders, and Principal Thomas is one of them...Bottom line, the principal leader is crucial. I’ve been in schools where there were terrific teachers, but the principal lacked the leadership to pull it together. And those teachers floundered because they had no support under them to encourage them to keep doing what they were doing. To me that’s the bottom line.

The children all seem to love the principal, especially because he works the cafeteria, “because he is always in there [the cafeteria] by himself...there is no other person...like him in this school...he is so fun like a teacher.” One second grader student said, “Principal Thomas is really nice to us.” One student said, “I was having some issues with people and Principal Thomas helped me work it out.” Another student said, “I like Principal Thomas because he is so nice to us and stuff and...if you are hurt or something if you are having a problem he will try to help you solve your problems.”

Harless Center Initiatives

Five years later, the Harless Center initiatives that were first implemented when the partnership began are for the most part still in place at Dolen Elementary. Specifically, the center has continued to work with the school's students, staff, and administrator by supporting their using technology to become researchers and writers, become published authors, and to make movies. The Harless Center was instrumental in supporting the principal as he instituted programs that increased the parental involvement in the school. Principal Thomas held Wild Cat Cooking Classes with the support from the Harless Center and the community members. The principal also noted the PTO, with the Harless Center's help, had evolved from a group of parents who raised money to the school to a team of community minded citizen that organized events that would give back to the community. The Harless Center also supported the school's gardening project and helped them, "extend their growing seasons" by writing a grant to purchase and help install a high tower/green house on site.

A teacher shared her appreciation of how the Harless Center helped the staff and administrator realize their accomplishments, "I love learning and I love learning new things, and I love using them [Harless Center]. Everything we've done has been valuable to what we're doing...the math studios...really helped with teaching the new math...the Seven Habits workshops...have been good...as somebody who is on the Vision team, it's been really wonderful to be able to meet with them and...set goals and then actually see our goals accomplished...the nice thing about having them back is that sometimes we don't think we've done anything but then they bring us back this evidence that shows...what we have done so far...that's really awesome to be able to see that."

Using Technology to Become Researchers and Writers

Technology at Dolen Elementary had been embraced and moved beyond the teachers' initial timid reactions to learning what technology could offer and "being afraid if they touched something it would break," to the point that the entire community was not only involved, but benefited as evidenced by the students', teachers', and principal's collaboration with the community and the creation and completion of project-based learning projects. The principal shared examples of the place-based learning projects at Dolen Elementary which were led by the Harless Center staff. The first project shared was a third grade project from the 2012-2013 school year. The third graders researched the eastern woodland Indians. They kicked the unit off by designing pumpkin creations for Halloween. Principal Thomas described how the third graders used the Polycom, "the life size system, our virtual learning lab...and took a virtual fieldtrip to the Royal Botanical Gardens up in Canada where there is a program on pumpkins and all the parts of the plant, all the uses of pumpkins, the history of the pumpkin....It was quite an experience for them." The students researched recipes by going online to find recipes for baked butternut squash, hazelnut honey roasted acorn squash, berry soup, and yellow squash soup. The recipes were published at the Board of Education office in color and bound. The students donated a copy to the Heritage Center and each child received a copy as a memento of their culminating project.

Using Technology to Become Published Authors

Another project made possible through the partnership with the Harless Center came about as a result of a teacher reading, *The Important Things*, by Margaret Wise Brown and students' responses to the book where they asked, "What about the Wildcat important things?" and suggested, "Why don't we make an important things book of ourselves?" The Harless Center

had the books bound and every student was provided a book about the history of their school and community. The school took the project further the next school year and had the fourth grade students “go online, research, and create” a real hard back book on the historical facts of the area. A publishing company bound the books and by the graciousness of a “private donor each child received a copy.”

A virtual fieldtrip of the local historical society’s website and the Heritage Center was the inspiration for another project. The principal shared that as the teacher pulled the site up, the students started a conversation stating, “I go by that building on my way to school. I know where that’s at; that’s next to my house” The principal said, “Those conversations really set the hook because they wanted to learn more about their town.” He said the students learned a lot, but had never matched the places with the actual buildings so the school took the project a step further and, “connected it with careers...they found all different types of careers that existed in the town...in the 1800s.” One student, for example, wanted to be a cop,

so [she] found the person’s name who was the actual sheriff at that time...To find information the students did a walking tour. They went over to the Heritage Center. They worked with the archive place in [the area] trying to find out who did what and when they did it. The cover of the book was a student illustration of the sheriff [played by the student] taking the bad guys to jail.

Then the students typed up their research into a speech. They took another walking tour of the area searching for the building or place that the person with their occupation would possibly have lived or worked at in the 1800. The PTO president, a community member who owns a local theater company, “dressed [the students] up in period costume...for their walking tour.”

Principal Thomas explained that all was going well until the children voiced a concern “about what people driving by would think of them.” He said the teachers reminded the students how at Christmas the town’s people dress up for the “Dolen Old Fashioned Christmas” and “wear those old time dresses” and how, “this will just be a celebration. It’s just us doing our fieldtrip and

dressing up. So then they thought that was really cool.” The children took the school’s iPads along and recorded each section which was later burned to a DVD. Every family at Dolen Elementary received a book and a DVD of the completed project.

Using Technology to Make Movies

The place-based learning lesson did not stop with the students publishing a book and a DVD. The principal contacted the county’s technology integration specialist and she helped them work with the Heritage Center on “an app that’s called Aurasma.” Aurasma is an app that can take a picture that is printed on paper and animate it; allowing you to create Augmented Reality which means you can combine a real life person or item to a picture and make it move. This app is being utilized as the “platform...to display student work” at Dolen Elementary. Principal Thomas provided several examples where his iPhone or iPad hovered over a “target point” which was a photo of the student dressed in clothing of the era and position he/she was portraying which triggered the video to begin playing. He showed me several videos of the students dressed in the 1800 era costumes matched with the current citizen of the community. There were videos of the local sheriff (student) with the actual police officer of the community standing in front of the police station. A local doctor (student) standing with the current doctor of the community in front of his clinic. They even had a blacksmith shop. Principal Thomas went on to say that the current phase the school and community are working on is to create, “these target points on 4x6 play cards” and have them mounted at each one of these historical buildings in town so “folks can take their smart device and scan their target point to see the video of a Dolen Elementary student” describing the building. The principal said there are plans to construct platforms inside the school so students and parents can use them. They plan to place the platforms on a wall-sized map of the world painted in the school’s foyer to complement the school-wide global studies,

another initiative instituted by the Harless Center at the inception of the partnership and still going strong today. He shared an example; “This is North America [first grade level’s continent]. Parents aim their smart device at the target point and they can see their child’s class work.” Principal Thomas also shared another use of the augmented app was for the students to create a 3-D movie to enhance their descriptive writing assignments. He described how the students used a:

simple coloring sheet with a village and a dragon on it and how the 3D app picked up the picture and the dragon popped up and...breathed fire and had music that went with it...They had the students to sit behind their picture and they videotaped the dragon flying over their head.

