UNDERSTANDING TEACHER CAREER STAGES AND THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

GABRIELLA STETZ JACKSON

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

    Clinical Associate Professor Mary Herrmann, Chair
    Professor Peter Kuchinke
    Assistant Professor Rachel Roegman
    Excellence Professor Kern Alexander

Abstract

The goal of professional development is to continually increase the knowledge and skills necessary for teachers to help their students succeed in their classrooms. Just as our students learn and grow throughout the course of their educational careers, teachers and administrators should also be expected to change, expand their professional skills, and develop their craft over time. This case study focused on one district and examined the role of leadership in providing professional development opportunities and how those opportunities were perceived by teachers. Using the adult learning frameworks of andragogy and transformative learning provided a focus on adult learning and the needs of adult learners.

This case study involved interviews with district leaders, school leaders, and instructional coaches. Teachers at all three district schools were invited to complete a survey on their experiences with and perceptions of professional development. Findings from interview and survey data showed that a clear vision, organizational structure, and focus on adult learning can provide teachers with opportunities that meet their ever changing needs. District leaders were purposeful in their design of adult learning and school leaders also worked to further that vision. In turn, teachers felt support for participating in various professional development opportunities. The contractual requirement for an annual coaching plan also provided opportunities for teachers to set their own learning goals and choose from a variety of options for professional development.

One implication is that it takes a vision for professional development and a system of support at the district and building level to offer teachers choice and differentiated opportunities for learning. Further research on effective ways to differentiate professional development for teachers as well as research on districts where teachers perceive their instructional practices to be

benefiting from individualized and differentiated professional development can help leaders as

they design adult learning opportunities for teachers.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Teaching is a complex profession, and the needs of teachers are constantly changing. Policy-makers recognize that one major component in improving educational outcomes involves high quality professional development (Guskey, 2002). According to the 2014 study by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, $18 billion dollars is spent annually on teacher professional development. School and district leaders are responsible for both delivering professional development and determining the topics and focus of sessions offered (Lutrick & Szabo, 2012). Leaders should have a clear understanding of the components of effective professional development for the various needs of their teachers in order to maximize teacher learning and student outcomes. Combining an understanding of effective professional development with knowledge on what teachers need at various stages throughout their career can improve the experiences of teachers and ultimately their students.

A Historical Perspective of Professional Development

The first large-scale review of the quality of education in the United States took place when the U.S. Secretary of Education formed a commission to study the topic. The outcome of that work led to the *A Nation at Risk* report, which compared high school students from 1964-1969 with students from 1976-1979. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE, 1983) identified the following areas that needed to be addressed:

1. assessing the quality of teaching and learning in our nation's public and private schools, colleges, and universities;

2. comparing U.S. schools and colleges with those of other advanced nations;

3. studying the relationship between college admissions requirements and student achievement in high school;

4. identifying educational programs which result in notable student success in college,

5. assessing the degree to which major social and educational changes in the last quarter century have affected student achievement and

6. defining problems which must be faced and overcome if we are successfully to pursue the course of excellence in education. (pp. 9-10)

One of the main recommendations stemming from this report centered on the quality of teaching. This recommendation contained seven parts and was intended to improve teacher preparation, make teaching a rewarding and respected profession, and improve classroom teaching and learning practices. The task force recommendations held educators responsible for the leadership necessary to enact reforms. School administrators were charged with enacting recommended reforms, and it was clear that leadership would play a key role in the success of implementation:

> Principals and superintendents must play a crucial leadership role in developing school and community support for the reforms we propose, and school boards must provide them with the professional development and other support required to carry out their leadership role effectively. (NCEE, 1983, p. 41)

After nearly two decades of state and national education reform initiatives designed to improve PK-12 education systems, federal legislation through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) went beyond the recommendations made in the *Nation at Risk* report and enacted guidelines for placing highly qualified teachers in classrooms (NCLB, 2001). This act called for an examination of current practice and reflection on whether state and local policies and procedures were in line with NCLB guidelines and what reforms needed to be addressed in order to ensure academic achievement for all students. The focus on qualified teachers through NCLB

led to research on how to ensure teacher quality and encourage continual growth for teachers. However, research conducted to date on professional development has documented ineffective methods or models (DeMonte, 2013), and few studies have identified effective professional development practices to improve teaching quality. Much remains to be learned from additional study of professional development programs, how they are meeting the needs of all teachers and their students, and how they can be strengthened.

Problem Statement

The goal of professional development is to continually increase the knowledge and skills necessary for teachers to help their students succeed in their classrooms. High school teachers in particular face unique challenges when it comes to professional learning. Teaching assignments are focused on specialized content areas and teachers are often scheduled to teach a variety of courses in their particular disciplines.

Focusing on how to provide effective professional development that results in improved teaching and learning practices is a necessary and worthwhile endeavor (Guskey, 2012). In addition, school leaders need to be regularly engaged with their teachers in professional development, ensuring that skills gained through ongoing training are implemented with fidelity and that they become a regular part of classroom practices.

Just as our students learn and grow throughout the course of their educational careers, teachers and administrators should also be expected to change, expand their professional skills, and develop their craft over time. Changes occur for educators based on both personal and organizational factors, and in order for them to remain effective in their classrooms they need support for continual growth; in addition, researchers report that teachers' professional development needs change as they advance to varying career stages as adults and professionals

(Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). Further research on how teachers grow professionally and their developmental needs at varying stages of their careers can inform school leaders on how best to support educators through effective, tailored professional development. If school leaders can gather information on the needs of teachers as they progress through their career cycles/stages, they can use that information and focus on the appropriate professional development activities to meet those needs (Drago-Severson, 2007).

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recognizes the importance of professional development and requires that teachers complete 120 hours of professional development during each renewal cycle. This requirement applies to all educators, regardless of how many degrees they hold. Beginning with the 2015-2020 renewal cycle, and every cycle after that, acceptable professional development is limited to coursework from an Illinois college or university, National Board Certification, National Licenses (for School Support Personnel), and activities provided by an Approved Professional Development Provider. These requirements were a major change from previous policy. Prior to the 2015-2020 renewal cycle, ISBE offered a menu of options that teachers could use toward license renewal. Teachers who mentored new staff, participated in regular Professional Learning Community meetings, supervised student teachers, taught college or university courses, presented at conferences, participated in action research, or served on various school or district teams were able to use the chart provided by ISBE to determine Continuing Professional Development Unit (CPDU) values for each activity. Also, the amount of professional development required varied based on degrees earned. Those who held a Bachelor's Degree needed 120 hours, those with a Master's needed 80 hours, those who held two or more advanced degrees needed 40 hours, and National Board certified teachers needed 40 hours. This change in policy essentially raised the amount of professional development required,

and limited the types of professional development activities that could be used toward license renewal. Teachers who previously had no trouble meeting the requirements found a need to pay for graduate course tuition or national board certification, ensure that any conference or workshop they attended was held by an Approved Professional Development Provider, and save all completion forms for institute days attended. Licensed staff have to rely more and more on their own districts for opportunities to earn CPDU credit towards license renewal. All public schools in Illinois are eligible to become Approved Professional Development Providers. Those who complete the application and approval process are able to provide their own staff with CPDUs and help them work toward meeting the 120 hour requirement for renewal.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how consideration of high school teacher needs at various stages in their teaching careers and at varying levels of expertise is helpful in creating meaningful and effective professional development programming. The study examined the role of school and district leaders in designing and implementing effective and differentiated professional development.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. In what ways are leaders providing differentiated professional development?

2. How do teachers at different career stages perceive leadership meeting their professional development needs?

3. How does the incorporation of adult learning theory into professional development program design enhance the learning experience of teachers?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to determine whether consideration of adult learning theory, as well as years of experience and levels of expertise, can help create effective professional development programming for teachers. If certain themes or topics could be identified at various career stages, administrators and professional development directors can use that data in conjunction with the main tenets of adult learning when designing and planning professional development activities. This study examined professional development, career stage development, adult learning theory, and how these topics intersect for teachers.

Conceptual Framework

The focus of this study involved examining professional development programs for teachers. This included both the design and implementation of professional development programs, as well as the role of leadership in meeting the needs of teachers. Given this focus and the themes that emerged, using Knowles' (1980) concept of andragogy and Mezirow's (1981) Transformative Learning Theory provided a focus on adult learning and the needs of adult learners.

Adult learning theory as the conceptual framework for an examination of professional development for teachers at various career stages offered a narrowed focus on how adults learn and how leadership can be more responsive to the needs of their adult learners. Examining the tenets of the framework and using those to evaluate professional development helped identify strengths as well as areas that could be altered and improved. This framework allowed for a focus on educating teachers in a way that their thinking, behaviors, and classroom practices would be altered in a way that could improve student achievement.

Research Methods

Case study research was used to examine a high school district with existing professional development programming for teachers. Data was collected through a variety of methods at each of the schools within the district and at the district level. Surveys were distributed to all teachers throughout the district to gain insight into their experiences with professional development. Interviews were conducted with administrators and instructional coaches from all of three district schools. The interviews with administrators provided insight into leadership practices and supports for professional development programs. The interviews with instructional coaches provided more in-depth information on the teacher perspective on professional development experiences.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The study was scheduled to begin just as the pandemic and school closings began. The original timeline was adjusted to accommodate the situation. I waited until teachers had some time to get used to virtual learning before sending the survey out. Even though the survey was sent to all teachers, I was only able to get 52 responses to the survey. Due to this limited sample size, it is uncertain that the data accurately reflects the perceptions of all teachers regarding professional development. In a normal year, I feel I would have received many more responses, but I understood completely the state of education and the stresses placed on all teachers due to the global pandemic. I also held off on scheduling interviews until last spring knowing that administrators and the instructional coaches were incredibly busy and stressed during that time. All of the district and building leaders were willing and able to meet for an interview, and I appreciated getting the full district perspective by being able to talk to several people at each building and at the central office as well.

Delimitations

This case study was delimited by various factors. The research questions required the site to be delimited to having a robust professional development program. The rationale for this was the focus of the study was on the leadership for and the perceptions of professional development programs.

An additional delimitation for this study was the incorporation of survey results from teachers at each of the three buildings. The reason for this was to gain perspective district wide at each of the three schools.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to provide clarity on their usage throughout this study.

Andragogy. Andragogy refers to a concept popularized by Malcolm Knowles (1980) as the "art and science of helping adults learn."

Professional development. Professional development refers to various types of activities that are "intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom focused" and:

> are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards. (Learning Forward, 2015)

Career stages/cycles. Career stages refers to the concept that teachers can continue to grow and develop over the entire course of their careers (Eros, 2011). At times, this progression is linear and based on years of experience (Fuller, 1969). Other times, teachers move in and out of various stages, depending on factors that are both environment and personal (Fessler & Christensen, 1992).

Transformative learning. Transformative learning refers to "the process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discrimination, and integrative understanding of one's experience" (Mezirow, 1990, p. xvi).

Summary

This chapter presented a brief history of professional development in education and the value of such programming. This chapter also included a brief summary of the problem as it relates to professional development for teachers and meeting their needs at various stages in their career. The research questions and the introduction of the conceptual framework were also included in this chapter.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Educators in Illinois are required to participate in professional development activities throughout their career. Although the exact requirements vary based on position (certified teachers, administrators, school service personnel, National Board Certified teachers), all must engage in professional development activities for license renewal. As of 2014, the Illinois State Board of Education has stipulated approved professional development providers and approved professional development activities. Although professional development for teachers has been in existence for a long time, there is still much discussion on identifying teacher needs as well as designing and implementing programming that can lead to increased student achievement.

Career Stages/Career Cycles of Teachers

Various career stage/cycle models depicting the growth and development of teachers have been utilized as a tool for understanding and guiding the professional development of teachers. Teachers learn, grow, and develop throughout the course of their careers and knowing how to recognize career stages and offer opportunities for growth could be beneficial for administrators (Eros, 2011). Teachers may also benefit from an understanding of the most common characteristics and needs at various career stages as they reflect on their practice and look for opportunities for growth (Lumpkin, 2014).

Multiple career-stage models have developed over the years. The idea of career stages dates back to the early work of Fuller (1969) and a study of education students. Fuller's stages included pre-teaching concerns, early concerns about survival, teaching situation concerns, and concerns about pupils (Fessler & Christensen, 1992). The progression through these stages focused first on the individual, then on the task of teaching, and then on the students themselves.

Turner and Unruh (1970) were also among the first to introduce the notion of career stages. Their stages included the initial teaching period of up to 5 or 6 years, the period of building security, which covered years 6 to 15 and the maturing period. Another notable model from Gregorc (1973) depicted four stages of development. The first stage was called the becoming stage, and described a period of time in which teachers discover the purpose of education and their role in that process. The second stage was called the growing stage, and described teachers' development of commitment to their school that is partly based on the school culture and expectations of teachers. The third stage was the maturing stage and depicted teachers becoming deeply committed to education. The fourth and final stage was the fully functioning professional stage, in which teachers attempt to realize their full potential as educators and contributing members to the educational profession.

The model from Katz (1972) moved beyond just a description of stages and included both the stages of development as well as the training needs of teachers. The survival stage is first and lasts 1 or 2 years. This stage requires on-site, technical training for new teachers. Next is the consolidation stage, and this period lasts into the third year and requires access to resources and on-site assistance. The third stage was called the renewal stage and would last through a teacher's fourth year. This stage requires professional training such as conferences, workshops, and access to journals and teacher centers. The final stage was termed the maturity stage and extends through the fifth year and beyond. Appropriate activities for this stage include seminars, degrees, conferences, journals and institutes.

The model presented by both Gregorc (1973) and Katz (1972) depicts a differentiated perspective into teacher professional development and a solid foundation for career stage models. One limitation of these early models, however, is that teachers in the final or mature

stages were not differentiated into subgroups. Teachers can continue to grow and develop over

their entire career, and these changes are not represented by any of the early models.

Later models build on the early works of Katz, Gregorc, and Fuller and include a more

holistic view of career stage development. Burden (1982) used interview data to develop a

descriptive framework for teacher development. In his framework, the first, or survival stage

describes the first year of teaching and describes concerns of teachers such as lesson planning,

organization of materials, and classroom control. The second stage, the adjustment stage,

includes years 2, 3, and 4 and recognizes teachers' abilities to better identify student needs and

use a wide range of classroom techniques. The third, or mature stage, includes the fifth year and

beyond and describes the teacher as more comfortable and secure in their environment. While

this model still does not account for differentiation beyond the fifth year, it offers insight from

interview data and several clear descriptors for each stage.

Huberman (1989) developed various models of career stages and was one of the first

theorists to offer different paths or options for development. His first model was based on a study

of women with 5 to 10 years of experience. This model includes a period of career launching,

which could occur between years 1 and 6. The description of this period includes a range of

experiences from comfortable beginnings to struggles with students, supervision, and isolation.

The second period is one marked by stabilization and final commitment. This period generally

occurs between the fourth and eighth year of teaching and often includes the potential of tenure,

autonomy, and integration into groups with peers. The third stage is one of new challenges and

new concerns. During this period teachers enter into one of three different tracks:

experimentation, responsibility, or consternation. In the alternate model, teachers move from the

stabilization period to one of many streams. This model includes a stream for late or end of career paths that include experimentation, serenity and disengagement.

Some models determine stages based on years of teaching and others use a description of attributes. Although the teaching career is often looked at in terms of years of experience, the career cycle is not necessarily a linear development (Fessler & Christensen, 1992). Based on various external factors, teachers could potentially move in and out of these different stages or cycles throughout their entire career. The model from Fessler and Christensen (1992) takes into account the previous research on career cycles, as well as other external factors that may influence development. In this realistic model, personal factors and organizational factors influence the eight career cycles of teachers: pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiastic and growing, career frustration, career stability, career wind-down, and career exit (Fessler & Christensen, 1992, p. 36).

The dynamic model of the teacher career cycle from Fessler and Christensen (1992) prompted recommendations for the professionalization of teaching and the need for professional development to include variety and personalization. An understanding of career cycles has implications for planning differentiated professional development that meets teachers' needs at any given time (Eros, 2011). Lumpkin's (2014) work centers around higher education professionals, but the implications are there for teachers at all levels when she states that professional development opportunities should be offered to accommodate the various stages of a faculty. Lumpkin's recommendations for activities include: mentoring, attending conferences, applying for grants to stimulate innovation, and seeking out release time to work collaboratively on enhancing curriculum. These various models can serve as a guide for assessing needs and

implementing programs. Combining an understanding of the models with an understanding of

the principal's role in supporting teachers can lead to valuable professional learning for teachers.

The Role of the Principal in Supporting Teachers

The role of the school principal is increasingly complex and multifaceted. School leaders

are often tasked with both instructional and operational duties (Drago-Severson, 2007). At the

heart of their work is supporting teachers as they work toward helping students achieve academic

success. There have been several comprehensive reviews of the literature on the relationship

between school leadership and student achievement. A review of 43 studies conducted between

1980 and 1995 by Hallinger and Heck (1998) looked at the relationship between principal

leadership and student outcomes. From careful examination of those studies, they were able to

see that principals do have an effect on school achievement, albeit in an indirect way. One area

in which principals have an indirect influence on school outcomes is through their involvement

in framing and sustaining school goals (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, p. 171). Another area of

indirect influence deals with organizational culture and people. Principals help develop shared

meanings and goals and shape the school environment.

Another review of the literature examined 70 research studies on the link between

principal leadership and student outcomes. This review looked at school culture, teacher

motivation and instructional support (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Their review showed

a relationship between principal leadership and student achievement, and they identified 21

leadership responsibilities that are associated with student achievement. The framework

described as a result of this research offers leadership practices that can be applied in an effort to

increase student achievement. While more research can be done to identify specifics aspects of

leadership and qualities of successful leaders, the literature review is encouraging and supports the need for effective school leadership for the continual growth of both teachers and students.

Principals play a role in student academic growth through their promotion of teacher learning. Principals provide opportunities to connect teachers to experiences that increase their effectiveness in the classroom and create a school climate that encourages continual growth. By establishing a collaborative school culture, principals can encourage reflection, and promote teacher development (Leithwood, 1994). Also, principals can develop the human capital in their schools through hiring and evaluating teachers, and also through providing high quality professional development opportunities (Donaldson, 2013).

Principals who are seen as instructional leaders can play a direct role in the professional development of their teachers. In a study of the principal's role in teacher motivation, Acharya (2015) reported that principals who were involved with the district leadership team and the decision-making process were directly involved in the professional development of their teachers. They oversaw the program and provided guidance at staff meetings, during PLC meetings, and provided training as necessary. Such a high level of involvement and communication with teachers gave principals insight into the needs of teachers, which then established an environment of trust and collaboration. Finding ways for school leadership to establish a school culture and climate in which teachers feel trust in their leadership, collaborate with one another and feel motivation for continual improvement can have powerful and lasting effects for both teachers and students.

Trust

One of the ways successful school leaders impact the professional growth of their staff is through establishing a supportive school culture and climate. Youngs and King (2002) assert that

those principals who are able to establish trusting relationships with their staff are able to determine the professional development needs of their teachers. Once principals identify teacher needs, they are able to provide opportunities to directly address them. Teachers in turn feel supported, and the trusting relationship is strengthened throughout the process. Through daily interactions with teachers, principals are able to help teachers believe in themselves as professionals (Bredeson, 2000). Also, during daily interactions principals can listen to teachers and recognize their thoughts and concerns. This act of listening serves to create a trusting culture and climate (Bredeson, 2000). Creating a positive school culture is imperative for a successful learning environment and "school culture is the heart of improvement and growth" (Habegger, 2008, p. 42). Once a positive culture is established, other aspects of successful schools, such as collaboration, engagement and motivation can flourish.

Collaboration

Providing these opportunities for collaboration can lead to professional growth for teachers and increased achievement for students. Szczesiul and Huizenga (2014) studied leadership and its effects on teacher collaboration. Practices identified as critical to effective collaboration included providing a clear vision for work, aligning goals and professional development with the overall vision, and creating a sense of shared responsibility. These findings were consistent with the study from Drago-Severson (2007). In this study, the initiatives principals employed to support collaboration encouraged an environment conducive to teaming. Teachers who were encouraged to work in Professional Learning Communities, curricular teams, or in a team-teaching setting found that "teaming opens communication, decreases isolation, encourages collaboration and joint inquiry, and creates interdependency" (Drago-Severson, 2007, p. 87). Opportunities for teaming can help teachers reflect on their work and on themselves

as teachers. When teachers interact in professional learning communities they are also able to assume different roles with one another, such as mentor, coach, advisor or facilitator (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Through a comprehensive study of 800 teachers, Blase and Blase (1999) found that principals who modeled "a philosophy of teamwork, providing time regularly for collaborative endeavors, and advocating sharing and peer observation" were able to increase teacher motivation, innovation and reflection (p. 364).

