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Teachers' perceptions of professional development and pedagogical practice: a study of a Kentucky suburban school district.

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE: A STUDY OF A KENTUCKY SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Heidi. From the first day she believed in me more than I did in myself. She continued to support me when it was emotionally overwhelming and academically challenging. She continues to see the best in me even when I do not. This dedication is a small gesture in comparison to all the things she has given to and sacrificed for me.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my children, Carter and Beckett. I will always appreciate the small things you supported and the time you gave me in order to complete this process. There will be people who doubt you and your abilities; trust yourselves. You will always have our support to be the change you want to see in the world. Carter, your passion, huge heart and imagination are inspiring and infectious. Beckett, your determination, energy, and laugh never cease to amaze me! I LOVE YOU ALL to the moon and back!

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ABSTRACT

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE: A STUDY OF A KENTUCKY SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Rachelle Bramlage-Schomburg

November 28, 2022

Professional development supports teacher growth and enhances pedagogical practice. Teachers in Kentucky must complete annual professional development hours and districts must develop a professional development plan tied to research that supports high-quality professional development. This qualitative case study takes place in a rural district, Bullitt County, where I investigated the teachers' perception of a customized professional development, Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC), and its impact on their pedagogical practice.

While a body of research exists on high quality professional development, there is a lack of research on the effectiveness of it, in particular a year-long cohort model with curriculum centered around four pillars: learning of community, thinking strategies, gradual release of responsibility, and academic discourse.

This study drew upon data collected from document analysis, semi-structured interviews and group level assessment (GLA). Document analysis provided an understanding of materials used throughout TFC and feedback gathered from outside observers and participants. The semi-structured interviews provided insight into

participants' perspectives on their experience of TCF. GLA questions functioned to fill the gap of information which addressed teachers' perceptions of the Thinking Focus Cohort and its influence on teachers' pedagogical practice, specifically focusing on the participants' experience as a community of learners as well as their intentional pedagogical practices.

Findings show the customized professional development, TFC, impacted teachers' pedagogical practice from their perspective after reviewing the participants' responses aligned with the selective codes. First, participants were able to identify intentional pedagogical practices they implemented, which also created higher teacher and student efficacy. Next, participants revealed the importance of instructional coaches serving as mentors to foster the perceived pedagogical changes. Finally, participants discussed how the teacher rounds provided exemplar modeling of the intended instructional strategies and created an avenue for collaboration throughout the district. In summary, the transformational changes to teachers' pedagogical practice was supported through a year-long cohort of modeling instructional strategies tied to the curriculum while meeting monthly was enhanced through instructional coaches and teacher rounds.

The demands of teaching have evolved -in part due to high stakes accountability systems. This is coupled with the hemorrhage of teachers leaving the profession for more personal and professional reasons. Professional development is a means for teachers to experience critical support through collaboration, thus resulting in pedagogical changes. The effective professional development and the desired results point directly to implications for policy and practice to mitigate compliance driven by regulations and law, suggesting instead the creation of structures to evaluate the effectiveness of

professional development. This also points directly to examining the style of delivery and methods of support within the evaluation system of professional development. Teachers become models of continued learning focusing on improving their pedagogical practice. This study reveals the importance of high-quality professional development as a means to positively impact a teacher's pedagogical practice.

Keywords: professional development, pedagogical practice, instructional coaches, teacher rounds

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The United States federal government has a long history of involvement in education that has changed with each policy, changing definitions of education based on the demands of society (Long, 2014). The stated purpose of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was to close student achievement gaps by providing all students with a fair and equal opportunity to obtain a high-quality education focusing on four pillars: accountability, flexibility, research-based education, and parent options (Klein, 2015). Like NCLB before it, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) serves as the most recent reauthorization of the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), evidence of the federal government's longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students upholding critical protections for America's disadvantaged and high-need students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Education has experienced many changes within its landscape from the 1950s to more recent NCLB (2002) and even to ESSA (2017); each policy has placed pressure on states to reform schools and improve teaching (Dennis, 2016).

Within federal education policies such NCLB and ESSA, schools experienced changes with Common Core Standards, accountability for all students, and technology changes, all while addressing multicultural diversity and different learning styles within one classroom (Dixon et al., 2014). States, districts, schools, and teachers have learned

what works best for some students does not work best for all students. Consequently, a means to improve student learning is to invest in high quality, relevant, professional development for teachers. Therefore, professional development has been a part of each of these reforms (Long, 2014).

Kentucky adopted the amendments in 704 KAR 3:035 to not only define professional development programs, but also include annual professional development requirements (Annual Professional Development Plan, 2014). In conjunction with 704 KAR 3:035, the Kentucky Department of Education adopted Standards for Professional Learning (Kentucky Department of Education, 2020). Bullitt County Public Schools (BCPS), located just south of Louisville, Kentucky, is a suburban district with approximately 13,000 students enrolled. BCPS followed the directive of the Kentucky Administrative Regulation, but felt it was lacking a quality professional development platform to improve teacher effectiveness and to improve student achievement ultimately. In response, Bullitt County Public Schools implemented the Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC) in the 2014-2015 school year.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the implementation of customized professional development in a rural district and the perceptions of teachers who experienced this professional development program. The context of this study is Bullitt County Public Schools, with a purposive sample of educators serving as the participants of my study. There are three research questions guiding my study with the first serving as the overarching question and the subsequent two delving into perceptions of its impact on pedagogical practice.

RQ 1: What are the teachers' perceptions of the Thinking Focus Cohort and its influence on teachers' pedagogical practice?

RQ 2: What role did instructional coaches play in district effort to improve teachers' pedagogical practices within the Thinking Focus Cohort?

RQ 3: What role did teacher rounds play in district efforts to improve teachers' pedagogical practices within the Thinking Focus Cohort?

Significance of the Study

The primary goal of professional development is to improve student achievement by enhancing teachers' knowledge on pedagogical practices (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Yoon et al., 2007). High quality professional development is vital for teachers to understand and implement the necessary instruction to meet the demands of the standards, assessments, and accountability policies (Wallace, 2014). Therefore, teachers need access to ongoing professional development that is meaningful and aligns with students' needs, time to implement the strategies learned, collaboration with coaching on reflection and improvement of strategies taught (Bailey & Jakicic, 2019).

There has been extensive research that has sought to identify effective professional development for teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Guskey, 2002; Long; 2014; Wallace, 2014; Wei et al., 2010; Yoon et al., 2007). Yet, little research exists connecting the components of professional development to the measurable outcomes (Goldring, 2012). Unfortunately, there has been a lack of focus on evaluations tied to professional development. These results either by a costly, time-consuming process or with a lack of adequate and appropriate standards to guide evaluation practices (Guskey, 2002). Students are expected to meet higher academic standards, teachers are held to a

performance-based accountability for student results, and district leaders are asked to invest in the knowledge and skill of educators if what they do matters (Elmore, 2002). This accountability, in particular, creates a need for districts to examine their professional development, pondering if the financial investments yield tangible payoffs (Kutner et al., 1997).

Teachers participate in the minimum professional development required by their state or district each year (Hill, 2009). Kentucky teachers are required to meet a minimum of 24 hours of professional development. Continued examination, analysis, and evaluation of professional development programs are necessary in order to reveal the aspects that facilitate or impede their effectiveness with teachers (Zambak et al., 2017). I will explore teacher perceptions of a specific professional development program offered in the sampled district -- the Thinking Focus Cohort. This will provide evidence for the district to inform their decision making related to the Thinking Focus Cohort, a professional development offering that has incurred budgetary costs estimated at $25,000 per year since its district-wide implementation in the 2014-2015 school year. Furthermore, this program has not been formally evaluated to determine its perceived impact on a teacher's pedagogical practice.

Theoretical Underpinnings and the Selection of Methodology

Throughout my research, three major theories influence my work: Social Constructivism Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Literary Theory. The intersection of these three theories forms my theoretical understanding and serves as the interpretative framework for teachers' perception of a specific professional development, TFC. All three theories consider the individual as an active learner in the learning process and

emphasize the role of social interaction in learning through dialogism. On one side of the process, social interaction precedes the development of knowledge and cognition (Ruey, 2010). On the other side, a person's sense of self-efficacy develops through interactions and social pressure to achieve (Lent, 1994). The final theory, Literary Theory, uses social context to investigate human interaction and communication, as the concept of language does not exist independently, but rather through meaning, which brings social context to the forefront even in academia (Cuenca, 2011).

