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The University of Southern Mississippi

COMPARING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES OF  
LOW PERFORMING PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND HIGH PERFORMING  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

by

Lori Rogers Wilcher

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2014

## ABSTRACT

### COMPARING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES OF LOW PERFORMING PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND HIGH PERFORMING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

by Lori Rogers Wilcher

August 2014

This study was designed to investigate the professional development practices of public schools in Mississippi. More specifically, the causal comparative design sought to discover if there were differences in professional development practices between low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi. For the purposes of this study, high-performing schools were classified A or B and low-performing schools were classified D or F by the Mississippi Department of Education. Classifications were based on student performance measures from the statewide testing system for the 2012-2013 school year.

The review of literature guided the examination of differences in perceived value placed on professional development, perceived delivery of professional development, perceived follow-up of professional development, perceived collaborative process of professional development, perceived duration of professional development, and perceived integration of data into professional development. Data were obtained through survey methodology with survey instruments completed by principals and certified teachers employed in the 2013-2014 school year. The instruments were distributed to educators in both low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

The results of this study revealed a statistically significant difference in the perceived collaborative process of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi. Furthermore, the results of this study also revealed a statistically significant difference in the perceived integration of data into professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

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A Dissertation  
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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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August 2014

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Jimmy, Alex, Bo, and Grant. I love you more than life.

Jimmy, my wonderful husband, thank you for the sacrifice and the tireless effort you have made to take care of everything so I could accomplish this dream. Alex, Bo, and Grant, thank you for your many sacrifices. I love you and did all of this for you and your future.

Dr. Jim Young and Dr. Rebekah Young, thank you for everything. You gave me support both educationally and emotionally.

Thank you to Mom, Dad, Pa Junior, Ma Cille, Aunt Susan, Uncle Tony, and Lana. I could not have made it without your support.

I am thankful to Jesus, my Savior. Through Him all things are possible.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Lee, thank you for serving as chair and providing personal experience and knowledge to help me understand the importance of a topic that is relevant to our field.

Dr. Roberson, you are a wonderful department chair; thank you for wisdom, direction, and understanding. The lessons you have taught me go much further than just a career.

Dr. Johnson, I think you may be the only person I know who can put statistics into words that I can understand. Thanks to you, I actually enjoy the information numbers can provide. I get excited about knowing how to interpret and use information.

Dr. Locke, I had no idea how to focus research and pull things together in a scholarly manner. Thank you for being such a wonderful teacher and for setting deadlines and goals that often seemed impossible. You all have been my driving force, and it is because of the respect and admiration I have for each of you that, when I wanted to give up or settle for mediocrity, I kept striving for excellence. Thank you.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

One thing is certain: If teachers and administrators are not learning and growing professionally, students are not likely to be learning much either (Gupton, 2010, p. 99)

The Education Reform Act of 1982 emphasized that professional development was “to improve student achievement by improving the quality of instruction students experience in school” (Task Force for Educational Excellence in Mississippi [TFEEM], 1983, p. 13). Additionally, The Education Reform Act of 1982 included the professional growth of school personnel as one of the four primary methods to achieve academic excellence (TFEEM, 1983).

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) established a system of accountability of student achievement in Mississippi public schools by establishing the Mississippi Statewide Accountability System. Work that began in 2007 by the Accountability Task Force and the Commission on School Accreditation (CSA) was set forth in 2009, giving performance ratings to both schools and districts. Ratings included components of achievement, growth, graduation, and dropout (MDE, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived professional development practices of low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in the state of Mississippi to determine if there is a difference in professional development practices in relation to student achievement as set forth by the MDE’s Accountability Standards.

### Statement of the Problem

School districts in Mississippi have been required to “have a state-approved comprehensive in-service staff development program in effect since the 1984-1985 school year and annually thereafter” (TFEEM, 1983, p. 11). This emphasis on professional development has been to “improve student achievement by improving the quality of instruction students experience in school” (TFEEM, 1983, p. 13). Therefore, if the professional development plan of a school district is to be state-approved and the goal of professional development is the improvement of student achievement, there could be questions as to why there is such a wide range of student achievement results in Mississippi Public Schools.

### Research Hypotheses

For the purposes of this study, the following hypotheses will be tested.

- H<sub>1</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived value placed on professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.
- H<sub>2</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived delivery of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.
- H<sub>3</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived follow-up of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing

public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

- H<sub>4</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived collaborative process of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.
- H<sub>5</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived duration of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.
- H<sub>6</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived integration of data into professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

#### Definition of Terms

*Accountability system* – as required by NCLB, all states were required to adopt statewide accountability systems to ensure public schools were making adequate yearly progress educating all students (NCLB, § 1111). The accountability system used in this study was one required by the Mississippi Department of Education at the time of the study. This system included, “...a performance classification....issued to both schools and districts...an achievement component and a growth component, [and] a graduation/dropout component” (MDE, 2012, p.5).



*Collaborative process* – for the purpose of this study, has a dual purpose. The collaborative process may be the process of multiple stakeholders providing input, but may also be teachers working together as a method of professional development.

*Delivery of professional development* – for the purpose of this study, refers to the method in which the subject to be learned is presented to the audience of learners.

*Duration of professional development* – for the purpose of this study, refers to the length of time the learner continues to receive instruction or training in reference to the subject matter of professional development.

*Follow-up of professional development* – for the purpose of this study, refers to the process, specifically in relation to the subject taught in professional development, which will ensue after the initial onset of professional development.

*Integration of data* – for the purpose of this study in relation to the context of the hypotheses, is information used to make decisions at the school or district level to determine both needs and outcomes of professional development.

*Professional development* – for the purpose of this study, refers to the “processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students” (Guskey, 2000, p. 16).

*School at-Risk* – for the purpose of this study refers to a school that does not meet growth, has a percentage of students performing below grade level, has a classification of failing, or has been classified as low performing or at-risk of failing for two consecutive years (MDE, 2012).

*School performance classification* – for the purpose of this study, the performance classification assigned to a school or district was determined by MDE based on (a) the percentage of students who are performing at criterion levels (minimum, basic, proficient, and advanced) and (b) the degree to which student performance has improved over time (based on an expected growth value for the school). The results from the Achievement Model and the Growth Model are combined to assign performance classification as follows:

- A Star School
- B High Performing
- C Successful
- D Academic Watch
- F Low Performing
- F At-Risk of Failing
- F Failing. (MDE, 2012, p. 13)

*Scientifically based research* – for the purpose of this study, refers to research that has been proven effective, uses systematic methods, involves rigorous data analyses, uses measurements and or observational methods, or accepted by peer-reviewed journals or a panel of experts (National Institute for Literacy, 2005).

*Value of professional development* – for the purpose of this study, refers to the importance of professional development as perceived by stakeholders.

### Delimitations

The following delimitations were imposed upon this study.

1. Only Mississippi public schools with the performance classification of A, B, D, or F were participants. Schools rated A or B were labeled high-performing. Schools rated D or F were labeled low-performing.
2. School performance classifications, as aforementioned, were given by the Mississippi Department of Education based on the Mississippi statewide accountability system.
3. Principals employed during the 2013-2014 school year and teachers employed during the 2013-2014 school year were the only stakeholders invited to participate in the study.
4. Only survey methodology was used.
5. Perceived value placed on professional development, perceived delivery of professional development, perceived follow-up of professional development, perceived collaborative process of professional development, perceived duration of professional development, and perceived integration of data into professional development were the only variables measured.

### Assumptions

The following assumptions were made as a part of this study.

1. The information about school performance classifications, as set forth by the Mississippi Department of Education based on the Mississippi statewide accountability system for the 2012-2013 school year, were accurately reported.
2. Schools labeled either A or B were actually high-performing, while schools labeled either D or F were actually low-performing.

3. All schools in the study conducted professional development as required by the Mississippi Department of Education.
4. Principals and teachers that participated in the study answered honestly.

#### Justification

The purpose of this study was to compare professional development practices of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

Guskey (2003a) explained that NCLB legislation specifically included language clarifying that professional development must be deemed effective in terms of scientifically-based research because of a belief that intelligent decisions have not always been made with regard to the content and format of professional development. Therefore, this study was to collect more specific aspects of professional development practices in Mississippi public schools and investigate how those practices may or may not in effect impact student achievement. Teacher and principal perceptions were pertinent in order to ascertain information.

Furthermore, information discovered could potentially be significant to educational administrators at both district and school levels. Additionally, teachers and students could also benefit. Data from this research could theoretically facilitate more informed decisions in regard to professional development. Specifically, district level administrators could plan according to variables that are linked to more successful outcomes. Additionally, school level leaders could use information relevant to data, follow-up, and value to improve professional development at the school level. Teachers could benefit from more effective professional development that, in turn, could enhance

knowledge and practice. Furthermore, students could potentially benefit academically from increased academic rigor that potentially could stem from more effective and purposeful professional development.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Research Question and Purpose

Understanding the scholarship in relation to both professional development and academic accountability provided relative background information prior to developing a research study that compared the professional development practices in low-performing and high-performing public schools in Mississippi. The purpose of this study was to determine if professional development practices were different in low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

The literature review included a brief history of professional development, laws and requirements that are pertinent to the implementation of professional development, and the requirements of professional development on national, state, and local levels. The review also provided information to define both professional development and the academic accountability systems in Mississippi. More specifically, the review investigated how student academic achievement in Mississippi is measured and how it is correlated to the identification and classification of both low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

Theory of adult learning was explored because even though the content of professional development for school staff is centered on the instruction and learning of children, in professional development settings adults are the learners. Finally, the review of previous research exemplified effective professional development practices. This review of relevant professional development literature and previous research on the practice of professional development included models of professional development,

methods of delivery, types of feedback, examples of support, and current professional development trends.

#### History, Legalities, and Requirements of Professional Development

The Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards (MDE, 2012) provided a brief history of accreditation in Mississippi. The State Board of Education was given authority to set and enforce standards after the accreditation law of 1970 was passed. In part, the law “gave the State Board of Education the power and authority to prescribe the standards and procedures for the accreditation of schools and place the responsibility for enforcement in the Mississippi Department of Education” (MDE, 2012, p. 4).

Under the leadership of Governor William Winter, the Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1982 was passed and led to the establishment of the Commission on School Accreditation (CSA). Furthermore, “the law clearly shifted the emphasis in school accreditation to the outcomes of education, specifically those related to student achievement, and changed the accreditation process from voluntary to compulsory for all public elementary and secondary schools” (MDE, 2012, p. 4).

Improved professional preparation and growth of school personnel was one of the four primary methods to achieve academic excellence as set forth in the Education Reform Act of 1982. Improved professional development was part of the ERA to not only improve academic achievement, but to also give “significant attention to the continuing education of teachers and administrators” (TFEEM, 1983, p. 11). Furthermore, according to TFEEM, schools were required to have a “state-approved comprehensive in-service staff development program in effect for the 1984-1985 school year and annually thereafter” (p. 11). The Education Reform Act of 1982 defines

professional development as “training or education selected by an individual for the development of that individual’s career” (TFEEM, 1983, p. 12). Ultimately, the emphasis put on professional development was to “improve student achievement by improving the quality of instruction students experience in school” (TFEEM, 1983, p. 13).