The videos were then used to have the children look at what they had created so they could revise their writing in order to make it even more descriptive. The principal continued, “It was quite impressive when we did our LSIC presentation for the Board of Education...its movie making, which is absolutely incredible.”

Increased Parental Involvement

A significant change at Dolen Elementary in the past five years is the level of parental and community involvement. The principal described the parental and community involvement as none existent when he first came to the school. As a matter of fact, when he arrived at the school in 2007 he actually closed the campus to parents and the community. Principal Thomas stated:

My first year, because of some circumstances that had taken place prior to my arrival and with me being new I did not have a volunteer program the first two years. I did not have parents coming into the school, did not have any type of community members...because we needed that controlled environment. And the parents were not permitted to come in and volunteer.

Two years later when the Harless Center administered parent surveys the results showed parents were asking for access to the school. The partnership decided it would be best to “start

building back the PTO...so parents [could] have more opportunities to be involved.” The Harless Center worked with the school to design opportunities that would enhance the community and parental involvement. One teacher spoke of how parental support has gradually improved at Dolen Elementary saying, “The community steps in and helps out quite a bit...by supporting the school and by attending the vertical team meetings through the summer and in the fall. Another teacher explained how parents were also invited to “participate, volunteer, and help set up some of those activities when the Carnegie Center from Pittsburgh came and did a big science presentation. That was really neat to see all the parents come in and help out with that.”

The PDS partnership seems to have built solid relationships with the parents and community members. The Harless Center and Dolen Elementary provided many opportunities that led to more than just parents showing up for a planned special event, but events where parents were actively taking part. For example, Principal Thomas explained how that “The WV Read Aloud program [is]...more than just parents — that’s community. So that’s very active. We have about twenty readers that come in through that program.”

Wild Cat Cooking Classes

Parents also attended cooking classes that were sponsored by the principal in an effort to bring parents into the school. Principal Thomas described the Wild Cat Cooking classes, “were a collaborative effort with the food pantry next door, the catholic charities, the pro-start down at the Vo-tech center, our staff, and the LSIC.” Using grant money from the Department of Education he purchased, “crockpots, frying pans, skillets, baking dishes, and some containers for storage.” He also purchased spices. He described the program’s focus:

on healthy eating, family eating, because they go through the drive-thru, meals aren’t emphasized. Some people don’t cook. Some people don’t even have the stuff to cook with. So we advertised that we were going to do a cooking class. They had to RSVP...Our focus was crockpot dishes...We had fourteen different

families that participated and there were a lot of dads that came with their sons, which surprised me. And we had a few grandmothers that came with their grandchild.

He shared how the pro-start teacher from the Vo-tech and her students prepared each crockpot dish and videotaped step-by-step instructions in how to prepare meals such as, crockpot lasagna and crockpot apple crisp. Principal Thomas said every family left the class with a free crockpot, copies of all the recipes, a set of the spices, and most of the ingredients so they could go home and create these recipes for their families. The training also guided parents to be conservative with their leftover food:

As door prizes we gave away zip-lock containers, because one of the things that catholic charities had talked about when they do their work with the families was that they'll cook a dish and they'll throw it away. They don't know what leftovers are. So encouraging them when they have that family time and they make those dishes in those crockpots, you save it and you can have your lunch for the next day or you can have the next meal.

PTO Community Minded

Parental Involvement clearly has grown beyond the traditional PTO raising money for the school to “help pay for some of our accelerated reader trips for students...new back curtains for our stage, and playground renovations.” The organization has actually started raising money to give back to the community. Principal Thomas noted that the PTO is, “very active and they've really taken on a community citizenship type role as far as showing the students being good stewards of what we're doing.” He described recent projects including hosting a meet-Santa night where there were cookies and crafts for the kids to give back to the community and a Halloween carnival where the proceeds were donated to the local food bank.

Community Gardening

The school worked with a local farmer from the community to grow a garden. The third grade students shared how much they enjoyed working in their school garden, “we have a salad

bar that has like onions and stuff and lettuce and you can like make a salad.” The Harless Center supported the school garden project by writing a grant to help them purchase a green house or high tower, “to try and grow plants and vegetables in the winter” in order to extend their growing season. One student further stated how the food that, “comes from our garden we don’t have to pay for and it’s actually pretty fun to go out there and harvest it.” Students reminisced on their first grade harvest, “We went out and picked a couple radishes and then we brought them in and we washed them and then we like took a couple bites of them,” and another student giggled, “Half of the class acted like they were going to puke, but it was actually pretty good.” A fifth grade students shared their greenhouse experience of how they, “picked the tomatoes that we used for the cafeteria.” Another student shared how he is in a video on the county’s website, “about the garden...I’m in there for like 20 seconds even though they interviewed me for 30 minutes.”

CONSTRAINING FACTORS

I asked the teachers, students, and principal if there were any constraining issues preventing the success or move forward in the PDS initiative and if they had any suggestions or changes that they would like to see at their school. The constraining factors mentioned were a couple of concerns teacher’s had regarding the leadership teams at Dolen Elementary, the Vertical and Vision teams. Teachers were questioning whether the Vertical teams were actually effective and were concerned the communication between the Vision team and staff was not effective. Teachers also complained that although they loved the Harless Center staff and PDS initiatives; they saw them as constraining factors because there were so many new initiatives implemented. They also criticized the number of professional development hours they had to attend and how they were being pulled out of their classrooms for this training and their students

were left with substitutes. (The entire staff signed a Memorandum of Understanding stating they would participate in the professional development sessions and that all sessions would be held during school hours because they did not want to stay after school or use their summers before the partnership went into effect. The Harless Center agreed to train substitutes in the new initiatives and 21st Century philosophy so teachers would feel confident to leave their students with substitutes.)

Leadership Teams

When discussing factors that constrained the progress or success at Dolen Elementary since the PDS initiative began, teachers discussed a couple of issues with the Vertical and Vision teams. One teacher offered her reservations regarding the effectiveness of the Vertical teams initiated by the Harless Center, “I am not really been convinced that that works. We haven’t really done them long enough to really see if that’s going to work. I think if this was a really large school with several first grades...I think Vertical teams would be a wonderful idea. Since our school is so small, I don’t think it’s really necessary for the kids to stay in one group, since there is only two of each grade... I don’t know. I’m not an expert on Vertical teams, and I don’t know if it’s going to actually make a difference or not, since we just started it...I haven’t really ever had a true vertical class come up to me, because last year’s kindergarten was divided half and half.” I believe it is important to point out, this teacher stated she has never had a true vertical team yet; therefore, she really does not know if it will be effective. She is simply voicing a concern.