Social constructivism is rooted in Jean Piaget's work; however, Vygotsky's constructivism is closely related. Vygotsky's constructivism stressed individuals' sociocultural systems having a major impact on individuals' learning (Kim, 2001; Ruey, 2010). At the root of social constructivism theory, knowledge is socially situated and is constructed through reflections of one's own thoughts and experiences, as well as others' ideas (Creswell, 2014). In a constructivist learning environment, students are encouraged through dialogism to actively engage in learning and to collaborate to solve problems. Merriam et al. (2007) used the concept andragogy, which Malcolm Knowles explained in 1973 as the art and science of teaching concepts to adults to support adult learners. As such, curriculum needs tailoring to meet the individual adult learners' needs, interests, abilities, and experiences with identified learning objectives and outcomes derived from course content (Ruey, 2010). Therefore, the principles of adult learning should emphasize the agency of the learner, collaborative and inquiry-based learning experiences, and application of curriculum to practical, real-world problems (Allen, 2016).

Lent et al. (1994) concluded the social cognitive theory, based on Albert Bandura's work, is rooted in the interaction between learning experiences, self-efficacy,

and outcomes expectancy. Barni et al. (2019) further elaborated using social cognitive theory, which posits teachers' beliefs in their ability to handle the tasks, obligations, and challenges related to their professional activity effectively. These two components support the view that the world is in a constant state of change because of the intersection of humans and their environment (Bandura, 1997) resulting in personal beliefs that arrive out of them, and are a developmental foundation for professional self-efficacy. Therefore, teachers who have a high sense of self-efficacy are willing to try new instructional techniques and preserve through difficult tasks and professional development should harness teacher efficacy (Lotter et al., 2018).

Cuenca (2011) used dialogism based on Makhail Bakhtin's literary theory. Dialogism explores the power in the classroom for the students and learning to teach for adults through heteroglossia, answerability and addressivity. The use of heteroglossia gives a word, phrase, slang, jargon, etc. one set of meaning, yet used in another context or condition during discourse, sheds light a different meaning (Apusiagh et al., 2012). This can be presented during professional development as exemplified by sentence starters such as "I used to think….but now I think" (Wells & Mitchell, 2016). Bakhtin's concept of answerability makes a case for ethical responsibility that resides in action. Through answerability, pedagogical actions and decisions of teachers hold significant ethical weight because of the responsibility between student and teacher preparing for life (Cuenca, 2011). Through participant feedback, instructional coaches can embed student-centered coaching cycles to explore in-depth concepts, such as workshop models, (Wells & Mitchell, 2016). Bakhtin claims dialogism, specifically addressivity, is constructed from words never belonging to an individual, but spoken words learned and heard from

others followed by responses. Therefore, each comment or statement is addressed to someone with an anticipated answer through diverse voices, such as instructional coaches and teachers in participation of their future work together (Hsu, 2014).

Social constructivism theory, social cognitive theory, and literary theory are based on social, interpretative experiences. Researchers using these philosophies look for complexity of views rather than narrow meanings (Creswell, 2018). In this study, I am seeking to understand viewpoints and perceptions of teachers and their experiences within a specific professional development opportunity, the Thinking Focus Cohort. It is my goal to listen to their perspectives to reveal patterns and interpret the complexity of their views. It is not about solving problems, but understanding how teachers felt about their experiences with professional development, the instructional coaches, and teacher rounds. The research questions and interview questions are broad and general so participants can construct meaning of situations and researchers can interpret the meaning teachers have about professional development, TFC (Brown et al., 2006).

Definitions of Terms

I will use the following terms in the context of this study:

Academic Discourse: is the engaged, academic conversations in understanding and discussing materials through listening and speaking skills (Hoffer, 2020).

Activating Schema: is a thinking strategy by bringing background knowledge to a text through personal history, previous stories seen or read, adventures, day-to-day experiences, relationships with others, and passions (PEBC, 2015) in order to make connections between what is read and what is previously known (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Readers make connections around reading through:

- ***Text-to-self***: is when readers make connections around reading by their own life (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003)
- ***Text-to-text***: is when readers make connections around something read or seen on television, movies, or social media (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003)
- ***Text-to-world***: is when readers make connections beyond their own life (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003).

Addressivity is the language oriented towards a listener or reader (Hsu, 2014).

Answerability is the responsibility for justifying one's actions (Cuenca, 2011).

Community: is the learning environment where students feel trusted, have a shared purpose in learning, safe to take risks, and have mutual support from their peers and teacher within a classroom (Hoffer, 2020).

Collaborative Learning: is part of the gradual release of responsibility that is intentional time for students to consolidate their thinking and understanding in order to have accountability discourse while negotiating with their peers, discuss ideas and information and engage in inquiry with other students in order to apply skills and knowledge they have been taught and turn to their peers for support and enrichment (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

Determining Importance: is a thinking strategy used to assist readers in sifting and sorting information to make sense of the abundant amount of information that goes across the pages (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007) by deciding your purpose for reading, consciously searching for new facts, reading with specific questions in mind, and understanding the

layout, particularly with nonfiction text, clarifies what is important while reading (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003).

Focused Instruction: is part of the gradual release of responsibility that is the most important part of the lesson establishes a clear lesson purpose to ensure students grasp the relevance of a lesson (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

Gradual Release of Responsibility: is an instructional framework for teachers to shift the cognitive load purposefully from teacher-centered to a joint responsibility of teacher and students (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

Guided Instruction: is part of the gradual release of responsibility that is intentional time to differentiate content, process, or product that is a result of formative assessment data, in order for the teacher to form a small group in order to scaffold students' developing skills or knowledge through prompting, questioning, cueing, while the other students within the classroom engage in collaborative learning (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

Heteroglossia is the presence of two or more voices or viewpoints (Apusiagh et al., 2012).

Independent Learning: is part of the gradual release of responsibility that is where the students apply skills and strategies to transfer learning to produce a new product using metacognition and self-regulation (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

Inferring: is a thinking strategy used to draw conclusions beyond what is written on the page using sentence starters such as "I predict, I think that, my guess is, now that's a surprise, or my conclusion here" allow the reader to elaborate upon what is read, draw conclusions beyond what is written on the page (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003).

Instructional Coaches: are expert teachers who work alongside teachers to support and provide personalized professional development, job coaching, and work as a resource (Kathis Knudsen, 2017).

Mini Lesson: is part of the workshop model that is a short, focused segment of whole group instruction, led by the teacher introducing a thinking strategy, thinking aloud, modeling a parallel task, or teaching a critical piece of content tied to the students' work ahead to support students as independent learners (Hoffer, 2012).

Monitor for Meaning: a thinking strategy used when readers pause to reflect on their understanding, explore a variety of means to remedy confusion, and employ a range of options, such as reading on and coming back, for establishing meaningful memory (PEBC, 2015).

Opening: is part of the workshop model when a teacher activates students' thinking strategies through warm-up, bell ringers, flashback, etc. to generate thinking (Hoffer, 2020).

Questioning: is a thinking strategy used to clarify confusions, stimulate research efforts, and propel learners forward to dive deeper into reading (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007) in order for the reader to create and strengthen the reader's dialogue with the page and aids in clarifying ideas for a deeper understanding (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003).

Reflection: is part of the workshop model that is intentional time for students to have an opportunity to synthesize their own progress and focus their attention on learning yet to come, where this is done individually, with a partner, or as a whole class and can be recorded on a sticky note, on a loose paper, in a journal written or demonstrated visually (Hoffer, 2020).

Synthesizing: is a thinking strategy used when the reader interweaves their thoughts to form a comprehensive perspective to make the whole greater than just the sum of its parts (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003).

Teacher Rounds: is a defined process where teachers observe other teachers in action, designed to bring about discussions of instruction with teachers using the lens of learning through the students to improve schools directly (City et al., 2018).

Thinking Focus Cohort: is a year-long professional development focused on the four pillars: community, thinking strategies, gradual release of responsibility, and academic discourse.

Thinking Strategies: are tools for students to use when paired with content taught by the teacher to enhance the student's understanding of the topic as well as transfer beyond schooling (Hoffer, 2020).

Visualizing: is a thinking strategy used to construct meaning, whether to fill in missing information or to better understand size, space, and time (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007) using pictures, smells, tastes, sounds, feelings, etc. allow the story to make sense to a reader (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003).

Workshop Model: is an instructional practice to promote student ownership of the process and product of their learning (Hoffer, 2009).

Work Time: is part of the workshop model when participants are grappling with their learning either as collaborative learning ('You do it together.") or independent learning ("You do it alone.") as well as when teachers can also use work time for intentional guided instruction ("We do it") for specific small groups or conferring with students throughout the class to gather formative data (Hoffer, 2012, 2020).

Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction, framing the argument behind professional development and its impact, purpose, statement of research questions, rationale for the study, scope of the study, definitions of terms, methods and data sources, and organizational summary of this study. The remaining chapters consist of a review of the relevant literature (Chapter Two); an in-depth description of the qualitative case study methodology, including participants and methodology used to collect and analyze data (Chapter Three); the findings of the study (Chapter Four); and finally, a discussion of the significance of the results and implication for future research and professional development practices (Chapter Five).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this qualitative case study, I will explore how teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical practice have changed because of the Thinking Focus Cohort, a professional development initiative for Bullitt County educators. Additionally, I will examine how teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical practice have changed because of the additional support of instructional coaches and teacher rounds implementation throughout the Thinking Focus Cohort. There are three research questions guiding my study, with the first serving as an overarching question and the subsequent two delving into impact on teachers' perception of pedagogical practice.

RQ 1: What are the teachers' perceptions of the Thinking Focus Cohort and its influence on teachers' pedagogical practice?

RQ 2: What role did instructional coaches play in district efforts to improve teachers'

pedagogical practices within the Thinking Focus Cohort?

RQ 3: What role did teacher rounds play in district efforts to improve teachers' pedagogical practices within the Thinking Focus Cohort?

In this chapter, I provide a comprehensive review of relevant research in order to provide some historical context of the need for and development of teacher's pedagogical practice through professional development. I begin the literature with a brief history of systemic education reforms in the United States, and more specifically, in Kentucky. I

then review the literature on the purpose of professional development and the characteristics of effective professional development. I then review the research on instructional coaches and teacher rounds that seek to support professional development. I then focus on the extant research that explores the four pillars of professional development tied to the Thinking Focus Cohort. The chapter ends with a summary that captures the predominant themes of the existing research findings and the methods used to arrive at these findings. Most notably, I end this summary with a clear warrant from the research literature, justifying the need for this study.

Increasing Educational Accountability in the United States and Kentucky

Federal legislation in the United States, specifically, The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002), mandated that student subpopulations identified by racial or ethnic identity, students living in poverty, students with limited English proficiency and students with disabilities achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP). If any one of these subpopulations in a school fails to make AYP, state departments of education identified the school as needing improvement, faces public stigmatization, and faces the potential loss of federal funds. By holding schools to student performance measures on standardized assessments, the provision directs administrators and teachers to focus on improving student achievement. NCLB also advocated that every child in the country have a highly qualified teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). This is supported through various research indicating that the quality of teaching has the greatest impact on the learning of students (Hattie, 2012). Ensuring classrooms are filled with highly qualified teachers "does more to assist students who are academically at-risk than any other policy-controllable issue" such as smaller class sizes (Hattie, 2012).

NCLB represented a significant step forward for our schools in accountability particularly with students on their academic progress or lack thereof with regard to subset demographics such as race, income, zip code, disability, home language or background. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was enacted in 2017 as NCLB became increasingly unworkable for schools and educators. ESSA granted flexibility to states regarding specific requirements of NCLB in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to close achievement gaps, increase equity, improve the quality of instruction and increase outcomes for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The improvements include rewritten definitions of professional development. ESSA (2017) defines this as "activities that are sustained, not stand-alone, one-day, or short-term workshops, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom focused" (S. 117, Section 802, page 295, paragraph 42). As a result of the ESSA changes and given their important roles in shaping students' lives, teachers are advocating for more personalized professional learning that focuses on understanding student learning, deepening subject matter knowledge, using differentiated effective instructional strategies, and integrating instruction seamlessly. ESSA also prioritized funding support for professional development (Alexander, 2018). The Trump administration revised ESSA to consolidate state plans to provide flexibility while maintaining essential protections for subgroups of students (DeVos, 2017).

Kentucky's Senate Bill 1 (SB1) was adopted in 2009 in order to revamp the state's accountability system, per NCLB requirements. The passage of SB 1 (2009) caused Kentucky to embark on a comprehensive system of education reform, known as Unbridled Learning. Unbridled Learning called for new, more rigorous standards, a new

assessment and accountability system for schools, and a focus on student readiness (09RS SB1, 2009). One of the critical components of Unbridled Learning was Next Generation Professionals, an initiative to develop highly effective teaching and leadership among all Kentucky educators (09RS SB1, 2009). This paved the way for every student to be taught by an effective teacher and every school to be led by an effective principal. In 2013, House Bill 180 paved the way for a new statewide evaluation system for all certified employees, known as the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES) (13 RS HB 180, 2013). It was designed to promote continuous improvement for professional growth and development of skills needed to be a highly effective administrator or teacher. School leadership professional development is important since school leadership is second only to teachers in its effect on students (Mincu, 2015). The quality of professional development that teachers receive, therefore, is critically important if professional development is to have the intended effects of improving instruction and student learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Kentucky's legislation adopted the amendments in 704 KAR 3:035 to include annual professional development (Annual Professional Development, 2014). 704 KAR 3:035 defined professional development programs, regulated schools and districts to develop a professional development plan to meet the needs of educators, defined duties tied to District Professional Development coordinators, yearly requirements for educators, and minimum budgets towards professional development (Annual Professional Development, 2014). The Kentucky Department of Education, in conjunction with 704 KAR 3:305, adopted the Standards for Professional Learning October 2013 (Kentucky Department of Education, 2020).

Professional Development

The purpose of professional development is to increase student learning by improving, enhancing, or updating classroom instruction (Shumack & Forde, 2011). Traditional models of professional development, in the early years of education, included a one-size-fits-all approach through generic workshops, conferences, seminars, and staff meetings derived from a topic and selection of speakers (Carter, 2013). In the face of growing accountability demands, both school systems and practitioners are taking professional development more seriously (Wolff et al., 2010). Students' success depends on schools' capacity to deal with their specific needs (Shumack & Forde, 2011). Therefore, the school's improvement involves research-derived expert knowledge for teacher professional development (Carter, 2013).

There is an array of professional development opportunities for teachers to choose from, all with the intent to increase content knowledge and pedagogical skills, which contribute to a teacher's personal, social, and emotional growth (Schmoker, 2012). Professional development can look different in a formal setting, such as seminars on in-service days, workshops, local conferences such as Kentucky Society for Technology in Education (KySTE) or national conferences such as Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), college courses, and special institutes. Other forms of professional development can occur when teachers observe other teachers, participate in the selection of new curricula, or design and facilitate instructional strategies for colleagues (Remillard, 2005). A wide view of these examples of formal professional development posits that adults learn through social interaction, constructing ideas through dialogism in learning communities (Borko, 2004).

Concerns with Professional Development

Self-efficacy is the perception of one's capabilities to shape and implement actions required to generate desired results (Bandura, 1997). Teachers' self-efficacy indicates teachers' confidence in their teaching competencies to teach their students and promote student learning, realizing specified academic achievement levels. Teachers who are highly efficacious are motivated to experiment with new pedagogical practices to teach their students (Gulistan et al., 2017). Teachers' professional development is a way to increase teachers' pedagogical knowledge to not only support student outcomes but also improve teachers' self-efficacy. However, research has not shown many professional development initiatives to be effective in supporting changes in teachers' pedagogical practices, leaving states and districts to question their effectiveness (Gulistan et al., 2017).

To improve teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skill, states and districts have committed resources and invested in professional growth. Schools and districts invest resources (time and money), but yield varied results (Schmoker, 2012). For example, more than 100 middle school mathematics teachers from 12 US school districts participated in over 100 hours of professional development in the form of summer institutes, seminars, and in-school coaching (Garet et al., 2011). According to Jackson (2011), Los Angeles Unified School invested $500 million in professional development to support the completion of graduate work for teachers. Their investment of money did not pay off, as the professional development had no effect on raising student performance (Jackson, 2011). Teachers reported needing more time, more in-class coaching, and tailored professional development to meet their varying needs (Jackson, 2011). Similarly,

there was no evidence that the math teachers' participation in over 100 hours of professional development improved teacher knowledge in spite of the substantial investment of time and money (Garet et al., 2011).

Districts are trying to uncover what attracts teachers to certain professional development opportunities while ignoring others. Anderson (2008) found that approximately 67% of middle school science teachers attend for content knowledge while 78% of middle school science teachers focused on improvement in their teaching pedagogy through instructional strategies. These results vary depending on the content taught. Some teachers' teaching assignments change year to year due to their certification(s) and the staffing needs within the school. The unpredictability of their teaching assignments causes teachers to reevaluate their professional development options (Anderson, 2008). This is reinforced when teachers claim lack of time: lack of time to attend, lack of time to collaborate with other teachers, and lack of time to implement strategies. These roadblocks limit the impact on a teacher's pedagogical skills. For districts, the impact of professional development decreases with teacher movement, both within the schools or district, and turnover to another district (Fields et al., 2012).