Motivation

Principals can motivate teachers to strive for professional growth through distributed leadership and empowering teacher leaders. Teachers who seek continual growth and improvement in their craft can be encouraged and motivated by school leadership.

When teachers feel a high level of guidance, their motivation for collaboration increases. Principals can establish norms of collaboration through encouraging teachers to share ideas about teaching, try out new classroom techniques, and reflect on their experiences (Leithwood, 1994). In a study on transformational leadership, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) found that school leadership does have consequences for teacher motivation. This is particularly important since teacher motivation in turn has consequences for classroom practice and student achievement. Teachers feel motivated when they have goals they feel they can achieve and when they believe in their own capacity as professionals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Effective leaders can support teacher motivation by helping them set challenging but attainable goals and increase their capacity as professionals. Drawing on data from a national sample of teacher survey responses, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) suggested that effective school leaders "had quite strong and positive influences on staff members' motivations, commitments and beliefs concerning the supportiveness of their working conditions" (p. 32). Putting effort into leadership practices that

motivate teachers can result in positive influence in the classroom as well. This particular study found results as teachers implemented strategies in their classrooms. Those teachers who were motivated and felt confident about their capacity to implement strategies saw the strongest contribution to their classroom practice (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008).

Eyal and Roth (2010) studied the relationship between principal leadership and teacher motivation. The results from a study of 122 elementary school teachers revealed that their perception of principals' leadership styles was a predictor of motivation (Eyal & Roth, 2010, p. 266). Transformational leadership, which was characterized by a clear vision and teacher empowerment, promoted a sense of common understanding and helped teachers identify their role in achieving the school's mission.

According to a report from the National Center for Education Statistics, the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) addressed the topic of professional development in education and revealed several encouraging highlights surrounding the topic (Choy, Chen, & Bugarin, 2006). Data from the 1999-2000 SASS provides information on how professional development is organized and managed, which types of activities were made available to staff and which activities teachers participated in. One of the highlights from this report showed that district leaders and principals were primarily responsible for deciding content, planning activities, and conducting activities for professional development. The SASS is the nation's most extensive survey of teachers and administrators in elementary and secondary schools, and these findings support the importance of the role principals and school leaders play in the professional development for teachers.

Professional Development

Professional development provides educators the knowledge and skills they need to ensure student success in education (Learning Forward, 2015). This definition focuses not only on the teachers, but also on student learning as well. The ultimate goal of providing professional development for teachers is to improve outcomes for student learning (Guskey, 2003). Keeping student learning as the focus provides perspective when examining professional development opportunities and effectiveness.

Focus on Teaching and Learning

Professional development for teachers has moved from a focus on acquiring new skills and knowledge to a focus on teaching and learning. This shift has encouraged teachers to examine their own practice and focus on student learning. Guskey (2012) asserted that the focus of professional development program evaluation, which typically centers on the teachers, must be changed to a focus on outcomes. Guskey's first rule of effective professional development is to seek answers to two central questions that form the foundation of professional development planning: "What outcomes do we want to achieve, especially with regard to student learning, and what evidence best reflects the achievement of those outcomes?" (p. 41). This shift in thinking keeps the focus on students and on student achievement. In order for teachers to do so, they need to evaluate student achievement data and look for areas that need improvement. This evaluation can be done through examining standardized test scores, formative and summative assessments, discipline and attendance data, and day-to-day observations of students in the classroom. Once areas of need are identified, designing professional development that is targeted to address the needs becomes very timely and relevant to all teachers. The second rule of staff development is that "different stakeholders trust different evidence" (Guskey, 2012, p. 42). Teachers respond

differently to forms of evidence, and they should be encouraged to reflect and identify areas in their practice they feel need improvement. It is important to keep in mind the various perspectives involved and "use multiple sources of evidence" (Gusky, 2012, p. 42). Teachers tend to trust their own personal experiences with students and their own assessments more than raw data from test scores and the student information system. Having a good balance of types of evidence can help teachers focus on data they trust and data that can be helpful overall. This rule also leads into the next one: "How evidence is gathered is just as important as the evidence itself" (Guskey, 2012, p. 42). Providing teachers assistance with the process of data collection, when necessary, can lead to greater investment in the process overall. The last rule for staff development is to "plan for comparisons" (Guskey, 2012, p. 43). One way to add to the reliability of the evidence gathered is to use a comparison with another school or district that is similar in size and demographics. Guskey (2012) concludes:

> Just as we urge teachers to become more purposeful in planning instructional activities, we need to become more purposeful in planning professional learning. We must determine up front what improvements we seek in terms of student learning and what evidence best reflects that improvement to the satisfaction of all stakeholders involved. That will improve the likelihood of our success and yield more valid evidence on the effectiveness of current activities while informing future professional learning. (p. 43)

Guskey and Yoon (2009) also stressed the importance of regularly evaluating the effectiveness of professional development activities and keeping the desired outcomes at the central focus.

Effective Professional Development

Common themes found in the literature on designing and implementing effective professional development for all teachers include the concepts of time, relevance, collaboration, supportive school culture and climate, and adaptive leadership (Desimone, 2011). One major obstacle teachers face centers around a general lack of time (Patton & Parker, 2015). It is not uncommon for teachers to be consumed with their own curriculum development, teaching, and

assessment. Finding time for research, action research, reflection, and collaboration during the school day can be a challenge for educators. Unless time is built in for purposeful collaboration, it is unlikely that teachers can develop a culture in which they work together and learn from each other (Bubb & Earley, 2013). Teachers must feel that required professional development activities are relevant to them and to their students (Masuda, Ebersole, & Barrett, 2012). If the programs they are offered do not pique their interest, and they cannot see a direct connection to themselves and their particular students, they are not likely to be completely present and benefit from an activity.

Studying teachers and various types of professional development activities offers insights into what types of activities are perceived as effective. Teachers learn best through direct involvement in activities (Burke, 2013). Experiential learning through activities such as coaching, mentoring, self-evaluation, reflection, and dialogue can benefit teachers and help them grow professionally. Patton and Parker (2015) identified guideposts for effective sessions, including offering activities based on interest, need, and providing opportunities for collaboration with peers. Devlin-Scherer and Sardone (2013) also cite collaboration as a method for improving professional practice. Their study found that teachers involved in a team-teaching scenario benefited from the collaborative nature of their teaching assignment.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) presented recommendations for effective professional development, based on their research. The four main findings for effective professional development programming included: opportunities that are ongoing and connected to classroom practice, learning that focuses on students and addresses curriculum content, work that is aligned to the goals for school improvement, opportunities for collaboration, and forming strong working relationships with colleagues.

Guskey (2003) supported the idea of agreement on criteria for effective professional development and looked at various lists to find some commonalities among all of them. Based on this examination, Guskey found that one frequently cited characteristic for effective professional development was the enhancement of teachers' content knowledge and focusing on ways to help students learn that content (p. 749). Another characteristic centered on allocating sufficient time to professional development activities. He emphasized, though, that time alone is not enough. In order for professional development to be effective, activities need to be organized, structured and carefully directed (Guskey, 2003). Similarly, another characteristic was collaboration. Activities that involve collaboration among colleagues also need to be structured and guided by leadership in order to be effective. After examining various lists for effective professional development, Guskey concluded that it is important to continue efforts toward finding agreement on criteria for effectiveness and should include clear descriptions for each criterion. This work could further attempt to find ways to improve the quality of professional development for teachers.

Scholars from the American Institutes for Research conducted one of the largest syntheses of research on effective professional development. The results of their analysis found some common characteristics of effective professional development. They found that workshops could be an effective approach when they focused on implementing research-based practices and provided experiential learning opportunities for teachers (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Also, they found that bringing in outside experts was effective when those experts not only presented information, but also helped teachers facilitate implementation into their classrooms. The concept of time also appeared in their analysis. Those initiatives that yielded positive results included 30 or more contact hours. Follow-up was also seen as important to effective professional development. Structured and sustained follow-up after professional development

activities showed positive improvements in student learning. The implications of such an analysis include a need for further research on ways to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development.

Desimone (2011) argued that focusing on the features of professional development activities that lead to teacher learning could be more valuable than trying to identify effective approaches. Based on a study of teachers, Desimone identified five core features of effective professional development: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation. When teachers are involved in activities that are focused on content, the work is relevant to their daily goals and classrooms. The feature they term active learning encompasses planning, data analysis, obtaining feedback, and creating lessons. This feature allows teachers to be actively engaged. Coherence focuses on the alignment of activities to school and district policies and initiatives. Their description of duration includes 20 or more hours of contact time and spreading activities out over a semester. And finally, collective participation helps teachers build learning communities and opportunities for further collaboration.

It is undeniably difficult to ensure that all teachers benefit from professional development. However, incorporating elements that have been identified as effective could help shape professional development programs. Those elements include a clear vision for activities, opportunities for peer collaboration, time for reflection, and ensuring direct relevance to curricular and school goals. Ensuring that district and school leaders responsible for the development of professional development programs have a clear understanding of the research on what makes professional development effective can benefit both teaching practices and student achievement.

Gaps in the Literature/Recommendations for Further Research

Although there is agreement that professional development is necessary for continual professional growth for teachers, there is certainly a lack of consensus surrounding the issue. Analysis of existing research revealed gaps in the literature and provided insight into opportunities for further research that could add to the existing literature. This study addressed two particular limitations.

First, studies conducted on professional development carry the limitation that they deal with different people at different times. It is difficult to replicate results when people vary and so do their needs and attitudes towards personal growth and development. This study examined the career stages/cycles of teachers as a needs assessment that could be used to determine types of activities that may benefit teachers in general and ultimately, their students. Knowing what teachers' needs are and combining that knowledge with the transformative learning framework can help differentiate professional development opportunities and create meaningful learning experiences for teachers.

Second, further understanding of how school leaders can create those meaningful learning experiences can add to the literature on the role of principals and school leaders in teacher development. There is existing literature on the role of the principal for both teacher growth and student success. The study examined how principals and school leaders can use information on teacher needs and adult learning to implement professional development programs that ultimately lead to improved student achievement.

Conceptual Framework

In order to examine professional development for teachers at various states in their career, this study discussed adult learning theory, using Knowles' (1980) concept of andragogy

and Mezirow's (1981) Transformative Learning Theory. The following section will discuss the adult learning theories used for the scope of this study.

Andragogy

Malcolm Knowles (1980) popularized the concept of Andragogy. This concept focused on the "art and science of helping adults learn" (p. 293) and was a contrast to the term pedagogy, which referred to the "art and science of teaching children" (p. 61). According to Knowles, the andragogical model is based on several assumptions that set it apart from the pedagogical model: (a) adult learners need to understand why they need to learn something, (b) adults develop a self-concept and a need to be seen by others as capable of self-direction, (c) adults have individual experiences that they bring to a learning situation and these experience form their self-identity and add value to their own and others learning, (d) adults have a readiness to learn what they need in order to cope with their life situations, and (e) adults are motivated to learn especially when they see real life application to their learning. These assumptions about adult learning can "enable those designing and conducting adult learning to build more effective learning processes for adults" (2005, p. 2).

Table 1

Six Assumptions of Andragogy

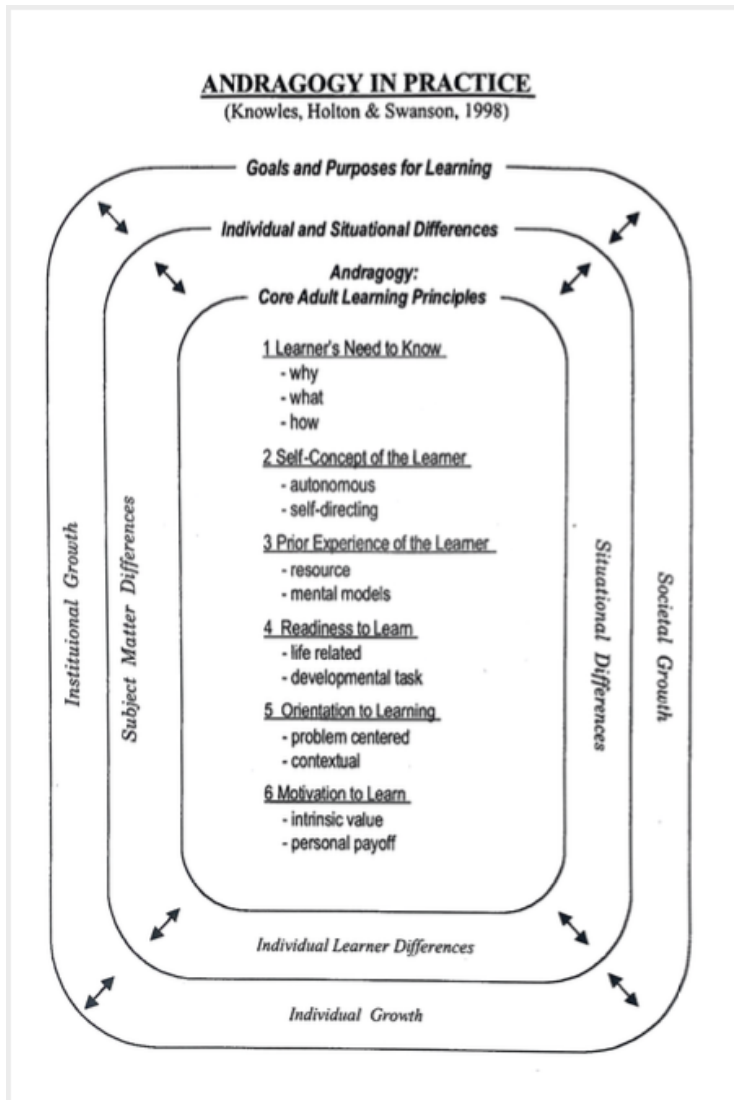| Assumption	Approach to learning
Self-Directed Learners	• The learner is responsible for his/her own learning • Self-evaluation is used in this approach
Readiness to Learn	• Assessing gaps offers insight into where the learner is now and where the learner wants and needs to be. • Develops from life tasks and problems or changes
Role of the Learner's Experience	• Learners bring their experiences into learning situations. • Adults are resources for one another • Experience becomes a source of self-identity • Experiences provide diversity in groups of adults

Table 1 (con't)

Assumption	Approach to learning
Orientation to learning	• Learning must have relevance to real life tasks • Learning is organized around life/work situations • Learning is task or problem-centered
Motivation for learning	• Internal motivators include: quality of life, curiosity, self-esteem, recognition, self-confidence, self-actualization
Need to know	• The what and why of learning is important to the overall experience of the learner

Note. From *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (Knowles, et al., 2005).

Knowles (2005) argues that the strength of andragogy is that "it is set of core adult learning principals that apply to all learning situations. The goals and purposes for which the learning if offered are a separate issue" (p. 2). Knowles (1984) suggested four principles that could be applied to adult learning: (a) adults need to be involved in both the planning and evaluating of their instruction, (b) learner experiences provide the basis for learning activities, (c) adults are most interested in subjects that are relevant and applicable to their job and personal life, and (d) learning is problem-centered. In an effort to clarify the andragogical model of adult learning, Holton et al. (2001) presented the following figure which shows the core learning principals as well as the individual and situational differences and goals and purposes for learning. This figure helps clarify the andragogical model in practice.

Figure 1

Based on Andragogy in Practice, Holton et al. (2001)

ANDRAGOGY IN PRACTICE
(Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998)

Goals and Purposes for Learning

Individual and Situational Differences

Andragogy:
Core Adult Learning Principles

1 Learner's Need to Know
- why
- what
- how

2 Self-Concept of the Learner
- autonomous
- self-directing

3 Prior Experience of the Learner
- resource
- mental models

4 Readiness to Learn
- life related
- developmental task

5 Orientation to Learning
- problem centered
- contextual

6 Motivation to Learn
- intrinsic value
- personal payoff

Institutional Growth

Subject Matter Differences

Situational Differences

Societal Growth

Individual Learner Differences

Individual Growth

According to Holton et al. (2001) this andragogy in practice framework can be used in either of two ways. Some may prefer to work from the outside inward and examine the goals and purposes and then examine the individual and situational differences, and then finally apply the core principles to fit the situation or context. Alternatively, the principles in the center can examined first and then adjusted to fit the individual and situational differences due to the goals and purposes. In this scenario, the outer rings can act as a lens through which the principles can

be examined and adjusted. Included with this framework is a three-part process for analyzing the adult learning: (a) the core principles provide a solid foundation for planning adult learning experiences, (b) analysis should be conducted to understand characteristics of the individual adult learner and situation, and (c) the goals and purposes should be clearly identified (Holton et al., 2001, p. 136). The expansion of adult learning theory to this framework for practice provides a clarification of Knowles' adult learning theory and separates the goals and purposes of learning from the core principles so they can more clearly be defined.

Knowles (1984) also presented a second part of the andragogical model as the process design. The steps were presented to guide the creation of adult learning experiences. The original seven steps were: (a) establishing a climate conducive to learning, (b) creating a mechanism for mutual planning, (c) diagnosing the needs for learning, (d) formulating program objectives that will satisfy these needs, (e) designing a pattern of learning experiences, and (f) evaluating the learning outcomes and rediagnosing learning needs. In 1995 Knowles added a new first step for creating adult learning experiences: preparing learners for the program.

According to Knowles (1990) climate is the most crucial element and creating a climate conducive to learning is essential for adults to feel they are valued as human being and that their development is a priority. The step of creating a mechanism for mutual planning is essential for adults and their need to be self-directed. Adults are more committed when they feel they have input and influence on planning and decision making. In the next step of diagnosing needs for learning, Knowles (1990) recommended using sources of data from the individual, the organization, and society (p. 126). He places particular importance on using "the learner's own perception of what he wants to become, what he wants to be able to achieve, and at what levels he wants to perform" (p. 126) as the starting point for building a model of competencies.

Knowles defined a learning need as "the discrepancy or gap between the competencies specified in the model and their present level of development by the learners" (p. 128). His theory of adult learning sees the self-assessment as a critical element for assessing the learning gaps and providing data for those facilitating learning. For the next step of formulating program objectives, Knowles acknowledged the controversies among theorists. In his andragogical model, he states that learners need to have choice over objectives and see them as being relevant to their self-diagnosed needs. This leads to the andragogical theorists' tendency to design a pattern of learning experiences based on areas identified by the learners in the previous step of self-assessment of needs. This step often requires engaging learners in activities that guide them through self-directed learners. Those who have been conditioned to environments where the teacher is active and the learner is a passive participant may need support to become self-directed learners. The last step of evaluating the program poses difficulty and Knowles recommends the use of both qualitative and quantitative data for evaluation. Obtaining both types of data can help what he calls the rediagnosis of learning needs and recommends building this process into the evaluation phase so that every learning experience can lead to further learning.

Table 2

Eight Process Design Elements of Andragogy

Elements of process design	Andragogical approach to learning
Preparing the learner	Prepare students for participation, develop expectations
Climate	Relaxed, collaborative, mutually respectful, informal, supportive
Planning	Mutual effort by learners and facilitators
Diagnosis of needs	Self-assessment and looking for gaps in learning
Setting of objectives	Mutual negotiation
Learning activities	Independent study, inquiry projects
Evaluation	Self-assessment and rediagnosing of learning needs

Note. Based on *The adult learner: A neglected species* (Knowles, 1990).

This second part of the andragogical model focuses on the learning process for adult learners. These assumptions and core principles provide step by step guidance and can be used by those who design and conduct adult learning to ensure effective learning processes for adults (Holton et al., 2001).

Transformative Learning Theory

The work of Jack Mezirow has also informed and influenced the evolution of the adult learning theory. His theory originated from a comprehensive study of women returning to community colleges (Mezirow, 1997). Using a grounded theory approach, Mezirow studied students in 12 different college programs, as well as mail inquiries and an analysis of 24 additional programs. According to Mezirow (2000):

> Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (p. 7-8)

His theory is constructivist in that we make meaning from our experiences. This viewpoint relates directly to professional development, as it would only be considered effective if teachers experienced activities and then used what they learned to guide their teaching context and classroom actions. Mezirow's theory that making meaning is central to the learning process is supported by the study done by Boleyn (2013) on the learning experiences of students who were new to a white belt program. In this study, Boleyn found that post-learning activity feedback and reflection were critical to the learning process of novice learners and for experienced students. He found it beneficial to the teachers to seek out feedback from mentors, colleagues, bosses, and others who may have differing viewpoints or experiences (Boleyn, p. 245). Although this study

focused on the specifics of learning a physical skill, the implications are there for training situations in other fields as well.