Scheduling issues seemed to be preventing Vertical teams from meeting. One teacher stated,

The scheduling has been a problem, and [Principal Thomas] scheduling himself as a lunch duty person. He’s out often, or has other issues pop up, and on more than

one occasion there's been one person in there for lunch duty. To put himself in the duty roster needs to be fixed, because he can't commit himself to that, he shouldn't commit himself to a duty...The intent was to let teachers have more free time in their room, to meet vertically with their team members. Well that doesn't happen.

When asked why the teachers have not been going to their Vertical team meetings the teacher replied, "Because I go do duty...there isn't anyone to take my place to free me up." The teacher suggested they put the schedule back to like it was before with the teachers on lunch duty and the aides on recess duty. I asked a different teacher if the Vertical team scheduled meetings were actually taking place and she replied, "We do after school on Thursdays, not every Thursday, we've backed it off to every other Thursday." Five years later, I asked the principal if the meetings were still taking place and he said they definitely were being held. He also shared that his lunch room duty had been reassigned to three staff members so that he could be in the lunch room with the students as much as possible, yet be readily available for meetings or emergencies.

Communication between Vision team members and the rest of the staff was another constraining factor that became a concern with one teacher. A glimpse of how this teacher expressed she was not being heard follows, as the teacher stated she feels the school would have,

more voice as a group. I feel like there's that one group that is making all these decisions for the school, and then we have to deal with it...It's like our Vision team is the one that makes all the decisions...That was set up without any teacher input, that was before I got here, but it was set up apparently without any teacher input.

It is important to note here that this teacher was not on the staff when Dolen formed a partnership with the Harless Center. Interviews with both school and university-based participants clearly provided evidence teachers were placed in lead positions by the principal and with input from the faculty and the collaboration of the Harless staff.

One of the Vision team members realized there was a conflict between some members of the Vision team and their colleagues because they felt they were not receiving information in a timely manner so the team came up with a plan on their own to help resolve this issue among their colleagues, “Everybody thought, we kept most information to ourselves and they were in the dark...we started doing our Vertical team meetings once a week...to make sure that everybody knew what we were doing...was on the same page...and knew what was going on...by having those weekly Vertical team meetings we were able to disseminate more of the information...” The teacher said some teachers may still feel they are left in the dark, but she doesn’t believe that is happening because she is sharing her information as it comes in and she believes other team members are doing the same. Five years later, the Vision team was still together and communication between team members and the rest of the staff seemed to be running smoothly. In fact, Principal Thomas shared that the Vision and LSIC teams voted to budget for the continued funding necessary to maintain a pool of trained substitute teachers through the Harless Center so that when or if teachers were pulled out for training the Harless trained substitutes would always be available and teaching could continue in the same manner and with the same philosophy as the Dolen staff.

Too Much Too Soon

Despite the teachers stating the Harless Center initiatives was one of the enabling factors that could be attributed to the success within their PDS partnership; the teachers listed the professional development sessions were coming at them too fast and too soon and they were one of the constraining factors that was hindering their progress because they were having to leave their students with substitutes. One teacher shared how much she appreciates the support from the Harless Center’s staff, but at the same time feels overwhelmed by all the new initiatives that

have been implemented. She wondered if the Harless Center staff understood what it was like to go through this procedure. She hoped the Vision team and the Harless Center staff will take the concerns of the staff in mind as they plan for the upcoming year:

I don't know how to say this, I love the Harless Center. I think those people are absolutely amazing. I just wish sometimes instead of them saying okay you're going to do this, I wish we had more say...last summer they just went ahead and with Paul and probably the Vision team...and did all this scheduling that was completely different than it used to be without really our input...it's fine to try something but a lot of it didn't work and we're hoping that this summer when they go to revamp...that they will take some of our concerns...It's just they're not the ones doing it, you know? They're the ones presenting it and saying, try this, but they're not the ones that are actually in here doing it every day...I get the feeling that we're sometimes just so overwhelmed with so many things coming at us...we're going to teach you this, now go back to you room and do it. And then in a month we're going to come back and we're going to teach you how to do this, and you're going to continue what we taught you last month, but you're going to come in and do this new thing. And for a younger teacher that's probably fine. It's tough for some of us that have been teaching the old way for so many years. It's not that we don't want to, we're not willing to try, but I keep thinking can we not just get good at one thing before we go on to something else?

Another teacher said she had only one negative statement and realizes she cannot have things both ways; she originally agreed to a specific amount of professional development per month and voted to not have sessions before or after school, but she does not like the only other alternative which is to be pulled from her classroom. She exclaimed, "Sometimes I feel like they come too often...and we hate to lose that time in the classroom, but really you don't want to spend time before or after school so that's your only other alternative...the only negative."

Another teacher even though she fully supports the new initiatives of the PDS partnership still has a lot of frustrations when she talks about what the Harless Center staff and everyone else expects from her:

They want those kids actively engaged. They want them to do that self-directed learning, plus they want them to remember – 'you got to set goals, you got to work toward it, you got to be a valued team member.' We have to teach them how to do the 21st century stuff that they're going to need to do. And it's hard for

teachers who've been teaching 30 years to suddenly change what they've done for 30 years.

One teacher shared feelings of being stuck in the middle of county and state regulations and the new initiatives being presented by the Harless Center, specifically how he feels the county and state feel the need for more emphasis on the WESTEST and the Harless seems to put less emphasis on the tests which he feels leaves him and his colleagues in the middle. He believes there needs to be more,

Balance, that's my key word all the time. You can't go one direction with one fad...some new idea we need to keep that balance because the rules haven't changed yet...we are going to do what we can to appease this side and do what we can to appease that side and somewhere in the middle we hope we are not ruining the kids.

This same teacher also shared concerns about the amount of time spent out of the classroom for professional development and having substitutes cover important material being a constraining factor to the success of the PDS initiatives,

The biggest knock that I would have is how many times we are being pulled out of the classroom with the kids to get them...On one hand you don't want to use up your summer the whole time. We had our 18 hours of PD, but because of us being this Innovation Zone and taking on these new ideas and things we've been pulled out of the classroom and had to get substitutes and things like that and I may be a little old school, but I don't particularly trust other people doing my job with my kids. And that's the only problem I have with it. The ideas are ok. I guess for sometimes it is hard for me to have the best attitude going into it when I know I am being pulled away at a time that I feel that I need to be with them...You can't count on substitute to get the message across the way you would have wanted it.

One teacher stated the Harless Center staff are "too enthusiastic almost pushy when it comes to setting up new routines or procedures...I think they are offering...This is something that might work you might want to try it. I appreciate that. But sometimes it's not presented that way and I don't think that flushes to well very often." Finally, another teacher shared that even though she feels the subs "can't quite go on with what we're doing," but she sees a light at the

end of the tunnel because she believes the staff is, “reaching the point where we’re pretty well getting trained.” She seems optimistic that, “next year there shouldn’t be as many [professional development sessions]” because this was a learning year and, “we’ve devoted a lot of time to it, to learn.” Five years later the teachers shared that the Harless Center staff still offer professional development sessions and support whenever the staff makes a request.