Characteristics of High-Quality Professional Development

A basic framework for professional development includes teacher participation in professional development, and as a result, their knowledge and skills improve. The new improved knowledge and skills transfers and improves the way the teacher teaches, which ultimately results in increased student learning (Shumack & Forde, 2011). Desimone (2011) examined empirical research to shift from the basic framework to an effective professional development model that includes five core features: content

focus, active learning, coherence duration, and collective participation, encouraging teachers to focus on learning the content as well as learning how their students learn content. These features encourage teachers to focus on their content and pedagogical skills needed for students to learn their content. This encourages teachers to become involved in the adult learning process through observations while receiving feedback and analyzing student work. Desimore (2011) also suggested teachers should participate in professional development together for 20 hours or more of content time.

Professional development is about continuous learning and improvement; thus, it serves as a means to improve a teacher's pedagogical skills. As professional development continues to evolves from a single day seminar to workshops, organizations like Learning Forward, emerge to support the instructional leaders in the facilitation of professional development. Learning Forward has a mission that prides itself in building the capacity of instructional leaders to build and maintain a highly professional development. Learning Forward (2013) outlined the characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results through seven standards: learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning design, implementation, and data. Learning Forward further expanded its four cornerstones of professional development that consists of equity, team learning, high-quality instructional resources, and advocate with evidence (Hirsh, 2019).

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) expands off previous features of effective professional development after reviewing 35 studies of methodologically rigorous studies that demonstrated a positive link between professional development, teaching practice, and student outcomes. Professional development should include the following seven

features: content focused incorporation of active learning utilizing adult learning theory; support for collaboration; job-embedded contexts; use of models and modeling of effective practice; providing coaching and expert support; offers opportunities for feedback and reflection; sustained duration. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) concluded the professional development that had the largest impact contained five out of seven elements or more.

For any professional development program to be successful, teachers must first participate in the learning process (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2011; Fields et al., 2012;). University personnel provided Kindergarten through second grade teachers from select urban Memphis elementary schools with professional development on reading instruction focusing on phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary development, and writing (Perkins & Cooter, 2013). The teachers participated in 150 hours of professional development over two semesters of graduate level work, which included 60 hours of job-embedded coaching on their pedagogical practice with literacy implementation. Included in this mode of professional development were principal training of the selected schools and weekly literacy coaching to support the translation of new learning into practice. The collaboration proved to be an effective model as evidenced by teachers implementing reading content and methods and yielding improved student outcomes as evidenced by 2005 Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) Reading Test scores. Teachers also reported feeling positive about the content, relevance of the Academy curriculum, and improved pedagogical practices in teaching literacy through the extensive and intentional professional development they received (Perkins & Cooter, 2013).

Science Teachers Learning from Lesson Analysis (STeLLA) program sought to strengthen teachers' pedagogical skills first by exploring student science thinking in order to anticipate misconceptions and students' responses. STeLLA also supported teachers in their curricula development to sequence science ideas for students to construct a coherent science story. Roth et al. (2011) found teachers experienced greater gains in student achievement and self-efficacy after 100 plus hours of reviewing videos of modeled lessons taught, modeled lessons by expert teachers, analyzing their pedagogical practices and reflecting on their experiences as viewed on science pre and posttests compared to their peers who only received content knowledge.

In a Texas district, teachers engaged in on-site, small group professional development to enhance inquiry-based, literacy integrated instruction in science classrooms to improve English Language Learners (ELL) science and reading achievement (Heller et al., 2012). The initiative required teachers to collaborate in bi-weekly workshops, where they reviewed upcoming lessons, reflected on students' progress towards desired learning outcomes and participated as learners in the inquiry-based science strategies, which included support to help ELL students. Heller et al. (2012) found students whose teachers participated in district initiative professional development scored higher in science and reading achievement than those students whose teachers did not participate as evidenced by Quality English and Science Teaching (QuEST). Teachers also reported more confidence supporting ELL students as well as other students on the development of inquiry-based science instruction

Generic and short-term professional developments are being replaced by customized programs relevant to participants, the learning from which is reflected as new

practices, processes, and strategies in the work setting (Grisham et al., 2002). Teachers are the main actors in their classroom and may promote in complex ways effective learning processes. Effective teaching is a unique factor that may reduce or even close the achievement gap (Mincu, 2015). Designing and leading individualized and differentiated professional development, resulting in changes in practitioners' practice and changes in student learning outcomes is a significant task (Carter, 2013). Gambrell and Morrow (2015) argue the key to effective professional development is specificity to its target, designed for immediate application in instruction with particular students, with instructional materials available, and with intentional support or it will not work. Furthermore, Porter et al. (2000) revealed commonalities around effective methods to improve teacher pedagogical practice through professional development as the following: ongoing, job embedded, collaborative, reflective, and inquiry-based. Thus, effective professional development provides teacher input into the learning topic, an active role in the engagement of ideas, and a network of colleagues to challenge and support their thinking (Miller & Stewart, 2013).

Therefore, continued examination, analysis, and evaluation of professional development programs are necessary in order to reveal the different aspects that encourage or inhibit their effectiveness on teachers (Zambak et al., 2017). It becomes the challenge of schools and districts to continue to provide quality professional development to support the teachers and their growth. To enable teacher pedagogical growth with these reforms in professional development, time, practice, and feedback from instructional coaches is essential for teachers (Cooter, 2003).

Supporting Professional Growth through Instructional Coaches

With its emphasis on reading instruction, the enactment of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) led to the expansion of instructional coaches in US public elementary schools (Dole, 2004). The instructional coach is an on-site resource for teachers who can provide targeted professional development opportunities to meet teachers' specific learning needs (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). The professional development activities include but are not limited to observing teachers' classrooms, providing feedback on instruction, modeling lessons, collaborating with teachers on the analysis of student data and facilitating professional development (Woulfin, 2014).

Although coaching for teachers is often prevalent to improve pedagogical practice and student learning, there are often challenges as instructional coaches begin their work (Miller & Stewart, 2013). The transition from individual practice of teachers to community practice and learning can be challenging and can generate fear amongst teachers. In addition, lack of support from school administrators, lack of defined roles and purpose for instructional coaches, and lack of guided coaching cycles for improvement present further challenges (Miller & Stewart, 2013). Instructional coaches bear the responsibility for building teacher capacity, and serve as one of the catalysts to increase student achievement through ongoing work, collaborating and motivating teachers to become active participants, and to drive change through goal setting (Pawl, 2019). Coaches draw from their learning community's knowledge or their ability to facilitate collective learning while working with individuals or teams of teachers. Therefore, instructional coaches can help incorporate all elements of effective

professional development with learning communities, being a strength of the practice when developed and implemented adequately (Woulfin & Rigby, 2017).

There are different models for instructional coaches to utilize to support teachers. Cooter (2003) introduced a capacity-building model for teacher development that reflects the fundamental stages of learning pulled from Lev Vygotsky and Benjamin Bloom. Within this model, learning occurs over time, two years or more, combining the cognitive development of the teacher and field practice with intentional coaching for improved quality of implementation on strategies taught for increased student achievement (Cooter, Jr., 2003). Sweeney and Harris (2017) define this type of coaching as teacher-centered, where the focus is on what the teacher is, or is not, doing and addressing through coaching.

The Community Coaching Cohort Model (CCCM) was designed using research on effective professional development and coaching adult learners to establish a learning community amongst teachers with a focus on relationships, collaboration, research, and personal reflection (Miller & Stewart, 2013). CCCM includes a nine-week cycle where coaches and teachers during phase one reflect and determine an area of growth. During phase two, teachers observe coaches modeling lessons, and the final phase, phase 3, has the teachers choosing an area of growth in their pedagogical practice to implement with feedback provided by the instructional coaches (Miller & Stewart, 2013). Sweeney and Harris (2017) characterize CCCM as relationship-driven and providing support to teachers in a way that does not challenge or threaten them.

Student-centered coaching focuses on using classroom data and student work to analyze progress as well as collaboration between the teacher and instructional coach to

make informed decisions about instruction that is both differentiated and needs-based (Sweeney, 2011). Coaching cycles are designed to last between six and nine weeks, with a minimum of one weekly planning conversation to look at student work and design upcoming instruction and coaching one to three times per week in the classroom (Sweeney & Harris, 2017). During stage one, the teacher and instructional coach establish a standards-based goal for student learning, which comes from the alignment within the school and/or district. In stage two, working collaboratively, the teacher and instructional coach determine where students are in relationship to the learning targets derived from the established goal (Sweeney & Harris, 2017). For stage three, the teacher and instructional coach implement instruction through co-teaching, and modify when students are not meeting learning targets. The final stage, stage four, is where the teacher and instructional coach determine if students have met learning goals by analyzing formative data and co-planning additional instruction for those students who have not met the standards-based learning goals (Sweeney & Harris, 2017). Student-centered coaching is a collaborative effort with instructional coaches and the teacher to set specific targets for students derived from standards in curriculum and then working collaboratively to ensure targets are met (Sweeney, 2011).