Transformative learning is the process of changing frames of reference and ultimately changing thinking. According to Mezirow (2006): "frames of reference are the structures of culture and language through which we construe meaning by attributing coherence and significance to our experience" (p. 92). These frames of reference shape both habits of mind and point of view and can be altered through the process of transformative learning. Transformative learning theory:

> is a rational, metacognitive process of reassessing reasons that support problematic meaning perspectives or frames of reference, including those representing such contextual cultural factors as ideology, religion, politics, class, race, gender and others. It is the process by which adults learn to think critically for themselves rather than take assumptions supporting a point of view for granted. (Mezirow, 2006, p. 103)

The process of transformative learning involves both self-reflection and critical reflection. Mezirow (1990) described critical reflection as referring to "challenging the validity of presuppositions in prior learning" and "addresses the question of the Justification for the very premises on which problems are posed or defined in the first place" (p. 12). As adults come across a situation that is disorienting or does not fit with their existing frames of reference, they have an opportunity for learning as they critically reflect and potentially create new meaning or learning (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). Rickey's (2008) study examined the experiences of four administrators as they worked to support teacher learning. In this study, school leaders needed to make time for discussion, experimentation, and reflection in order to support teaching practice. This finding is supported by Mezirow's (1994) theory, which states that the adult learning process involves critical thinking and reflection. Also, the study found that school leaders needed explicit training in adult learning theory. School leaders were not aware of the necessity of

reflection and discussion and felt that the knowledge helped them incorporate these experiences into their professional development activities (Rickey, 2008, p. 184).

Habermas influenced Mezirow's work and ideas on instrumental and communicative learning and the ideal conditions for human discourse (Mezirow, 1990). According to Habermas, the ideal conditions for human discourse can benefit adult learning (Mezirow, 1990). These conditions include having accurate information, being open to alternative points of view, being able to weigh evidence, critical reflection, and opportunity to participate equally (Mezirow, 1990). These same tenets were the keys to learning in Cuddapah's study (2005), which explored the learning experiences of teachers through the transformative learning theory lens. Findings from this study support Mezirow's views on the importance of discourse and critical reflection. Teachers experienced transformative learning through discourse and reflection with others. The social nature of this learning can be supported by professional development that provides the context and opportunity for such practice.

Mezirow's theory of adult learning has influenced adult learning programs and educational practice. Providing professional development programming offers an opportunity to encourage transformative learning. Cranton and King (2003) described characteristics of transformational professional development experiences, including the idea of offering various perspectives, including: articulating assumptions, discussion, encouraging a critical attitude and designing activities based on participants' daily practice. Possible strategies for promoting transformative learning also include reflective activities, case studies, curriculum development and critical theory discussions (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 35). Cox (2015) builds on Mezirow's work to inform the work of coaches as they work with adults. There is opportunity for transformative learning when coaches work with those who are ready for changes and learning to

occur. Sometimes teachers become ready for new learning and coaching when they experience what Mezirow calls a "disorienting dilemma." Coaches can look for situations in which teachers are not comfortable or are experiencing something new and can use that situation as a springboard for coaching and transformative learning (Cox, 2015).

The goal to support adults in their own development and learning is central to Mezirow's theory. As teachers strive for continual growth throughout their careers, having an understanding of how they can best engage in a learning environment can help them and benefit their students. Professional development can support individual growth goals through the use of Mezirow's learning theory tenets in planning and activities.

In the recent publication by the National Academy of Sciences (2000) titled *How People Learn,* an entire chapter was devoted to teacher learning. Opportunities for teacher learning that can help improve instructional practice include environments that are learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment centered, and community-centered (p. 192). A learner-centered environment takes diverse needs into consideration and encourages the use of interest groups and individual interests and strengths as well. The knowledge-centered environment focuses on pedagogical content knowledge. In this environment is it necessary for teachers to "become comfortable with the role of the learner" (p. 195) and encourage students to explore topics and come up with their own questions. In an assessment-centered environment, learners test their learning and receive feedback from colleagues. Community-centered environments involve both collaboration and learning. In this environment, teachers form collaborative relationships around educational research and use communities of practice to review student work and data. In this environment, teachers can also conduct action research around classroom-based projects. Sharing their learning with colleagues is also an important part of this approach and provides

opportunities for others to learn as well. These recommendations for adult learning environments are consistent with the adult learning theories of both Knowles and Mezirow. Knowles (2005) emphasized climate and the importance for teachers to have input in their learning and opportunities for reflection. These principles are present in the learner-centered and community-centered environments. Mezirow (2006) focused on the idea that learning is constructivist and people make meaning from their experiences and through self-reflection. The community-centered approach and the recommendation for action research also present opportunities for constructivist learning in a collaborative setting.

Summary

The review of the literature cites consistencies with regard to the important role leadership plays in ensuring continual growth for teachers. Educational leaders are in a position to assess the needs of their teachers and provide opportunities accordingly. The research discussed in this review also highlighted the limitations of current professional development models and the need for further examination of effective programming.

Since professional development for teachers is a required and important part of the educational profession, striving for effective ways to benefit teachers at various stages in their career should be a continual focus. Understanding adult learning theory and transformative learning theory can provide insight to educational leaders on how best to implement professional development programming that can translate into improved classroom practice and student achievement. Also, combining this knowledge with an understanding of what constitutes effective types of professional development programs can lead to quality learning experiences for teachers. Viewing teachers as lifelong learners and having the desire to meet their needs at every stage of their career would benefit not only the teachers, but also the students as well.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

In order to explore the topic of professional development for teachers at various stages in their career, this study used a case study approach. Merriam (2009) describes case study as a bounded system in which the unit of analysis characterizes the study (p. 41). In this study, the unit of analysis describes the learning experiences of teachers within a particular school district. Those teachers and their corresponding administrators were studied in order to examine their learning experiences. Case studies can offer "a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 50). The multiple variables under investigation in this study were examined through the use of survey data and interview transcripts. The following subsections explain the research methodology for this study.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following questions:

1. In what ways are leaders providing differentiated professional development?

2. How do teachers at different career stages perceive leadership meeting their professional development needs?

3. How does the incorporation of adult learning theory into professional development program design enhance the learning experience of teachers?

Methodology

This study employed qualitative methods and the use of case study design to examine the professional development experiences and needs of teachers at various career stages. The approach to this study mirrored the description of qualitative research given by Creswell (2014):

"an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems" (p. 4). The strategy for the research design was a case study. Creswell (2014) describes case study as a research design "in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a program, event, activity, process or one or more individuals" (p. 14). According to his description of qualitative research in general, the process involves questions, procedures, data collection, and making meaning of the data collected (p. 4). For this study, I researched a high school district and its professional development programming. In this particular case, the problem that framed the study was the topic of effective professional development for teachers at all stages in their careers. The educational case study, according to Bassey's (1999) definition, focuses on an area of educational activity, is located within a defined space, and seeks to examine and interpret a case (p. 156). Bassey's (1999) definition served as a road map and provided important considerations throughout the course of the study.

Using the case study methodology allowed me to research the various components of effective professional development. According to Yin (2014), when a researcher is looking at what can be learned from an effective school, using an exploratory case study is an appropriate approach with "the goal being to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry" (p. 6). The goal of this study supports Yin's definition of case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). Researching effective professional development programming could develop further insight into best practices for school leaders and professional development directors.

Site Selection

In order to answer the questions posed in this study the site selection was purposeful. Finding a district in which teachers range from non-tenured, beginning teachers to teachers very near retirement was important for this study. Also, site selection was based on finding an exemplary district with a strong and developed professional learning department. The selected site had both the characteristics of having a long-standing history of providing professional development programs and employing teachers at various stages of in their careers. Part of the site selection process included contacting professional organizations, such as ASCD, for their feedback on which districts are doing exemplary work in the area of professional development.

Also, site selection was based on finding a district with a strongly developed professional learning department. Maxwell (2005) describes purposeful sampling as "a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 235). This definition fit the intentions of purposeful site selection for this study. The site selected for this study has been focused on adult learning and professional development for over 10 years.

Participant Selection

The participants in this study included administrators as well as teachers. All teachers were invited to complete the online survey. The surveys provided descriptive statistics and opportunities for teachers to elaborate on their views. One instructional coach from each school site was interviewed to provide additional insight into the teacher perspective. At the district level the Superintendent and the Adult Learning Coordinator were interviewed, and at the building level the Principals and Associate Principals for Teaching and Learning were interviewed.

Data Collection

This study incorporated the use of multiple data sources. Online surveys were sent to all teachers in the district. These surveys focused on teachers' perceptions and experiences with professional development. Individual interviews were conducted with school and district leadership as well as one instructional coach from each school site. Interviews explored beliefs about and experiences with professional development planning and programming. Data collected from artifacts were also examined.

Online Surveys

Using an online survey to gain teachers' perspectives and experiences was appropriate and fit with Creswell's (2014) definition of survey research: "Survey research provides a numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p. 13). Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected from the online survey results. Quantitative data came from questions addressing descriptive statistics, Likert scale rating questions, and questions about participation in particular types of professional development programs. The survey also included open-ended questions to give teachers opportunity to elaborate on previous responses. The online survey served as the initial data collection. Combining the survey data with data obtained from interviews and artifacts provided the opportunity to analyze and summarize attitudes and feelings about professional development. Also, information gathered provided a mechanism to disaggregate educators' perceptions based upon their positions and years of experience.

School Personnel Interviews

Since the focus of this study was on professional development for teachers, it was important to interview those who are responsible for designing and implementing professional

development programs. Interviews were held with both school and district administrators as well as instructional coaches.

The professional development department at the district level is an important group to this study. Administrators who are tasked with the planning and implementation of professional development programming, such as an Adult Learning Coordinator and the Assistant Principals group, were invited to participate in individual interviews. These interviews provided insight into the vision for professional department and how programs are structured in this particular district.

Teachers were another important group for this study. It was beneficial to have teachers respond to the survey who are at various stages in their career with different levels of experiences. With randomly selected teachers from these various groups of teaching experience, I was able to work toward answering the research questions on whether looking at the needs of teachers at various stages of their teaching career and at various levels of expertise on their course matter could help the professional learning department when planning professional development programming for all teaching staff.

Table 3

Number of Survey Responses from Teachers at Each School

Location	Number of survey responses
Walker High School	12
Central High School	19
Lakeside High School	21

Interviews were conducted using a virtual conference platform and all sessions were recorded and transcribed. The interview sessions were semi-structured and lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour. Just as Creswell (2014) describes qualitative interviews, the interviews

"would involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from participants" (p. 190).

Table 4

Interview Participants for This Case Study

Location	Number of leaders interviewed	Number of instructional coaches interviewed
Walker High School	2	1
Central High School	2	1
Lakeside High School	2	1
District	2	

Documents

Yin (2014) recommends using documentation as a source of evidence to support case study research (p. 105). In this case study, artifacts related to professional development programs offered meaningful insight into teacher experiences and district norms. The advantage of collecting such artifacts, as Creswell (2014) points out, "enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants" (p. 191) and in this case, provided information on contractual expectations, structure of the new teacher and induction program, options for the annual coaching plans, district initiatives, and vision for professional development and adult learning.

Figure 2

List of Artifacts Examined

Multi-tiered Systems of Support for Adult Learning
Collective Bargaining Agreement
Adult Learning Competency Statements
Adult Learning District Website
Non Tenured Coaching Academy Program Overview
Mentor Qualifications and Responsibilities
Adult Learning Pathways

Data Analysis

Survey data was collected and the findings were examined for themes that informed the research questions. Once data from interviews with instructional coaches, building level administrators, and district level administrators was collected and transcribed, that data was coded and examined for trends and overall themes that could be used for making interpretations to answer the central research questions in this case study. I used a qualitative computer software program, Dedoose, for data analysis. According to Creswell (2014), "qualitative software programs have become quite popular, and they help researchers organize, sort, and search for text or image databases" (p. 195). Data was coded using both open coding and axial coding. Saldaña (2016) describes the first look at data as an "opportunity for the research to reflect deeply on the contents and nuances of your data and to begin taking ownership of them" (p. 115). During this first cycle of coding, data from interviews, surveys, and artifacts were examined line by line or sentence by sentence and coded to label and make meaning of the data. Using Dedoose, I then examined the list of the codes used and also the packed code cloud for a visual of the codes and the frequency of their use throughout the coding process. The second look at the data required axial coding to tag all of the data so that it would be useful for further analysis. According to Saldaña (2016), "axial coding describes a category's properties and dimensions and explores how the categories and subcategories relate to one another" (p. 236). The code co-occurrence chart in Dedoose was used to examine the connections between and frequency of code usage.

Table 5

Data Collection and Analysis Matrix

Research question(s)	Collection sources	How did I access the data?
To what degree are leaders providing differentiated professional development?	• School leaders • District leaders • Teacher leaders • Teachers	• Teacher survey data • Interviews with district leaders • Interviews with school leaders • Interviews with teacher leaders
How do teachers at different career stages perceive leadership meeting their professional development needs?	• Teachers	• Teacher survey data • Interviews with teacher leaders
How does the incorporation of adult learning theory into professional development program design enhance the learning experience of teachers?	• District leader • Teacher leaders • Teachers	• Teacher survey data • Interviews with district leaders • Interviews with teacher leaders

Figure 3

Inductive Coding on Professional Development

Open Codes	Open Code Groups	Key Findings
Vision of Superintendent		
Support from Admin	Vision for programs and initiatives	Vision
Initiatives - Focus areas		
Programs		
PLT		
Contractual requirements		
Centralized support	Structures of support	Structure
Time		
Role of Adult Learning Coordinator		
Role of APTL		

Figure 3 (con't)

Open Codes	Open Code Groups	Key Findings
Teacher Needs		
Department Chairs		
Instructional Coaches	Formal and informal feedback	Feedback
Role of Admin		
Teacher Leaders		
Teacher perceptions		

Validity

The issue of validity in this study was addressed through the use of Creswell's recommended strategies. Of the eight strategies he recommends, I used the following: triangulation, member checking, description, bias clarification, debriefing and external auditor (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). The following section will elaborate on each of these strategies.

Triangulation

Creswell (2009) states that triangulating data from various sources and using it to build the justification for the emerging themes can add to the validity of a study (p. 201). For this study, I triangulated data collected from interviews with instructional coaches, administrators, and online surveys to identify themes. Once themes emerged, I worked with a peer reviewer to confirm those findings.

Member Checking

Interview data and artifacts were collected and analyzed throughout the course of the study. Once interviews were transcribed, member checking was used to ensure that the themes and interpretations made throughout that process accurately reflected the views of the participants who were interviewed. This member checking was conducted through follow-up

communication where participants were allowed to make any necessary comments on the findings presented to them.

Bias

Patton (1990) suggests that the "neutral investigator enters the research arena with no axe to grind, no theory to prove (to test but not to prove), and no predetermined results to support" (p. 58). Also, according to Creswell (2009), it is important to "clarify the bias the researcher brings to the study" (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). It is important to acknowledge here that this research is important to the researcher for several reasons. The researcher has been an educator for over 20 years and has experienced professional development as a teacher, coordinator, and administrator. Currently, as the Assistant Director for Professional Learning in a large high school district, the researcher is tasked with coordinating and overseeing professional development for both licensed and support staff. The researcher also oversees the instructional coaches, new licensed staff induction program, and mentor program at all of the buildings and works with them on both building based and district wide professional development sessions. Designing, implementing, and evaluating professional development that meets the needs of teachers at various career stages has been of interest to the researcher. Finding different ways to work with staff both during and outside of the school day has been a primary focus. Instituting an Internal University program for district teachers to provide graduate level courses to their colleagues has been one way to help meet teacher needs and also provide professional development hours toward teacher license renewal. Since all instructors are approved as adjunct faculty with Quincy University, all courses are transcripted by Quincy, and each credit hour counts as 15 professional development hours toward license renewal. The researcher is also currently in the process of designing a 2-year cohort model professional learning program that

would take place during the school day and provide teachers with support from their instructional coach and provide both professional development hours and an opportunity to document learning through Domain 4 submissions in the evaluation system. The district studied was identified by both ASCD and Learning Forward as having a rich professional development program. Members of the district had been actively involved with both organizations and presented at Learning Forward's national conference. The opportunity to study a district that has been identified as having a history of quality professional development offerings, a commitment to adult learning at the building and district level, and a vision for professional development will benefit the researcher in the current role of Assistant Director as well as future roles in education.

Reliability

According to Yin (2014), using a chain of evidence can be used to increase reliability in a study. This chain of evidence could allow the reader of a study "to follow the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusion" (p. 127). The steps Yin (2014) emphasizes to create this chain of evidence include keeping well-labeled documentation that refers to the actual documents and interviews. To address the reliability of the approaches used in this study transcripts were checked for accuracy before any coding was applied and a detailed set of procedures was documented and used to keep track of all of the steps taken throughout the course of the study.

Generalizability

Typically, case studies are not viewed as generalizable, but Stake (1995) argues they can play a role in furthering research by adding to the existing literature on a topic. This study could provide insight into leading professional development programs that support teachers at varying stages of their careers and could thus further research on the topic.

Summary

       This chapter reviewed both the design and methodology on this research and also provided district context around the structures and systems in place for professional development. Since this study examined several aspects of professional development for teachers, data collection included surveys, interviews, and artifacts.

       The following chapter will provide the district context and background. Chapter 5 will address the findings from school and district leaders. Chapter 6 will review the conclusion and recommendations for practice.

Chapter 4

District Context

This case study examined the Springdale district's approach to designing and implementing effective professional development programming that addresses teacher needs at various career stages. In order to understand the outcomes of those efforts, this study focused on the work at the district level and also at three high schools: Walker High School, Central High School, and Lakeside High School. The previous sections outlined the methods of research and the collection of data. This section answers part of research question one by providing a description of the structure of professional development programming at the district level and at the school level as well. To better understand the context for this district, this section will begin with a brief background of the district makeup and the district's structure and programming for professional development. Additionally, there will be an explanation of the stakeholders included in the study.

Introduction

The Springdale high school district is a suburban school district located outside a large metropolitan area in the Midwest. Of those 416 teachers in the district, 46% are male and 54.2% are female. The average teaching experience district wide is 18.7 years. 21.9% of the teaching staff have a Bachelor's degree and 77.7% of the teaching staff have a Master's degree or are working on coursework beyond their Master's. The teacher retention rate is 92.6% and 98.2% of teachers are rated as proficient or excellent. In recent years, the district leadership has committed to streamlining their professional development programming for teachers at all three schools. Specifically, district leaders at Springdale have focused their efforts on the role of the Adult

Learning Coordinator, the Associate Principals for Teaching and Learning, and the instructional

coaches in providing professional development for teachers.

Table 6

Teacher Information, 2020 Report Card

Groups	Total Number	Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
District	419	46%	54.2%	91.8%	.5%	4.3%	2.3%

Table 7

Teacher Experience Information, 2020 Report Card

Group	Average Teaching Experience (years)	% of Teachers with a Bachelor's Degree	% of Teachers with Master's and Above
District	18.7%	21.9%	77.7%

Table 8

Teacher Retention Rate, 2020 Report Card

Group	Teacher Retention Rate
District	92.6%

Table 9

Teacher Attendance Rate, 2020 Report Card

Group	Teacher Attendance Rate
District	91.7%

Table 10

Teacher Evaluation Rate, 2020 Report Card

Group	Teacher Evaluation Rate
District	98.2%%

The total district enrollment is approximately 6275 students. The district describes both Walker High School and Central High School as having a diverse student body. With a student enrollment of 1826, Walker has the following demographics: White (41.2%), Asian (31.9%), Hispanic (20.2%), Black (4.2%). Central has an enrollment of 2049 with a student body that is White (41.9%), Hispanic (40.9%), Asian (11.6%), Black (3.7%). Lakeside has the largest enrollment of the three high schools and is considered the least diverse with an enrollment of 2375 and the following demographics: White (85.6%), Hispanic (8.3%), Asian (3.9%), Black (.6%).