Facility Updates

In addition to the discussions regarding any enabling and constraining factors contributing or hindering the success of their PDS partnership, all participants insisted on offering suggestions for facility updates that would make their school better. The school-based participants contributed three suggestions they would like to see changed in their school: air condition and bathroom repairs, architectural changes, and upgrades to the park.

Air Conditioner and Bathroom Repairs

A concern mentioned by students, teachers, and the principal that seemed high priority was the air conditioners for the school. All participants made comments about how “hot the building was” and how “it is miserable” to work in the heat. Five years later the concern had still not been met. One student complained, “We don’t have any air conditioning and we’ve all been complaining about it.” Another student agreed, “We only have fans. That’s all we have.” The principal and teachers said the heat in the building raises to “87 degrees the first thing in the morning and the air conditioning only lowers the temperature to 85 degrees on hot August days.” I read an old county report that stated the heating and cooling of Dolen Elementary was in need of an upgrade. They said the county was supposed to help with upgrading the facility, but monies had not been allocated at this time. Another student discussed a fund raiser that took place, but no results have come out it, “There’s a paper that they gave out about the wildcat plan and they

said they're going to try to raise money to install air conditioning." Another student added, "Yeah, they had a cakewalk" to raise money and...then they gave us a paper about the new cafeteria that they never built." Students said that was, "two years ago" and we were, "in first grade and they never built it."

An additional constraining factor mentioned by the fifth grade students was the need for bathrooms to be upgraded. One girl adamantly proclaimed that someone needed to, "work on the stalls, some don't open and some won't latch." Another student agreed, "I have to agree...In the girls there are three with stalls, but one does not have anything [a door]." Five years later the bathroom concern was mentioned again as a concerning factor. One student told me, "The girls' bathroom, the second [stall] has no door." One boy shared how not having a bathroom door affects him on a daily basis by stating, "The boy's bathroom has one door with no stalls. I don't use it. I hold it." I shared this information with the Harless administrators and they said the bathroom doors to the stalls must have broken again because five years ago, when they first came to the school, they conducted student surveys to assess any concerns or needs the student expressed. One of the issues brought to their attention was that the bathrooms needed to be repaired. The administrators informed the principal of the student concerns. The principal responded that he "had no idea there was a problem with the bathrooms." He was appreciative for the information and had the repairs taken care of the very next day.

Architectural Changes

Architectural changes were expressed by teachers, who stressed the need for improvements to their school building because,

This is a very old, old, old school that was built onto. So we're very spread out and we have, quote wings of the school...we are in the shape of an E...there are weeks at a time that we don't see people on the other end of the building...That's one thing I would change, architecturally.

In addition to a need for architectural changes, another teacher expressed the need for additions to the structure in order to provide additional classrooms,

We're too crowded. We have 2 grades for every grade. We have a title room; we have 2 title teachers and a speech teacher all in one room together. And if you want to pull out a small group and work with them, we have nowhere to do that; nowhere at all in this facility to do that because we're on top of each other. Now we're supposed to get a new cafeteria to get us out of that gym, because that's where we have to eat is in the gym. But I don't know if any classrooms are being added onto that too, but there should be.

Upgrade the Park

Upgrade the park was the suggestion mentioned during the third grade focus group. The students participated in a lively discussion regarding, "a little playground" the preschool and first graders use which, "doesn't have very much things" on it for them to play with. This discussion was indicative of the community minded philosophy that has been instilled in the students at Dolen Elementary through participation in the PDS partnership. In addition to being concerned about their young friends not having a good playground, the students also voiced concerns about the community playground. The school's playground extends into a huge field, but according to the students, "That's a soccer field. That's not our field but we get to play in it. That's where the older soccer players play." The students discussed how people bring their dogs to the field and let them use the restroom and never offer to clean up after them. They also suggested someone clean the, "graffiti off the wall" of the school. They also notice that people buy, "McDonald's and they bring it over to the school and then they leave their trash on the ground" and another student added they, "leave cigarettes on the basketball court and it's illegal to smoke on school ground and you should have signs everywhere that says no smoking allowed on school property." They suggested someone put signs up to pick up their trash and clean up after their

dogs. They ended the interview discussing who they needed to talk to about this situation. The students started brain storming about who they could talk to about getting these issues resolved. Each student offered a suggestion. One student suggested talking to “Principal Thomas” another offered they talk with “the PTO”, the third focus group student suggested they contact the “Board of Education,” and the fourth student added we could contact “the government.”

SUMMARY

In summary, chapter five reviewed the data found while conducting this phenomenological research project that focused on the PDS partnership between Dolen Elementary and the Harless Center. The data focused on the participant’s responses to two different research questions. Through observations, interviews, focus groups, and document analysis conducted within a five year period from 2010 to 2015 and analysis of data I have determined the participants, both school and university-based presented an overall willingness to learn. Evidence the participants were willing to learn was apparent through their embracement of Harless Center initiatives such as, Covey’s Seven Habits and the implementation of data notebooks and student led conferences. Students stressed the reason they were so willing to learn was because the teachers were nice and their humongous principal made it fun to go to school. The students shared all the special stuff that made learning fun, such as AR trips, holidays, and assemblies where animals were brought in and the time basketball players showed up to play with them. The teachers shared they were willing to continue their grass-roots efforts to reform their school by forming a partnership with the Harless Center. They described their willingness to learn came from their devotion to being lifelong learners and how this drive led to them to become a more cohesive staff, change their mind-set, incorporate more group work, and accept the new technology. They shared conversations that helped bring changes to their little

Appalachian school and how they incorporated data notebooks and student led conferences to help students set and achieve academic goals. Despite the teachers dedication to helping their school improve, their devotion was put to the test. All the new initiatives wore heavily on the veteran teachers. With the extensive amount of professional development offered by the Harless Center, the teachers had to spend more time out of their classrooms leaving their students in the hands of substitutes. The learning year, the theme used by most teachers to describe the evolutionary process that was transforming Dolen Elementary, was their gentle way of saying learning new things is always difficult. However, they knew the journey was nearing the end because they had already received most of their training and their next school year should be easier. The teachers enjoyed working at the school, felt heard by their principal, and described the staff as family. The principal provided support to his staff by reaching out to the Harless Center and encouraging his staff to form a partnership that would help move the school into the 21st century. He was willing to learn right along with his staff. He was willing to trust his students with all the new and expensive technology because he wanted them to be users of technology, not just observers. He encouraged his staff to embrace Covey's Seven Habits in order to change the culture of Dolen Elementary.