The importance of providing learning in combination with model curriculum and classroom materials should not be underestimated. Kleickmann et al. (2016) found that teachers who used educational strategies alone had lower student achievement in science compared to those who had access to materials and expert support with modeling combined with collaborative learning opportunities focusing on sequencing and presenting science concepts. Within education, teachers often play the role of experts.

Other times instructional coaches shared evidence-based practices and shared expertise. Either form of expert teachers provides intentional focus of improvement, feedback, and recommendations to improve pedagogical practices (Sweeney, 2011). Structured expert coaching can be one-on-one coaching, facilitation of workshops, on-site observation and feedback from expert teachers, or any combination thereof (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Powell et al. (2010) found that teachers who participated in on-site coaching had larger gains and higher student achievement in early language and literacy skills than those who did not participate.

Some teachers are highly adept at accomplishing their goals in order to improve student learning through growth of pedagogical practice, there are many more teachers who are struggling to fit all the pieces together in a way that improves the teachers pedagogical practice and student achievement (Pawl, 2019). The goal of school-based, expert coaching through use of instructional coaches is to improve student learning by providing continuous, relevant, and job-embedded-supports to teachers (Sweeney, 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). These intentional supports redefine and rethink how professional development is viewed, evaluated, and assessed through student achievement (Guskey, 2002). Yet, instructional coaching combined with teacher rounds yields greater improvement (Powell et al., 2010).

Supporting Professional Growth through Teacher Rounds

There are multiple ways instructional leaders get into classrooms to see what teachers and students are doing, such as observations, walk-throughs, and teacher rounds. Observations are used to evaluate teachers, while walk-throughs are used to evaluate how well teachers are implementing a particular program or set of practices that the district or

school has adopted (David, 2008). During an observation or walk-through, only the teacher being observed is expected to learn when the observation is complete. (City, 2011). Teacher rounds is a process used by educators adapted from the medical rounds doctors use in hospitals (Aguilar, 2012; Terantino & Hoyt, 2014). It is used to examine what is happening in classrooms in a systematic, purposeful way, conducted by teams in conjunction with pre-classroom visit preparation and post classroom visit debriefing (David, 2008), by comparing instructional practices of the observer to the observees to improve their pedagogical practice (Marzano & Troth, 2013).

The Standards for Professional Learning call for professional development that fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance (Learning Forward, 2013). It does not guarantee all teachers are equally effective in learning, but it does support teachers through a process of collaborative learning and mutual accountability, focusing on improved student learning (Troen & Boles, 2014). Teacher rounds align with the Standard of Professional Learning by producing a professional learning environment that has teachers observing others to learn from data-driven feedback offered from a stand of inquiry and making a commitment to change their practice based on their learning. It creates a culture of professional growth improving teaching and learning by providing tools, skills, strategies, and supports to improve pedagogical practice (Troen & Boles, 2014).

While participating in teacher rounds, there is a shift of attention from the teacher to the student and the tasks in which they are engaged (City et al., 2018). There is a defined process utilized by the facilitator in order to prepare the teachers for teacher rounds effectively (Troen & Boles, 2014). First, the facilitator prepares the host teacher

with the problem of practice by focusing on what the teacher wants the students to know and do and what will be observed. Next, the round group of teachers observes the host teacher's class. The teachers debrief the observation, discussing their wonderings and learning. Following the debrief, the teachers who observed commit to a "theory of action" which is a change in practice each wants to experimentally change in their own classroom with documented student outcomes. Finally, teachers share their record of practice, their data, and how their pedagogical practices evolved (Troen & Boles, 2014).

From Boston to California, districts are implementing teacher rounds as they are an inquiry process, where all participants should expect to learn something themselves (City, 2011). Judith Blanco, District Instructional Coach, enacts teacher rounds for Boston high schools as a "cyclical process that directly correlates to the whole school improvement plan and professional development plan as it is not a one-time event" (City, 2011). United for Success Academy (UFSA) in Oakland, California uses teacher rounds to support professional development for English Learners to speak more within classrooms (Aguilar, 2012). Oakland Unified School District implements teacher rounds twice a year in every school where approximately 800 classrooms are observed. The data collected and the teacher round process fosters an inquiry cycle rooted in the instructional core versus attempting to implement a quick fix without understanding the problem of practice (Aguilar, 2014).

The Four Pillars of Thinking Focus Cohort

Education provides students access to postsecondary options, such as higher education, allowing them to make informed decisions about their finances, health, and employment (Hoffer, 2012). Education equips students with problem-solving power to

preserve life, such as development of vaccines during the pandemic, and the socioemotional skills, focusing on empathy, flexibility, resilience, persistence, and optimism (Hoffer, 2020). The four pillars of community, thinking strategies, gradual release of responsibility, and academic discourse, seek to equip students with 21st century skills needed to succeed in their careers during the information age. The 21st century skills include learning skills, mental processing of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication; literacy skills discern facts through information, media, and technology; and life skills focus on personal and professional qualities of flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity, and social skills (Stauffer, 2020).

Community

According to Hattie (2012), teacher-student relationships have a large impact on student achievement when students perceive classrooms as fair, safe to ask for help, students are valued, and the purpose of class is to learn and make progress. Yet this experience does not happen for all students, but rather for the students who have positive relationships with teachers (Hoffer, 2009). School can be hard for many students for many reasons, such as cultural background of families, pedagogical practices implemented by teachers, and individual student beliefs about themselves as learners, can interfere with students' academic success (Hoffer, 2012).

Teaching can be exhausting and challenging. In managing student behavior, having to make students comply with a directive does not promote community, compassion, responsibility, or reflection (Hoffer, 2020). The relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom community is not a simple one-way relationship from belief to practice, but rather a dynamic two-way relationship in which beliefs are influenced by practical,

classroom experiences (Muijs & Reynolds, 2002). If teachers believe all students can and must learn all content, the value of learning is thinking, and all students are learners capable of mastery, then teachers must create classrooms where teachers serve as coaches and students engage as a community of learners (Hoffer, 2012). Creating an intentional culture of learning with a community as described takes effort, courage, time, and patience (Hoffer, 2009).

Placing students together within a classroom creates a community composed of individuals (Hoffer, 2009). With intentionality on the engagement of each student, teachers can create a productive culture or purpose, thus creating a community of thinkers where learners see peers as resources. Therefore, productive communities of thinkers offer students opportunities to achieve more as part of the collective than they might achieve individually (Hoffer, 2020). Learning environments are inviting atmospheres displaying high quality work full of thinking on walls, classrooms arranged in groups or circular patterns for easy access to classmates to collaborate and learn together, and easy access to supportive materials (Hoffer, 2009). Bryk and Schneider (2002) undertook an analysis of 400 elementary schools, finding higher levels of relational trust among school communities resulted in greater improvement of standardized tests. While results are important, they are not the ultimate goal. The community of learners understands the process of learning is rarely linear, it requires commitment, and investment of effort, and welcomes errors, as this is the essence of learning. It is through building trust in a classroom where the questioning is high by students and engagement is the norm, that students can gain reputations as effective learners (Hattie, 2012).

Just as a community of professional educators share expectations and norms for professional development, classrooms must do the same. Teachers can invite students to create what an optimal learning environment could look and sound like by collaboratively developing classroom norms (Hoffer, 2012). Others, like the Director Rob Stein, faculty member of Denver's Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning, created a set of norms for students, such as you are responsible for your own learning and supporting of others, be where you are supposed to be, and take care of the learning environment (Hoffer, 2009). Whatever norms are adopted, they must mirror beliefs and values of the teacher, be referred to often, explained, demonstrated, and include discussion of how and when norms were not followed, in order to enable students to recognize and celebrate when norms are followed (Hoffer, 2012).

Learning to learn in a group setting is one of the most challenging tasks due to students having experiences from their past cooperative activity, both good and bad (Reinhart, 2000). However, this allows them to pull from prior experiences to create solutions and helps develop a community of value that models problem-solving (Hoffer, 2009). Classroom communities support student learning under cooperative conditions, while interpersonal relationships have a strong influence on student achievement. Triesman (1992) reduced failures through intentional grouping of study groups. Moll et al. (2009) used daily household routines seen through home visits to support teachers and students to support student learning for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Building community through challenging tasks, communication, collaboration, and empathy towards and with one another is difficult work yet rewarding (Hoffer, 2012).