Additional legislation in 1994, following the ERA of 1982, “required the system to include: rigorous minimum standards; levels above the minimum that demand High Performing performance; and strict accountability measures for districts that fail to meet minimum standards” (MDE, 2012, p. 4). It was after this 1994 legislation that two public schools were taken over by the State Board of Education, “under the conservatorship section of the law” (MDE, 2012, p. 4) because of continued academic failure and “remained under state control until 2002” (MDE, 2012 p. 4). In 2013, information provided on the Mississippi Department of Education website listed eight public school districts under conservatorship and,

the reasons for declaring a state of emergency in a local school district include, but are limited to, the following:

- An extreme emergency exists in a school district that jeopardizes the safety or educational interests of the children enrolled in the schools in that district and that the emergency situation is believed to be related to a serious violation or violations of accreditation standards or state or federal law;
- If a school district meets the State Board of Education’s definition of a failing school district for two (2) consecutive full school years; or in the event that



more than fifty percent (50%) of the schools within the school district are designated as Schools At-Risk in any one year;

- A lack of financial resources; or
- Failure to meet minimum academic standards as evidenced by a continued pattern of poor student performance. (MDE, 2013, p. 1)

Following the Mississippi Student Achievement Improvement Act of 1999, additional legislation was implemented that provided additional clarification. In 2000 accreditation was made applicable to individual schools rather than districts. “This 2000 legislation required individual school performance accreditation levels to be based on two criteria: (1) meeting an annual growth expectation in student achievement and (2) the percentage of students scoring at the basic and proficient level” (MDE, 2012, p. 5). An assistance program to support needed training for schools not meeting the criteria was also established as part of this legislation (MDE, 2012).

By 2009 work to establish a new accountability system that was begun in 2007 by the Accountability Task Force came to fruition. The Accountability Task Force and the CSA submitted a new accountability system that was approved by the State Board of Education on March 20, 2009. This new system of accountability established performance ratings for both schools and districts and contained an achievement component, a growth component, a graduation component, and a dropout component. These vast efforts were made in hopes of preparing “Mississippi children to compete on a national and international level” (MDE, 2012 p. 5).

National Standards, the driving force behind state standards, were set forth by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 signed into legislation on January 8, 2002, by

President Bush. The act passed with “overwhelming bipartisan support” (USDE, 2002a, p. 9). Additionally, one of the key components of NCLB was “stronger accountability for results” (U. S. Department of Education [USDE], 2002a, p. 9).

NCLB mandated that all states establish a statewide accountability system. NCLB also mandated that states define and meet adequate yearly progress (AYP). AYP must be established by the state education agency and set annual measurable objectives (AMO). These established AMOs must be met. More specifically, these AMOs were required to include objectives that ensure there is equality in learning in regard to race, ethnicity, disability, limited English proficiency, or socioeconomic status (USDE, 2002a).

According to NCLB, professional development must be addressed specifically in schools that require academic improvement (USDE, 2002a). Furthermore, professional development must be aligned specifically with identified areas of academic problems and funds must also be used to help teachers teaching in Title I schools become highly qualified. NCLB defined highly qualified teachers as “teachers that have state certification (which may be alternative state certification), hold a bachelor’s degree, and have demonstrated subject area competency” (USDE, 2002a, p. 19). According to NCLB, Title I is the largest federal program providing financial support to elementary and secondary schools. Title I resources are distributed to schools based on financial need of the students and families of students enrolled in the schools (USDE, 2002a). Simply stated, a Title I school is a school that receives federal funds based on socioeconomic need of students.

The nation’s focus on improvement prompted the Mississippi Department of Education to establish a Statewide Teacher Evaluation Council (STEC) to make

recommendations for a statewide evaluation system to improve leadership and teaching practices that would, in turn, increase student achievement (MDE, 2010). The STEC was composed of members including four teachers, five administrators, three union representatives, a community representative, a governor's office representative, two teacher preparation program representatives, a Mississippi Association of School Superintendents representative, and Mississippi Department of Education personnel. Members not only examined national initiatives concerning school-wide improvement, but they also looked at national professional development programs, student assessment data, career growth, and performance-based pay for teachers (MDE, 2010).

The STEC members along with approximately 60 teachers who attended Mississippi Delta Community College's Millennium Partnership Summer Institute for Secondary Teachers were given a questionnaire about the needs of a statewide evaluation. The STEC members and the group of teachers both ranked professional development as the highest need for success of a new teacher evaluation system. Furthermore, both groups indicated that the results of teacher evaluation should be the driving-force of professional development (MDE, 2010).

"The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation places new demands on educators at all levels. But perhaps no group will be more affected than staff development leaders" (Guskey, 2003a, p. 27). Guskey writes that these demands on professional development leaders arose from a lack of good decision making in both content and format of staff development on the part of educators. NCLB references scientifically-based research (USDE, 2002a), and Guskey (2003a) suggests this type of research is "(1) grounded in theory; (2) evaluated by third parties; (3) published in peer-reviewed journals; (4)

sustainable; (5) replicable in schools with diverse settings; and (6) able to demonstrate evidence of effectiveness” (p. 28).

In order to ensure that professional development is steeped in scientifically based research, the demands on professional development leaders require them to make sure that information being presented for professional development is evident in the academic scholarship, not just opinion (Guskey, 2003a). The scholarly research must show both the evidence of positive outcomes for students in relation to school priorities as well as realistic needs of staff in relation to student learning (Guskey, 2003a). Planning professional development will also require what Guskey (2003a) calls “planning backward” (p. 28). Planning backward requires that leaders first determine the learning goals educators desire for students and then develop training for staff on how to instruct the students while also determining the success and needs of the students based on a continual analysis of actual data (Guskey, 2003a).

Guskey (2000) outlined five levels of evaluation for planning professional development: participants’ reactions, participants’ learning, organization and support change, participants’ use of knowledge and skill, and student learning outcomes. Guskey (2003a) continued the explanation of planning backwards by suggesting that the previously listed five evaluation levels be reversed. The reverse order would be to determine what goals schools desire for students to achieve, determine methods of instruction by using evidence from research and data, decide the types of support needed to ensure implementation of desired goals, conduct an assessment of the staff’s existing knowledge and skills pertaining to the goals, and, finally, provide the information needed

to successfully obtain knowledge and skills needed to accomplish the goals (Guskey, 2000).

Federal laws regulated state laws, and those state laws established the accountability and educational standards for local districts and ultimately school leaders (Gupton, 2010). “No role in school leadership’s scope of responsibility today looms larger than that of providing instructional oversight and guidance. Principals - as CEOs of school - are expected to ensure that good instruction and learning are taking place” (Gupton, 2010, p. vii). Gupton (2010) emphasized the importance of principals’ understanding that the literature correlates to practice, but asserted that many practitioners do not believe the literature is applicable to daily operations.

Gupton (2010) presented evidence from scholarly literature that a “one-size-fits-all” (p. 98) approach to professional development is not successful. The principal, in terms of effective professional development practices, must evaluate and give “frequent, insightful, specific feedback” (Gupton, 2010, p. 98). Gupton also argued that professional learning was often most effective when done collaboratively. Ward and Wilcox (1999) also listed reasons why collaborative leadership is important. These reasons included: the inability of one person or even a small group of people to effectively do everything that must be done, vitality of multiple stakeholders can benefit the school, all stakeholders “have a vested interest in the leadership of the school and the right and obligation to contribute” (Ward & Wilcox, 1999, p. xiii).

The principal, as the school leader must initiate and support the expectations of professional learning (Gupton, 2010). “One thing is certain: If teachers and

administrators are not learning and growing professionally, students are not likely to be learning much either” (Gupton, 2010, p. 99).

#### Professional Development and Mississippi Accountability Defined

In the proposal to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), Learningforward (n. d.) defined professional development as “a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (p.1). Extensive definitions for professional development are found in the ESEA, section 9101 (34). For the purpose of this study and to support the proposed hypotheses, the most relevant definitions of professional development found in the ESEA are

- Activities that improve teacher knowledge of academic subjects
- Activities that give teachers and administrators knowledge and skills to provide students with the opportunity to meet academic standards
- High quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom focused
- Not 1-day or short-term workshops or conferences
- Advance teacher understanding of effective instruction
- Based on scientific research
- Aligned with state academic standards
- Developed with participation of teachers, principals, parents, and administrators
- Activities that provide training for use of technology

- Regularly evaluated with findings used to improve professional development quality
- Include instruction in the use of data
- Provide follow-up training. (ESEA, 1965, pp. 6-8)

These definitions of professional development in ESEA supported findings discussed later in Chapter II relevant to effective professional development.

Guskey (2000) stated that the defining characteristics of professional development are intentional, ongoing, and systematic. Guskey continued that in order to ensure intentionality, professional development should “begin with a clear statement of purposes and goals, ensure that the goals are worthwhile, and determine how the goals can be assessed” (p. 19).

Because the purpose of this study is to compare professional development practices of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi, public school performance classifications were used to establish low-performing and high-performing schools. Performance classifications in the state of Mississippi are outlined in the Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards of 2012.

The Mississippi State Board of Education adopted a statewide accountability model that provides a classification or rating system for individual public schools and Mississippi public school districts. This A-F rating is based on several criteria including student achievement data, growth models, and graduation rate. The results from the Achievement Model and the Growth Model are combined to assign performance classification as follows:

- A Star School
- B High Performing
- C Successful
- D Academic Watch
- F Low Performing
- F At-Risk of Failing
- F Failing. (MDE, 2012, p. 13)

Furthermore, Quality Distribution Index (QDI) has a formula of “ $QDI = \% \text{ Basic} + (2 \times \% \text{ Proficient}) + (3 \times \% \text{ Advanced})$ ” (MDE, 2012, p. 31). The QDI score then determines the performance classification levels. Schools and school districts that have inadequate gain in growth have lower performance classifications: 200-300 is B, 166-199 is C, 133-165 is D, 100-132 is F (Low Performing), and 0-99 is F (Failing). Thus, schools and school districts that have adequate gain in growth have higher performance classifications: 200-300 is A, 166-199 is B, 133-165 is C, 100-132 is D, and 0-99 is F (At-Risk of Failing) (MDE, 2012).

In sum, achievement models are based on the students’ level of performance in a current year, while the growth models are based on the level of student improvement from the previous year. For the purpose of this research, A (Star) and B (High-Performing) schools will be considered high-performing, and D (Academic Watch) and F (Low-Performing, At-Risk of Failing, and Failing) schools will be considered low-performing.



## Theories in Adult Education

Adult learning theory supports how adults best learn. Guskey and Huberman (1995) linked the importance of the study of adult education to professional development practices and discussed that teachers formulate beliefs and acquire knowledge about methods of instruction that lead to student learning. Furthermore, Guskey and Huberman stated that it is the knowledge development of these teachers, the targeted learners of professional development in the K-12 educational setting, which carries over into the classroom and ultimately becomes the medium of which new practices and activities are introduced to K-12 students. Ultimately, the outcome of the adult learning in the form of professional development is carried over into the classroom and, therefore, impacts student achievement.

Successful professional development efforts are those that help teachers to acquire or develop new ways of thinking about learning, learners, and subject matter, thus constructing a professional knowledge base that will enable them to teach students in more powerful and meaningful ways. (Guskey & Huberman, 1995, p. 60)

Knowles (1950) wrote “the first requirement for learning is the desire to learn, learning must be purposive, and the learner must have an objective in mind and must be motivated toward it” (p. 21). Ozuah (2005) acknowledged the works of Knowles, Lindeman, Cross, and Tough when outlining the assumptions made about adult learners. These assumptions were: “the need to know, the learners self-concept, the role of experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation” (Ozuah, 2005, p. 84).

Adult learning can be understood in depth by looking at the theories of adult learning. Trotter (2006) explained that adult learning theories provide information that, in turn, allows professional development to meet the needs of the learners. “Being aware of adult learning theories will aid districts in offering effective, sustainable professional development activities” (Trotter, 2006, p. 8).

Ozuah (2005) indicated “the five main learning theories are: behavioral theory, cognitive theory, constructivist theory, humanistic theory and developmental theory” (p. 85). He explained that behavioral theory has the goal of changing an observable behavior and instruction using behavioral theory including direction, management, and reinforcement pertaining to a specific observable objective. Furthermore, cognitive theory consists of a goal of gaining knowledge and learning to problem solve (Ozuah, 2005). Galbraith and Fouch (2007) provide a summation of cognitive adult learning as “the purpose of learning is to teach the brain to engage in critical thinking and problem solving” (p. 36). Assessing existing knowledge and then connecting new information to old information will facilitate instruction in cognitive theory (Ozuah, 2005). Galbraith and Fouch (2007) additionally explain that in training using cognitive theory application can be facilitated through hands-on and problem solving activities (p. 36).