The university-based participants also demonstrated a willingness to learn by administering surveys to the students, teachers, and parents of Dolen Elementary. Their willingness to listen to the school-based participants led them to learn that the students were not comfortable in sharing their work in front of their peers which led to the school adopting Covey's Seven Habits and forming a culture where students were cognizant of their own learning by setting academic goals, working to achieve the goals, providing documentation to prove they met a goal, and were comfortable sharing their successes not just with their peers, but with

parents and the community. The administrators reflected on their previous work throughout their consortium and the lessons learned from their experiences. Confident in their ability to provide an answer for school reform, their Retrofit process, the couple expressed it was definitely worth their efforts and they would certainly do it all again, ‘because kids can’t wait.’ The center’s staff also proved their willingness to learn by listening to the teachers’ concerns about being out of the classroom for so much training by using place-based learning for their venue of change, once the initial year of professional development had been completed.

Moving on to the participants’ responses to research question two, according to both the school-based and university-based participants, we discussed the school’s enabling factors that contributed to a successful PDS partnership and the few constraining factors that were possibly hindering the school’s success. The enabling factors mentioned by the participants were the Innovation Zone status that had been granted to Dolen Elementary, the principal, and the Harless Initiatives. The constraining factors participants discussed were issues with the leadership teams, the staff development sessions coming too fast too soon, and improvements to the school’s air conditioning and student restrooms. Students and teachers also shared suggestions that would make their school better, such as; architectural changes and upgrades to the park. When asked what the students wanted me to remember most about their school, a kindergarten student thoughtfully replied, “Dolen [Elementary] is probably the best school for me and I think for some of my classmates, too.” Evidence depicted the PDS partnership between Dolen Elementary and the Harless Center is still intact after five years. It seemed the school, both teachers and principal were still calling the shots in regards to what they wanted for professional development and how they planned or made decisions for their school; yet the implementations, initiatives, and suggestions made by the Harless Center were still being used and seen as valuable. True to

their grass-roots efforts, to strengthen their students' academic skills, the staff has already scheduled another meeting with Dr. Robert Gentry to help students with their writing. In regards to the Harless Center, it seems an "open door policy" has been established within the partnership. When referring to the relationship between the Harless Center and Dolen Elementary today, one teacher confidently stated, "All we need to do is call them and they will help us by providing support on any project."

CHAPTER SEVEN

INTERPRETATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to determine the perceptions of the participants in a Professional Development School (PDS) setting in relation to what it is like to work and learn at a PDS. This chapter includes my interpretations of the findings from the two prior chapters in relation to the literature on Professional Development Schools. The findings can be described as an overarching willingness to learn that was demonstrated by all participants. This genuine willingness to learn was broken down further into three themes as follows: enthusiasm, collaboration, and leadership. The enabling and constraining factors contributing to or limiting the partnership were also explored and are woven into the three themes. In this final chapter I will discuss those themes in relation to the relevant prior research on PDSs. I will also describe the strengths and limitations of this study. Subsequently, implications for future research that could apply to practice or policy in schools and universities will be discussed. A brief conclusion on the significance of this study will complete the chapter.

INTERPRETATIONS OF FINDINGS IN RELATION TO PRIOR RESEARCH

Analysis of the findings in this research project featured one overarching theme — an overall willingness to learn exhibited by all participants and evidenced in the manner in which they listened and learned from each other. The findings are further expressed through three themes: enthusiasm, collaboration, and leadership. The enabling and constraining factors are also embedded within the three themes. The themes will be discussed in conjunction with the relevant literature on Professional Development Schools.

Willingness To Learn

The PDS participants' willingness to learn was evident in every facet of the partnership, including school-based even down to the students as well as university-based. Teachers and students were enthusiastic as they embraced the Harless initiatives, Covey's Seven Habits, and Berger's data notebooks and student led conferences in order to change the culture in their school. In addition to enthusiasm, the partnership featured strong collaboration within the school as well as between the school and university-based participants, and even between the partnership and the local community and beyond. Finally, the learning-focused leadership of the teachers and principal, as well as the Harless Center staff was a key factor of the Professional Development partnership.

Enthusiasm

The first theme is the enthusiasm participants exhibited in their genuine willingness to learn. Teacher enthusiasm is an indicator of students' motivation to learn (Patrick, Hisley, & Kempler, 2005) and a "significant predictor of student behavioral, cognitive and emotional engagement" (Zhang, 2014, p. 52). "Enthusiasm is contagious" (Nilson, 2015, p.45) and when teachers show enthusiasm they motivate their "students' interest in learning...and inspire their respect" (p.45). In the current study, this enthusiasm was evidenced by the students' excitement in trying the Harless Center initiatives and the teachers' eagerness and grass-roots efforts to search out strategies to individualize instruction. The Harless Center's eagerness to make sure the project fit the needs of the school was apparent by their Retrofit process where they conducted a needs assessment at the beginning of the partnership.

The Holmes Group's hope for duplicating models of exemplary practice that were seamless between the classroom and the university was realized in the partnership by the positive

and enthusiastic manner in which the school-based and university-based participants came together in order to create, implement, and assess an ethos that enhanced learning for all.

The “PDS mindset” (Bondy, 2001, p. 11) was apparent at Dolen Elementary as participants changed their ideas and attitudes and their eagerness to consider the new initiatives presented by the Harless Center. The mindset was also evident in a willingness to learn that was exhibited by the university-based participants as they listened to the teachers’ concerns regarding what they considered to be a constraining factor — the pacing of the professional development sessions that were offered too often. Walmsley (2009) states PDSs’ sustainability lies in whether the partnership is willing to check the frustrations of the participants, such as the lack of time, buy-in, and a mutual philosophy. It was evident the Harless Center administrators and staff did check the frustrations of the school-based participants because in response to the teachers’ concerns about being pulled from their rooms for too much training, the Harless Center staff started offering Place-Based Learning (PBL) projects. The PBL projects were used as the new venue for professional development which allowed the teachers to stay in their classrooms and provided the time and opportunity for the Harless Center staff to demonstrate and model particular ideas, strategies, or skills inside the classroom.

This research project started at what NCATE (2001) labeled the beginning phase or level of a PDS partnership. Five years later, the project ended while the PDS partnership was in what Walmsley (2009) called the sustainability phase. It seems that Teitel’s (2003) suggestion for “simultaneous renewal” was also taken as evidenced by the enthusiasm of students, teachers, and the administration as they worked and learned from each other, and in conjunction with the Harless Center staff who were also working and learning from the school-based participants in order to transform the climate at Dolen Elementary.