Table 11

Student Demographics of District, 2020 ISBE Report Card

Groups	District	Walker	Lakeside	Central
Total enrollment	6275	1826	2375	2049
White	58.2%	41.2%	85.6%	41.9%
Black	2.7%	4.2%	0.6%	3.7%
Latinx	22.5%	20.2%	8.3%	40.9%
Asian	14.6%	31.9%	3.9%	11.6%
Low SES	23.6%	37.7%	5.5%	31.7%

Springdale District Historical Overview

Springdale school district's history dates back to the early 1900s when a small high school was approved, and the first Board of Education was established. By the late 1920s the rapidly growing student population necessitated the building of another campus. In the 1950s voters approved the purchase of two additional high schools, based on the projected enrollments. By the mid-1960s all three campuses were operating to serve residents in the surrounding areas. Today the district covers approximately 32 square miles across all or parts of nine communities.

The Springdale district has a history of innovation. In the early days they were the only district offering courses in automotive repair. In 2008, they were the first high school district to partner with Google Apps for Education. This partnership led to a one-to-one computer program and all staff and students were provided with a Chromebook. Today they pride themselves on an all-in coaching program in which all teachers participate annually in instructional coaching in order to improve their practice and overall student achievement.

District Vision for Professional Development

The current superintendent described his passion for teaching and learning and his interest in how people learn. During his time as superintendent, he has created structures and systems to support adult learning. He has created positions dedicated to a focus on adult learning and worked with the teacher's union to incorporate mandatory annual coaching plans for all teachers into the teacher contract. At the district level he created an Adult Learning Coordinator position to oversee district wide professional development. At the building level, he created the Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning position to oversee the instructional coaches and the evaluation of teachers.

The superintendent's vision for professional development started to take shape when he was in the role of assistant superintendent. At that time, he was involved in training on cooperative learning. He stated that he recognized the need to train teachers in cooperative learning in order to change what was happening in the classroom. During his second year in the role of assistant superintendent, he hired an agency to conduct an instructional audit. He stated that the audit revealed that the district had a transmission model of education with a focus on college prep. Teachers spent much of their instructional time lecturing, classrooms were teacher centered, and there was very little student voice present in the classroom. He stated that he was

disappointed with the data since by that time around 300 teachers and administrators were trained in the cooperative learning mode. Another finding from the audit that stuck out for the superintendent was that there was indeed one group of teachers who were using cooperative learning successfully in their classrooms. This group was the group of cooperative learning trainers. Most teachers had several workshops on cooperative learning and were expected to try to implement the model on their own. The cooperative learning trainers, however, were teaching and coaching others in cooperative learning. He recalled this finding as the beginning of his passion for instructional coaching.

The superintendent stated he was partly motivated to move from the role of assistant superintendent to superintendent because he knew that in the superintendent role he could continue to move his vision forward. His core mission was to further teaching and learning and with the position and authority of the role of superintendent, he was confident that he could do so. Once he was in the role of superintendent, he stated that his passion for coaching continued, and he began the district's coaching journey. In his first year as the superintendent, instructional coaching was a voluntary program. That year also happened to be when Illinois Senate Bill 7 and the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) were introduced. The result of these two acts was that teachers and principals were subject to new evaluation criteria, which included student growth, and performance evaluation ratings held greater importance in employment decisions. The Danielson Framework for Teaching was also introduced as the evaluation instrument, and teachers in the district found they needed help in figuring out the changes and what those changes meant for their evaluations. The superintendent stated that he knew teachers needed support for the transition to a new system, and the instructional coaches would be able to provide one on one coaching for their colleagues.

At that time, there was an annual requirement in the district for teachers to create a professional development plan annually (PDP). According to the superintendent, both teachers and administrators agreed that this task was cumbersome and included a great deal of paperwork. Most often these plans then just sat on a shelf, and there was no accountability for accomplishing goals set within each PDP. The superintendent and union president made an agreement to do away with the PDP requirement if the union supported piloting an institutional coaching program for teachers. Once the pilot period was over, they went to an all in coaching program and included the requirement for a coaching plan in the collective bargaining agreement. The language in the collective bargaining agreement reads: "Coaching Plan: All teachers are required to create and complete an annual coaching plan in conjunction with instructional coaches as approved by the administration and outlined in the Plan." The superintendent said he knew this compromise could be the beginning of a robust coaching program for all teachers in the district. This structural change to the bargaining agreement allowed the superintendent to move his vision for instructional coaching forward.

Walker High School: Brief Overview

Walker High School is the oldest of the three high schools in the Springdale district. The current principal and has been with the district for 23 years. She has served as department chair at one of the other district schools and associate principal at Central High School, before obtaining the principal position. As the principal and building leader, she feels professional development is "incredibly important because it's how we build capacity so that we can get the work done that we need to get done for our students, their families, and frankly, for each other." The principal works together with the associate principals, department heads, and instructional coaches and feels that collectively they have an accurate sense of both teachers' strengths and

potential areas of growth. The Associate Principal for Teaching and Learning (APTL) partners with the principal, the administrator team, and the instructional coaches to identify professional development needs and provide support for staff. In his previous position he served at another district school in the role of instructional coach and understands the important role they play in supporting teachers.

Central High School: Brief Overview

The principal at Central High School is the newest member of the principal team. Central has gone through many changes in leadership over the past few years, and she feels that the school is in a period of transition. After spending 2 years as Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning, this is her first year as principal. She considers herself the "framer in chief" and feels her administrative team and instructional coaches work together at the building level and also with the Adult Learning Coordinator at the district level to plan and implement professional development for teachers. In her previous role, she worked closely with the instructional coaching team and through their coaching feels they have a good pulse on the needs of building. The Associate Principal for Teaching and Learning at Central is in her first year in the district and feels the entire district emphasizes the importance of adult learning. She sees a high level of commitment to creating a learning organization through the many coordinated efforts that go into providing opportunities for growth.

Lakeside High School: Brief Overview

Lakeside School is located in the most affluent community within the Springdale district, and it is the least diverse of the three schools. The principal at Lakeside has been with the district for 6 years. In that time, he has served as associate principal at one of the other district schools and principal at Lakeside. He explained that the implementation of professional development

programs is one of the most important parts of his role. He referred to his work as "purposing" and said that even though he is not necessarily the person designing the learning experiences for teachers, he must make sure that those learning experiences are aligned with both the building and district goals. He feels this is where the principal role intersects with professional development for teachers. He also recognizes that the Associate Principal for Teaching and Learning (APTL) works closely with the other administrators and instructional coaches to identify teacher needs and potential areas of support. The APTL believes professional development has greatly contributed to her own professional growth as an educator and is involved in the planning and implementation of professional development at the building and the district level.

Uniting a System of Schools

The superintendent discussed his efforts to unify the three schools. When he began working in the district, he saw the three high schools as a system of schools instead of a unified district. He said he has made it his mission to construct a learning organization where all members can learn together. He noted that one of the most powerful outcomes of the adult learning program is that it creates a professional learning community, in which staff from all three schools work and learn together. This section will discuss all of the stakeholders in that professional learning community and what their roles were in the efforts to create meaningful learning professional development experiences for all staff.

Classroom Teachers

For this study, all licensed staff members were invited to complete a survey and provide their thoughts on professional development in the district.

District Leaders

The district leaders interviewed for the study are the superintendent and the adult learning coordinator. Both of these roles are at the district level and work closely together to form the vision of professional development for the entire district. The adult learning coordinator leads all district wide professional development and works closely with the ATPLs, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders.

School Leaders

The school leaders included in this study are the principals, associate principals for teaching and learning (APTL), and one instructional coach from each of the three high schools. Each principal, APTL, and instructional coach plays a unique role in the design and implementation of professional development, but they work together to accomplish their goals.

Table 12

Year of Experience of Interview Participants

Name (pseudonym)	Current school/location	Years in current position	Year in district
Superintendent	District Office	11	15
Adult learning coordinator	District Office	3	6
Principal	Central High School	1	3
Assistant principal for teaching and learning	Central High School	1	1
Instructional coach	Central High School	7	22
Principal	Lakeside High School	4	7
Assistant principal for teaching and learning	Lakeside High School	3	15
Instructional coach	Lakeside High School	4	25
Principal	Walker High School	10	23
Assistant principal for teaching and learning	Walker High School	4	16
Instructional coach	Walker High School	12	33

Summary

The Springdale district has worked under the leadership of the current superintendent to become an organization that values learning. Forming cross district professional learning communities has united the principles, associate principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders. These core groups work directly with the adult learning coordinator to design and implement professional development for both tenured and non-tenured teachers. The professional development plans for non-tenured staff are outlined for them across a 4-year program. Tenured staff members can choose between several one on one or group coaching options to improve their practice and professional growth. Throughout the year, optional sessions are held at the district level and taught by both administrators and teacher leaders. As teachers identify areas of need, they can select from various programs and are supported with job-embedded and ongoing professional development. This section focused on a description of the district and their professional development programs and systems. The next chapter will examine the perceptions of the adults involved in the planning and implementation of professional development programs as well as the adults who receive those programs.

Chapter 5

Findings From School Leaders and Teachers

The purpose of this case study was to examine how consideration of high school teacher needs at various stages in their teaching careers is helpful in creating meaningful and effective professional development programming. The study also examined the role of school and district leaders in designing and implementing effective and differentiated professional development. The research questions driving the study were:

1. In what ways are leaders providing differentiated professional development?

2. How do teachers at different career stages perceive leadership meeting their professional development needs?

3. How does the incorporation of adult learning theory into professional development program design enhance the learning experience of teachers?

The planning and implementation of effective professional development programming involves communication, commitment, and cooperation from district leaders, school leaders, and licensed staff (Lutrick & Szabo, 2012). Many stakeholders are involved in identifying needs, decision-making, and providing adequate support for teachers at all stages of their career development. In the previous chapter, I identified the structures and vision for professional development as led by the superintendent, adult learning coordinator, and school leaders. Additionally, I described the three high schools in this case study, as well as the key stakeholders.

In this chapter, using the adult learning frameworks of andragogy and transformative learning, I examine the data collected from interviews and surveys with regard to the ongoing work at the district and school levels in the Springdale district: Walker High School, Central

High School, and Lakeside High School. In the sections that follow, I focus on three thematic areas that emerged through the interviews and survey responses: a mission and vision for district-wide professional development, using informal feedback to identify the professional development needs of teachers, streamlining opportunities for professional development. In examining these areas, I answered the questions posed in the research by gathering adult perceptions on the role of school and district leadership in differentiating professional development programming based on teacher needs and expertise.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted for this study between May 18 and June 19, 2020. The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with administrators and instructional coaches. All interviews were conducted through the online conferencing platform called Zoom. At the school building level principals, associate principals, and instructional coaches were interviewed. At the district level the adult learning coordinator and the superintendent were interviewed. According to Merriam (2009), "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (p. 88). The purpose of the interviews was to gain a richer understanding of their role in the planning and implementation of professional development for teachers as well as their view on teachers' perceptions of and experiences with professional development.

The interview protocol for the 11 interviews included 20 questions. The questions were designed to measure perceptions around professional development design and implementation and to what degree their efforts are perceived as meeting the needs of teachers. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix E.

Surveys

All teachers in the district were invited via email to participate in a survey on professional development. Survey participants answered both multiple choice and open-ended questions. A total of 52 teachers completed the survey. The survey was taken by teachers at all three of the district schools. There were 12 responses from teachers at Walker High School (23.1%), 10 responses from teachers at Central High School (54.7%), and 23 responses from teachers at Lakeside High School(40.4%). A total of 54.7% of the participants were female, and 45.3% were male. Figure 4 represents the number of years of teaching experience for the teachers who participated in the survey. The highest percentage rate for years of teaching experience was 16-20 years (28.8%), with 21-25 years (17.3%) and 2-5 years (15.4%) closely aligned, followed by 11-15 years (11.5%). Both 6-10 years and over 30 years were equally represented (7.7%). Also, under 2 years and 26-30 years were equally represented (5.8%).

Figure 4

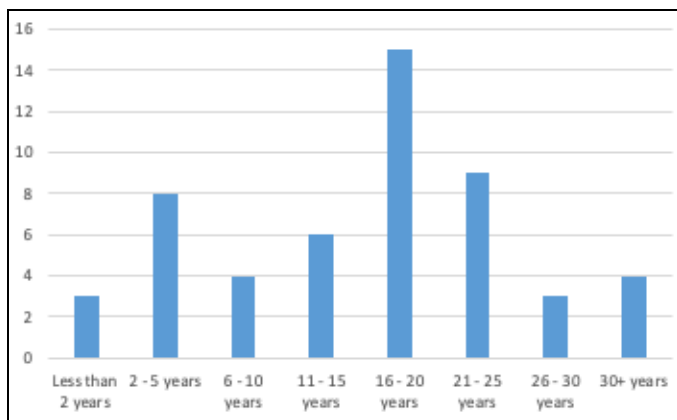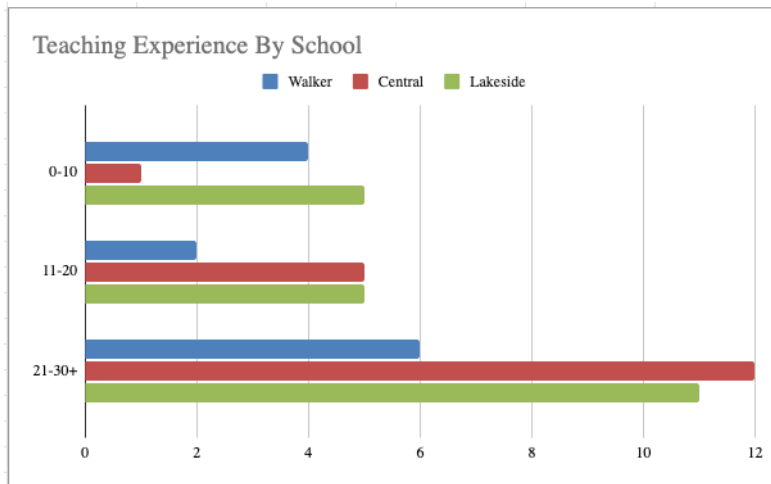*Years of Teaching Experience Districtwide*

Figure 5

Year of Teaching Experience by School

Of the 52 teachers who completed the survey, 48 had a master's degree (90.3%), three had a bachelor's degree (5.7%), and one had a doctoral degree (1.9%). The U.S. Department of Education reports that 52.7% of secondary school teachers held a post baccalaureate degree in the 2017-2018 school year (Taie & Westat, 2020). The participants in this research study well exceed the national average for obtaining advanced degrees.

Table 13

Highest Level of Education Completed

Degree	*N*	Percent
Bachelor's degree	3	5.7
Master's degree	48	90.3
Doctorate degree	1	1.9
Total	52	100

Survey participants were asked to rank types of professional development activities according to their preference and the majority of survey participants rated the following types as

high: conferences, observations with feedback, peer mentoring, instructional coaching. The types of activities that were rated as medium preference were: workshops, in-service days, educational journals, and institute day programming. The types of activities that were rated low were: online courses, institutes or academies, and professional learning communities.

Figure 6

Professional Development Activity Rankings (Low, Medium, High)
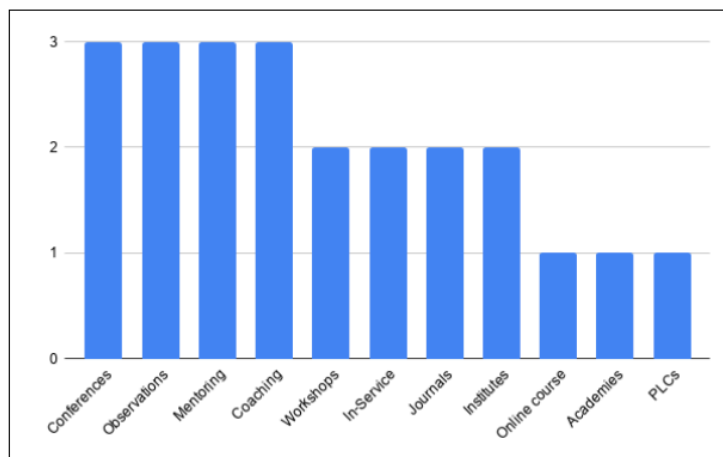
When asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements, the majority of participants agreed with the following statements:

- I feel my administration sees professional development as important for continual growth (43 out of 52 teachers agreed).

- I find professional development opportunities to improve my instructional practice (41 out of 52 teachers agreed).

- I am currently satisfied with the professional opportunities presented to me (40 out of 52 teachers agreed).

- The topics presented in my district have helped me in my profession (39 out of 52 teachers agreed).

- I feel professional development has an impact on student achievement (38 out of 52 teachers agreed).

- I feel professional development meets the needs of new teachers in my district (36 out of 52 teachers agreed).

- Teachers have a variety of options to choose from for their professional development (36 out of 51teachers agreed).

- I feel that the needs of teachers at varying stages of their careers are taken into consideration for professional development programming (28 out of 52 teachers agreed).

The statements that the majority of participants did not agree with or were neutral on were:

- I feel that participation in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) provides professional development for teachers (31 out of 51 teachers disagreed or were neutral).

- Teachers are provided time to share ideas/materials from professional conferences they have attended (29 out of 51 teachers disagreed or were neutral).

When examining the survey responses related to professional development rankings by school, years of experience revealed a few patterns. Teachers at all three of the schools with less than 10 years of teaching experience indicated their preference for in-district workshops and instructional coaching. Since the district has been focused on both workshops and instructional coaching during this time, it is fitting that teachers who are very familiar with these programs prefer these experiences as a form of professional development. This finding is in line with comments from the Superintendent about working to create a culture of coaching over time, as more and more teachers start in the district and come to know these programs as a form of professional development practiced by all. Responses from teachers with more than 10 years of experience were mixed when it came to their preference for both workshops and instructional coaching. The centralized workshop and instructional coaching programs were introduced to them starting in their mid or later career stages. All three of the instructional coaches interviewed stated that many of the more veteran staff recall the introduction of these programs and did not embrace the changes. Examining these professional development preferences by career stage confirms the statements from the instructional coach interviews.

A Vision for Professional Development

One of the main themes that emerged from the interviews with school and district leaders was the role of the superintendent in the design and implementation of professional development. Understanding the vision of the superintendent for adult learning helps answer the first research question that relates the role of leadership in providing differentiated professional development. All of the administrators and instructional coaches referenced the vision of the superintendent for professional learning. The superintendent and all three of the principals interviewed mentioned the initial pushback to the implementation of a coaching program. The superintendent stated that he held a long view on the implementation of these changes and was committed to working through setbacks and conflicts over these changes. The superintendent stated:

> I got a ton of resistance on the idea of coaching. And most of it came from the administration. Because we were such a defined department chair model they thought that's the department chairman's job to coach teachers. And as you know, it is and it isn't. Not in the purest sense of a safe place. If your coach is also your evaluator, you know, it doesn't allow for the vulnerability that we want our program to have with our teachers.

He indicated that the resistance also came because of his plans for restructuring: "I got a lot of resistance from this because I had to redesign things. And I actually cut some administrative positions to get this because I wanted to make it relatively cost neutral." He stated that he knew the resistance would not last: "It only took less than a semester for even some of the resistant principals to go okay, I get it."

The Difficult Transition to Mandated Coaching Plans

Several of the school leaders interviewed also mentioned the transition period when evaluation criteria changed and the instructional coaching plan requirement was introduced. The principal of Walker High School was starting his first year as principal when instructional coaching began. He recalled that during the pilot phase of the coaching program his instructional

coaches had success working with about a third of their staff. Once the coaching plan requirement was put into place, he remembered being glad that the coaches were already seen as trusted and well-respected teachers, and the transition was fairly smooth. He does, however, recall some of the resistance. He stated that as an administrator he understood that when a program is mandated, the reaction from teachers is often negative. Some of the teachers who resisted instructional coaching at first met the minimum requirements for completing the coaching plan. But he also noticed that those staff members who bought into the program saw the value in it and went well over the minimum requirements for the coaching plans. He attributes part of the success the coaches had to an understanding of confidentiality between coaches and teachers. Everyone interviewed for this study referred to this "firewall." Administrators are all in support of the confidential relationship between coaches and teachers, and they only know about the work being done on the coaching plans if teachers themselves volunteer the information. He also noted that many of his strongest department chairs have previously held the role of an instructional coach in the district. All of the instructional coaches were trained in the Jim Knight model of coaching. Knight's coaching model uses what he calls an impact cycle to improve teaching and learning (2017). The cycle consists of three stages: identify, learn, and improve. In the first stage, the teacher and coach work together to identify the reality in the classroom. This is most often done through videotaping a lesson. The teacher reviews the video and then sets a student-centered goal with the coach. During the learn stage, the coach and teacher examine teaching strategies that fit the student-centered goal. The last stage is the improve stage. The teacher implements new strategies, gathers, data, and meets with the coach to monitor progress. The coach and teacher continue to monitor progress and plan next steps until the goal is met. Department chairs who were trained in this model practiced both

questioning skills and providing feedback regularly during their coaching cycles. And according to the superintendent, this skillset has made them particularly successful as administrators.