Contrarily, learning in the constructivist theory “is the acquisition of a shared understanding and the development of the process of knowledge acquisition” (Ozuah, 2005, p. 85). Instruction for learning in constructivist theory is done through object development, practical application, and exploration of hypotheses (Ozuah, 2005). Cranton (1989) explained that as learners are faced with challenges they will hypothesize solutions and work through the process to support or fail to support the solutions.

Developmental theory is used to foster individual achievement (Ozuah, 2005). “The learning objectives are based on norms and appropriate behavior, skills, or knowledge for specific levels or stages of development” (Ozuah, 2005, pp. 85-86). Additionally, instruction for learning in developmental theory is based on an assessment of the stage of the learner (Ozuah, 2005). However, the humanistic theory is based on the idea that “there is a natural tendency for people to learn and that adult learning will flourish if nourishing and encouraging environments are provided” (Ozuah, 2005, p. 86). Instruction for learning in the humanistic theory is based on the needs of the learner and specifically modifying learning to meet each learner’s needs (Ozuah, 2005). In 1989 Cranton explained that adult learners should be involved in the planning, encouraged to use his or her experiences, and taught to practically apply learning to actual situations.

Knowles (1970) labeled adult learning with the term “andragogy” and explained the definition of the word andragogy as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (p. 38). Knowles (1970) further explained that even though “pedagogy” is by definition “the art and science of teaching children,” (p. 37) and andragogy as aforementioned is “the art and science of helping adults learn” (pp. 37-38) that andragogy has a deeper meaning. Knowles argued that with andragogy the depth of learning and the process of maturation can begin in childhood and is not limited to only adult learning. Merriam (2001) noted there is much debate and difference of scholarly opinion as to whether andragogy is a theory of adult learning or a model of adult learning. Merriam also highlighted additional learning theories: self-directed learning, transformational learning, and informal and incidental learning.

Merriam (2001) further explained the comparison of andragogy and pedagogy and describes some assumptions about andragogy:

The five assumptions underlying andragogy describe the adult learner as someone who (1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning, (2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning, (3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles, (4) is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge, and (5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors. (Merriam, 2001, p. 5)

Continuing in the identification of characteristics of the adult learner, Ross-Gordon (2003) explains that adult learners make decisions that affect not only themselves, but also others and further states an assumption that adults would rather have self-direction in learning.

Merriam (2001) also referenced the work of Knowles (1984) in the debate concerning the application of the assumptions and models of andragogy with respect to the learning of children. Merriam (2001) cited Knowles in reference to children writing that children are “very self-directing in their learning outside of school..... could also be more self-directed in school” (Knowles, as cited in Merriam, 2001, p. 6). This process of thought is part of the debate “as to whether andragogy was just for adults and pedagogy just for children” (Merriam, 2001, p. 6).

Even though self-directed learning (SDL) is considered a model, as is andragogy by some, there is debate as to whether or not andragogy and SDL should be considered models or theories. Trotter (2006) states that “adult development theories provide a framework for understanding how adult learners are different from younger learners,

while also providing insight into devising better professional development programs to meet the needs of teachers at all phases of their careers” (p. 8). “A more likely scenario is that both of these ‘pillars’ of adult learning theory, andragogy and pedagogy, will continue to engender debate, discussion, and research, and in so doing, further enrich our understanding of adult learning” (Merriam, 2001, p. 11).

Humanistic philosophers such as Knowles, Tough, Brockett, and Hiemstra argued that SDL should have a goal of developing the learner’s capacity to be self-directed. Transformational learning contains a goal that included the learner’s self-knowledge in reference to the reason for learning (Merriam, 2001). Baumgartner (2001) further explained how transformational learning is inherently relative to the learner and therefore is the type of learning that is powerful and life-changing because of how it relates personally to the learner. There is the goal of self-directed learning based on “social action” (Merriam, 2001, p. 9). Merriam (2001) continued by explaining that some researchers, such as Brookfield and Collins, desire a self-directed learning that is geared toward both social and political action. Merriam (2001) also cited inquisitives included in previous work with Caffarella, Merriam, and Caffarella in order to promote further exploration and understanding of SDL. The inquiries ask how adults remain self-directed, how learners move from beginners to experts, and if instruction and planning is impacted (Merriam, 2001, pp. 10-11).

In reference to Mezirow’s (1990; 2000) transformational learning theory, Sandlin, Wright, and Clark, (2011), write that “all learning produces change of some kind but transformational learning is responsible for personal change, the kind of change that is major and significant” (p. 6). “Research using Mezirow’s theory has yielded insights

into the importance of relationships, feelings, and context in the process.

Transformational learning theory has expanded our understanding of adult learning by explicating the meaning-making process” (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 22).

According to Marsick and Watkins (2001) professional development outside of an institutionally sponsored, highly structured, classroom setting would be considered informal learning. Further, the scope of informal and incidental learning could include any type of learning that occurs outside a formal learning setting (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Because of the vast array of informal and incidental learning, it is important to more specifically look at how informal and incidental learning correlate with research and practice (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Marsick and Watkins (2001) cited Marsick and Watkins (1990) to define informal and incidental learning in contrast to formal learning. They explained that formal learning is highly structured, whereas informal and incidental learning are not. Furthermore, as part of formal learning, the responsibility of learning is on the instructor, whereas in informal learning, the pupil is responsible for learning. Incidental learning can come from activities, interactions, and even failure (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, as cited in Marsick & Watkins, 2001).

As stated by Marsick and Watkins (2001), research showed that both informal and incidental learning could be enhanced and that formal learning could benefit from exploring the elements of informal and incidental learning.

Ozuah (2005) summarizes that adults learn best when they want or need to learn, are in a non-threatening environment, learning style needs are met, previous experience is valued and utilized, when there is active cognitive and psychomotor participation, when ample time is provided, when there is an opportunity to

practice, when the focus is relevant, when the application is practical, and when there is feedback provided. (p. 86)

In sum, the literature presents supporting evidence to attest to the fact that the way adults learn impacts professional development.

### Effective Professional Development

Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet (2000) surveyed 1,000 teachers who took part in the Eisenhower Professional Development Program. The analysis of the survey data and current literature led to the identification of both structural and core features of professional development. The structural features were form, duration, and participation, while the core features were content focus, active learning, and coherence. Birman et al. (2000) explained that the form is the method of the professional development structure while duration is the length of the professional development activity. Furthermore, participation is the way participants took part in the professional development, individually, in teams, in groups, or by department. Content focus is the extent to which the professional development centered on deepening content knowledge. Active learning is the opportunity to be involved in the professional development learning, and coherence is the amount that the professional development was tied to goals, standards, and assessments (Birman et al., 2000).

Birman et al. (2000) evaluated traditional forms of professional development in comparison to profession development reform activities. Reform activities included study groups, teacher networks, mentoring relationships, task forces, internships, individual research projects, or teacher resource centers while traditional activities were workshops or conferences. Reform activities were found to be “more effective primarily

because they are longer and thus have more content focus, active learning opportunities and coherence” (Birman et al., 2000, p. 29). Even the traditional forms were found to be more effective when they had similar features of the reform activities (Birman et al., 2000). Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) further supported the effectiveness of professional development that is contrary to the more widely used workshop model and explained that the most effective duration was more than 30 hours and continued for months.

Duration of professional development impacts the content focus, learning opportunity, as well as teacher coherence (Birman et al., 2000). Activities of longer duration provide for more effective training because it affords more time for content, learning, and coherence (Birman et al., 2000). “The coherence of professional development with policies and other professional experiences is directly related to increased teacher learning and improved classroom practice” (Birman et al., 2000, p. 31). Coherence in activities of professional development has a component of integration that includes incorporation of goals, development of previous learning, and collaboration with other teachers (Birman et al., 2000). “Activities are also coherent when they support national, state, and district standards and assessments” (Birman et al., 2000, p. 31).

Collective participation in professional development is “the participation of teachers from the same department, subject, or grade” (Birman et al., 2000, p. 30). This type of participation was found to provide advantages of similar knowledge of content, concepts, and problems while also contributing to “a shared professional culture” (Birman et al., 2000, p. 30) that enable teachers to learn from one another (Birman et al., 2000 p. 30). Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) explained that as part of



collective learning teachers must be willing to openly share practices so that adjustments and modifications can be made that will in turn impact learning. The aforementioned concepts “created norms that value mutual aid above privacy” (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, p. 49).

Birman et al. (2000) referenced the works of Cohen and Hill (1998) and Kennedy (1998) to explore content of professional development. According to Birman et al. (2000), specific instruction in professional development was found to be more effective than general instruction. Content that focused on subject-specific professional development fostered a greater desire of learning for teachers involved in the professional development. This content-specific focus allowed for a more sophisticated understanding of the subject and an expanded level of teaching. Likewise, active learning provided effective learning through engagement. Active learning includes journaling, modeling, practice, and feedback (Birman et al., 2000). Furthermore, Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) provided research supporting professional development that “provides opportunities for active, hands-on learning” (p. 49).

Guskey (2003b) sought to answer the question of what effective professional development is and in doing so, examines 13 lists of what was called effective professional development by scholarly publications. Guskey (2003b) found that the lists were “derived in very different ways, used different criteria to determine “effectiveness,” and varied widely in the characteristics they identified” (p. 749). Guskey (2003b) continued that “the research evidence regarding most of the identified characteristics is inconsistent and sometimes contradictory” (p. 749).

Guskey (2003b) concluded that professional development researchers and practitioners of professional development do not agree on what is considered effective professional development. Guskey (2003b) maintained that in order to prove what effectiveness really is in terms of academic achievement that “authentic evidence” including many aspects of student learning must be obtained (p. 750). Guskey (2003b) further explained his point of contradiction with numerous “yes, but...” statements (p. 750). Guskey argued that these statements show that the characteristics of effectiveness do not necessarily mean they are being used effectively:

For example, *yes*, enhancing teachers’ content and pedagogical knowledge is important, *but* existing research is limited mainly to investigations of mathematics and science instruction. *Yes*, professional development should provide sufficient time and resources, *but* such time and resources must be used wisely, focusing on activities that positively affect learning and learners. *Yes*, professional development should include procedures for evaluation, *but* evaluations that focus narrowly on educators’ self-reported satisfaction with professional development activities offer inadequate guidance and direction to improvement efforts. And so on. [Emphasis Original] (Guskey, 2003b, p. 750)

Guskey (2003b) further argued that even though previous research was not complete it did not have to remain void. Research may be fulfilled by examining the strategies and practices of teachers who have been successful in raising the achievement of students.

Guskey (2003b) concluded that a single list of characteristics of effectiveness may not be possible; however, it is crucial to provide “clear descriptions of important contextual elements” (p. 750).

Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) examined more than 1,300 studies to determine how the professional development of teachers affected academic achievement of students. Yoon et al., reviewed the subject areas of mathematics, science, and reading and English/language arts. “This report finds nine that meet What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards” (Yoon et al., 2007, p. iii). After the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) was established as part of the United States Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES) (USDE, 2013):

The IES and the WWC have identified topic areas that present a wide range of our nation’s most pressing issues in education (e.g., middle school math, beginning reading, and character education). Within each selected topic area, the WWC collects studies of interventions (i.e., programs, products, practices, and policies) that are potentially relevant to the topic area through comprehensive and systematic literature searches. The studies collected are then subjected to a three-stage review process. (USDE, 2008, p. 1)

This review process determines if studies are relevant to topic, if outcome measures are valuable, if data reported is adequate, if the intervention being tested is effective, if evidence is sufficient, and if studies provide clarity (USDE, 2008).

Continuing with the findings of Yoon et al. (2007), discovering that only nine out of 1,300 studies met WWC standards “attests to the paucity of rigorous studies that directly assess the effect of in-service teacher professional development on student achievement in mathematics, science, and reading and English/language arts” (p. 2). However, based on the results of those studies that met the standards,

average control group students would have increased their achievement by 21 percentile points if their teacher had received substantial professional development – which indicates that providing professional development to teachers had a moderate effect on student achievement across the nine studies. The effect size was fairly consistent across the three content areas reviewed. (Yoon et al., 2007, p. iii)

Yoon et al. (2007) further explained that the studies with more than 14 hours of professional development showed the most significant effect. Professional development training was given to teachers themselves instead of trainers, and was conducted through either workshops or summer institutes. A suggestion was made for further studies on “the effect of professional development on both teachers and students ... studies more fully addressing professional development’s direct effect on teachers and its indirect effect on students” (Yoon, et al., 2007, p. iv).