Collaboration

The second theme from this research project is the collaboration, the combination of the participants coming together and the blending of inside and outside (beyond the local community) resources to enhance the PDS partnership. Both sides of the partnership worked together to assess initial needs, to implement the reform, and to assess their progress and restructured their program to make sure the collaboration remained beneficial for other partnerships as suggested by Pepper, Hartman, Blackwell, and Monroe (2012). Prior research demonstrates that collaboration within PDS partnerships enhances teacher quality, achievement of students, and enrichment of schools (Carpenter & Sherretz, 2012). Moore (1996) states, “By using true collaboration to address public concerns, citizens can and do develop a different kind of propitious culture that makes their communities stronger and more effective” (p. 3). In addition, Marlow, Kyed, and Connors (2005) agree, “The chief characteristic of the PDS partnership...is common effort toward common goals in a collaborative way” (p. 557). This study identifies participants benefited in these areas. Enabling factors listed by the participants were the collaborative efforts entailed by both sets of participants to incorporate Berger’s data notebooks and student led conferences. In fact, the collaboration between PDS participants and the county enhanced the entire school as the teachers and principal worked with the Harless Center to apply for the Innovation Zone grant, and by the county recognizing the school was awarded the grant and donating a computer lab to the school.

Authentic relationships (Doolittle, Sudeck, & Rattigan, 2008) where everyone, including the K-12 students, benefit (Teitel, 1997) have been created at Dolen Elementary in their collaboration with the Harless Center and when they reached out to the community. This blending of honoring community members and at the same time reaching beyond the community

to outside resources (e.g. Ron Berger) raised the quality of educational support the teachers had and enabled them to provide relevant Place-Based Learning projects for the students and their families. Evidence of the collaboration is found in the community gardening project where a local farmer was brought in to support the school's garden, Wild Cat Cooking classes where parents were taught how to cook healthy dinners for their children, and the Place-Based Learning projects that were focused on the Civil War in conjunction with the local historical society.

Leadership

My third theme is rooted in the colorful, playful role of the principal throughout this study and the enhancement of teacher leadership. The principal's leadership skills seemed to be one of the most enabling factors contributing to the success of the partnership. He enthusiastically welcomed teachers' ideas and suggestions. He listened to his students and parents. He went outside the local community and brought in the Harless Center professionals to strengthen the school and support his staff. The staff and students shared how he was always helping them, how they loved working with him, and that he was a lot of fun. Zepeda (2004) insisted the most significant aspect of the process schools go through is to recognize the part the principal plays within the partnership. Furthermore, Tilford (2010) stated that the "critical ingredient" (p. 72) in nurturing school and university partnerships is the principal. Likewise, in this study Mr. Thomas was named as the most important and enabling factor contributing to the success of the PDS partnership at Dolen Elementary. Multiple comments and vignettes were noted during observations and interviews as participants on both sides of the partnership shared the devotion, kindness, sincerity, and downright fun they had experienced at the hand of Dolen Elementary's principal. Mr. Thomas's situation was similar to the principal in a report presented by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC, 2007) in that both schools were at the

point of being evaluated and monitored by the state, but because of PDS participation, both schools achieved significant successes. Wolf (2007) states, “When a leader has a vision and instills ownership, teachers respond with enthusiasm, imagination, and dedication” (p.16). Mr. Thomas seemed to embrace Barth’s (2001) suggestion to “celebrate the craft knowledge that resides in every schoolhouse” (p. 62) as he answered teachers who approached him with an idea or suggestion with a simple, “go get it” so we can look it over and “What can I do to help?”

A study by Carpenter and Sherretz (2012) indicated, “PDS partnership activities encourage teachers to assume leadership functions to improve their schools’ teaching and instructional strategies for student growth,” (p. 98) and helps them gain the respect of their peers. In the current study, teacher leadership at Dolen Elementary was already evident before the partnership began by the teachers’ grass-roots efforts to achieve a grant to attend a conference on individualized instruction. However, the functioning of the school’s vision and vertical teams, which featured leadership positions for some teachers, became problematic over the course of the study. Teachers serving on the teams struggled to arrange meetings compatible with their schedules. Further, some teachers who were not on the teams felt left out and voiced concerns about lack of communication.

Louis and Wahlstrom stated, “Schools need to build strong cultures in which the many tasks of transforming schools require many leaders” (2011, p. 52). The Dolen Elementary teacher leaders’ grass-roots efforts coupled with their inquiry stance to teaching (Bondy, 2010) led this small group of veteran teachers in creating a culture of learning at Dolen Elementary that benefited participants and was enhanced by the Harless Center initiatives. Kotter (1996) listed traits of a lifelong learner as one who is willing to seek out the opinions of others with an open mind, which describes the characteristics exhibited by the teachers at Dolen Elementary, who

were also seen to have, “high standards, ambitious goals, and aspirations [that] facilitate the development of humility, openness, willingness to take risks, and the capacity to listen” (p. 182-183). Finally, the principal’s intuitive leadership skills were also noticed when the Harless Center was called upon to provide professional development training for new Dolen faculty, at the request of the principal, in order to ensure their foundation was strong and the faculty was abreast of the initiatives already in place when they came to the school. Lujan and Day (2009) suggested if partnerships ensure training is provided for new faculty they will contribute to the success of the partnership. Some examples of the type of training that was offered to the brand new, first, and second year teachers by the Harless Center were the Seven Habits, higher level questioning techniques, and modeling of the FOSS kits.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study revealed the love and respect the participants had for their principal. Tilford (2010) argues principals are the “critical ingredient” (p.72) in the school. I am now aware that there is a need for additional studies on this topic because “very little empirical research has been published on the role of the PDS principal (Tilford, 2010, p. 61) and there are not many studies in the PDS literature. Every set of school-based participants shared particular characteristics of Mr. Thomas’ ability to honor the teachers in his building because he was approachable and encouraged them to bring their ideas to him. Students spoke of him making himself available to them because he worked in the cafeteria which gave him time to talk with the students. He also searched outside of the community for resources to support his teachers and students. Additional studies on the impact principals have on their schools and positive roles they play in their schools would provide valuable insight into educational leadership. A qualitative research study on the leadership within a Professional Development School, in particular the principal’s role in linking

them with outside resources supporting teachers and students, would provide additional insight for stakeholders. Tilford (2010) states, “Given the push to create professional learning cultures within schools and the key role a principal plays in the process, it is imperative that new insights into the roles and responsibilities of PDS principals be explored” (p. 62) and further research in trying to understand the principal’s role may help prepare school leaders in the future.

This study found that classroom teachers whose craft and knowledge are acknowledged are eager to learn and become leaders and researchers. I would like to see research studies that focus on the teacher evolving into a researcher and how learning to become a researcher makes a difference in the classroom regarding classroom management or student achievement. I would also like to see the research go beyond the teachers becoming researchers, but to include the teachers being encouraged to present their findings not only in-house, but to their county, state, and national peers.