The instructional coaches also commented on the implementation of contractual coaching plans. One of the coaches expressed some disappointment in the change from voluntary to mandatory coaching. She felt that the best way to implement coaching was to build a program in an organic way and focus on those willing to be coached. She mentioned that this philosophy was common among instructional coaching experts. She understood why it was hard for many teachers to accept coaching at first and said, "when you tell someone that they have to improve in the classroom, it's very personal. It's integral to who they are as a human versus any other job is more job performance." Even with those challenges, she said she felt they adapted to changes to the program well, and they are doing good work with teachers that involve deep coaching and intensive coaching cycles. Another instructional coach mentioned the difficulty for some staff members to get on board with the coaching program. She feels they saw instructional coaching as necessary for those who were not doing a good job and needed to be coached. She herself started out as a non-believer in coaching and understood that perception personally. She felt she had been a successful teacher, gotten positive feedback from students and parents, and wondered what coaching could possibly add to her practice. She saw this same reaction mostly from the successful veteran teachers in her building. What changed her mind was having one of the building coaches on her professional learning team. She felt that the coach had a positive impact on her teaching and helped her grow as a teacher. The more and more she heard of such stories from her colleagues, the more interested she became in becoming an instructional coach. The third instructional coach interviewed also recalled having success with the coaching program when it was still optional. She remembers being hesitant at first when the program became

mandatory but says in retrospect that it has been great because the coaches no longer have to spend time recruiting teachers for the program. Because she had already developed relationships with colleagues she was able to transition smoothly to the new coaching requirement for staff.

The adult learning coordinator also recalled the transition to required coaching plans for teachers. She remembers thinking that every expert on coaching was saying that it should not be required, but she decided to sit back and wait and see what happened. She started thinking about the philosophy of the superintendent and thought,

> He's right. Teaching is a highly complex practice. People who are athletes pay coaches to coach them on things that are, in my opinion, less complex. Why wouldn't it be a good idea for everybody to have a coach? It's just something we hadn't done before.

She noticed that over time some of the coaching experts also changed their stance on voluntary and required coaching and was comforted when her favorite coaching expert and author, Diane Sweeney, came out and said coaching should be required, but the focus of the coaching should be up to the teacher. This was in line with what the superintendent envisioned. He made the program mandatory but teachers were able to choose their area of need or focus for the coaching cycles. Over time, she feels the district has adopted a belief in coaching and a belief that they are all learners.

The findings show that while there was initial resistance to mandated coaching plans from both teachers and administrators, over time the program has gained support. This work began 10 years ago, and the options for the coaching plans have been adjusted over time based on feedback from teachers. What started as a one-on-one coaching program for all teachers now includes eight different options.

Administrator Positions Focused on Professional Development

At the time the coaching plan requirement was being implemented and changes to evaluation were taking place, the superintendent realized he needed additional administrative support that focused on teaching and learning. He created a position called the Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning (APTL). This position was tasked with overseeing the instructional coaches, the evaluation process, the department chairs, and building-wide professional development. In order to create this new position, he stated that he had to adjust and cut other administrative positions, and this was met with some resistance. Again, he explained that he took the long view on this change and knew that his administration teams would quickly see the value in the addition of this role. He recalls that it took less than a semester for even the most resistant administrators to see the potential and value of the newly created role. After a few years of success with the APTL role, the superintendent redesigned the adult learning program. He created the role of the adult learning coordinator at the district level to oversee professional development district wide. He felt they had already identified several professional development areas he wanted all staff members to have proficiency in and knew it would help to have a role that oversaw that programming. The adult learning coordinator sits on the superintendent's cabinet team as well as the APTL team for curriculum and instruction. The adult learning coordinator also oversees professional development for the district in the following areas: new teacher induction, the mentoring program, the instructional coaching program, district wide professional development workshops and sessions.

The superintendent views the two positions dedicated to adult learning as a professional learning community that works together to benefit all staff in the district. The mission and vision of adult learning includes providing multi-tiered systems of support for the following: high

impact instruction, integrated career services, equity, social and emotional learning and behavior, and competency based learning. Support in these areas focuses on the learning, the learner, and the learning environment. Tenured and non-tenured staff are provided opportunities to attend sessions on the topics during the school through the school year. Both district and school leaders encourage teachers to attend sessions and obtain substitute teachers while they are absent from their classes. The adult learning coordinator also oversees the New Teacher Coaching Academy program. This is a 4-year program to prepare new staff for proficiency in the following areas: assessment literacy, cooperative learning, social emotional learning and behavior, and differentiated instruction. The first year the focus is on assessment literacy, and new teachers attend 3 full days of instruction, monthly morning sessions, and quarterly meetings after school at the district office. The second year is spent learning about and implementing cooperative learning strategies through 3 full days of instruction, monthly morning sessions, and one after school session each semester at the district office. The third year teachers have 2 full days of instruction on social emotional learning and behavior and 2 full days of instruction on literacy. The third year cohort also attends monthly morning sessions and one after school session each semester. During the fourth and final year of the program new teachers attend 2 full days of instruction on differentiated instruction. They can also choose between the monthly morning sessions or evening sessions for instruction on equity and culturally responsive practices. At the end of the fourth year the cohort gathers once after school for sharing and celebration. All sessions are facilitated by the adult learning coordinator, instructional coaches from all three buildings, and teacher leaders.

The adult learning coordinator also works with the Associate Principals for Teaching and Learning (APTL) to oversee the instructional coaching program. Collaboration between the adult

learning coordinator, the APTLs, and the instructional coaches led to changes to the instructional

coaching program. These changes were aligned to research on effective professional

development programming to include teacher choice and differentiation. The adult learning

coordinator described the differentiation in the programming:

> If we look at the entire professional development program as district, the workshop and
> courses are just one small piece of it. Coaching is a whole other huge piece of what we
> do, and that is totally differentiated. It is completely individualized. All of the work
> teachers do with their coach is completely individualized.

At first, every teacher had to create an annual coaching plan for one on one coaching. Over time,

the program has evolved to include options for staff members. Changes to this program also

came as a result of feedback from staff members. Providing options that fit both classroom and

non-classroom certified staff provides a way for staff to identify their own needs each year and

participate in the option that will provide support and job-embedded learning opportunities.

Coaching Plan Components for Differentiated Professional Development

The coaching plan options are intended to provide differentiation of professional

development activities for teachers at every stage of their career. These options include: an

individual plan, a PLT plan, action research, a peer-to-peer coaching plan, coaching pre-service

teachers, national board certification, student services extension plan, and a student services

consultation plan. Staff members who choose an individual plan also get to choose which of the

instructional coaches they would like to work with. The minimum requirement for this plan is to

meet with the coach three times. The sessions could include classroom visits, planning meetings,

and reflection sessions. The PLT plan is a collaborative plan for members of a Professional

Learning Team (PLT) and staff members must receive prior approval from their department

chair to participate. The PLT engages with an instructional coach to implement a PLT goal. The

minimum requirement for this plan is to set a PLT goal and meet both individually and as a

group with the instructional coach. Staff members who choose CLEAR work with an instructional coach to complete an action research project. Non-tenured staff must receive prior approval from the APTL to choose this option. Those who choose CLEAR must meet monthly with a district wide action research cohort and also present their findings at the end of the year at a session called iLearn. The peer-to-peer coaching plan is available to tenured staff who receive approval from their APTL to participate. With this plan two staff members work together to implement a goal or instructional practice. They not only coach each other, but they also meet regularly with one of the instructional coaches throughout the process. Tenured staff can also choose to coach pre-service teachers. Those who choose this option must attend three full days for a workshop on mentoring new teachers. They also meet monthly as a cohort of cooperating teachers. These meetings take place during the school day and during a non-teaching period of the day. Also, they must conduct a peer observation and debrief meeting with another cooperating teacher and their pre-service teachers. Lastly, they must attend the Chicago Coaching Center level 1 training course. Those who choose to go through national board certification must meet at least three times with an instructional coach, meet with a national board certified coach, and are also encouraged to attend monthly meetings during the self-directed learning time in the morning. student services staff can choose to participate in a self-directed learning cohort or a book study group. This option requires a minimum of four meetings in addition to monthly self-directed learning meetings. The last option is the student services consultation plan. Student services staff members who choose this plan meet with a cohort a minimum of six times. The cohort group chooses a topic or problem or practice to explore and coach one another through implementation in their practice.

Table 14

Coaching Plans

Type of plan	Brief description
Individual Plan	Individual coaching cycle with an instructional coach
CLEAR	Design and implement an action research project
PLT Plan	Work with an instructional coach on implement a PLT goal
Peer-to-Peer Coaching Plan	Two staff members will work with an instructional coach and coach each other through the implementation of a goal or practice
Coaching Pre-Service Teachers	Coach and mentor a student teacher during fall practicum and spring student teaching experience
National Board Certification	Participate in the National Board Certification process
Student Services Extension Plan	Extension of monthly self-directed learning cohort for coaching group to reflect on learning and implement practice
Student Services Consultation Plan	Peer to peer coaching group facilitated by instructional coach around topic or problem of practice

According to the adult learning coordinator, the coaching plan options will likely continue to evolve. The language in the collective bargaining agreement around the coaching plans was vague and this allows them to continue to adjust based on current initiatives or needs. Currently, the district is engaging in equity work and going through an equity audit. Based on the results of that audit, there may be further adjustments to the coaching plan options that address their goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels of the organization.

Creating a Culture of Learning

The superintendent's vision for professional development and creating a learning organization was evident in the teacher survey results as well. Of the 52 teachers who took the survey, 48 responded to the question asking if teachers have a responsibility to participate in continual professional development. All 48 of those respondents (92%) answered affirmatively.

Many commented on the changing needs of students necessitating growth in teachers as well. Others discussed the need to continually grow as professionals and improve their practice. One participant stated:

> Education is changing more frequently now than it did when most teachers around me were in high school. It is our responsibility to grow and adapt. That said, each teacher is different and some can take the PD and initiate it in their classrooms right away and reflect as they go. Then they can repeat it with something else. Others are not as adept to the continuation of PD at such a pace. This might be personal, this might be a lot of things, but like we differentiate for our classes, our PD plans are differentiated for the individual teacher.

Teachers were also asked about whether they feel their administration sees professional development as important for their continual growth. Of the 51 teachers who answered the question, 42 (82%) of teachers answered affirmatively and felt their administrators also saw the importance of their continued professional development.

Moving the Vision Forward

The sections above outlined the superintendent's vision for professional development and the actions that were taken to move that vision forward. During the interview, he repeatedly stated the importance of having a vision and also having the courage to move that vision forward, even in the face of adversity. His relationship with the union president helped him negotiate a plan to include the coaching program in the collective bargaining agreement. He admitted that his relationship with the School Board members helped him restructure administrator positions and redesign those roles to focus on teaching and learning and also to add a new role designed to coordinate adult learning across the district. Even though the changes he implemented were met with some resistance, he believed in his long-term vision for the district and knew in time others would see the value of those changes as well. The superintendent acknowledged that it was his vision that began the structural and systemic changes that focus on

adult learning, but that the systems in place have become embedded into the culture of the district. The findings show that the superintendent's commitment to his vision and the structural changes he implemented created a framework for professional development that could be evaluated and adapted over time to meet the needs of teachers.

Identifying the Professional Development Needs of Teachers

Even though the district has sent out formal surveys from time to time, all of the administrators interviewed discussed the importance of informal feedback for identifying the needs of teachers. At the building level, some of those informal ways include administrator team meetings and discussions with instructional coaches. At the district level, the adult learning coordinator gathers information from various committees and meetings with the APTL group.

Feedback From Instructional Coaches

All of the administrators interviewed mentioned the importance of the instructional coaches in helping the leadership team identify the needs of teachers. Since the instructional coaches work directly with both tenured and non-tenured teachers, and since their work centers around goals set by individual teachers, they are able to see patterns and trends emerge every year. The team of instructional coaches meets weekly and discusses what they are seeing in classrooms and can often see what teachers need to help them achieve their goals. They are therefore in a position to provide feedback on what they are seeing to the principals and APTLs. Everyone interviewed expressed respect for confidentiality between the coaches and teachers, and the feedback they provide never includes specific names or classes. The big picture nature of their work with teachers from across the building provides a unique perspective for their administrators. One of the principals stated that she relies on her team of coaches for feedback.

When she feels stuck and needs to understand where people are on a topic, she will go directly to the coaches and ask for feedback.

All three principals stated the importance of having the APTL oversee the instructional coaching program at the building level. The APTLs at each of the three buildings meet weekly with their coaches. The purpose of these meetings is to bring together those individuals who work directly with teachers and discuss patterns or needs that they are seeing across the distinct. This helps inform the work of the APTLs and the adult learning coordinator. Also these meetings provide an opportunity for the adult learning coordinator and the APTLs to identify the professional development of the instructional coaches. The adult learning coordinator stated:

> I have more time to think about their professional development than the APTL does. I also meet with them about just their own PD. I have time to think about the PD for the coaches where the APTLS don't really have time to think about that. They meet with them regularly too, but it's more building based conversations. But my time with them is more focused on their development.

Since the instructional coaches are usually focused on developing their colleagues, she stated the importance of also providing those same opportunities for them as well.

Teacher Career Stages

One of the interview questions for the administrators and instructional coaches was based directly on a research question for the study. This question asked whether or not identifying needs of teachers at various career stages was a strategy to help inform the planning and implementing of professional development programs. The adult learning coordinator felt that having a structured 4-year program for all teachers who are new to the district was an effective way to ensure that they receive learning opportunities on district initiatives and non-negotiables. Since they focus on the five areas of adult learning for all staff, they incorporate that learning in the new teacher academy (SEL, high impact instruction, equity, competency based, and

integrated career services). She also expressed the importance of the new teacher academy for anyone new to the district and not just new to teaching: "Just because you've been in another district for so long doesn't mean that you've had the training we offer and I tend to think you can always get something out of any of these introductory workshops and learn something." With that said, she also hopes to further differentiate the new teacher academy in the coming years to include two levels: level 1 for those new to teaching and new to the district and level 2 for those with previous teaching experience but new to the district. The adult learning coordinator identified voluntary workshop participation as another way to address needs at different career stages. Throughout the school year, a variety of sessions are offered at the district office. Staff members can voluntarily sign up for sessions on cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, competency based learning, assessment literacy, blended learning, academic literacy and any other opportunity that comes up as a need for teachers. These sessions are led by teacher leaders and instructional coaches and also take place during the school day. Teachers who attend these sessions and still need additional support can work with the instructional coaches in their building one on one at any time. Teachers are able to obtain a substitute teacher and attend as needed. In this way teachers can self-identify needs and can work with either their coach or those leading these sessions to improve their practice. Lastly, the adult learning coordinator discussed the differentiated and personalized nature of the entire coaching program. Since teachers create a coaching plan annually, they are able to address different needs each year. And within each coaching plan, teachers have five options to choose from (one-on-one coaching, peer coaching, PLT coaching, action research, and coaching pre-service teachers). For each of the five options, teachers are able to set goals with their instructional coach so that the entire experience is personalized and differentiated. The incorporation of choice into the coaching program has been

very important to the adult learning coordinator. She feels this is a way to truly personalize

learning. The incorporation of these various options for the coaching plans has been developed

over time based on feedback from teachers, specialists, and instructional coaches, and

administrators. She sees the importance of responding to feedback and having the flexibility to

make adjustments as needed so that everyone receives the best possible professional

development for their own situation and needs. It is important to note that individualized

professional development was not originally a focus of this research, but data from the

interviews and survey revealed that the work in this district has created different ways to meet

teacher needs. Based on the answers from both administrators and instructional coaches, looking

at career stages to inform professional development programming is not necessary when

programs can be differentiated and individualized. This research initially looked at how to vary

programs based on typical needs at different career stages and use that information for program

design. When teachers are provided options and input into their own professional development,

they are able to identify their own needs and make decisions accordingly. Once teachers move

beyond the prescribed 4-year program for new staff, they are provided flexibility and encouraged

to explore programs and options that best meet their needs.

Teacher Perceptions on the Variety of Offerings

The teacher survey asked about perceptions on the variety of professional development

opportunities offered to them through their district. Figure 7 shows that of the 51 people who

answered the questions, 37 (73%) agreed that they are offered a variety of opportunities for
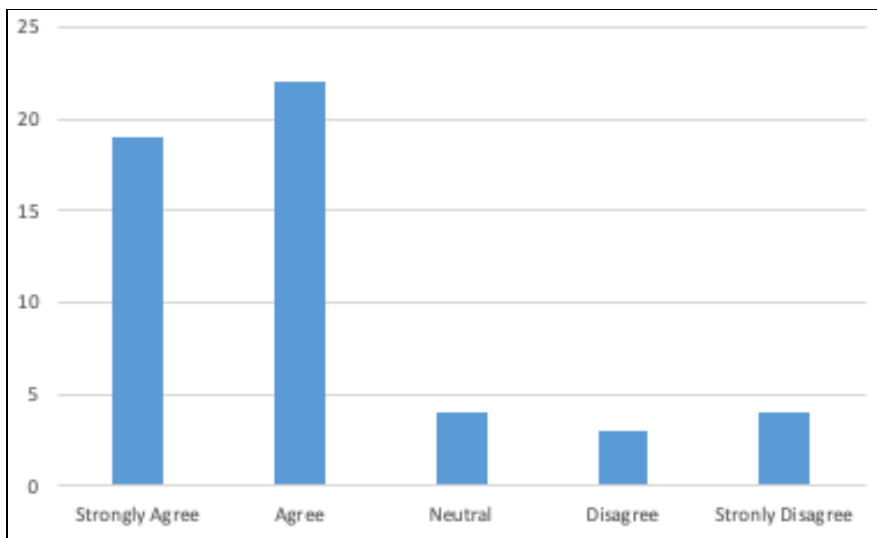
professional development.

Figure 7

Variety of Professional Development Opportunities
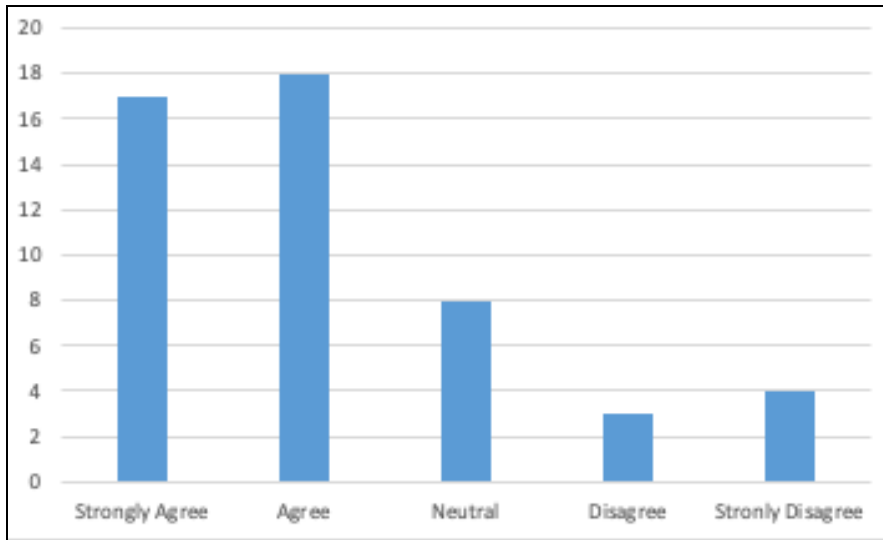
Teachers were also asked if they felt the professional development opportunities helped improve their practice. Figure 8 shows that of the 51 teachers who answered the question, 36 (75%) agreed that the topics presented improved their practice. Survey participants indicated general support from their administrators and efforts to gain feedback from their teachers.

Figure 8

Topics Presented Improve Practice

Some of the specific responses to the open-ended questions on the survey that speak to the variety of opportunities and support include: "Administrators allow teachers to choose their own professional development based on needs and interests" and "the adult learning coordinator works like crazy to organize a variety of professional development for teachers. There are literally countless opportunities within our district" and "I think the administration is very open to listening to the types of support the teachers need and developing professional development strands that help in the areas we need." These findings address the research question relating to teachers' perceptions of professional development meeting their needs at various career stages. The survey results can help us understand their perceptions on the variety of learning opportunities offered, how those opportunities help them improve their progress, and support from their administrators on their participation professional development.