#### Components of Professional Development

In 1950 Knowles made a comparison between formal and informal education clarifying that formal education lead to the obtainment of a diploma or a degree, while informal education, what is now often termed professional development by scholars such as Thomas R. Guskey, lead to the gaining of knowledge in a desired area, not for academic advancement, but for knowledge (Guskey, 2000; Knowles, 1950). Knowles (1950) listed reasons for informal education: “to develop special skills, to produce changes in attitude, to provide short-term exploratory experiences preparatory to affiliation with a long-run program, and to attract a diversified clientele” (pp. 85-87). The methods of teaching informal courses in 1950 included styles like “lecture, question

and answer, group discussion, project method, laboratory method, apprenticeship, demonstration, individual investigation and drill” (Knowles, 1950, p. xii). The current literature on professional development explored many of the same issues that Knowles explored in 1950 including planning, organization, appropriate delivery method, and evaluation (Guskey, 2000; Knowles, 1950; Opfer & Pedder, 2010).

More recent literature identified components of professional development to include type, model, delivery method, trends, evaluation, feedback, and support (Guskey, 2000; Opfer & Pedder, 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development [OECD], 2009; Polly & Hannafin, 2011). The OCED lists in order of participation from greatest to least, based on 2007-08 international averages, the types of professional development as “informal dialogue to improve teaching, courses and workshops, reading professional literature, education conferences and seminars, professional development network, individual and collaborative research, mentoring and peer observation, observation visits to other schools and qualification programs” (OECD, 2009, p. 57).

Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2010) listed alternative forms of professional development as “beginning teacher assistance programs, skill development programs, teacher centers, teacher institutes, collegial support groups, networks, teacher leadership, teacher as a writer, individually planned professional development, and partnerships” (pp. 338-339). These alternative forms varied in method of delivery and duration.

Learner-Centered Professional Development (LCPD) was defined by Polly and Hannafin (2011) as one type of professional development. Polly and Hannafin included how LCPD should be modeled to be “student-focused, reflective, teacher-owned, content

and theory-laden, collaborative, and comprehensive” (p. 122). To expand on types of professional development, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) was explored by Opfer and Pedder (2010) and types of professional development that could fall under the heading of CPD were listed as “in-school workshop or seminar; non-university accredited courses; university courses; out-of-school workshops or seminars; teachers networks or collaboratives; conferences; mentoring, coaching, lead teaching, or observing peers; committees or task forces; teacher study groups; and independent study” (p. 421).

Although Guskey (2000) listed many of the aforementioned types of professional development, he discussed using the term *model*, not *type*. “Major models of professional development are training, observation/assessment, involvement in a development/improvement process, study groups, inquiry/action research, individually guided activities, and mentoring” (Gusky, 2000, p. 22). In further discussion of the models or features of professional development, Desimone (2011) concluded that professional development should contain five core features: “content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation” (p. 69).

Pill (2005) researched models of professional development and identified models as reflective practitioner, action research, novice to expert, and metacognitive approaches. However, Luke and McArdle (2009) used the word *model* to explain the components of an entire professional development plan that includes phases such as the priority of policy, specific educational goals, identification of teacher groups and knowledge categories, mode and program evaluation.

Glickman et al. (2010) identified characteristics of professional development programs instead of using the label of model for professional development. Glickman et

al. listed these characteristics as the involvement of stakeholders in planning, conducting and evaluating, an integration of foundational goals, long-term planning, incorporation of differentiated activities, use of applicable research, financial and planning support, applied principles of adult learning, relevance, collaboration, understanding of change in practice, follow-up, support, assessment, feedback and a culture of continuous professional development (p. 336).

Learningforward's, (2011) *Standards for Professional Learning* highlighted the current trends in professional learning (2011). "Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students includes learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning designs, implementation and outcomes" (Learningforward, 2011, pp. 22-23). Learning communities promote educational effectiveness through collective responsibility and goal alignment reinforced by skilled leaders that foster support. Educational effectiveness also requires the implementation of resources, data, and a developed learning design to produce desired outcomes (Learningforward, 2011).

Fogarty and Pete (2009) identified seven protocols frequently mentioned in professional development literature explaining that, "These seven components are particularly important for successful Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). But, regardless of what models of professional learning are implemented, these seven elements anchor the experiences for lasting impact" (p. 32). Fogarty and Pete called these seven protocols "the Syllabus of Seven" (p. 32) and stated "these seven protocols call for professional learning that is sustained, job-embedded, collegial, interactive, integrative, practical and results-oriented" (p. 32).

“Informal dialogue to improve teaching, courses and workshops, reading professional literature, education conferences and seminars, professional development network, individual collaborative research, mentoring and peer observation, observation visits to other schools and qualification programs” are all professional development types listed in *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environment First Results from TALIS* (Teaching and Learning International Survey), by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD, 2009 p. 57). After reading the different types, models, and trends in the OECD publication, enough information is provided to conclude that the label of professional development may differ, but modern practices are identifiable.

A plethora of research and literature currently in the field of professional development was centered on evaluation of professional development, feedback after professional development, and support in using what is taught in professional development (Guskey 2000; Guskey & Yoon 2009; Myers, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2011). Guskey (2000) suggested evaluation of professional development is needed to better understand the dynamics of professional development, the intent of professional development, the information guiding professional development, and accountability of professional development.

Guskey (2000) further explained previous mistakes of professional development leaders as an inappropriate focus on documentation rather than a more important focus on evaluation, a lack of meaningful content related to success, and a duration that is too brief. Additionally, Reeves (2010) examined problems with professional development and addresses them by stating



Autopsies yield interesting information, but they fail to help the patient.

Similarly, educational accountability systems that focus on pathology yield limited information about how to help students whose needs are very much in the present. We must focus not only on effects but also on causes; and in the realm of education, the causes on which we can have the greatest influence are teaching and leadership. (p. 20)

Reeves (2010), after discussing the problems in professional development, offered solutions: “(1) a focus on student learning, (2) rigorous measurement of adult decisions, and (3) a focus on people and practices, not programs” (p. 21). Even though Guskey (2000) and Reeves (2010) did not use identical words or explanations, they both presented evaluation and measurement as a problem in professional development.

Myers et al. (2011) discussed the evaluation of professional development in a “Response to Intervention” (p. 35) approach. Mississippi Department of Education (2010) explains that Response to Intervention (RTI) is a three-tiered approach to education that gives additional assistance to struggling learners. Myers et al. (2011) approach learning in professional development with this same three-tiered approach.

The first tier is the “Baseline: Primary Intervention Tier” where the exact same training was given to every teacher in the school (Myers et al., 2011, p. 42). Tier two, “Secondary-level Intervention” training was given to teachers who after observation did not meet the goals and consisted of “(a) brief consultation (b) data and (c) weekly praise from the researcher contingent on improved rates” (Myers et al., 2011, p. 43). Finally, tier three “Tertiary-level Intervention” was only given to teachers who were not successful

after the second tier and consisted of “feedback after each observation session, daily scripts, and modeling” (Myers et al., 2011, p. 44).

Research suggested that models such as the three-tier model are ideal for teaching children and, additionally, scholars further presented how models such as the three-tier model could also be significant in the learning of adults.

King and Newman (2000) asked the question “Will teacher learning advance school goals?” (p. 576). King and Newman argued, “professional development can effect all aspects of school capacity” (p. 578). However, Yoon et al. (2007) stated “showing that professional development translates into gains in student achievement poses tremendous challenges, despite an intuitive and logical connection” (p.3). King and Newman further explained “a school’s instructional capacity is enhanced when its programs for student and staff learning are coherent, focused on clear learning goals, and sustained over a period of time” (p. 578). Student learning can be enhanced with professional development that focuses on core academic standards and how students best learn, professional development that is aligned with core curriculum and assessments, and evaluation (“Making the Most”, 2006). Furthermore, “it appears that when teachers have opportunities to learn their subject matter in ways similar to what is expected of the students – and when teachers have a deep understanding of how students learn- student achievement improves (“Making the Most”, 2006, p.102).

### Summary

This study was designed to investigate the professional development practices of public schools in Mississippi by comparing the professional development practices between low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in the state.

The thorough review of the literature exemplified specific conditions that are relevant to effective professional development and that, furthermore, potentially lead to professional development components that, in turn, lead to academic achievement in students.

According to the literature, effective professional development is most likely to occur when professional development is driven by policy, vision, and goals by all educational stakeholders. Furthermore, the literature provided evidence that follow-up and feedback are also crucial to effective professional development and the relationship of professional development to academic achievement.

The items that were illuminated in the literature in relation to effective professional development were value of professional development, delivery of professional development, follow-up of professional development, the collaborative process of professional development, duration of professional development and integration of data into professional development. The aforementioned items became the variables of the research hypotheses.

Teachers, STEC members, school superintendents, and other stakeholders ranked professional development as the highest need for success of a new teacher evaluation system and indicated that the results of the evaluative process should drive professional development (MDE, 2010). Furthermore, Guskey and Huberman (1995) linked the importance of the study of adult education to the success of professional development.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Overview

This study was quantitative and causal comparative. The purpose of this research was to compare the professional development practices of low-performing public schools in Mississippi to high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

#### Research Design

Hypotheses were used to guide this research. The study was quantitative and used survey methodology. The independent variable for the study was school performance classification with schools being classified as either low-performing or high-performing public schools in Mississippi. Surveys were distributed to principals and teachers employed in the 2013-2014 school year at both high-performing public schools and low-performing public schools in the state of Mississippi. For the purposes of this study, high-performing schools were classified A or B and low-performing schools were classified D or F by the Mississippi Department of Education. Classifications were based on student performance measures from the statewide testing system for the 2012-2013 school year.

#### Research Hypotheses

For the purposes of this study, the following hypotheses were tested.

H<sub>1</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists on the perceived value placed on professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

- H<sub>2</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived delivery of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.
- H<sub>3</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived follow-up of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals in high-performing public schools in Mississippi.
- H<sub>4</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived collaborative process of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.
- H<sub>5</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived duration of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.
- H<sub>6</sub>: A statistically significant difference exists in the perceived integration of data into professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

## Participants

Participants of this study were principals and teachers employed during the 2013-2014 school year in public schools in Mississippi with performance classifications of A, B, D, or F. Performance classifications were based on the Mississippi statewide accountability system and on 2012-2013 testing data. Participants in the pilot study were teachers and principals employed during the 2013-2014 school year in Mississippi public schools with a performance classification of C given by the Mississippi Department of Education based on the Mississippi statewide accountability system and 2012-2013 testing data. For the purpose of this study, high-performing schools were schools with an A or B performance classification, while low-performing schools had a D or F performance classification.

## Instrumentation

Two separate instruments were used in the study. The instrument for the principals, the Principal Professional Development Assessment Instrument (Appendix A), included 27 statements related to professional development practices. Participants were asked to respond to the statements using the scale always (A), often (O), sometimes (SO), seldom (SE), or never (N). The instrument for the teachers, the Teacher Professional Development Assessment Instrument (Appendix B), included 29 statements related to professional development practices. Participants were asked to respond to the statements using the scale always (A), often (O), sometimes (SO), seldom (SE), or never (N).