Cultivating a community through communication supports social and emotional learning. Social and emotional learning is not a sacrifice of academic learning but rather a source of learning as many elements of a student's life improve along with the development of these skills (National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development, 2019). A meta-analysis of 200 studies found improved student behavior and feelings about school, making it safer to communicate and learn (National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development, 2019). Therefore, when students are motivated, responsible and focused they are more able to persist in hard tasks and respond to good teaching, thus improving student achievement. Thus, communication through academic discourse models curiosity, demonstrates respect for ideas and teaches empathy while supporting social and emotional learning and improving student learning (Hoffer, 2012).

Communities need structures that hold learners accountable both academically and as community contributors (Hoffer, 2012). Feedback, according to Hattie's meta-analysis, has a high effect size on students' academic growth when teachers provide feedback appropriate to the point that students are involved in their learning and teachers seek evidence that this feedback is received appropriately. Teacher feedback given frequently to the entire class models appropriate, honest information for learners to offer feedback to one another (Hoffer, 2009). Giving and receiving peer feedback empowers students to take responsibility for their own learning. Self-reflection allows learners to succeed in community endeavors when they can read, write, and think aloud before engaging with others. Feedback to teachers models respect and trust for learners and their

thinking and communicates that teachers are engaged in an ongoing process of improvement (Hoffer, 2009).

Developing a community of learners, keeping them together and learning together takes time (Hoffer, 2020). It is not an easy task for teachers to make learning come together, to create routines, build trust, and have shared purpose through norms, while independently learning, building connections between home and school and finding common ground with their peers. (Peterson, 1992). Teachers have daily opportunities to create safe environments where students honor thinking and teachers encourage their students because the ones doing the reading, writing, and talking are doing the learning also (Hoffer, 2009).

Thinking Strategies

Teachers have never been under more pressure: pressure to perform, cover curriculum, meet standards, and ensure high scores on standardized tests, along with the political climate surrounding education (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). When teachers watch students struggling with thinking and learning, it is often too much to bear; yet students have a right to think and teachers have an ethical obligation to teach students to think and provide them with meaningful content about which to think (Woods, 2009). Thinking is active, strategically learned, highlights what is important, and focused from the background information to create the foreground. However, thinking can often be a slow process and if teachers deny time to think, students do not learn or remember because they will not care about content covered (Woods, 2009).

Unfortunately, the United States of America has a reading problem. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), only 35% of all 4th graders were at or

above National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), while only 34% of all 8th graders were at or above NAEP proficiency. The 2019 achievement-level results reflect the decrease in overall average scores and selected percentiles at both grades when compared to 2017. Kentucky dropped three percentile points from 2017 to 2019 matching the national average, leaving Kentucky ranked 34th out of 51 states, including District of Columbia in reading proficiency (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019).

In 2019, Kentucky adopted Kentucky Academic Standards, which included language strategies, such as comprehension strategies and thinking strategies, for application to improve literacy. By the end of year, students should demonstrate flexible use of a variety of comprehension strategies, such as questioning, monitoring, visualizing, inferencing, summarizing, synthesizing, using prior knowledge and determining importance, to read, comprehend, and analyze grade-level, complex literary texts. (English Language Arts Advisory Panel & English Language Arts Standards Review and Development Committee, 2019). Even with dedicated teachers and the standards with implementation of comprehension strategies, there is still a concern.

Reading is a fundamental success tool in life, opening the door to all other learning opportunities (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Reading is not an isolated subject, but a critical means to an end (Woods, 2009). Reading is thinking, more specifically comprehension building on the past knowledge, mastering new information, and connecting with the minds of the authors and others (Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003). Research suggests that comprehension is a multifaceted process (McLaughlin, 2012). Comprehension is a continuous, complex activity that is influenced by factors such as

constructivism through schema, influential teachers, active readers, text, and the varying types of instruction to broaden a reader's comprehension ability (Duke & Pearson, 2002). The more prior knowledge and experience readers have with a particular topic, the easier it is for them to make connections between what they are learning and already know (Anderson, 2018).

Comprehension strategies, supported by research, are tools that readers employ to construct meaning from text thus increasing students' comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; PEBC, 2015). Explicit instruction is a multiple-step process that must be taught intentionally to gradually release responsibility to students (McLaughlin, 2012; Zimmermann & Hutchins, 2003). The seven key strategies include activating schema, questioning, making inferences, synthesizing, visualizing, monitoring for meaning, and determining importance (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; PEBC, 2015). Yet these seven strategies are also known as metacognitive strategies, thinking about their thinking.

Metacognitive monitoring of these strategies is important; especially in education because accurate metacognition is linked with better academic performance (Miller & Geraci, 2011). Hattie's (2012) meta-analysis confirms when students develop awareness of what they are doing, where they are going, and how they are going there, there is a high level of learning and growth. Therefore, teachers need to be diligent in guiding students through the process of metacognition in order for the students to work towards their gradual independence as a reflective learner (Swinehart, 2009).

Swinehart (2009) found students who received intensive, focused literacy instruction and tutoring will graduate from high school and attend college in significantly

greater numbers than those not receiving such attention. Teachers strive to believe all students can learn, but often grapple with providing authentic opportunities for students to think and to own that thinking. If we intentionally teach and encourage students to apply metacognitive techniques, like thinking strategies, to each type of text read, students will become more independent, on the road to adulthood (Swinehart, 2009).

Gradual Release of Responsibility and Workshop

The belief that students are empty vessels into which teachers pour information into their brains has been debunked by research (Fisher & Frey, 2013). Learning requires interaction and whoever is doing the work: the thinking, problem-solving, writing, thinking, reading, etc. in classrooms is doing the learning (Fisher et al., 2009). Students' learning begins as the teacher takes a step back (Kong & Pearson, 2003). The teacher's role is still active, picking up cues from their students in order to model, facilitate, coach, confer and celebrate for learners to continue the work of learning and growing. Gradual release of responsibility and workshop support intentional time for the student to be released to explore, think, and learn rather than guiding to replicate (Grant et al., 2012).

Pearson and Gallagher (1983) designed the first model of gradual release of responsibility to shift the load deliberately from teacher-led to joint responsibility of both the teacher and the student to sustain independent work. The original model contained two components, shared practice and guided practice, designed to prepare students for gradual release on focused, successful learning (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Shared practice happens when the teacher leads the instructional activity but invites students to think and work together through a task. For guided practice, the responsibility shifts from

the teacher to students, where students take on more of the responsibility for thinking or talking (Hoffer, 2009).

Fisher and Frey (2013) updated the gradual release of responsibility to include the nature of learning and teachers cycling purposely through focused instruction, guided instruction, collaborative learning, and independent learning. Through this model, learning occurs through intentional interactions with the teacher and student exchanges: "*I do it*; *we do it*; *you do it together; you do it independently*" (Fisher & Frey, 2014, pg. 17). Teachers provide students with an intentional opportunity to struggle through difficult problems with a clear learning goal in mind, combined with enough stretch and strategic assistance. This develops lasting connections and significant ideas, increased capacity for productive struggle, and durable skills for problems in life (Grant et al., 2012).

Fisher and Frey (2014) contend the gradual release of responsibility takes on four interactive components: focus lessons, guided lessons, collaborative learning and independent learning. Focused lessons are where new concepts or skills are being introduced which include an established purpose for their learning, and where the teachers are transparent with their own thinking procedures. Focused lessons, also known as direct instruction, focused on cognitive learning. Kozioff et al. (2001) argued direct instruction designed with cognitive learning, are highly effective and will enable teachers to meet the demands of increasing school accountability. Guided lessons provide students opportunities to try it for themselves with teacher prompts and cues, questions, in order to facilitate or lead other students. Cook et al. (2013) concluded the use of guided lessons, more specifically with purposeful prompts and cues, in math lessons increased students'

learning in their classroom assessments. Learning is a social act, constructing ideas proposed by Vygotsky (Kim, 2001; Ruey, 2010) and spending time with peers is vital (Fisher & Frey, 2013). Collaborative learning provides structured time where students discuss, negotiate, solve and think with their peers over challenging tasks. Challenging tasks allow for productive failure, where students make errors that must be resolved. Kapur (2012) studied the effectiveness of productive failure in middle and high school mathematics. His findings resulted in students encouraged to find solutions by direct support in which students demonstrated higher levels of listening to find solutions related to their problems (Kapur, 2012). The last component, independent learning, improves self-regulation through metacognition where students apply the skills and information independently (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