Regular Administrator Meetings

In all three of the district schools the administrators meet weekly. These meetings provide opportunities for conversation around what is going well for teachers and what they are struggling with at any given time. Since department chairs work closely with their teachers on a daily basis, they provide informal feedback on teacher needs regularly. At Lakeside High School, the administrator team meets weekly, and department chairs often bring up concerns or areas of need from their teachers. The APTL there said:

> the department chairs also speak a lot on their teachers behalf and then it'll kind of weave back to my counterparts and go from there. And then of course, we would, you know, involve more people if we're going to form a committee, but I think that's kind of the avenue for communication is the coaches are giving the voice of the teacher, so are the department chairs, it's coming to me, and then going up the chain from there.

The APTL serves as the connection to the district office, and since the APTL group and the adult learning coordinator meet regularly, this system ensures that teacher needs are brought forward

and can be addressed. At Central High School, the administrator team also meets weekly, and the APTL there said: "you have to constantly think about and discuss the needs of your staff. So I would say that that has been a big topic in our administrative council this past year." At Walker High School, the APTL identified the administrative team as one avenue for identifying needs. She also identified Professional Learning Teams (PLT):

> I just started going to the PLT meetings and sitting there. And then usually one of my last questions was just what additional needs do you guys have, do you have any professional development that you actually need? And then over time seeing if there's any more of that then across the building, then we might offer something as a building wide piece.

Streamlining Opportunities for Professional Development

The superintendent expressed his passion for designing systems of learning at every level of the organization. One of his priorities is to "construct a learning organization, so that we are learning together." The structure of support for professional development has been very intentional at both the district and building level. The superintendent stated:

> Because of the power of the adult learning program teachers are able to do more every year. So too is our organization able to do more, because we practice getting better every year. We take the leap carefully to design a better structure, and we commit to it. We don't get hung up if it's imperfect, we acknowledge it transparently. We figure it out together. And that practice is a learning practice.

Data from both interviews and survey results showed widespread support for teachers to attend professional development regularly. Since the district provided opportunities for professional development are scheduled during the school day, substitute teachers are needed to cover classes for teachers to attend. The adult learning coordinator keeps track of the various opportunities for professional development district wide and makes an effort to spread out workshops and events so that there are not too many substitutes needed for any given day. Since she works closely with the superintendent, principals, and APTLs, she is able to communicate the overall calendar of events and get their support from the start of the planning process. Only one of the principals

interviewed expressed concern for teachers missing instructional days for attending professional

development sessions. And even though he expressed concern about the need for substitute

teachers, he was in support of teachers having opportunities to attend sessions during the daytime

and having access to continuing education that was hosted at the district level. That same

principal stated that for the role of principal, professional development is "incredibly important

because it's how we build capacity so that we can get the work done that we need to get done for

our students, their families, and frankly, for each other."

Centralizing Oversight for Professional Development

Centralizing the planning and oversight for professional development at the district level

with the adult learning coordinator has allowed for consistency across the district. The adult

learning coordinator oversees the new teacher academy, mentor program, instructional coaching

program, the coaching center, professional development sessions on the five priority topics for

adult learning (SEL, high impact instruction, equity, competency based, and integrated career

services) and ensures that all teachers have the same opportunities. She collaborates with the

APTLs, instructional coaches, and other teacher leaders to provide all of these opportunities.

Since the adult learning coordinator role is focused on district wide professional

development, bringing together a group that is representative of each of the schools has been an

integral part of the planning process. The Adult Learning Committee was formed to help inform

the work across the district. This committee consists of the instructional coaches (five from each

building), one teacher leader trainer from each of the major professional development strands

(assessment, cooperative learning, blended learning, differentiated instruction, standards based

grading), department chairs, student services representatives, other staff members interested in

having a voice in the planning, and the APTLs. Recently, this committee came together to work

on making the vision of professional development more coherent. They came up with six pathways for professional development: SEL, literacy, assessment literacy, equity, cooperative learning, and student engagement, learning and behavior. Then they assigned each of the courses offered to one of those pathways. Once they aligned the courses and pathways, they wrote adult learning competency statements for each of those pathways. Their hope is that teachers can then look at the competency statements and identify potential areas of growth they would like to explore and choose courses that way. This particular committee focuses on teaching and learning, and the adult learning coordinator ensures that their programs are all aligned to Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning (2013). In this way, the adult learning coordinator can align professional development with standards that support adult learning. This focus helps provide insight for the research question that seeks to understand how adult learning theory can be used to help enhance the learning experience of teachers. The adult learning coordinator also leads a committee of student services staff. She recognizes that the needs of non-classroom staff members differ from classroom teachers and said: "I meet with them about five times a year to try to make sure we are meeting their needs and that everything we are doing we are trying to differentiate for them as well." This committee gives them a voice to discuss potential areas of need and help the adult learning coordinator plan for those as well.

The process of centralizing professional development through the adult learning coordinator has also helped the district identify teacher leaders. All professional development offerings at the district level are taught by teacher leaders, instructional coaches, and administrators. The adult learning coordinator calls them all PD trainers. For every session that is created, she tries to bring together one instructional coach and one representative from each of the three buildings. This system creates an opportunity for cross district collaboration. Also, by

having an instructional coach involved, she knows that they will incorporate best practices in facilitating adult learning sessions. The involvement of the instructional coaches is also important because she meets with that team monthly and is able to get regular updates on the courses they facilitate as PD trainers. She sees the role of course creation as separate from both a teaching assignment and an instructional coaching assignment, and she has developed a pay structure for curriculum design work that goes into each course. When leading these sessions during the school day, she also makes sure they are assigned substitutes to cover classes for all PD trainers.

Structures for Feedback

The adult learning coordinator meets monthly with the team of instructional coaches and the APTLs. There are five coaches from each of the buildings, and each coach teaches three periods and is released two other teaching periods to do the work of instructional coaching. Their schedules are set so that they all have a common off period for collaboration, and there is always a coach available every period of the day to ensure availability to help teachers.

To help track all of the professional development activities offered throughout the year at the district level, they recently implemented a software program that works as a professional development management tool. They have built pathways of courses that are tagged and accessible in this system. Teachers have access to the schedule of offerings and can enroll in workshops voluntarily. Through this system they are able to track which teachers have gone through each of their offerings and which have not. Eventually their goal is to incorporate a badging system so teachers who have completed courses in a pathway receive a badge and can track their own progress more easily. This system can also help them find emerging teacher

leaders who have received badges in pathways and might be interested in leading some of the courses offered.

The district is also an approved professional development provider and can issue Professional Development Hours (PDU), which teachers can use toward license renewal. Each 5-year cycle, teachers need to obtain PDUs through either graduate coursework or participation in professional development activities. Given the number of opportunities provided within the district, even teachers who are not taking graduate level courses can earn the necessary PD hours for license renewal. This system provides opportunities for teachers at any level of experience or education to obtain these PD hours for no cost and during the school day or summer. While some may choose to complete graduate level coursework or attend paid conferences or workshops, they are not required to do so since the district has an internal system in place to help teachers earn what they need for license renewal.

Also, the collective bargaining agreement contains a section on Professional Growth Units (PGU). Teachers in the district can earn PGUs for "the purpose of horizontal advancement on the compensation schedule." Teachers may participate in the following activities to earn PGUs: graduate coursework, leadership, publications, research, curriculum development, work experience, workshop participation, and national board certification. The collective bargaining agreement outlines the specific requirements for each of the approved activities listed and all of the activities require approval. The adult learning coordinator stressed that even though it takes a long time to advance horizontally on the salary schedule if teachers are only using PGUs, it could still provide them the opportunity to do so earlier than they otherwise would. This opportunity provides support for participation in professional development and rewards those who engage in such activities.

Professional Learning Teams

At the building level, administrators from all three buildings mentioned the need to work on the effectiveness of Professional Learning Teams in providing professional development for teams. Findings from the interviews and surveyed showed a mixed reaction to the concept of Professional Learning Communities as a form of professional development. Springdale district uses the term Professional Learning Teams (PLTs). The principal at Central High School stated:

> So I think there's a bunch of ways to do PLTs wrong, I think there's a couple of ways to do them right. I do see people doing them, right. And they're doing them right in the places where the chairs really are on top of it and who get it, but the manager chairs make management PLTs.

The APTL at Central High School hopes to work on restructuring PLTs to focus on integrating SEL:

> And so we're hoping to restructure PLT so that it can be more about not just adult learning, but also about integrating SEL and academic learning together. We haven't gotten that far yet. There were a lot of things on the plate for this year, but we're hopeful that we can really harness PLTs to a greater extent than we're currently using.

At Lakeside High School the APTL stated:

> I think it depends on the team and on the members and the leadership of that team. I think an important part of that is the leadership of the department chair and how they've structured some of that time and given guidance to those teams.

The principal at Lakeside also sees room for growth: "I don't think we leverage that as much as we probably need to." At Walker High School, the APTL felt their PLTs do provide learning opportunities for teachers weekly: "I feel like almost every single week, I mean, because I feel like our teachers are still learning when they're meeting in their PLTs or PLCs." The principal at Walker agreed:

> And we're seeing better, better and more consistent work across [PLTs]. So I think it certainly can and in the ideal, that is a form of professional development, if they really support and spur each other on and encourage and challenge in appropriate ways.

From the district perspective, the adult learning coordinator also acknowledged that some PLTs are successful and some are not:

> Some people feel the PLT is a form of professional development, some people don't, I think it really depends on the PLT and the norms that are kind of in place with how that PLT functions. But if you have a really high functioning team, then I would say it's a form of professional development that those staff members get to experience weekly.

Comments from the survey responses also reflected the mixed feelings on PLTs as professional development. The teachers surveyed were asked to rate their preference for PLCs as low, medium, high, or none. Of the 52 responses to that question, 12 (23.5%) rated PLCs as high, 18 (35.3) rated PLCs as mid, 17 (33.3%) as low, and 4 (7.8%) had no preference.

Figure 9

Preference for Professional Learning Communities
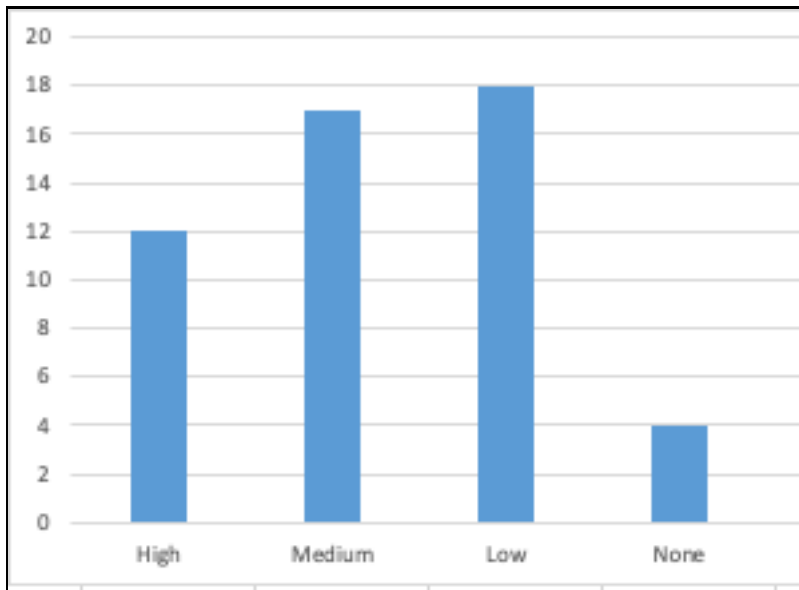
Another survey question asked teachers if they felt that participating in professional learning communities provides professional development for teachers. Six (11.8%) teachers strongly agreed that PLCs provide professional development for teachers, 14 (27.5%) agreed, 7 (13.7%) strongly disagreed, 8 (15.7) disagreed, and 16 (31.4%) were neutral.

Figure 10

Participation in Professional Learning Communities
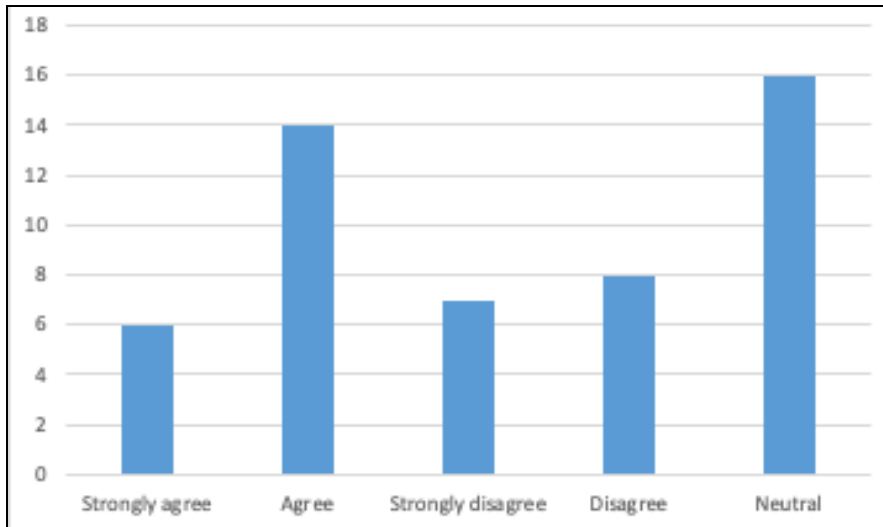
One of the open-ended questions asked teachers to list who they talked to most often about professional issues. Teachers mentioned their instructional coach, department chair, PLT, APTL, and colleagues. Only four teachers mentioned PLTs specifically, but they listed colleagues 32 times total. The next highest mention was for department chairs, then instructional coaches, then lastly APTL.

Figure 11

Who Teachers Talk to About Professional Development
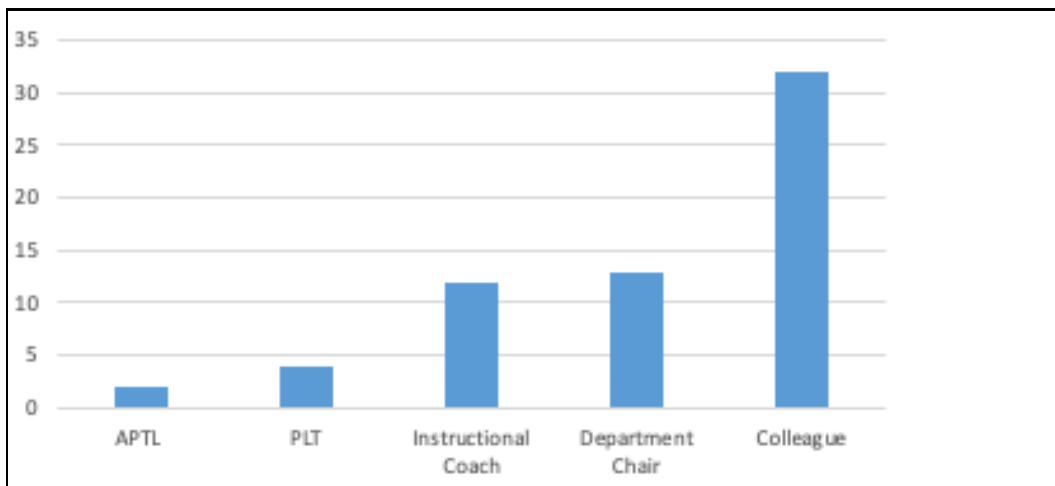
Collaboration

Another area of growth for streamlining professional development that was mentioned by administrators at all three buildings had to do with the collaboration between department chairs and instructional coaches. There was agreement among the administrators that the best department chairs in the district also had previous experience in the instructional coaching role and that all would benefit from closer collaboration. Administrators in all three buildings also mentioned the potential for increased collaboration between the chairs and instructional coaches. The instructional coaches also discussed a disconnect between the two roles and some initial resistance from the chairs to the instructional coaching program. The instructional coach at Walker High School recalled the transition to the all in coaching model and some resistance on the part of the department chairs. She remembered that some department chairs were worried that the coaches were going to replace them, and they would be shifted back to the classroom. She attributed that angst in part to the fact that the instructional coaches became certified evaluators. The intention behind becoming certified evaluators was for the coaches to gain a better understanding of how teachers are evaluated so that they could coach them to improve their practice based on the district adopted Danielson Framework for Teaching. The coaches understood the clear divide between the role of the chair as evaluator and the role of the coach, since much of their training discussed those differences and how to maintain trusting, non-evaluative relationships with teachers. The department chairs initially felt that coaching their teachers was their job and did not see the rationale for separating coaching from evaluation. At Central High School, the principal indicated a desire to see both positions work together to help teachers improve their practice:

> We've been really trying to bring that back together and help our department chairs to
> come back into being instructional leaders and to diving into professional growth as well.

And we also hope to see more presence in our department chairs at the adult learning sessions. We've been really trying to encourage that more too, for a variety of ways one so that they can model and do for their students, but also as they're seeing as they're in their teachers' classrooms you want to say, oh, that was a really awesome code strategy you used, I just attended that session too. And here's how I did it and let's talk through it. I don't want to see department chairs and instructional coaches as separate. I really want to try to bring them back together.

The APTL at Lakeside High School was also asked about the relationship between department chairs and instructional coaches and stated: "There's not a lot of collaboration in terms of generating professional development." In an effort to model the coaching program for teachers, the administration at Central High School has implemented a coaching program for department chairs. Since department chairs are administrators, they do not have an annual coaching plan with the instructional coaching team:

So now all of the 12 month admins have two or three of the chairs that they meet with every week or every other week in a coaching role. And as we pivot to the new administrative model, they will write those evaluations. So that's a different way of investing in the capacity of chairs, and hopefully that'll grow.

Investing in the professional development of department chairs to increase their capacity to work with instructional coaches and help teachers can hopefully even further help teachers improve their practice.

Summary

This chapter examined the findings from interviews and surveys and the themes that emerged. The findings showed that the superintendent's vision for creating a learning organization through ongoing, job-embedded professional development drove the work of the district and the design and implementation of professional development. The requirement to complete an annual coaching plan created a system for the self-identification of needs and provided teachers with options for professional development around their individual needs. The personalization of coaching plans provides opportunity for differentiated professional

development experiences based on needs and potential areas of growth. Additionally, members at all levels of the organization agree on the importance of ongoing professional development for educators. Lastly, the findings show that the structure in place at both the district level and school level supports the collaborative and ongoing work around professional development for the district. The adult learning coordinator, associate principals for teaching and learning, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders, work together to create opportunities for professional development around both district initiatives and individual coaching plans. These structures are perceived by teachers as providing a variety of professional development opportunities that positively impact their practice. In the next chapter I will examine how these findings relate to each of the research questions for the study.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusion

In the previous chapters I reviewed the context of the Springdale district setting as well as introduced the three high schools in the district. I described the vision of the superintendent around professional development and how that vision created a structure for the design and implementation of professional development opportunities. The findings in both the administrator and instructional coach interviews showed that district leadership has been very purposeful in their design of adult learning. Building leaders also worked to further that vision and teachers in turn felt support for participating in professional development opportunities. Based on teacher responses to the survey, the purposeful design and implementation of adult learning programs in the district has resulted in teachers feeling the importance of and responsibility for their own ongoing professional development. Based on interview and survey data, there are also opportunities for growth at both the district and school level to continue to further the efforts around adult learning.

In this chapter I will revisit the problem, purpose, conceptual framework, and discuss the findings of this case study, which examined the design and implementation of professional development for teachers at all stages of their career and how teachers perceive the work of school and district leaders. Also, I will focus on the findings and discussion of themes within each research question as they relate to the adult learning theories of andragogy and transformative learning. Lastly, I will critique the framework and offer concluding remarks.

Problem and Purpose

The problem identified in this chapter is that even though school and district leaders are purposeful in the design and delivery of professional development opportunities for teachers,

teaching is a complex profession and the needs of teachers are constantly changing. The purpose of this study was to examine the role of school and district leaders in designing and implementing programming for teachers that can be differentiated to fit the individual needs of teachers.