The instruments were developed by the researcher specifically for this study based on the information discovered through the review of the literature. The content validity was established for each instrument through a thorough review by a panel of

experts. The panel of experts included six highly qualified individuals. Expert A had 15 years of experience as a Mississippi public school teacher, 13 years as a Mississippi public school principal, 6 years as a Mississippi public school superintendent, and 7 years in educational development. Expert B had 26 years of educational experience, having held several positions within the educational realm including coach, science teacher, special education teacher, assistant principal, principal, federal programs director, and superintendent. Expert C had 35 years of classroom teaching experience and was a grade chair, mentor, student teacher supervisor, and tutor. Expert D served 12 years as a principal in Mississippi public schools, 10 years at the high school level, and 2 years at the elementary level. Expert D also served 20 years as a teacher and coach at both the junior high and high school levels. Expert E had 27 years of educational experience and was a National Board Certified teacher with both an undergraduate and graduate degree in elementary education. Expert E was also a certified administrator with experience in numerous positions in Mississippi public schools, which ranged from classroom teacher to district administration. Expert F had a bachelor's degree in elementary education, a master's degree in elementary education, and a specialist degree in elementary education. Expert F had 34 years experience in Mississippi public schools, 4 years in non-public schools, and multiple years as a professional development coordinator. Expert F was also a coordinator for High Schools That Work (HSTW) and a peer evaluator for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

The panel of experts were provided the following items: a 2-page validity questionnaire (Appendix D), a 2-page principal instrument, a 1-page principal instrument,

a 2-page teacher instrument, a 1-page teacher instrument, and a postage paid envelope, where applicable. The packages were hand-delivered or delivered by postal mail.

The panel of experts provided very useful feedback. The average time it took the experts to read and respond to an instrument was 6 minutes with a range from 2 minutes to 15 minutes. The majority of the experts preferred a one-page document. All experts agreed that the language in the instruments was understandable. Furthermore, they agreed that there was no offensive language. However, they made suggestions on the wording in reference to several items. The panel also verified that the items on the instruments were relevant to the topics being examined.

One expert commented, “The instrument was very well done and allows each of the stakeholders to give valuable input on a critical part of any school district.” Another expert commented, “This is concise. It is not time consuming for a principal or teacher to answer.” The positive comments and feedback give strength to the validity of the instruments. All comments and suggestions were taken into consideration and modifications were made accordingly. The final version of both instruments reflects feedback from the panel.

To establish reliability, the instruments were further tested through a pilot study to determine Cronbach’s alpha. Reliabilities for teacher scales were .951 for value, .725 for delivery, .858 for follow-up, .628 for collaboration, .551 for duration, and .869 for data. Even though collaboration and duration were below acceptable standards, they were evaluated in the final study. Principal data for the pilot study was too small to determine reliabilities.



Table 1 provides the breakdown of each instrument's questions as they relate to category being investigated.

Table 1

*Subtest Relating to Instrument Questions*

Category	Principal Instrument	Teacher Instrument
Value	18, 22, 26, 27	7, 8, 13, 16, 18, 19*, 20, 21, 22, 28
Delivery	16, 17, 19, 20	12, 24, 26, 29
Follow-up	4, 11, 12, 14, 21	5, 6, 14, 25
Collaboration	2, 3*, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13*	2, 3, 9, 11, 26
Duration		23, 27
Data	1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13*, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25	1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 16, 17, 28

\*Indicates reverse item

### Procedures

Upon approval from the dissertation committee, the Human Subjects Internal Review Board (IRB) at The University of Southern Mississippi, and the panel of six highly qualified experts, a pilot study was conducted. After a successful pilot study, the survey instruments were sent by postal mail to all Mississippi public schools with school performance ratings of A, B, D, or F that were given permission to participate by the school district superintendent or the superintendent's designee. Permission was requested from the superintendent of each school by letter (Appendix E) through

electronic mail. A personal note followed the electronic request. In the event that permission was not given or denied, the superintendent was contacted by phone to confirm permission or denial. If permission was given as the result of the telephone call, another electronic request was sent. The letter stating that permission from the school districts was granted was received in the form of either electronic or postal mail on district letterhead with signed permission. A personal thank-you note from the researcher was sent to districts granting permission.

Once permission to participate was given, a letter (Appendix F) in the form of an electronic correspondence was sent to each school principal explaining the study and that his or her superintendent had granted permission to participate. Through electronic mail, procedures and timelines were explained. If requested, the researcher also made phone calls to the principal or the principal's designee. After the initial communication with school principals, a package including a hand-written note of thanks, the instruments (Appendixes A & B), clear and concise procedures (Appendix G), and a postage-paid, self-addressed shipping envelope included for material return was sent to the designated school proctor.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics including frequency, mean, and standard deviation were determined. Hypotheses were tested using an independent sample *t*-test with a .05 level of significance. Data from the pilot study were used to determine Cronbach's alpha for the instruments. Reliabilities for teacher scales were .951 for value, .725 for delivery, .858 for follow-up, .628 for collaboration, .551 for duration, and .869 for data. Even though collaboration and duration were below acceptable standards, they were evaluated

in the final study. Principal data for the pilot study was too small to determine reliabilities.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

The causal comparative design of this study sought to discover if there were differences in professional development practices between low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi. For the purposes of this study, high-performing schools were classified A or B and low-performing schools were classified D or F by the Mississippi Department of Education. Classifications were based on student performance measures from the statewide testing system for the 2012-2013 school year. Survey methodology was used to test the hypotheses that guided this study. This chapter will present the results of the data collection and analysis for the study.

In an effort to get an appropriate sample, the superintendent or the conservator of each Mississippi regular public school district was sent an electronic request for teachers and principals in his or her district to participate (Appendix I). According to the Mississippi Department of Education, at the time of the study there were 156 school districts. Five of the school districts were special schools and were not included in this study. All 151 regular public school districts were invited to participate in the study. Eight school districts gave consent for research to be conducted in the school district. Nine schools participated in the research. A total of 12 principals with 10 principals from high-performing schools and 2 principals from low-performing schools participated. Furthermore, 188 teachers from high-performing schools participated, while 52 teachers

from low-performing schools participated. The total number of teacher participants was 240.

### Demographics

Twelve principals returned completed surveys. Ten surveys (83.4%) were returned by principals from high-performing schools and 2 (16.7%) by principals from low-performing schools. However, no surveys from participating principals came from an F school (Table 2).

Table 2

#### *School Performance Classification of Principals*

School Performance Classification		Frequency	Percent
Low	D	2	16.7
Low Total		2	16.7
	B	5	41.7
High	A	5	41.7
High Total		10	83.4
Combined Low and High Totals		12	100.0

Reported years of experience for principals ranged from 14 ( $n = 3$ ) to 30 ( $n = 1$ ) with half of the principals reporting 20 or fewer years of experience. As shown in Table 3, one principal had 30 years of educational experience, while 3 principals had only 14

years of experience. The mean for years of experience among principals was 20.75 with a standard deviation of 4.90.

Table 3

*Years of Educational Experience of Principals*

Years of Educational Experience	Frequency	Percent
14	3	25.0
20	3	25.0
22	1	8.3
23	2	16.7
24	1	8.3
25	1	8.3
30	1	8.3
Totals	12	100.0

Table 4 explains that 41.7% of principals reported only having been in the role of principal while 58.3% reported having previously been a teacher, a coach, or both.

Table 4

*Positions Held Prior to Principalship*

Other Positions	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	3	25.0
Teacher and Coach	4	33.3

Table 4 (continued).

Principal Only	5	41.7
Totals	12	100.0

Fifty percent of the participating principals did not report his or her current school level. However, among the reported levels, two principals served at the elementary school level, one principal served at the middle school level, two principals served at the high school level and one principal served all three school levels (Table 5).

Table 5

*School Levels of Principals*

School Level	Frequency	Percent
Elementary	2	16.7
Middle	1	8.3
High	2	16.7
Other	1	8.3
Total	6	50.0
Missing	6	50.0
Total	12	100.0

Note. Other includes a response of more than one school level

Two hundred forty teachers participated in the study. Table 6 exhibits that 188 teachers were from high-performing public schools, while 52 teachers were from low-performing public schools. The mean years of experience for teachers was 13.5 years

with a standard deviation of 10.1 years. Reported years of experience ranged from less than 1 ( $n = 1$ ) to 40 ( $n = 1$ ). The largest group (25.1%) of teachers had 0-5 years of experience ( $n = 60$ ).

Table 6

*School Performance Classification of Teachers*

School Performance Classification		Frequency	Percent
Low	F	14	5.8
	D	38	15.8
Low Total		52	21.6
High	B	100	41.7
	A	88	36.7
High Total		188	78.4
Combined Low and High Totals		240	100.0

Only 52.9% ( $n = 127$ ) of teachers reported subject taught. Table 7 shows English/language arts had the highest percentage of teachers at 12.9% ( $n = 31$ ). The subjects with the lowest percentage of 8.3% each ( $n = 1$ ) were science, computer/technology, special education, gifted, agriculture, physical education, and health.



Table 7

*Subject Taught by Teachers*

Subject	Frequency	Percent
English/ Language Arts	31	12.9
Math	27	11.3
Science	1	8.3
Social Studies	2	16.7
Technology Computer	1	8.3
Special Education	1	8.3
Gifted	1	8.3
Multiple	3	1.3
Foreign Language	2	.8
Music	4	1.7
Agriculture	1	.4
Physical Education	1	.4
Health	1	.4
Total	127	52.9
Missing	113	47.1
Total	240	100.0

One hundred thirty-four teachers (55.8%) reported the grade taught (Table 8). The grade with the largest percentage (7.5%) was first grade ( $n = 18$ ), but more teachers (19.6%) taught multiple grades ( $n = 47$ ) than any individual grade taught.

Table 8

*Grade Taught by Teachers*

Grade	Frequency	Percent
First	18	7.5
Second	11	4.6
Third	9	3.8
Fourth	9	3.8
Fifth	7	2.9
Sixth	5	2.1
Seventh	2	.8
Eighth	3	1.3
Ninth	3	1.3
Eleventh	3	1.3
Twelfth	3	1.3
Pre K	1	.4
Kindergarten	13	5.4
Multiple	47	19.6

Table 8 (continued).

Total	134	55.8
Missing	106	44.2
Total	240	100.0

School level was reported by 112 teachers (94.6%). More teachers taught at elementary schools (46.7 %) than at middle schools or high schools (Table 9).

Table 9

*School Level of Teachers*

School Level	Frequency	Percent
Elementary	112	46.7
Middle	14	5.8
High	84	35.0
Other	17	7.2
Total	227	94.6
Missing	13	5.4
Total	240	100.0

Note. Other includes a response of more than one school level

## Perception

Table 10 shows the perception of principals concerning value of professional development had a combined mean of 4.06 with a standard deviation of .51. This

combined mean was a result of all statements measuring the perception of value of professional development on the Principal Professional Development Assessment Instrument (PPDA) (Appendix A).

Compared to all other means related to principal perception of value of professional development, principals had the highest mean in perception of value in relation to the alignment of professional development with academic need as measured in statement P22 on the PPDA with 4.33 as the mean and a standard deviation of .49. The statement with the lowest mean as rated by principals relative to value of professional development was P18 on the PPDA (critical to instruction) had a mean of 3.83 with a standard deviation of 1.12. Even though P18 was lower than some of the other means measuring the perception of value of professional development, it was still considered high.

Table 10

*Perception of Value of Professional Development by Principals*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
P22 Professional development aligned with academic need	12	4.00	5.00	4.33	.49
P27 Instructional methods impacted	12	3.00	5.00	3.92	.52
P26 Student learning impacted	12	2.00	5.00	3.92	.79
P18 Critical to instruction	12	1.00	5.00	3.83	1.12
Value Combined	12	3.00	5.00	4.06	.51

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always

Note. Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct.

Teacher perception of value of professional development is shown in table 11. Teacher perception of value of professional development had a combined mean of 3.81 with a standard deviation of .82. The combined mean was calculated using the statements on the Teacher Professional Development Assessment Instrument (TPDA) (Appendix B) that related to the perception of value of professional development. Teachers, like principals, also rated perceived value in reference to aligned with academic need highly on statement (T16) of the TPDA with a mean of 3.96 and a standard deviation of .91. The question that was not inversely measured that had the lowest mean in relation to the perception of value of professional development by teachers was T21 on the TPDA (improved classroom management as a result of professional development), which had a mean of 3.51 and a standard deviation of 1.11. This mean was not as high as many of the other means in relation to value of professional development. However, it was still considered high because it was above 3.0. Statement T19 on the TPDA stated that professional development was a waste of time. Furthermore, statement T19 was inversely measured. Therefore, it is consistent with perception of value of professional development being high that this inversely related statement has a value below 3.0 at 2.08 with a standard deviation of 1.08 and is considered low.