Through this study a description of the relationships between the school-based and university-based participants has been documented. I interviewed student participants to determine their perceptions of what it is like to work and learn within a PDS paradigm. Few studies have taken into consideration the elementary students’ perceptions. Further study into the perceptions of elementary students participating in a PDS partnership would assist in our understanding of the impact a PDS partnership has on elementary students. In addition, listening to students’ ideas about the culture of their school, the relationships they have with their teachers, the leadership of the school, and their peers could prove beneficial. Also, asking students if they have any concerns, ideas, or suggestions that they feel will make schooling more beneficial or relevant to them would be enlightening, particularly in the areas of bullying, academics, or peer pressure. Additional longitudinal studies designed to follow elementary

students in their move to middle and high school levels could provide information that could possibly help prevent students from dropping out of school or gain insight into what we could do to derail the growing number of suicide attempts and successful suicides we see among our school age children in this nation. Educational leaders would be interested in qualitative studies that focused on student perceptions, in addition to teachers, principals, parents, and policy makers.

The effectiveness of vertical teams was questioned by the teachers of this school because they were not sure if keeping students together was making a difference. Evidently, the county valued the concept because they promised to continue holding students in common as long as the attendance numbers were viable even after the Innovation Zone grant ended. Therefore, a longitudinal study of students who participated in a PDS school would be beneficial to stakeholders. Specifically, a study that follows students who are in elementary school and held in common via a vertical team as they transition into middle and high school could provide information and insight into whether there are significant or long term benefits to holding students in common throughout their school years.

Bondy (2001) agreed that “neither school nor university personnel have time built into their assignments to produce and disseminate high quality classroom research” (p.12). I found this to be true during an interview with the Harless Center administrators when the two admitted they seldom took the time to document the PDS work they have completed throughout their career, citing a lack of time for writing and the distractions from having multiple projects going on simultaneously as reasons for not spending time reflecting on or analyzing their work. I suggest studies be designed with time built in the project for analyzing, reflecting, and writing about the process the partnership is going through. The Harless Center may want to consider

creating or adding a research department or section to their staff whose purpose is to gather data, analyze, write, and disseminate the PDS work the center is doing. Researchers should encourage reflections from administrator and staff members, in addition to gathering reflections from school-based participants. Once analyzed and presented, the information could be used to guide future endeavors within the PDS consortium. Professional Development Schools should consider ongoing reflection and possibly ask for outside researchers to observe their partnerships to ensure there are still on track for meeting their original goals or if alterations need to be made. This type of research is significant to state boards of education, school boards, and stakeholders as they determine whether to invest monies in Professional Development School.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The strength of this study has been the use of participants' voices, especially those of students, to understand their perceptions regarding what it is like to work and learn in a Professional Development School setting. An additional strength of this study is that the data have been gathered over a five-year span and include descriptions from the beginning of the partnership and continued to where the PDS is sustained by occasional projects when Dolen Elementary reaches out to the Harless Center for support.

As a result of the phenomenological research project, we were able to contribute to the literature by shedding light on specific details such as the enthusiastic willingness to learn exhibited by all participants. We have illuminated the importance of collaboration and the relationships among students, principals, teachers, and the community, as well as the relevance of leadership within a PDS. Other significant details we have contributed to the literature are how much it means for students to have fun at school and how the culture of a school can be changed when everyone pays attention to the climate as the participants did when they embraced

the Seven Habits and took charge of their learning through maintaining data notebooks and conducting student led conferences.

A weakness of this study is the time frame in which the data were obtained. The 2010 data were gathered at the end of the school year while the school was completing the WESTEST and stress-worn teachers were being inundated with end-of-year activities and events. The 2015 data were obtained right before Christmas break when teachers were dealing with the Christmas program and holiday activities.

CONCLUSION AND SIGNIFICANCE

A formidable voice in literature pertinent to this phenomenological research project is the Holmes Group (1986) who suggested universities and public school systems form unions, which they termed Professional Development Schools (PDSs), in order to enhance the learning of teachers and students. The Holmes Group's suggestion provided inspiration and information for teachers and university faculty to communicate and collaborate to provide authentic hands-on learning experiences. The Holmes Group's suggestions had merit as evidenced by the successful and sustainable partnership between the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development and Dolen Elementary.

The literature also states Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) provide opportunities and the venue for effective teaching and learning to take place (Doolittle, Sudeck, & Rattigan, 2008). This was certainly true for the teachers at Dolen Elementary as they learned, shared, evaluated and reevaluated their progress, and designed unique learning opportunities for their students.

In addition to learning what it was like to work and learn in a PDS setting, this research project also set out to understand any enabling or constraining factors relevant to the success of

the reform movement at Dolen Elementary. Enabling factors identified included the Innovation Zone grant which provided the autonomy for the school to arrange their schedule, place students in vertical teams, and group students according to their instructional level to best enhance their individual academic needs. The students and teachers also viewed their principal as an enabler, encouraging them to come up with ideas and suggestions to make their school better. They described him as always available; he cared for them, and listened to their ideas. There were a few constraining factors that the partnership had to work through on their road to reforming the school. The leadership teams, vertical and vision, were questioned by the teachers at the end of the first full year of the partnership. Teachers voiced concerns as to whether the teams were working and if they were going to see any success. Another constraining factor mentioned by the teachers was the pacing of new PDS initiatives, which came too fast and required too much time away from their classrooms. The Harless Center administrators and staff responded to the concern by designing Place-Based Learning projects, which allowed teachers to receive training and support via mentoring and modeling in their individual classrooms instead of being pulled out so many times. It is also important to note that all school-based participants requested their facility be updated in regard to air conditioning and the bathroom stall doors that need repairing.

These details, based on comments from students and teachers directly involved in the PDS, helped to narrow the “gap in the knowledge base” Merriam (2009, p. 68) about professional development schools. We also provided some of the “particular aspects” (Ziechner, 2005, p. 5) responsible for the successes found at Dolen Elementary and the “specific conditions (in which) they occur and how long they persist” (Ziechner, 2005, p. 5) when we spelled out explicit details participants provided regarding how the Seven Habits initiative enhanced the culture of the school, how Berger’s data notebooks and student led conferences provided the

opportunity for students to be in charge of their own learning, how the vertical and vision teams maintained a line of communication and gathered data, and how students enjoyed working in a fun, learning environment with dedicated and caring teachers and principal.