Conceptual Framework

This research focused on the role of school and district leaders in planning and implementing professional development programs, as well as the perceptions of teachers on the ability for that programming to meet their varying needs. For the focus of this research and the themes that emerged, I used adult learning theory, specifically andragogy and transformative learning theory, to focus on adult learning and the needs of adult learners. Andragogy (Knowles, 1980) posits that adults are self-directed learners who need to understand why they need to learn something. Adult learners also bring individual experiences to every learning situation, have a readiness to learn what they feel they need, and are especially motivated when they see the potential to apply their learning. This theory also suggests that adults need to take part in the planning of their instruction, learning needs to be problem centered and build on their own experiences, and be applicable to them personally. Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformative learning is complementary to andragogy in that it states adults make meaning from their experiences, and this is central to the learning process.

Research Questions:

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. In what ways are leaders providing differentiated professional development?

2. How do teachers at different career stages perceive leadership meeting their professional development needs?

3. How does the incorporation of adult learning theory into professional development program design enhance the learning experience of teachers?

The aim of this case study was to gather insight on professional development in a large suburban high school district. The district in this study is able to provide extensive resources to their staff. The location of the district is in a tax area that draws from various affluent areas and also helps the district provide adequate resources at the building and the district level. At the district level, support and resources are provided for adult learning, technology, student services, and human resources.

In the sections that follow, I will answer each of the research questions with themes that emerged from the research. The findings and discussion will highlight the areas of strength and also opportunities for growth.

Research Question 1. In What Ways Are Leaders Providing Differentiated Professional Development?

In order to answer this question, I had to consider both the leadership in the district and the overall design and implementation of professional development across the three high schools in this district. At the district level, the superintendent and the adult learning coordinator work together on the vision for adult learning programming. The adult learning coordinator also works with the leadership at the three school buildings. The main point of contact at each building for professional learning is the APTL. The APTL works closely with the department chairs and also the instructional coaches. In this structure, the leadership at the central office has a connection to all teachers through the APTL and department chairs. The types of differentiated programs that are offered to all teachers include workshops on topics that cover district initiatives and priorities, the new teacher academy, and the annual coaching plan requirement.

Workshops. The adult learning coordinator works with the Associate Principals for Teaching and Learning (APTL) on providing professional development opportunities to all teachers. Sessions take place at the district office and teachers are able to sign up for sessions they are interested in and also obtain a substitute teacher to cover their classes so they can attend. Sessions are scheduled during the school day to increase access and opportunities for attendance. The district recognizes the myriad commitments teachers have beyond the school day and supports their attendance through substitute teachers. Also, they offer several different days and times for each of the sessions. District workshops are taught by teacher leaders and administrators. Providing professional development to colleagues has been a way to offer leadership opportunities to teachers and another way for them to grow professionally. The district uses a professional development management software program to publish workshop opportunities, for registration, and for keeping track of which teachers have had professional development on various topics. It is important to them to offer sessions repeatedly so teachers have various opportunities to participate. The flexibility offered by the menu of session options and dates makes professional development available to all teachers.

New Teacher Academy. The New Teacher Academy was created as a new teacher induction program to cover all of the district initiatives and priorities for new staff. The program is a 4-year program with a set curriculum. New teachers are assigned a mentor and an instructional coach. They also meet regularly as a cohort of new teachers to cover set topics each year and develop expertise in the areas identified by district leadership as essential for classroom practice. Over the 4 years, new teachers work toward in assessment literacy, cooperative learning, social emotional learning and behavior, and differentiated instruction. This part of the curriculum is set for them, but the work they do together with their instructional coach is

completely individualized. Coaches help new teachers identify areas they want to work on or goals they have for the school year, and they partner together to work on those goals. Some new teachers focus their work with a coach around the areas covered in their 4-year program, and others identify areas outside of those topics. Having the ability to choose their focus has increased teacher buy-in and commitment to the coaching program. Also, the experience of working with an instructional coach throughout this 4-year program helps embed coaching into the culture and every teacher's instructional practice.

Coaching Plans. The superintendent's vision for professional development has included instructional coaching for all teachers since the beginning of his tenure in the district. He has supported the creation of annual coaching plans as a way to help teachers grow professionally in areas of their own identified needs. When he introduced instructional coaching, there were three part-time coaches at each building and the program was voluntary. In that first year, instructional coaches from all three buildings felt they were successfully building relationships with teachers and gaining trust as coaches. After that first year, coaching plans became an annual requirement that was included in the bargaining agreement for teachers. At first the instructional coaches were hesitant about making the program mandatory. In time they have come to see the requirement as a benefit to their work and also to the professional development of teachers. They no longer have to spend time recruiting and can focus on the work of coaching. This program itself is completely differentiated for teachers and individualized based on their needs. The premise of instructional coaching is for coaches to work together with teachers to identify student centered goals and then work together to achieve those goals. Teachers are able to consider their courses, their students' needs, school and district initiatives, and develop a goal and plan that fits their needs. The goals they identify one year may continue on to their plan the

following year, or they may change as needed. Also, the goals they develop with their coaches are not shared with administrators, and the coaches work with teachers in a non-evaluative way to help them reach their goals.

In response to teacher and instructional coach feedback, the coaching plan requirement has been expanded to include options beyond one-to-one coaching. Teachers are able to consider their needs each year and choose one of the following options: one-to-one coaching, peer coaching, national board certification, action research, coaching pre-service teachers, Professional Learning Team (PLT) coaching, or a book study for student services staff. Expanding from one to one coaching to include other options was one way to differentiate the coaching plan experience and include opportunities that could fit teachers at any stage of their career and any level of expertise. These options may continue to change based on teacher feedback and district goals.

Research Question 2. How Do Teachers at Different Career Stages Perceive Leadership Meeting Their Professional Development Needs?

The previous question considered the programming available to all staff across the district for professional development. This question examined the perception of those receiving the programming. In order to answer this question, I had to look at survey data from the teachers as well as information from interviews with the instructional coaches.

Teacher Perceptions. Based on the teacher survey, teachers overall feel that their department chairs support their participation in professional development opportunities. Workshops take place during the school day, and teachers are supported in getting a substitute teacher for their classes so they can attend. By scheduling opportunities during the day, all teachers have access to programming, regardless of commitments they may have outside of the

school day. Teachers also felt supported by the instructional coaches. Each one of the coaching

plan options involves working with a coach to some degree. Coaches provide teachers the choice

of which coach they prefer to work with. Some teachers choose based on content area, some

choose based on scheduling availability, and some choose a different coach each year to gain

various perspectives. Survey results also indicated that teachers were satisfied with the

opportunities provided by the district for professional development. Since workshops are offered

at the district office during the school day and throughout the school year, there are many

opportunities for teachers to access professional development when it fits into their schedules.

Teachers also indicated that the professional development topics presented to them have

improved their instructional practice. Since the district initiatives for all teachers include having

a level of proficiency in cooperative learning, assessment literacy, social and emotional learning

and behavior and differentiated instruction, these topics are presented regularly and repeat

throughout the school year. Also, teachers can select any of these or other topics as the focus of

their work with the instructional coaches.

Instructional Coach Perspectives. Interviews with instructional coaches provided a

more in-depth teacher perspective on professional development across the district. The

instructional coaches indicated that the very nature of the coaching plan requirement and

program was differentiated and individualized. Since teachers have the choice each year to

participate in several different coaching options, their individual needs and goals drive their

professional development experiences. They all indicated the importance of the new teacher

academy as a way to address the needs of both teachers who are new to teaching and teachers

who are new to their district. Having a structured 4-year program as well as an assigned mentor

and instructional coach provides various layers of support for new staff. The 4-year program

originally did not include having an assigned instructional coach. Once several of the coaches indicated a need for additional support for new teachers, they added that layer as well. They feel it is important for them to get to know the new teachers and provide ongoing support for them. Mentor teachers are not always free at the same time as new staff and may not have the flexibility in their schedule to observe or co-teach with them, but the instructional coaches can provide this support and also an additional perspective. When asked about tenured teachers, the instructional coaches did not see a need to look at teacher needs at various career stages. Since teachers have so many options for workshops and an individualized coaching plan that is based on their own goals and needs, they felt they were effectively able to reach teachers at every career stage. The focus for them has been on teachers as individuals, and they recognize that teachers have changing needs based on their students, course assignments, priorities, and life situations outside of school. Their main goal is to meet teachers where they are and work together to improve their practice and the experience of students in their classrooms. The instructional coaches reflected on the introduction of the coaching plan requirement and transitioning from a voluntary coaching model to an annual requirement. Even though there was resistance from teachers when the program was first introduced, and many teachers only completed the minimum requirements for their coaching plan, they all felt that coaching has become part of the culture of the district. Each year more and more new teachers are hired into the district and begin working with instructional coaches from the very start. They feel that developing a coaching culture across the district has taken time, and they know that in a few years the majority of their staff will have started in the district with this program in place.

Research Question 3. How Does the Incorporation of Adult Learning Theory Into Professional Development Program Design Enhance the Learning Experience of Teachers?

In order to answer this question, I had to understand the vision of professional development for the district and the role each of the leaders had in implementing a vision for adult learning. The vision for professional development in this district comes from the superintendent. His vision includes centralizing professional development opportunities through the role of the adult learning coordinator, a dedicated focus on teaching and learning through the APTL position, and instructional coaching for all.

The Associate Principal for Teaching and Learning (APTL). Part of the superintendent's vision included a dedicated focus at each of the three high schools on teaching and learning. He introduced the role of the APTL and met resistance from his leadership team. Within the first year of the new role, he received support from those same leaders who initially had reservations about the position. The APTL oversees evaluation, curriculum work, department chairs, and the instructional coaches with the primary focus on teaching and learning.

The Adult Learning Coordinator. Once the APTLs were in place and having success in their roles working with teachers and administrators, the superintendent saw the need to add the role of the adult learning coordinator. This role serves to connect the three individual buildings to the central office by working closely with the superintendent and his leadership team and also with the APTLs and instructional coaches at each building. The current adult learning coordinator oversees the professional development offerings at the district level, runs committees on professional development for feedback and evaluation of existing programs, oversees the coaching plan requirement and meets with the instructional coaches regularly. The adult learning coordinator is also tasked with keeping the district initiatives active and continually offering

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professional development in the areas identified as priorities. The adult learning coordinator also researches best practice in adult learning and aligns the work to Learning Forward's Standards of Professional Learning. Learning Forward's 2013 edition of Standards in Practice describes four distinct district based roles: central office, director of professional learning, superintendent, and school board (pp. 9-10). This district's design of the adult learning coordinator has combined part of their description of central office staff and the role of the director of professional learning. The adult learning coordinator works out of the central office and "leads programs, such as curriculum, instruction, assessment, human resource, research and evaluation, technology, or other supports for the academic or education initiatives within the school system" (p. 9) and also follows the description of the role of the director of professional learning: "the educator who has primary responsibility for all aspects of professional learning within the school system. The director of professional learning is the person who serves as the leader of professional learning and leadership development for the entire education workforce" (p. 9). Since the adult learning coordinator works closely with the superintendent and school board and also with the building leaders, she can ensure that the district vision for professional development drives the work at every level. Also important to the adult learning coordinator is the alignment to the seven standards for professional learning identified by Learning Forward: learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning designs, implementation, and outcomes (Learning Forward, 2013). These standards "outline the characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results" (Learning Forward, 2015). When planning, implementing, and evaluating programming, the adult learning coordinator uses these standards as a guide.

Required Coaching Plans. The annual coaching plan requirement addresses what Knowles (1980) termed andragogy: "the art and science of helping adults learn." By requiring teachers to reflect on their needs annually and develop a coaching plan that fits their needs, the program supports the adult learning principles outlined by Knowles: (a) adults need to be involved in both the planning and evaluating of their instruction, (b) learner experiences provide the basis for learning activities, (c) adults are most interested in subjects that are relevant and applicable to their job and personal life, and (d) learning is problem-centered.

Knowles' principle acknowledges the need for adults to be involved in the planning process. The coaching plan reinforces this need as adults drive their own learning plans and choose from the various coaching plan options they feel will benefit them in that given year. The second principle honors the experiences of learners, and this is reflected in the collaboration between instructional coaches and teachers. Goals are set by teachers, and they collaborate with their chosen instructional coach to work toward accomplishing those goals together. The third principle speaks to the need for topics to be relevant and applicable to individual teachers. Since coaching plans are teacher driven, teachers are able to ensure that they choose a plan that will be relevant to their students and their practice. This can change from year to year as teaching assignments and students change so that each year the most relevant goals and plans can be chosen by the teachers. The last principle speaks to the need for learning to be problem centered. Again, since teachers have autonomy to select their own goals and plan, they have the option to select a problem centered goal.

Knowles (1980) also introduced six assumptions of the andragogical model: (a) adult learners need to understand why they need to learn something, (b) adults develop a self-concept and a need to be seen by others as capable of self-direction, (c) adults have individual

experiences that they bring to a learning situation and these experience form their self-identity and add value to their own and others learning, (d) adults have a readiness to learn what they need in order to cope with their life situations, (e) adults are motivated to learn especially when they see real life application to their learning. These assumptions are also reflected in the required coaching plan program. The district vision of being a learning organization speaks to the need for adults to know the why behind their learning. The superintendent's vision to create an organization of learners was the driving force behind the introduction of instructional coaching and the desire for teachers to continue to grow professional throughout their careers. The second assumption addresses the need for self-direction and by providing choices within the coaching plan of working one on one with a coach or in a group coaching scenario, teachers are able to set that direction for themselves and take control of their learning situation. Since teachers set their goals, they are able to see the real life application of their coaching plan choices. Those goals can be based on what they need in any given year to cope with their current situation. And since work can be done one on one with a coach or in a small group, teachers have the ability to bring their own identities into that space and honor their experiences and identify.

The coaching plan requirement also overlaps with Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformative learning. According to Mezirow, we make meaning from our experiences. When teachers are able to experience individualized and personalized coaching plans, they can use that learning in their teaching context. His theory also highlights the importance of self reflection and critical thinking. Part of the coaching process for all of the coaching plan options involves self-reflection and processing those reflections with an instructional coach. The coaching cycle of discovering the reality in a classroom, setting goals based on that reality and teacher needs, then

reflecting on the actions of set goals provides opportunities for teachers to reflect and thinking critically about their practice with their coach.

The recent publication from National Academy of Sciences on *How People Learn* emphasized the importance of a learner-centered, community-centered, assessment-centered, and knowledge-centered environments. The coaching plan options align with all of those learning environments. Feedback and reflection are part of the process for one-on-one coaching, PLT group coaching, action research, National Board Certification, self-directed learning cohorts, and peer-to-peer coaching. In all of these options teachers work closely with a coach either individually or in a group setting.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings in this study show that school and district leaders are purposeful in the design and implementation of professional development. The following section will make recommendations for additional considerations for professional development.

Professional Development for Administrators

Principals play a role in the developing human capital in their schools (Donaldson, 2013). Developing the role of the department chair can extend the principals' reach in supporting the growth of teachers. The role of the department chair was discussed by each of the principals and APTLs interviewed. Since department chairs are not part of the collective bargaining unit with teachers, they do not have a requirement to create an annual coaching plan and work with the instructional coaches. Two of the APTLs indicated that department chairs have from time to time asked to work with the coaches and go through a coaching cycle, since part of their assignment is to teach one class each year. Also, some department chairs have asked to work with coaches so that they can speak to that experience and understand what their teachers go through if they

choose one-to-one coaching for their annual coaching plan requirement. Several of the principals and APTLs felt that the most effective department chairs were those who previously served in the role of instructional coach. They were skilled in asking questions, providing feedback, and following up with teachers on progress toward their goals. Since the coaches have received formal training on instructional coaching, and they also work with the district's coaching center, the instructional coaches have opportunities to practice and improve their skills throughout the school year. Each group of building coaches also works together as a professional learning community to ensure they are providing the best possible support for their teachers. The instructional coaches all completed the certified evaluator training so that they can assist teachers with goal setting, preparing for observations, and reflection on lessons. One of the principals recognized a need for the department chairs to go beyond the role of managing a department and felt that implementing professional development for all department chairs could be beneficial. Even though their relationship with teachers would remain evaluative, there is much to be gained from having similar training to the instructional coaches. Formal sessions on gathering evidence, providing feedback, using questioning techniques to help adults mediate their own thinking, and goal setting are areas that any evaluator could benefit from. The history of the department chair role in this district suggests that the role was seen as a management role and the primary responsibilities centered around scheduling, student placements, evaluation, and managing staff. The vision for this role has evolved and the several principals and APTLs interviewed hope to help their department chairs evolve into instructional leaders. They recognized this as a need and only one school interviewed had a plan to begin this work. At Central High School the principal has assigned each department chair to one of the associate principals. They are to meet every week or every other week, and the associate principal is to serve as a coach and mentor for the

department chair. The department chair evaluations will be written by their assigned associate principal, and their work together will be ongoing. Having a program that models instructional coaching in which the associate principal is the coach and the department chairs are being coached can help department chairs improve on goals they set together. This program could be replicated at each of the three schools in order to increase the leadership capacity of the department chair role. Since this issue was addressed by administrators in each building, and only one building outlined a plan to help develop the department chairs' leadership skills, all schools could potentially benefit from the vision set by Central High School.

Collaboration Between Department Chairs and Instructional Coaches

Opportunities for collaboration among educators can lead to professional growth (Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2014). Interviews with school administrators revealed a disconnect and missed opportunity for collaboration between the department chairs and the instructional coaches. In examining the structure of the coaching program and the communication between the coaches and the administrators, it was clear that the department chairs did not have a specified role or involvement with these processes. The lack of communication between these two roles may be based partly on the initial responses to the introduction of instructional coaching in the district. Initially, some of the department chairs were hesitant to meet with the coaches. Some felt that coaching was their role and did not understand why coaches were introduced and then became certified in evaluation. Many saw coaching as part of their role. Since they are not part of the bargaining unit, department chairs did not have the same requirement to create a coaching plan as the teachers. Also, they did not have a direct link to the coaches since the coaching program was overseen by the APTL. Even though coaches had great insight into both the strengths and areas of growth for teachers, there is a well respected firewall that prevents formal

conversation around the specifics of the coaching cycles. When coaches see patterns or trends or needs arise across the building, they discuss those among themselves and also bring those topics or general observations to the APTL. The APTL would then bring that information to the attention of the adult learning coordinator and the other APTLs across the district. This line of communication often skipped the department chair entirely. If there were a structure in place where the coaches and the department chairs and the APTL could discuss potential teacher needs together, they would be able to assist teachers even more effectively. Also, if department chairs developed similar coaching plans to their teachers and participated in a coaching cycle with one of the instructional coaches, they would have a deeper understanding of the work of the coaches and understand more fully the role of the coach. This would enable them to understand the work their teachers are doing annually with the coaches and provide additional perspective on that process and the potential outcomes of participating in coaching cycles.

Leveraging the Professional Learning Team (PLT) Structure

Interview and survey results indicated that the current PLT structure was not seen as a consistent form of professional development for teachers. Administrators indicated that some of their existing PLTs were strong and worked together on continuous improvement of teaching and learning in their classrooms. Other PLTs did not function as a productive group at all. On the teacher surveys, some teachers indicated that they discussed their own professional learning with their PLTs, and others did not feel they benefited from working with their PLT. Professional learning community groups can serve as opportunities for professional development. Collaboration in these groups has been seen to increase teacher motivation, reflection, and innovation (Blase & Blase, 1999). Since there is time dedicated each week for PLTs to meet, this structure can be leveraged for professional development. Introducing best practices for

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professional learning communities to all teachers can provide a common language and foundation for working in those groups. Also, involving the department chairs to help PLTs set goals each year could provide them with direction for collaborative work. Being very thoughtful and purposeful about setting up PLT teams, even if that means some teachers would have to change teams or course assignments, could be a worthwhile investment to improve the existing structure. Assigning PLT leaders who could work as a cohort with the building administrators to strengthen their skills for facilitating PLT meetings would also be a way to develop leadership capacity among teachers and provide opportunities for ongoing discussion of PLT goals, struggles, and successes.

Building Level Autonomy

All three of the principals interviewed expressed support for the superintendent's vision for adult learning. All were in support of the adult learning coordinator's role in aligning programming across the district. And all were supportive of the annual coaching plan requirement and the role of instructional coaching and its capacity to support teacher professional growth. And yet they all expressed a need to reconcile district initiatives with building initiatives. The demographic makeup of each of the three schools is unique, and the principals indicated that each building had distinct needs based on their students and staff. Also, they felt each building had a different climate and culture that also posed unique challenges. Since the district initiatives were clear and applied to all schools, they felt it difficult at times to fit in their own building initiatives as well. They all seemed to appreciate the consistency of the superintendent's vision but wanted to find ways to fit that in at their own buildings in their own ways. They appreciated being able to express concerns on their leadership team and felt that would need to continue as new programs and initiatives are introduced.