Table 11

*Perception of Value of Professional Development by Teachers*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
T13 Professional development in district is valuable	239	1.00	5.00	3.97	.95
T16 Professional development is aligned with academic needs	236	1.00	5.00	3.96	.91
T7 Professional development is relevant to my role	238	1.00	5.00	3.92	1.04
T8 Professional development by my school is critical to instruction	239	1.00	5.00	3.87	1.03
T18 Student learning is impacted by professional development	236	1.00	5.00	3.82	.96
T20 Professional development improves ability to instruct	237	1.00	5.00	3.78	.99
T22 Professional development in my school is comprehensive	233	1.00	5.00	3.68	.96
T28 Professional development is relative to my needs	239	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.01

Table 11 (continued).

T21 Professional development improves classroom management	239	1.00	5.00	3.51	1.11
T19* Professional development is a waste of my time	239	1.00	5.00	2.08	1.08
<b>Value combined</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>3.81</b>	<b>.82</b>

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always

\* Indicates reverse

Note. Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct

Table 12 shows that the perception of principals in reference to delivery had a combined mean of 3.48 with a standard deviation of .31. The highest mean in perceived delivery as rated by principals was in relation to hands-on delivery with a mean of 3.67 and a standard deviation of .89 (Table 12). Furthermore, being inversely rated, P19 (professional development was conducted outside the district) had the lowest mean related to delivery with a mean of 2.67 and a standard deviation of .89. Again, because of the inverse relationship the mean should be low compared to the other means in relation to delivery (Table 12).

Table 12

*Perception of Delivery of Professional Development by Principals*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
P16 Hands-on	12	2.00	5.00	3.67	.89
P20 Technology	12	2.00	5.00	3.50	.80
P17 Lecture	12	2.00	4.00	3.42	.67
P19* Outside District	12	2.00	4.00	2.67	.89
Delivery Combined	12	3.00	3.75	3.48	.31

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always

\*Indicates reverse

Note. Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct

The perception of teachers in reference to delivery, as shown in Table 13 had a combined mean of 3.82 with a standard deviation of .80. Compared to other means in reference to perception of delivery, the highest mean in perceived delivery as rated by teachers was in relation to technology with a mean of 3.88 and a standard deviation of .99 (Table 13).



Table 13

*Perception of Delivery of Professional Development by Teachers*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
T29 Technology is used	239	1.00	5.00	3.88	.99
T24 Opportunity to practice during training	239	1.00	5.00	3.81	1.02
T12 Professional development is hands-on	239	1.00	5.00	3.77	.95
Delivery combined	240	1.00	5.00	3.82	.80

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always

Note. Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct

Principal perception of follow-up of professional development is shown in Table 14. Principals had a combined mean of 4.06 with a standard deviation of .695 in the perception of follow-up in relation to professional development. Principals rated P11 (observation of skills taught) highest in relation to perception of follow-up of professional development with a mean of 4.42 and a standard deviation of .67.

Table 14

*Perception of Follow-up of Professional Development by Principals*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
P11 Principals monitor lesson plan and observe classrooms for use of skills taught	12	3.00	5.00	4.42	.67
P4 Principals attend with teachers	12	3.00	5.00	4.25	.75
P21 Teachers are accountable for what they learn	12	3.00	5.00	3.83	.72
P12 Feedback is provided on implementation of skills	12	3.00	5.00	3.83	.94
P14 A support plan is in place for teachers needing additional support	12	2.00	5.00	3.58	1.16
<b>Follow-up Combined</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>5.00</b>	<b>4.06</b>	<b>.70</b>

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always

Note. Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct.

The combined mean of perception of follow-up of professional development on the Teacher Professional Development Assessment Instrument had a combined mean of 3.77 and a standard deviation of .89 (Table 15). Statement T14 (being held accountable for what is learned in professional development) was given the highest rating in relation to teacher perception of follow-up of professional development with a mean of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 1.04 (Table 15).

Table 15

*Perception of Follow-up of Professional Development by Teachers*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
T14 Held accountable for what is learned in professional development	237	1.00	5.00	3.94	1.04
T6 Ongoing support is available after professional development	237	1.00	5.00	3.90	1.02
T25 Someone observes skills learned	235	1.00	5.00	3.66	1.08
T5 Feedback is given to me concerning implementation of skills learned	237	1.00	5.00	3.59	1.16
Follow-up combined	240	1.00	5.00	3.77	.89

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always

Note: Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct

The mean of principals in relation to the perceived collaborative process combined was 3.51 and the standard deviation was .78 (Table 16). Three statements had means above 4.00 in relation to the perception of the collaborative process by principals. These statements were P6 (needs assessment given to teachers) with a mean of 4.59 and a standard deviation of .90, P5 (needs assessment given to administrators) with a mean of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 1.21, and P4 (principals attend professional development with teachers) with a mean of 4.25 and a standard deviation of .75. The lowest mean in relation to the collaborative process of professional development by principals was P8

(students are given a needs assessment) with a mean of 2.91 and a standard deviation of 1.76.

Table 16

*Perception of the Collaborative Process of Professional Development by Principals*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
P6 Needs assessment given to teachers	12	2.00	5.00	4.59	.90
P5 Needs assessment given to administrators annually	12	1.00	5.00	4.25	1.21
P4 Principals attend professional development with teachers	12	3.00	5.00	4.25	.75
P7 Needs assessment given to parents annually	11	1.00	5.00	3.82	1.54
P2* Decisions for professional development are made at the district level	12	3.00	5.00	3.75	.62
P9 District office asks for principal input	12	1.00	5.00	3.50	1.24
P3* Principal makes professional development choices based on what he or she thinks teachers need	12	1.00	5.00	3.25	1.14
P10 Principal supplies data to central office to support professional development requests	12	1.00	5.00	3.17	1.40

Table 16 (continued).

P13* Principal allows teachers to choose his or her own professional development	12	1.00	4.00	3.00	.95
P8 Students are given a needs assessment concerning professional development	11	1.00	5.00	2.91	1.76
Collaboration Combined	12	1.00	4.00	3.51	.78

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always

Note. Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct.

\* Indicates reverse

The combined mean of teachers in relation to the perceived collaborative process was 4.06 with a standard deviation of .74 (Table 17). The highest mean in relation to the perception of the collaborative process by teachers was T3 (principals attend professional development with teachers) with a mean of 4.24 and a standard deviation of .93.

Table 17

*Perception of the Collaborative Process of Professional Development by Teachers*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
T3 Principal takes part in professional development with teachers	238	1.00	5.00	4.24	.93
T11 Collaboration is part of professional development	240	1.00	5.00	4.21	.94
T9 I am given a professional development needs assessment	238	1.00	5.00	4.10	1.09
T2 My principal chooses my professional development	232	1.00	5.00	3.69	1.11
Collaboration combined	240	1.00	5.00	4.06	.74

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always

Note. Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct.

Duration was evaluated by separate questions instead of a combination based on the results of Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha determined a reliability of .551 for duration. As shown in Table 18, the mean of question 23, duration consist of short or 1-day workshops, was 3.87 with a standard deviation of .85. Furthermore, the mean for question 27, time for professional development is built into every workweek, was 3.04 with a standard deviation of 1.35.

Table 18

*Perception of the Duration of Professional Development by Teachers*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
T23 Professional development consist of short or 1-day workshops	238	1.00	5.00	3.87	.85
T27 Time for professional development is built into every workweek	237	1.00	5.00	3.04	1.35

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always

Note: Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct

Table 19 shows principal perception of integration of data with a combined mean of 3.65 and a standard deviation of .63. The highest mean in relation to principal perception of integration of data is P6 (needs assessment given to teachers) with a mean of 4.58 and a standard deviation of .90. Three other statements have a mean higher than 4.00. Those statements are P22 (professional development aligned with academic need) with a mean of 4.33 and a standard deviation of .49, P5 (needs assessment is given to administrators) with a mean of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 1.22, and P1 (principal has documentation of research-based professional development) with a mean of 4.09 and a standard deviation of 1.30. The lowest mean in relation to principal perception of integration of data is from P8 (students are given a needs assessment) with a mean of 2.91 and a standard deviation of 1.76.

Table 19

*Perception of Integration of Data into Professional Development by Principals*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
P6 Needs assessment given to teachers	12	2.00	5.00	4.58	.90
P22 Professional development is aligned with academic need	12	4.00	5.00	4.33	.49
P5 Needs assessment is given to administrators annually	12	1.00	5.00	4.25	1.22
P1 Principal has documentation of research-based professional development	11	1.00	5.00	4.09	1.30
P24 Professional development is driven by academic performance	12	2.00	5.00	4.00	.85
P7 Needs assessment given to parents annually	11	1.00	5.00	3.82	1.54
P23 Professional development is driven by teacher evaluation	12	2.00	5.00	3.75	.97
P9 The district office asks for principal input	12	1.00	5.00	3.50	1.24
P25 Principal can identify steps that determine professional development	12	1.00	5.00	3.50	1.38
P15 Principal reads scholarly literature	12	2.00	5.00	3.42	1.08
P10 Principal supplies data to support requests	12	1.00	5.00	3.17	1.40
P13* Teachers choose own professional development	12	1.00	4.00	3.00	.95
P8 Students are given a needs assessment concerning professional development	11	1.00	5.00	2.91	1.76
Data Combined	12	2.15	4.31	3.65	.63

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always \* Indicates reverse

Note. Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct.



Table 20 shows a combined mean of teachers in perception of integration of data into professional development as 3.92 with a standard deviation of .751. The highest mean in relation to teacher perception of integration of data is T1 (there is a master plan for professional development) with a mean of 4.48 and a standard deviation of .88.

Table 20

*Perception of Integration of Data into Professional Development by Teachers*

Question	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
T1 There is a district master plan for professional development	231	1.00	5.00	4.48	.88
T9 Teachers are given needs assessments concerning professional development	238	1.00	5.00	4.10	1.09
T16 Professional development is aligned with academic needs	236	1.00	5.00	3.96	.91
T7 Professional development is relevant to my educational role	238	1.00	5.00	3.92	1.04
T17 The district has an organized process to determine professional development	229	1.00	5.00	3.90	1.05
T2 My principal chooses my professional development	232	1.00	5.00	3.69	1.11
T28 Professional development is relevant to my needs	239	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.01
T10 Data was provided indicating that professional development was research-based	237	1.00	5.00	3.54	1.24
Data combined	240	1.00	5.00	3.92	.75

Scale: 1=Never to 5=Always

Note. Combined means are calculated as a result of all statements measuring perception of the construct.

### Statistical Analysis

Hypothesis 1 stated a statistically significant difference exists in the perceived value placed on professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi. In Table 21, the independent sample  $t$ -test with  $t(250) = 1.18$ ,  $p = .24$  shows no statistically significant difference in the perceived value between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi.

Even though there was no statistically significant difference in perception of value between low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi, there was a slight difference in means. The mean for perceived value of low-performing schools was 3.71 with a standard deviation of .85, while the mean for perceived value of high-performing schools was 3.86 with a standard deviation of .80 (Table 21). There was a .15 difference in means between low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in Mississippi with high-performing schools having the slightly higher mean in relation to perceived value.

Table 21

*Statistics by School Performance Classification*

Performance		<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means		Sig. (2-tailed)
					<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	
Value	Low	54	3.71	.85			
	High	198	3.86	.80	-1.18	250	.24
Delivery	Low	54	3.64	.79			
	High	198	3.85	.78	-1.75	250	.08
Follow-up	Low	54	3.61	.89			
	High	198	3.83	.88	-1.58	250	.12
Collaborative Process	Low	54	3.83	.77			
	High	198	4.09	.74	-2.31	250	.02
Integration of Data	Low	54	3.71	.77			
	High	198	3.96	.73	-2.21	250	.03

Note. Equal variances assumed.