This research project also contributes to the empirical research that is called for (Schussler, 2006; Breault, 2010; Rainer & Hooper, 2010; & MHEC, 2007) because it did what prior studies have not accomplished by focusing on the perceptions of the elementary students at Dolen Elementary as they lived and learned within the PDS paradigm. This project also documented the “effect that PDSs have on children’s academic achievement” as suggested by Abdal-Haqq (1996, p. 239) by looking at test scores, data notebooks, and student-created artifacts. The analysis of student test scores in order to show academic progress and the observation of data notebook presentations of artifacts as an alternative to just using test scores to verify student successes from this research project is consistent with Rainer’s (2010) request for studies on student achievement, Breault’s (2010) request for rigorous studies, Schussler’s (2006) request for research on students’ perceptions regarding how they handle change when they are working in a PDS, and the request by Abdal-Haqq (1996) for documentation of student academic achievement. Hopefully, this study will deepen understanding of teacher practice and provide information on the effects of instructional approaches on child outcomes within a PDS in order to enhance school practices (Rainer & Hooper, 2010). This research also contributes empirical data Campoy (2000) states is lacking in the Professional Development Schools literature because we provided evidence the partnership between Dolen Elementary and the Harless Center had a positive impact on student and teacher learning.

The research project ended with a sustainable PDS partnership evidenced by the fact that the Local School Improvement Council (LSIC) committee has already budgeted and voted to

continue paying for Harless trained substitutes to cover classrooms when teachers attend a professional development session. Professional development sessions have already been scheduled by the Harless Center, at the request of the teachers and principal from Dolen Elementary, to train them on Ruby Payne's *Framework of Poverty*, to help close the achievement gap between students who are in the low socioeconomic level and are receiving free or reduced lunch. Finally, another factor one can use to state there is a sustainable partnership between Dolen Elementary and the Harless Center is the fact that teachers declare that a simple phone call to request help on any Placed-Based Learning project is all that is necessary to have the Harless Center staff back in their classrooms.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER FROM INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH BOARD



Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board
401 11th St., Suite 1300
Huntington, WV 25701

FWA 00002704

IRB1 #00002205
IRB2 #00003206

April 25, 2011

Linda Spatig, PhD
College of Education and Human Services

RE: IRBNet ID# 227674-1

At: Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral)

Dear Dr. Spatig:

Protocol Title:	[227674-1] A Case Study of a Model Professional Development School in Rural West Virginia	
Expiration Date:	April 25, 2012	
Site Location:	MU	
Type of Change:	New Project	APPROVED
Review Type:	Expedited	

In accordance with 45CFR46.110(a)(7), the above study and informed consent were granted Expedited approval today by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Chair for the period of 12 months. The approval will expire . A continuing review request for this study must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date.

This study is for student Cheryl Jeffers.

If you have any questions, please contact the Marshall University Institutional Review Board #2 (Social/Behavioral) Coordinator Bruce Day, CIP at (304) 696-4303 or day50@marshall.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

APPENDIX B: WESTEST SCORES 2010

WESTEST Scores 2010			
Subject	Dolen Elementary	Randolph County	West Virginia
Math	33.0	44.0	44.0
Reading	38.0	40.	45.0
Science	28.0	34.0	40.
Social Studies	25.0	29.0	36.0

APPENDIX C: SAMPLE ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Could you describe the model program here at Dolen Elementary?

Tell me a little about you as an administrator of Dolen Elementary? (How long have you been an administrator? What brought you to Dolen Elementary?)

I was told you contacted the Harless Center and asked for them to be consultants at Dolen Elementary. Could you tell me what made you think of the Harless Center and what you hoped to accomplish by bringing them in?

Is there a memorandum of understanding between Dolen Elementary and the Harless Center? If so can you describe what it entails?

Have things changed since the school became a model PDS and now?

If so – how overall? in the classroom? to what extent?

What do you think of the changes?

If changes for good – ask what are the enabling factors?

If changes are not for the good ask - what would you like to see changed in the future?

Describe the Innovation Zone grant and what it means for your school.

- Positive aspects
- Things you wish were different

Do you have any concerns regarding your school? (Teachers? Students? Parents/community? County/state)

When I visited last year, you invited me to sit in on a professional development session with you and your teachers. I emailed you a photograph of an activity where you and your staff were divided into two vertical teams and given the task to simply work together and assemble a puzzle. Without any prompting, the team that finished first stood up, walked over to the other team, and helped them complete the task. The photograph is of both teams, bending over and focused on a puzzle. If we repeated a similar activity today, how would your staff respond?

Can you share with me some of the additional professional development sessions in which you have participated?

- Most beneficial aspects of the PD
- Things you'd like to change about the PD

Could you describe your vision for Dolen Elementary next year? Five years?

Could you give me an example of what you feel it is like for your teachers and students to learn/work in Dolen?

The first time you invited me to visit your school, over a year ago, we spoke of a few paintings on the walls of your building and you shared a few tidbits of information - could you walk with me and share what is on your walls today and share with me why you chose to have the specific items on your wall?

Do you have any idea as to the effect, if any, or the students' perception or opinion regarding the appearance of their school building?

Is there anything I have not asked you about that you would like to share?

Thank you for talking to me

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE ELEMENTARY TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Could you describe the model program here at Dolen Elementary?

Have things changed since the school became a model PDS and now?

If so – how overall? in the classroom? to what extent? Examples/stories?

What do you think of the changes?

If changes for good – ask what are the enabling factors?

If changes are not for the good ask - what would you like to see changed in the future?

Can you tell me about some of the professional development sessions you have in which you have participated?

- What do you think has been/is the most valuable aspect of the PD sessions?

Explain – Stories

- What do you wish were different about the PD sessions? Explain - Stories

Could you give me an example of a learning activity you have changed in your classroom since inception of the model PDS?

- How did students respond?

Can you tell me what it is like – as a teacher - to work here?

- Things you like
- Things you wish were different

What word/words do you think your students would use to describe you, your class, their classmates, school, classroom, and the principal?

Is there anything I have not asked you about that you would like to share?

Do you have any recommendations to other schools considering becoming a PDS?

What is it like for you as a teacher to be in this PDS? Thank you for talking to me.

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE STUDENT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Opening Question:

What do you enjoy doing most when you are not at school?

Introductory Questions:

Set the stage by saying: Now close your eyes for a moment and think about where you are. You are at school. You have probably been going to Dolen Elementary for several years – maybe since you were in kindergarten. Think about all the experiences you have had at this school.

If a new student was going to join your class today, how would you describe Dolen Elementary to him or her? What is this school like for students?

How do you feel when you're in school?

Key Questions:

Tell me about your favorite subject here at school.

Follow up with: Why is it your favorite subject? Examples/stories?

Tell me about a good teacher you have had.

Follow up with: Why do you think she is a good teacher? Examples/stories?

What do you like best about your school?

Follow up with: About your classroom? Why? Examples/stories?

What would you like to change about your school?

Follow up with: About your classroom? Why? Examples?

Tell me about how group work happens in your classroom.

Follow up with: Examples/stories?

Ending Questions:

Of all the things we talked about today, what is the thing you want me to remember most?

What was the most important thing we talked about?

Have we missed anything? Is there anything we didn't talk about it?

Do you have any advice about how we can improve these discussions in the future?