The APTL from the most diverse school in the district spoke directly to the challenges of aligning all three schools to the district vision:

> Sometimes it's difficult and challenging because there are differences in each of the buildings. And so like, I know our team is further ahead because of the PBIS structures that have been in place for the last 10 years and some of that foundational SEL work that we're wanting to do now. And it's that balance of like, do we have to slow down like, I'm always asking myself, like when we're talking at the district level, well here's what we are doing. And I feel bad because is it like they're trying to catch up real fast or do I need to slow down because even though we say we're fine, where we are and everyone's on their own journey, what is that going to look like maybe to other people, maybe at the district office.

Access to National and Local Conferences

One of the open ended questions on the survey for teachers asked about suggestions for improving professional development for teachers in the district. Several of the survey participants discussed a need for support to attend national or local conferences that relate directly to a teacher's content area. While the responses overwhelmingly showed an appreciation for the variety of offerings within the district, teachers felt unsupported when seeking to go outside of the district for professional development. Some indicated that there is no financial support from the district for that type of activity. Others commented on the benefits of attending Advanced Placement and other content specific conferences or workshops. They indicated needing professional development beyond the prioritized areas and offerings within the district's professional development structure. To address this concern, department chairs could help identify teachers who have a need in this area. Then through a centralized process overseen by the adult learning coordinator, a rotating schedule could be created to provide opportunities for targeted professional development. Another suggestion would be to leverage the Professional Learning Team (PLT) structure and assign a PLT leader role to one of those members. Those PLT leaders could attend workshops or conferences and then be tasked with presenting their

learning to the PLT at their building or to that PLT district wide. Another option would be to take advantage of both virtual conferences and virtual professional learning networks. During this past year many organizations have reinvented themselves and begun to offer their programming virtually. These virtual conferences, workshops, and webinars have been able to connect educators around the world and expand their learning networks. This need to attend professional conferences and workshops is supported by the model from Katz (1972), which moved just describing various needs at various career stages to identifying the training needs of teachers. During what he called the maturity stage, experienced teachers needed opportunities such as conferences, seminars, institutes, and graduate study to further their learning and development.

Implications

The aim for this study was to determine whether the purposeful design and implementation of professional development could address varying teacher needs at different career stages and what role district and school leaders in developing professional development programming. Ultimately, the study revealed that it takes a vision for professional development and a system of support at the district and building level to offer teachers choice and differentiated opportunities for learning.

Leadership

In order to set up a system that supported his vision for a culture of learning, the superintendent created administrative positions that could focus on that work at both the district and school level. In this district, key positions were created to address the commitment and vision for professional development. The first position was the Associate Principal for Teaching and Learning (APTL). The role of the APTL includes overseeing teacher evaluation, the

department chairs, the instructional coaches, and professional development activities and programs. Narrowing the focus of this role on teaching and learning has prioritized teacher professional growth. At the district level, the position of the Adult Learning Coordinator serves as a link between the schools and the district office. This position collaborates with the APTLs, principals, and superintendency regularly. Also, the adult learning coordinator oversees all professional development offerings and the coaching plan requirement program. Dedicating a full-time position to being purposeful about adult learning programming shows a commitment to creating a culture of learning.

Collaboration With the Education Association

Working with the education association and adding the coaching plan requirement to the teacher contract was possible due to a collaborative relationship between the superintendent and the head of the association. Coming together around the importance of professional development and building a structure of instructional coaching to support that priority has created a coaching culture district wide. Prior to the coaching plan requirement, teachers had to write up an annual professional development plan (PDP) and submit that to their evaluators. It was seen by both teachers and administrators as an exercise in completing paperwork more than a true plan for professional development. Since the superintendent was willing to remove the PDP requirement, the association was willing to pilot the coaching plan. After one year of the pilot, they agreed to add language into the contract that states: "Coaching Plan: All teachers are required to create and complete an annual coaching plan in conjunction with instructional coaches as approved by the administration and outlined in the Plan." The language contained in the collective bargaining agreement was vague enough that the details of the coaching plan remained outside of the agreement. Due to this flexibility, the coaching plan was adjusted as needed over time to include

options beyond the original one to one coaching plan. Teachers can now choose the one to one coaching plan, peer coaching, PLT coaching, action research, coaching pre-service teachers, or a book study. Teachers' choices can change from year to year, and they are continually asked for feedback to improve the program as needed. The ability to make adjustments to the coaching plan requirement will enable the district to continue to adapt to upcoming needs and initiatives.

Recommendations for Further Research

In terms of recommendations for further research, there has been extensive research on the qualities of effective professional development and also the role of leadership in supporting teachers. This study brings to light the need for further research on effective ways to differentiate professional development for teachers. Also, extensive research has been done on differentiating classroom instruction for students, but there is a lack of research on best practices for differentiating professional development for teachers. Additional research on districts where this is happening successfully and where teachers perceive their instructional practices to be benefiting from individualized and differentiated professional development can help leaders as they design adult learning opportunities for teachers.

Reflection on the Conceptual Framework

Using adult learning theory as the conceptual framework for this study provided a narrowed focus on adult learners and the potential needs of adult learners when designing professional development programs. Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy highlights the differences between pedagogy and andragogy and the need to focus on "the art and science of helping adults learn." His assumptions about adult learning inform the principles that can be applied to all learning situations. The assumption that adults are self-directed learners who can benefit from self-evaluation to inform their learning goals and who need to be seen as having

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self-direction leads into the principle that adults need to be involved in both planning and evaluating their instruction. The assumption that adults have individual experiences that form their sense of value and identity and that they bring these experiences to every learning situation informs the principle that these experiences can provide the basis for the learning activities. Lastly, the assumption that adults are ready to learn when they see relevance and are motivated by being able to apply their learning to real life situations supports the principle that subjects need to be problem centered and directly applicable work and life situations. Using these assumptions and principles can "enable those designing and conducting adult learning to build more effective learning processes for adults" (2005, p. 2). The addition of Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory to Knowles' theory of andragogy offers additional insight into how adults make meaning from their experiences. His work builds on the assumptions of the andragogical model to add that we make meaning from our experiences. Learning is then transformed when our frames of reference and our thinking is changed. This process requires both self-reflection and critical thinking.

The tenets of andragogy and transformative learning theory are supported by the structure and design of professional development programming in the district in this study. A dedicated full time administrative position that oversees the design and implementation of all professional development activities across the district provides the structure and support for all programs. The design of the coaching plan requirement to include multiple options makes the program both individualized and responsive to all teachers' needs. Offering access to professional development sessions during the school day and providing support for substitute teachers ensures that all teachers are able to take advantage of those learning opportunities. Five teachers are released part time at each school to also serve in the non-evaluative role of instructional coaches. They

then collaborate with the APTL and adult learning coordinator to provide the link between the classrooms and those tasked with offering professional development to improve teaching practices. The thoughtful design from the district level all the way to the classroom level at each building can be seen in the various structures in place to help teachers improve their practice.

The Superintendent's vision for a structure that supports professional development includes staffing, schedules, and processes. According to Frontier and Rickabaugh (2014), there are five levers to improve learning and these components are part of the definition of the structure lever. Changing the structure of a school can result in increased learning under four conditions:

> (1) supports the use of more effective instructional strategies, (2) allows for more responsive use of strategies to benefit specific groups of students, (3) removes barriers in the way of learning opportunities for students or commitments among staff to collaborate on behalf of student learning, or (4) empowers staff and students to better realize their capacity to teach and learn. (p. 25)

The changes the superintendent made to staffing, including focusing the APTL role on teaching and learning, incorporating instructional coaching into mandatory coaching plans for teachers, and creating the adult learning coordinator role to focus on professional development. These structures aligned with Frontier and Rickabaugh's conditions for increasing student learning. The focus of the new teacher academy and various professional development opportunities prioritizes instructional strategies. The group coaching option helps encourage staff to analyze data and focus on student learning. Identifying teacher leaders for professional development offerings and participation on committees can empower teachers to both increase and realize their capacity to teacher and learn. According to Frontier and Rickabaugh, "changes at school will be effective only if teachers and students interact with one another in different ways because of the structural change" (p. 26). The structural changes implemented by the superintendent and supported at both

the district and building levels supported his vision for professional development and becoming a learning organization.

Conclusion

This case study examined the leadership and design of professional development programming in a suburban district and how teachers perceived programming to meet their needs. The findings suggest that the structure of leadership at both the district and building level provides consistent and varying opportunities for teachers to access professional development that meets their needs. Program offerings at the district level and instructional coaching at the building level provide teachers with opportunities to reflect on their needs and then choose programming that can be individualized to best help them meet their goals.

This research supports existing literature on the need for leadership to connect teachers to experiences that can best help them improve their classroom practice (Leithwood, 1994). Also, this study provides information for leaders in that it outlines efforts led by district and building leaders and also includes the teacher perceptions on those efforts meeting their professional development needs.

Final Thoughts

Throughout the interviews, one word that kept coming up repeatedly was the word "vision." The impact of having a vision and then leading with that vision to move the work of professional development forward was clear throughout the research process. This can be seen as a top-down approach driven by the superintendent, but the interviews showed that administrators also truly believed in the vision and moving it forward as well. The flexibility of that vision was also made clear. The administrative positions and professional development programs have continually been refined and adjusted based on feedback and results. Learning from mistakes and

having the courage to make adjustments was supported throughout the organization. Throughout the research process, I became aware of the importance of leadership in district wide programming. Each school has a unique culture and set of needs, and yet they are able to come together around a district vision for adult learning.

I am grateful for the opportunity this case study has provided me to learn from other professionals who are as passionate about teaching and learning as I am. Throughout the interviews, it became increasingly apparent that both building and district level leaders, who are tasked with overseeing the professional development of teachers, have a mutual respect for each other and for the thoughtfulness that goes into their programming. I purposely interviewed the superintendent last and hoped that the interviews preceding his would reflect his depiction of a learning organization. It became clear that his vision and design for professional development was reflected in the interviews with the principals, associate principals, and instructional coaches. Everyone I interviewed was transparent about both their struggles and successes, and it is clear they are united as a district around professional growth for their teachers as a way to ensure quality instruction for their students.

Ultimately, this research provides one more piece of work focused on professional development design and implementation for teachers and the role that administrators at both the district and building level have in that work. The research confirms that this work is ongoing and requires reflection and evaluation to pinpoint next steps and areas of improvement. It is the responsibility of administrators to partner with teachers to build systems and structures that can identify the needs of teachers and provide them with professional development opportunities and support. Providing effective professional development that helps teachers improve their practice will ultimately benefit their students and result in increased achievement. Acknowledging that

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needs change continually, this process must be purposeful and ongoing and built into the mission

and vision of the district and supported by all stakeholders.

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Appendix A

Email Requesting Entry From Superintendent

Dear [Insert Name of Superintendent],

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois studying under Dr. Mary Beth Herrmann in the department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership. You are being contacted because the high schools in your district have been identified by ASCD as exemplary for professional development. Because of that, I wish to explore practices your district employs to support teachers in professional development throughout varying stages in their careers. In addition to examining leadership practices that support professional development, I wish to collect information on teacher perceptions on professional development.

Should you choose to allow me to perform research at your site, I would like to collect information from the following sources:
- Online questionnaires for teachers
- Interviews with administrators
- Interviews with instructional coaches

Before beginning any research, all participants will be notified and asked to sign letters of consent. In addition, if there are district-specific research protocols, those will be adhered to.

If you are interested or have additional questions, please reply via email (gsjacks2@illinois.edu) or by phone (847.962.8912). Upon your acceptance, all consent forms and letters of invitation to potential participants will be sent for your review.

Thank you-

Gabriella Stetz Jackson
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Email Requesting Entry From School Administrator

Dear [Insert Name of Principal],

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois studying under Dr. Mary Beth Herrmann in the department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership. After speaking to [insert superintendent], I am contacting you because your high school has been identified by ASCD as exemplary for professional development. Because of that, I wish to explore practices your district school-based administration employs to support teachers in professional development throughout varying stages in their careers. In addition to examining leadership practices that support professional development, I wish to collect information on teacher perceptions on professional development.

Should you choose to allow me to perform research at your site, I would like to collect information from the following sources:
- Online questionnaires for teachers
- Interviews with administrators
- Interviews with instructional coaches

Before beginning any research, all participants will be notified and asked to sign letters of consent. In addition, if there are district-specific research protocols, those will be adhered to.

If you are interested or have additional questions, please reply via email (gsjacks2@illinois.edu) or by phone (847.962.8912). Upon your acceptance, all consent forms and letters of invitation to potential participants will be sent for your review.

Thank you-

Gabriella Stetz Jackson
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Email Requesting Entry From School Teachers

Dear [Insert Name of Teacher],

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois studying under Dr. Mary Beth Herrmann in the department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership. After speaking to [insert superintendent], I am contacting you because your district's high schools have a diverse group of teachers at various career stages. Because of that, I wish to explore professional development programming for teachers. In addition to examining leadership practices that support continual growth for teachers, I wish to collect information on teacher perceptions and experiences with professional development.

For the purpose of the study, I would like to collect information from the following sources:
- Online questionnaires for teachers
- Interviews with administrators
- Interviews with instructional coaches

Before beginning any research, all participants will be notified and asked to sign letters of consent. In addition, if there are district-specific research protocols, those will be adhered to.

If you are interested or have additional questions, please reply via email (gsjacks2@illinois.edu) or by phone (847.962.8912). Upon your acceptance, all consent forms and letters of invitation to potential participants will be sent for your review.

Thank you-

Gabriella Stetz Jackson
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Appendix B

Informed Consent: Administrator and Instructional Coach Interviews

Date

Dear [insert name]:

We are from the Department of Educational Policy, Organization, and Leadership at the University of Illinois and we are inviting you to participate in a case study that examines professional development for teachers. This research is being conducted by Gabriella Stetz Jackson, doctoral candidate, and her advisor, Dr. Mary Beth Herrmann, professor in the school of Educational Policy and Organizational Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.

The research will utilize several methods of data that will require your consent:
   a) Audio-recorded, semi-structured one-on-one interviews with teachers, and administrators. All interviews will remain confidential, and once transcribed, individuals will have access to their interviews (see below for further details). No personnel names will be used in the dissemination of the data, any quotations from interviews will be assigned pseudonyms.
   b) Administration of online surveys for teacher responses.

If you consent to participate, you retain the right to a review period of no less than five (5) days wherein you can review the materials that have been prepared and request changes, corrections, or withdraw consent before any information about you or your experience is presented or published. There is no direct benefit of agreeing to participate in this study for participants, and the publication of identifying information such as name, job title, or employing institution involves minimal risk. However, providing you a review period and allowing you to approve all information prior to publishing minimizes this risk.

Participation is strictly voluntary. You may choose to participate in the interview but decline to participate in a follow-up interview if it is requested of you. You may choose to participate in interviews but decline participation in classroom observations. Finally, you may completely opt out of participation at any time during the study without negative consequence or without jeopardizing your relationship with us, the University of Illinois, or the programs and services in which you. The total participation time for teachers who will participate one-to-one interviews should be no more than 60 minutes. The total time for teachers participating in classroom observations will be the duration of a current instructional period.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact us using the information below. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu. Please keep the attached copy of this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

(signature)
Gabriella Stetz Jackson
847.962.8912
gsjacks2@illinois.edu

I have read and understand the purpose for this project and indicate my willingness to participate below. I have been given a copy of this consent form for my records.

I agree to allow the researcher to observe my class   (circle one) yes / no

I agree to be interviewed for this research.   (circle one) yes / no

If interviewed, I agree to be audio recorded.   (circle one) yes / no

I agree to administer an online survey to students in my class.   (circle one) yes / no

Print name _____ Sign _____

Date _____

Appendix C

Survey Questions for Teachers

Thank you for participating in this survey regarding your experiences with professional development. All information on this survey is confidential and anonymous. You may skip any questions you prefer not to answer. This survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Qualifying Information:

Before beginning the survey, please indicate that you have read and signed the assent form, understand the purpose of this survey is to inform a research study about professional development, and are willingly participating in this study. Check one:

1. I have read and signed the consent form, and I understand the purpose of this study is to inform a research study, and I am a willing participant.
    - o Yes to all of the statements above.
    - o No to any of the statements above.

Questionnaire Part I: Teachers

Gender:
____ Female
____ Male

Level of education:
____ Bachelor Degree
____ Master Degree
____ Doctorate Degree

Years of experience as a teacher:
____ less than 2 years
____ 2 - 5
____ 6 - 10
____ 11-15
____ 16 - 20
____ 21-25
____ 26-30
____ 30+

Year of experience in current school:
_____ less than 2 years
_____ 2 - 5
_____ 6 - 10
_____ 11-15
_____ 16 - 20
_____ 21-25
_____ 26-30
_____ 30+

Please rank the following types of professional development activities according to your
preference, using the following scale:
0- none; 1-low; 2-mid, 3; high

_____ Conference
_____ Independent Research
_____ Workshop - in-district
_____ Workshop - outside of district
_____ Observation and feedback from others
_____ Peer Mentoring
_____ Instructional Coaching
_____ Online webinars
_____ On site in-service
_____ University Coursework
_____ Online courses
_____ Educational journals, books, magazines
_____ Institute Day programming
_____ Institutes or Academies
_____ Professional Learning Communities (PLC)
_____ Other (please explain):_____

**Questionnaire Part II: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree to the
following statements, using the following scale:**
Scale:
1 - Strongly Agree
2 - Agree
3 - Neutral
4 - Disagree
5 - Strongly Disagree

_____ I am currently satisfied with the professional opportunities presented to me.

_____ The topics presented in my district have helped me in my profession.

_____ I find professional development opportunities to improve my instructional practice.

_____ I feel professional development meets the needs of new teachers in my district.

_____ I feel that the needs of teachers at varying stages of their careers are taken into consideration for professional development programming.

_____ Teachers have options when it comes to professional development experiences in my district.

_____ Teachers are provided time to share ideas/materials from professional conferences they have attended.

_____ Teachers have a variety of options to choose from for their professional development.

_____ I feel my administration sees professional development as important for continual growth.

_____ I feel professional development has an impact on student achievement.

_____ I feel that participation in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) provides professional development for teachers.

Thank you for your time and thought. Your responses have been recorded. If you have any questions, please contact...

Appendix D

Consent Form for Interview Participants

[Date}

 Dear Educator:

I am a graduate student in the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and I am conducting research for my dissertation on professional development. This research is being conducted as part of the dissertation of Gabriella Stetz Jackson, under the supervision of Dr. Mary Beth Herrmann, Professor in Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Your participation in this activity is completely voluntary.

You may elect to terminate this activity if at any time you begin to feel uncomfortable about the experience. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me (847-962-8912 or gsjacks2@illinois.edu) or my advisor, Mary Beth Herrmann (mbherrma@illinois.edu).

Sincerely,

Gabriella Stetz Jackson

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in the research project described above. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____
Signature   Date

I agree to have the interview digitally recorded for the purposes of transcription.

_____
Signature   Date

Appendix E

Interview Questions for Administrators

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me to discuss professional development in your district. Before we begin, I want to ask you to respond to a few statements indicating your understanding or agreement, okay?

First, I would like to record this interview in order to ensure all information is accurate. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

I also want to assure you that your name, the name of this school, the names of teachers, students, other personnel of this school, will not be used anywhere in this research. When appropriate, pseudonyms will be used. Do you have any questions about that?

Have you read and signed the consent form to participate in this interview?

Do you have any questions about the consent form or this research?

Are you a willing participant in this research and interview?

Do you understand that this should take somewhere between 45-60 minutes, but that you may stop the interview at any time?

Interview Questions:

1. What is your job title, and could you please describe your role at this school?

2. How long have you worked here?

3. Has your role changed over time? If so, how?

4. How important is professional development to you and what role do you play in the planning and implementation of professional development programming?

5. Please describe the average school year in terms of when and how often professional development takes place for teachers.

6. How do you assess the needs of your teachers when it comes to planning professional development activities?

7. Do you consider career stages and years of experience when planning professional development? If so, how does that influence your planning?

8. Do you have formalized processes in place for keeping track of various needs of your staff? If so, please describe those processes.

9. Do you see PLC groups serving in the capacity of professional development for teams? If so, how?

10. Please describe the factors that influence the planning and implementation of professional development programs.

11. What role does the school administration play in developing programs teacher professional development?

Thank you for your time today. This interview will be transcribed, and I will share a copy of your responses with you to verify accuracy.