Hypothesis 2 stated a statistically significant difference exists in the perceived delivery of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi. There is no statistically significant difference in perception of delivery by principals and teachers of low-performing schools compared to the

perception of delivery by principals and teachers of high-performing schools  $t(250) = 1.75, p = .08$  (Table 21). However, even though there was not a statistically significant difference in perceived delivery, there was a slight difference. Low-performing schools had a mean of 3.64 with a standard deviation of .79 while high-performing schools had a mean of 3.85 with a standard deviation of .78. The mean of high-performing public schools was slightly higher than the mean of low-performing public schools by .21 (Table 21).

Hypothesis 3 stated a statistically significant difference exists in the perceived follow-up of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi. There is no statistically significant difference in the perception of follow-up between low-performing public school in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi  $t(250) = 1.58, p = .12$  (Table 21). There was however a difference of means by .22 between low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in relation to perceived follow-up of professional development. Again, high-performing public schools had a slightly higher mean than low-performing public schools.

Hypothesis 4 stated a statistically significant difference exists in the perceived collaborative process of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi. Table 21 shows there is a statistically significant difference in perception of the collaborative process of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi with  $t(250) =$

2.31,  $p = .02$ . Teachers and principals of high-performing schools had a higher perception of the collaborative process than did teachers and principals of low-performing schools.

Furthermore, this variable for perception of the collaborative process had the largest difference between low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in Mississippi. Table 21 shows a difference of .26 in means with high-performing public schools having the higher mean of 4.09 with a standard deviation of .74 while low-performing schools had the lower mean of 3.83 with a standard deviation of .77.

Hypothesis 5 stated a statistically significant difference exists in the perceived duration of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi. There was no statistically significant difference in T23 with  $t(236) = .07, p = .95$ . Again, no statistically significant difference was found in T27 with  $t(235) = .59, p = .55$  (Table 22). Variables of duration were examined individually due to a low Cronbach's alpha as determined in the pilot study. Reliability of duration in the pilot study according to Cronbach's alpha was .551.

Table 22

*Statistical Information on Duration*

Question	Performance	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test for Equality of Means		Sig. (2- tailed)
					<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	
T23 Professional development consists of either short or 1-day workshops	Low	51	3.86	.90	.07	236	.95
	High	187	3.87	.85			
T27 Time for professional development is built into every workweek	Low	51	3.14	1.23	.59	235	.55
	High	186	3.01	1.38			

Note. Equal variances assumed.

Hypothesis 6 stated a statistically significant difference exists in the perceived integration of data into professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi. Table 21 shows that there is a statistically significant difference in perception of integration of data with  $t(250) = 2.21, p = .03$  between low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in the state of Mississippi. Teachers and principals of high-performing schools had a greater perception of integration of data into professional development than did teachers and principals of low-performing schools.

Furthermore, with a statistically significant difference between low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in perception of integration of data, there was a difference in means of .25, as shown in Table 21 with low-performing schools having a mean of 3.71 and a standard deviation of .77 in relation to the perceived

integration of data, while high-performing public schools had a mean of 3.96 and a standard deviation of .73 in relation to perceived integration of data.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Summary

The causal comparative design of this study sought to discover if there were differences in perception of professional development practices between low-performing public schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi. For the purposes of this study, high-performing schools were classified A or B and low-performing schools were classified D or F by the Mississippi Department of Education. Classifications were based on student performance measures from the statewide testing system for the 2012-2013 school year.

Hypotheses were used to shape the focus of the study. The independent variable for the study was school performance classification. Survey methodology was used and the Principal Professional Development Assessment Instrument (Appendix A) and the Teacher Professional Development Assessment Instrument (Appendix B) were sent to participating schools in paper format. Participants were principals and teachers employed during the 2013-2014 school year in the participating schools. The Principal Professional Development Assessment Instrument included 27 statements. However, the Teacher Professional Development Assessment Instrument included 29 statements. Participants were asked to respond to the statements using the scale always (A), often (O), sometimes (SO), seldom (SE), or never (N).

In an effort to obtain an appropriate sample, all regular Mississippi public school districts were invited to participate. At the time of this study, according to the Mississippi Department of Education, there were 156 school districts with 5 of the



districts being special schools. Therefore, 151 school districts were invited to participate in the study. Eight school districts granted permission for schools in the district to participate and 9 schools participated in the study. A total of 12 principals with 10 principals from high-performing schools and 2 principals from low-performing schools participated. Furthermore, 188 teachers from high-performing schools participated, while 52 teachers from low-performing schools participated. The total number of teacher participants was 240.

### Conclusions and Discussion

High-performing schools had a higher number of both principal and teacher participants. The majority of teachers taught at the elementary school level and more teachers taught multiple grade levels than teachers that taught a single grade.

There was not a statistically significant difference in the perceived value placed on professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing public schools in Mississippi and teachers and principals of high-performing public schools in Mississippi. However, the results of the study provided insightful information as to the perceived value placed on professional development by principals and teachers in both low-performing and high-performing school districts.

The Education Reform Act of 1982 (ERA) emphasized that professional development was “to improve student achievement by improving the quality of instruction students experience in school” (TFEEM, 1983, p.13). The requirement of school districts to have a professional development program in place since the 1984-1985 school year stemmed from ERA legislation intended to improve instruction as a result of professional development that would lead to improved academic achievement. The

ERA's emphasis on professional development was one of the findings in the review of literature that provided a basis for statements used to measure perceived value of professional development. Statements from the Principal Professional Development Assessment Instrument (Appendix A) included alignment of academic need, impact of instructional methods, impact of student learning, and critical to student learning to measure perceived value of professional development. Furthermore, the Teacher Professional Development Assessment Instrument (Appendix B) measured perceived value of professional development by including statements: professional development in the district is valuable, aligned with academic need, critical to instruction, impacts student learning, and improves ability to instruct. These aforementioned statements used in both the Principal Professional Development Assessment Instrument and the Teacher Professional Development Assessment Instrument were derived from the literature as to why professional development is valuable (Gupton, 2010; MDE, 2010, 2012; TFEEM, 1983; USDE, 2002a).

According to the literature (Gupton, 2010; MDE, 2010, 2012; TFEEM, 1983; USDE, 2002a), professional development should be perceived as valuable. Because there was no statistically significant difference in the perceived value of professional development between teachers and principals of low-performing schools and teachers and principals of high-performing schools, and because the combined mean of principal perception of value of professional development and the combined mean of teacher perception of value of professional development were in the high range; the conclusion can be made that principals and teachers of both low-performing and high-performing schools have a high perceived value of professional development.

There was no statistically significant difference in the perceived delivery of professional development between teachers and principals of high-performing public school and low-performing public schools in Mississippi. Because there is not a statistically significant difference in perceived delivery of professional development between low-performing and high-performing schools, the conclusion can be made that the methods of delivery of professional development are similar in low-performing and high-performing schools.

There was no statistically significant difference between low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in the perceived follow-up of professional development. Even though there was no statistically significant difference in perception of follow-up between low-performing and high-performing schools, there was a slight difference in the means with high-performing schools having a slightly higher mean in perception of follow-up of professional development than did low-performing schools. This slight difference in means will be evaluated more closely in the section of this chapter that discusses recommendations for policy and practice.

Based on the findings by the Statewide Teacher Evaluation Council (STEC) when making recommendations for the statewide evaluation system, it is keeping with what was found in the literature that there was not a statistically significant difference in means between low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in the state of Mississippi. The STEC members and 60 teachers ranked professional development as the highest need in a new teacher evaluation system and indicated that the results of the evaluation should shape professional development (MDE, 2010). Therefore, evidence is provided in the literature showing that teachers and other stakeholders that made up the

STEC were aware of the need of professional development in Mississippi schools to be driven by follow-up through evaluation. Furthermore, the stakeholders that made up the STEC added that results of the evaluation of teachers should provide documentation and data for professional development needs (MDE, 2010).

There was a statistically significant difference in the perceived collaborative process between low-performing public school and high-performing public schools with high-performing schools having a higher mean in the perceived collaborative process. Throughout the literature evidence was provided for the impact of collaboration on effective professional development (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Gupton, 2010; Ward & Wilcox, 1999). The statistically significant difference in the perceived collaborative process corresponds to the findings in the literature providing evidence that the collaborative process of professional development impacts student achievement.

Duration was only evaluated by teachers and was not evaluated in a combined manner due to the reliability findings of Cronbach's alpha. There was no statistically significant difference in the perceived duration of professional development between low-performing schools in Mississippi and high-performing public schools in Mississippi. The means were almost exact for both low-performing and high-performing public schools in relation to the duration of professional development being short or 1-day.

Not having found a statistically significance in perception of duration provides insightful information based on the findings in the literature. What is more, the fact that the statement relating to short-term or 1-day workshops had a higher mean than the other statement measuring duration built into the workweek provides information that is

relevant to duration of professional development and the impact duration has on both professional development and student achievement. Multiple sources within the literature provide evidence of effectiveness and the impact on student achievement when professional development has a lengthy duration (Birman et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Yoon et al., 2007). Specific wording in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) said that professional development should not be 1-day or short-term workshops or conferences. The fact that this mean was equivalent for both low-performing and high-performing schools lends evidence to the fact that 1-day, short-term professional development is ever present. The literature provides multiple citations that professional development is more effective when it is longer in duration (Birman et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; TFEEM, 1983; Yoon et al., 2007).

There was a statistically significant difference in the perceived integration of data between high-performing schools and low-performing schools in Mississippi with high-performing schools having a higher perception of the integration of data. The statistically significant finding in relation to the perceived integration of data into professional development is consistent with the literature. The literature exemplified that data, specifically in the planning stages of professional development, were important to the effectiveness of professional development. Guskey (2003a) provided multiple examples of how planning and gathering data lead to effective professional development. Educational leaders must be able to understand what data to present in terms of academic achievement and academic need in order to produce evidence of what is needed in terms of professional development. Furthermore, input from stakeholders is valuable to make

sure that covert needs are not being overlooked. Nonetheless, even though there was a statistically significant difference between low-performing and high-performing schools, there are implications for improvement in relation to the collaborative process. The statement referring to a needs assessment for students had an extremely low mean, yet student achievement is the ultimate goal of effective professional development.

#### Limitations

This study was limited by the small number of districts and schools that agreed to participate in the research. Even though invitations to participate were sent to each superintendent or conservator of all regular school districts in the state of Mississippi, only eight school districts granted permission for schools to participate. Furthermore, even in schools where permission was granted for all schools within the district to participate, some schools did not participate. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to a larger sample size.

The possibility that low-performing schools could have implemented changes to the professional development practices based on a low-performing classification could be a limitation. In response to having been named a low-performing school based on the Mississippi statewide accountability system, some school districts could have implemented additional professional development or modified professional development for the 2013-2014 school year in order to improve test scores in 2014. Therefore, results could have been different if surveys had been completed by principals or teachers prior to schools receiving performance classifications. Furthermore, the classification of low or high, for the purposes of comparison in the study, could have been assigned after classifications were made public.

### Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Although there were few statistically significant differences found in the study, there is information that can impact educational leaders. The literature provided the constructs that measured the perception of value. Even though the perception of value of professional development was high, there are implications for practice. Even though we were not comparing differences of perception of value placed on professional development between principals and teachers, the combined mean of principals in relation to the perceived value of professional development was higher than the combined mean of teachers in relation to value of professional development. Administrators in the role of principal should make sure to implement a method of communicating to teachers the value of professional development so that the value of professional development is understood by teachers. This could be done by effectively communicating evidence from the literature on the impact of professional development on instruction, student achievement, and academic need.

Delivery of professional development can be made more effective by making sure that professional development is steeped in the best practices as suggested by adult learning theory. Trotter (2006) stated “being aware of adult learning theories will aid districts in offering effective, sustainable professional development activities” (p. 8). Many of the components of adult learning theory correspond to principles of effective professional development. This finding is specifically important to educational leaders responsible for planning and coordinating the implementation of professional development in school districts.