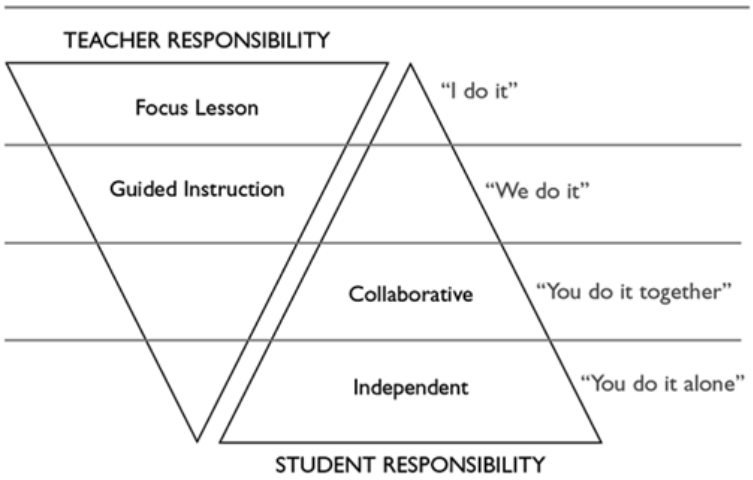

Figure 1. Fisher & Frey's (2014) Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework

Darling-Hammond et. al (2017) claims too many pedagogical strategies marginalized students, specifically students of color. Effective instruction often follows a progression in which teachers gradually do less of the work and students gradually assume increased responsibility for their learning (Fisher & Frey, 2014). The Workshop

Model promotes ownership of the process and product, and thereby fosters independence by giving students training and support, then affording them ample time to work and think (Hoffer, 2009). The workshop model can also teach students independence as an input into education equity (Hammond, 2015).

The American Institutes for Research (2021) aggregated state data on English Language Arts. Those schools who implemented the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) were associated with statistically significant positive effects on ELA scores in New York City and Atlanta Georgia. From this research, literacy instructors, such as Lucy Calkins, have honed readiness and writers' workshops, modeling how teachers' roles change from that of a presenter to that of a facilitator and coach (Hoffer, 2012). Calkins (2012) suggests teachers continue to use the workshop as a practical approach to allow students time to write, grapple with learning and receive feedback in order for revisions to happen before finalizing their understandings. Lain (2017) further supported the workshop model as a method to improve not only teacher pedagogical practice but also student outcomes that outperform their peers in state assessment in writing.

A workshop, whether one lesson or over several lessons, is a cyclical, flexible structure that follows a predictable pattern (Hoffner, 2012). A workshop lesson begins with an opening, which serves as a springboard into the mini lesson by having students complete bell ringers, flashbacks, and journal entries to activate their schema and promote thinking. It is then followed by a mini lesson, lasting approximately 10-15 minutes, composed of a connection called the hook to learning, teaching the lesson through modeling or think alouds (*"I do it"*), actively engaging students in turn and talk

(*"We do it"*), and corner talk or annotating a text in order to launch students into their work time. Work time is the largest section of time, 30-45 minutes, for students to grapple with the learning as individuals ("*You do it alone*"), pairs or groups ("*You do it together*") with catch and release embedded when the teacher needs to pull the whole class together to address a misconception. The final piece is reflection. Reflection is a time, five to ten minutes, for students to wrap up their learning for the period by reflecting on a strategy, growth of their learning or identifying a misconception (Hoffer, 2020).

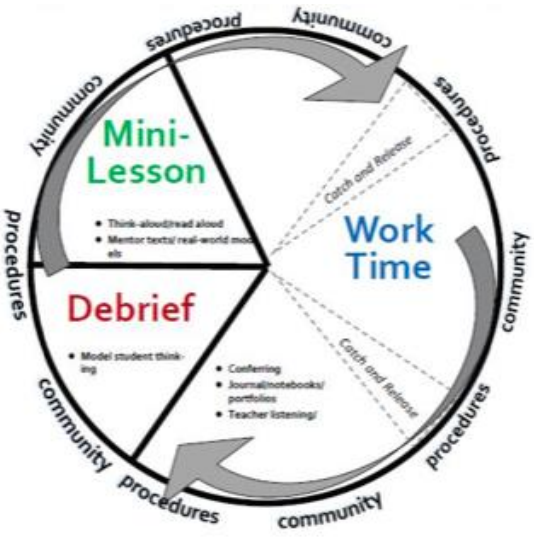

Figure 2. Hoffner's (2020) Sample Workshop Structure

The National Research Council (2000) identified three factors that promote learning: engaging preconceptions, offering learning as a conceptual framework, and creating opportunities for metacognition. The workshop model, supported by gradual release of responsibility, allows all three to happen (Hoffer, 2020). It provides teachers an ongoing cycle of assessment to guide instruction (Hoffer, 2009). It empowers students as thinkers and workers that not only promote student engagement but also intentional time

to think about what they are learning, why their learning is important, and how it fits with what they already know (Hoffer, 2009).

Academic Discourse

In many school classrooms, students sit either in rows facing forward or in table groups with the invitation to work together. In these classrooms, teachers' voices dominate conversations, or if students talk, it is to reflect on the initiated responses evaluation format, where a teacher poses a question, allows students to respond, and then evaluates their response (Hoffer, 2020). Unfortunately, while teachers are asking many questions, the majority are low-level cognitive questions. For students, a typical school day sounds like adults policing, praising, and directing, as less than 10% of their conversations revolve around academics (Hoffer, 2012). Reinhart (2000) invites teachers to use talking intentionally for students as a time to create, rather than assess, understand, an approach that raises student-achievement and encourages high-level thinking.

In a study of 44 classrooms in 25 schools, Close (2002) found students were more successful in a classroom where the teacher engaged students in thoughtful dialogue. Evidence from the National Assessment of Education Progress (2013) showed the more frequently learners discussed their reading material, the higher their test scores. However, it is not just talk in a classroom that makes a difference, but the quality of talk devoted to discussion and authentic questioning requiring effective interaction, and metacognition for students that create strong effects (Swinehart, 2009).

Carey (2013) found that students of lower socioeconomic status enter school at least two years behind their affluent peers in measures of language development. To reduce this language gap, Common Core standards implemented speaking and listening

standards across all grades. For example, in grades nine and ten, students are expected to initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, such as one-on-one, in groups, or teacher-led, with diverse partners on grades level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. (National Governors Association et al., 2009). Students are also expected to present information, findings and supporting evidence understandably, concisely, and logically in order for listeners to follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance and style which are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task. (National Governors Association et al., 2009). Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS), adopted in 2019, removed speaking and listening skills but adopted comprehension strategies and thinking strategies, for application to improve not only literacy, but academic discourse. By the end of the year, students in grades nine and ten should demonstrate use of a variety of comprehension strategies, such as questioning, monitoring, visualizing, inferencing, summarizing, synthesizing, using prior knowledge and determining importance to read, and being able to comprehend and analyze grade level appropriate, complex literary texts independently and proficiently (English Language Arts Advisory Panel & English Language Arts Standards Review and Development Committee, 2019). Classroom discussion is a skill that can be taught, modeled, and practiced during academic discourse (Hoffer, 2009).

Academic discourse is a logical discussion derived from an open-ended question, where students are engaged in the topic through various protocols. Academic discourse comes from focused, purposeful questions that motivate students to grapple with the question in a serious-minded conversation (Hoffer, 2020). Academic discourse, when

intentionally taught and implemented with feedback provided throughout, causes a high effect on student learning (Hattie, 2012). Before releasing students to engage in their academic discourse, teachers need to explicitly orally model and demonstrate to the whole class by presenting a small skill of a quality conversation. This displays the level of accountability by identifying conversations one is expected to hear (Hoffer, 2012). This starts with whole groups and short paired discussions to model and provide feedback so that as students develop skills, the students can be gradually released into groups of four, six, and so forth (Hoffer, 2009).

Even with modeling in place, some students still do not easily engage in discussion. For students to bravely share their thinking, publicly discuss, and/or disagree with their classmates or themselves, students need to feel safe in classrooms. Respect for thinking is more than a rule, but also how teachers can foster by expressing curiosity, reflecting assistance, applauding courage, welcoming diversity, and voicing gratitude (Hoffer, 2012). After building a community and prior to launching a conversation, allowing time for students to think by sharing with one classmate or writing (Hoffer, 2009). In addition, teachers need to intentionally plan by providing protocols or structures to ensure focus, progress, and accountability (Hoffer, 2020). Protocols, such as turn-and-talk, four corners, jigsaw, and socratic circles, take into account the grouping size, time spent on conversations, and structures that will most successfully support students grappling for understanding (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

Resnick et al. (2010) described effective academic discourse as accountable in three ways: to the learning community, to the content, and to rigorous thinking. Students demonstrate accountable talk to their learning community by actively listening to the

content, disagreeing respectfully, and probing for further understanding. Students exhibit accountability to their content by citing facts or evidence. Students illustrate accountability to their rigorous thinking by explaining reasoning and respectfully challenging or strengthening the arguments of others (Resnick et al., 2010). REAL discussions is one framework students can use as an example of high expectations and that promotes higher-level thinking through Referencing text, Engaging in active listening by eyes, ears, mind, and body, Acknowledging respectfully others thoughts, and Learning through open mind and questions asked (Hoffer, 2009).