With the literature presenting so much evidence of the importance of follow-up not only in improving the results of professional development, but also being desired by teachers and adding to so many other variables such as the collaborative process and integration of data, educational leaders must do a better job of providing follow-up to professional development.

Many aspects of effective professional development impact the collaborative process. Feedback, needs inventories, data collection, and support are only a few areas presented in the literature that can be tied to the collaborative process and the improvement of professional development. Therefore, it is not surprising that there was a statistically significant difference in perception of the collaborative process between low-performing public schools and high-performing public schools in the state of Mississippi, with high-performing schools having the higher mean in relation to the collaborative process of professional development.

There was no statistically significant difference found in the perception of delivery between low-performing and high-performing means. Thus, both low-performing and high-performing schools are conducting similar types of professional development in relation to delivery. The literature was very clear in presenting evidence that 1-day or short-term professional development workshops are not the most effective forms of professional development delivery. The literature provided evidence that long-lasting professional development is more effective and positively impacts student achievement. Educational leaders at the district and school levels need to be intentional in planning for the length of professional development. Furthermore, educational leaders need to ensure there are some offerings that have a longer duration than merely 1-day



workshops. The mean in duration of 1-day or short-term workshops being higher than the mean of professional development being built into every workweek shows that short-term professional development is still being used most frequently in both low-performing and high-performing schools in Mississippi.

The statistically significant difference in perception of incorporation of data into professional development with high-performing schools having the higher mean shows that educational leaders should use data to drive professional development. Many of the variables used in this study can be strongly linked to data. The findings of this study and the literature provide evidence that district level school leaders need to interpret and use data to drive professional development decisions. School level leaders need to use data to advocate for the professional needs of the teachers and the academic needs of students.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

This study could be replicated in many ways. One way to repeat this study would be to employ the same instruments, using growth as the independent variable. Furthermore, replicating the study and using the same independent variable but giving the instruments to educators in the fall before testing and performance classifications were known and then using the testing results of the spring to classify low-performing and high-performing schools would provide relevant information to reduce possible limitations.

District level administrators and leaders responsible for organizing professional development could benefit from a study that investigates if adult learning theory is being used in current professional development offerings.

A study based on information provided by those responsible for implementing professional development at the district level as well as those responsible for monitoring professional development at the state level could give an additional perspective from and to different stakeholders.

## APPENDIX A

## THE PRINCIPAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

**The return of this instrument constitutes permission to use this data. The purpose of this study is to examine the perception of professional development. This survey is anonymous.**

Years of Educational Experience \_\_\_\_\_ Positions Held \_\_\_\_\_

Current School Level (Please Circle One)    Elementary                      Middle                      High  
**Please indicate your response to each question by circling Always (A), Often (O), Sometimes (SO), Seldom (SE), or Never (N). There are 27 questions.**

1. I have documentation that indicates the professional development offered is research-based.	A	O	SO	SE	N
2. Decisions for professional development are made at the district level.	A	O	SO	SE	N
3. Professional development choices are made based on what I think my teachers need to learn.	A	O	SO	SE	N
4. I attend the professional development with my teachers.	A	O	SO	SE	N
5. A professional development needs assessment is given to administrators annually.	A	O	SO	SE	N
6. A professional development needs assessment is given to teachers annually.	A	O	SO	SE	N
7. A professional development needs assessment is given to parents annually.	A	O	SO	SE	N
8. A professional development needs assessment is given to students annually.	A	O	SO	SE	N
9. The district office asks for my input concerning professional development needs.	A	O	SO	SE	N
10. I supply data to the district office to support my professional development requests.	A	O	SO	SE	N
11. I monitor lesson plans and perform classroom observations to ensure teachers are using skills taught in professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
12. Feedback is provided regarding the implementation of skills learned in professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
13. I allow teachers to choose their own professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
14. A support plan is in place for teachers needing additional support to use skills taught in professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
15. I read scholarly literature about research in professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
16. Professional development is offered in a hands-on learning style.	A	O	SO	SE	N
17. Professional development is offered in lecture style.	A	O	SO	SE	N
18. Professional development offered is critical to instruction.	A	O	SO	SE	N
19. Teachers get the majority of their professional development outside the district.	A	O	SO	SE	N
20. Professional development is offered through technology.	A	O	SO	SE	N
21. Teachers are accountable for what they learn in professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
22. Professional development offered is aligned with academic need.	A	O	SO	SE	N
23. Professional development offered is driven by teacher evaluation.	A	O	SO	SE	N
24. Professional development offered is driven by academic performance.	A	O	SO	SE	N
25. I can identify steps that determine our professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
26. Student learning is impacted by professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
27. Instructional methods are impacted by professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N

## APPENDIX B

## THE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

**The return of this instrument constitutes permission to use this data. The purpose of this study is to examine the perception of professional development. This survey is anonymous.**

Years of Educational Experience \_\_\_\_\_ Subject/Grade Currently Taught \_\_\_\_\_

Current School Level (Please Circle One)    Elementary                      Middle                      High

**Please indicate your response to each question by circling Always (A), Often (O), Sometimes (SO), Seldom (SE), or Never (N). There are 29 questions.**

1. The district has a master plan for professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
2. My principal chooses my professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
3. My principal takes part in the professional development required of teachers.	A	O	SO	SE	N
4. I am assessed on the implementation of skills learned in professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
5. Feedback is given to me concerning the implementation of skills learned in professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
6. Ongoing support is available to me after professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
7. The professional development I am offered is relevant to what I am expected to do in my educational role.	A	O	SO	SE	N
8. The professional development provided by my school is critical to instruction.	A	O	SO	SE	N
9. I am given a needs assessment concerning my professional development needs.	A	O	SO	SE	N
10. I was provided data indicating the professional development offered was research based.	A	O	SO	SE	N
11. Collaboration is part of our professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
12. Professional development in our district is hands-on.	A	O	SO	SE	N
13. Professional development in our district is valuable.	A	O	SO	SE	N
14. I am held accountable for what I learn in professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
15. Our district wastes money on professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
16. Professional development offered is aligned with academic needs.	A	O	SO	SE	N
17. The district has an organized process to determine professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
18. Student learning is impacted by professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
19. Attending professional development is a waste of my time.	A	O	SO	SE	N
20. Professional development improves my instructional ability.	A	O	SO	SE	N
21. Professional development improves my classroom management.	A	O	SO	SE	N
22. Professional development in my school is comprehensive.	A	O	SO	SE	N
23. Professional development consists of short term or 1-day workshops.	A	O	SO	SE	N
24. I have an opportunity to practice what is being taught during the professional development training.	A	O	SO	SE	N
25. Someone in my district observes the implementation of skills learned during professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N
26. My district uses Professional Learning Communities.	A	O	SO	SE	N
27. Time for continued professional development is built into every workweek.	A	O	SO	SE	N
28. Professional development in my district is relevant to my needs.	A	O	SO	SE	N
29. Technology is used to provide professional development.	A	O	SO	SE	N

## APPENDIX C

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | [www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board](http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board)**NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.

Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **14032002**

PROJECT TITLE: **Comparing Professional Development Practices of Low Performing Public Schools and High Performing Public Schools in the State of Mississippi**

PROJECT TYPE: **New Project**

RESEARCHER(S): **Lori Rogers Wilcher**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education and Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Leadership and School Counseling**

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: **N/A**

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **03/25/2014 to 03/24/2015**

**Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.**  
**Institutional Review Board**

## APPENDIX D

## VALIDITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for volunteering your valuable time to assist in the development of these surveys. Your input is very important.

**Before reading the instruments in reference to the questionnaire, please read one and then the other. Please document the amount of time it took you to read each. This information is needed in order to provide participants the average amount of time to take the survey.**

Principal Instrument \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Instrument \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer the following questions in reference to the instruments included (Principal Instrument, Teacher Instrument)**

1. Do the instruments contain language that can be understood by the teachers and principals that will participate in the study? \_\_\_\_\_ If no, please indicate the questions of concern. Principal Instrument \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Instrument \_\_\_\_\_
2. Does the survey address specific and appropriate issues in the statements as it relates to professional development? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are there statements that you perceive to relate to the value of professional development? Principal Instrument \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Instrument \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are there statements that you perceive to relate to the delivery of professional development? Principal Instrument \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Instrument \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are there statements that you perceive to relate to the follow-up of professional development? Principal Instrument \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Instrument \_\_\_\_\_
6. Are there statements that you perceive to relate to the use of data relating to professional development? Principal Instrument \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Instrument \_\_\_\_\_
7. Are there statements that you perceive to relate to the use of collaboration in professional development? Principal Instrument \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Instrument \_\_\_\_\_

8. Are there statements that you perceive to relate to the duration of professional development? Principal Instrument \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Instrument \_\_\_\_\_

9. Are there any statements that you find to be offensive or confusing? \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, please elaborate. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. If you were a participant would you rather have one-page smaller font or two-page larger font? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Are there any statements you would remove?  
Principal \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

12. Are there any statements you would add?  
Principal \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Please make any additional comments or suggestions about the survey below:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E  
PERMISSION LETTER TO DISTRICTS

Date: [Insert Date]

Dear [Recipient]:

Heartfelt desire to help every student achieve his or her greatest level of success led me on a journey of educational pursuit. Furthermore, as an educator I strive to constantly learn ways to help students grow both personally and educationally. The combined desire for student achievement as well as professional growth led me to conduct research in the area of professional development.

I am requesting permission for teachers and principals in your school district to participate in my research survey concerning professional development practices in Mississippi Public Schools.

Please reply with your permission. Permission must be on school district letterhead and signed by the superintendent or the superintendent's designee. Permission should include the statement,

**Lori Wilcher has permission to conduct her study concerning professional development practices in the district.**

The questionnaires are attached and the survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. After permission is obtained from you, the principal will receive a request to participate at the school level. In that request, I will include your permission letter. After the principal has agreed to participate, instruments will be sent to the person designated at the school. The designee will distribute the survey, monitor the administration of the instruments, collect the instruments, and return them to me in a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope.

Results from this study concerning professional development may help you provide more effective, cost-efficient professional development that truly impacts student achievement.

Sincerely,

LORI WILCHER, MS, NCC, NCSC



## APPENDIX F

## PERMISSION LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Date: [Insert Date]

Dear [Recipient]:

Heartfelt desire to help every student achieve his or her greatest level of success led me on a journey of educational pursuit. Furthermore, as an educator I strive to constantly learn ways to help students grow both personally and educationally. The combined desire for student achievement as well as professional growth led me to conduct research in the area of professional development.

I am requesting permission for you and your teachers to participate in my research comparing professional development practices in Mississippi Public Schools.

I have been granted permission for your school to participate from the district office. I am asking you, as the principal to participate by completing the principal instrument. I am also asking that you encourage your teachers to participate by completing the teacher instrument. Each instrument should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. The instruments have no constructed responses. Most readers have completed the instrument in less than 6 minutes.

Without your help, the impact of this study could be greatly diminished.

Humbly requesting your rapid participation,

LORI WILCHER, MS, NCC, NCSC

## APPENDIX G

## LIST OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR PROCTORING SURVEYS

**To protect the integrity of this study, the package should only be handled by the designated proctor.**

1. Please keep all materials secure prior to the survey.
2. Please conduct the survey as quickly as possible after receiving the package.
3. To ensure the integrity of the study, the surveys must be conducted at one time to alleviate the discussion of any questions or topics.
4. Distribute the principal instrument to the principal only.
5. Distribute the teacher instrument to the classroom teachers only. (Please do not include any other certified or non-certified personnel.)
6. Stay in the room while the surveys are being completed.
7. Take the instruments up as they are completed and place them in the postage paid envelope. (Please include any instruments not used.)
8. After collecting all surveys please place them in a postal mail return immediately. Again, to protect the integrity of the study do not place them in an out-going mail bin within the school.

Thank you for your vital part in this study. Without your help this would not be possible.

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