Academic discussions, whether with small or large groups of students, creates an opportunity for a variety of perspectives to be heard. Actively listening to the thinking of others, reflecting, and responding respectfully, honors students as thinkers and promotes symbiosis of community (Hoffer, 2009). More importantly, when students offer critiques of their peers' work and thinking, it reveals more about their own understanding and misconceptions than traditional sit and get (Hoffer, 2012). Teachers can help students perceive an incorrect answer as stepping-stones to the road of understanding (Chapin et al., 2003). Teachers can facilitate students revising their thinking by asking them to synthesize ("Do you agree with earlier thinking?"), observe growth ("How has your thinking change?"), extract learning ("What's the lesson of this problem?"), or reflect on their strengths and challenges ("What do you learn about yourself as a student today?). It is through these thinking strategies that promote metacognition and model growth mindset by illustrating to the student that they are able to overcome any difficulties and maximize achievement (Hoffer, 2012).

Students are social beings and when engaged in academic discourse, they harness their desire to communicate with peers through service of learning (Hoffer, 2012). Well-designed academic discourse provides social interaction and engages the students, even the most reluctant ones, to communicate during class (Hoffer, 2009). Academic discourse consists of engaged, academic conversations in the pursuit of meaning and learning (Hoffer, 2020). It is intentional, focused and accountable conversations about ideas that results in the students growing in thinking, and evolving in understanding (Hoffer, 2012). Academic discourse builds agency, develops communication, builds collaboration skills, and supports academic language development as the learners get to hear, discuss, and reflect on their own ideas and deepen their understanding in the light of others' thinking (Hoffer, 2020).

Literature Review Summary

Students are our future: future leaders, mechanics, engineers, teachers, electricians, doctors, first responders, and the like. Teachers are among the most powerful influences in their learning (Hattie, 2012; Mincu, 2015; Schumack & Forde, 2011). They influence not only academic skills but also foster the 21st century skills of critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (Close, 2002; Cook et al., 2013; Grant et al., Hoffner, 2009; Hoffner, 2020; Kapur et al., 2012; 2012; Reinhardt, 2000; Swinehart, 2009). Unfortunately, there are differences among student experiences with varying teachers, causing a flux in learning. Students who are in high-impact-teacher classrooms have almost a year of advantage over their peers in a low-effect-teacher classroom (Hattie, 2012). In order to reduce these differences in classroom experiences for students, instructional leaders must provide professional development to support the

teachers and their growth (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2002; Hammond, 2015; Schomoker, 2012).

Therefore, continued examination, analysis, and evaluation of professional development programs are necessary in order to reveal the different aspects that encourage or inhibit their effectiveness on teachers (Guskey, 2002; Remillard, 2005; Zambak et al., 2017). It becomes the challenge of our schools and districts to continue to provide quality professional development that impacts teachers' perceptions on their lesson planning to improve student ownership in their learning (Anderson, 2008; Fields et al., 2012; Jackson, 2011;).

Professional development works best by influencing what teachers do, as opposed to what professional developers and/or instructional leaders think teachers should do (Darling-Hammond et al. 2017; Guskey, 2002; Hammond, 2015; Schmoker, 2012; Shumack & Forde, 2011; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The quality and impact of professional development depends on what the teachers are being asked to learn, how they are learning it, and whether they can implement practices they are being asked to try within classrooms. Teacher rounds identify the problem of practice, focusing on instruction that is observable and actionable and connects to a broader strategy of improvement (Aguilar, 2012; Aguilar, 2014; City et al., 2018; David, 2008). Instructional coaches and teacher rounds are among the most valuable tools a school or district can employ to help teachers develop their pedagogical skills and culture of professional development (Marzano & Toth, 2013; Sweeney, 2011).

There are many modes of professional development offered for teachers, such as conferences, self-taught classes, seminars, and programs. The modes available vary in

length from hours to days to months. Designing and leading individualized and differentiated professional development, resulting in changes in practitioners' practice and changes in student learning outcomes is a significant task (Borko, 2004; Carter, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hammond, 2015; Remillard, 2005; Shumacker & Forde, 2011; Wiggins & Mctighe, 2005; Wolff et al., 2010). The landscape of jobs is ever-changing and students in our current K-12 system are preparing for jobs that may not exist. There is a need for students to exit secondary education with a mastery of 21st century skills that will carry them into a global workforce. The four pillars of Thinking Focus not only support the development of literacy to be proficient readers, writers, and communicators (Fisher & Frey, 2013; Hattie, 2012; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Hoffner, 2012; Hoffner, 2020; Stauffer, 2020; Woods, 2009; Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003). It also supports the growth of students in their 21st century skills in order to get jobs and to be active and informed citizens in our democracy and improve the quality of team work through their acquired problem-solving skills (Hoffer, 2012).

This literature review revealed the need to focus on the shift within professional development in order to improve teachers' pedagogical performance. Instead of topics, such as content or instructional strategies, being isolated, professional development needs to incorporate at least five out of the seven components Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) revealed. However, the literature pertaining to the seven strands did not discuss teachers' perceptions of the professional development. Therefore, utilizing these components and other varying resources, a professional development model was developed, tied to the four pillars of the Thinking Focus Cohort. This literature review provided a perspective to understand the components needed to transform a teacher's pedagogical practice. There is

no other professional development like the Thinking Focus Cohort. Therefore, the findings in this study may help other districts embark on a similar change to engage teachers in high quality, relevant professional development for their teachers.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and design, including the purpose, design, data collection and data analysis procedures. This chapter also includes the study's limitations, credibility and ethical issues.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the implementation of a customized professional development, Thinking Focus, in a rural district by exploring the perceptions of teachers who participated in this professional development opportunity. There are three research questions guiding my study with the first serving as the overarching question and the subsequent two delving into perceptions of its impact on practice.

RQ 1: What are the teachers' perceptions of the Thinking Focus Cohort and its influence on teachers' pedagogical practice?

RQ 2: What role did instructional coaches play in district effort to improve teachers' pedagogical practices within the Thinking Focus Cohort?

RQ 3: What role did teacher rounds play in district efforts to improve teachers' pedagogical practices within the Thinking Focus Cohort?

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to explain and describe the research methodology for this qualitative case study. In particular, I outline the research process that I will use to answer the research questions. In terms of structure, I organize Chapter 3 as follows: First, I will begin by stating and justifying the selection of my research design (a qualitative case study), discussing the strength and the limitations of this strategy. Next, I will discuss the context of the qualitative case study. I will then discuss the various data sources and the corresponding data collection procedures that I will use to

obtain them. Given that teachers within Bullitt County will serve as participants of my study, I will give careful attention to the ethical considerations of undertaking research in the district in which I currently serve as the Director of Secondary Education. I will discuss the process by which I will explore my positionality and relationship with the topic, teachers, and district in which I will conduct the study. Finally, I will discuss the strategies by which I will ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings I generate.

Research Methods and Design—Qualitative Case Study

Qualitative research does not present itself by means of quantification, but rather research about persons' lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as organizational functioning (Rahman, 2017). Case study research is the study of a case (or cases) within real-life, contemporary contexts and settings (Yin, 2018). Yin suggests that case study research is a valid research design that "can be used for all three purposes—exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory studies" (p. 8). Case studies entail direct interactions and observations of events and stakeholders under study and typically include interviews with those involved currently or previously in the studied phenomenon. The underlying premise is that case study research for example, may seek to illuminate the *why* behind a decision, such as the selection and implementation of a professional development offering. Case studies are a straightforward approach that allows for the in-depth analysis of a bounded unit (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A common lived experience of teachers is one of the rationales Yin (2018) offers as justifying the limitation to a single case. In a common case, the aim of the researcher is to capture everyday experiences—ones that are frequent enough to provide insight into

some common experience. Creswell and Poth (2018) share that in a single case study the researcher identifies a phenomenon and then selects a single bounded case to explore the issue.

Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that the process of research flows from philosophical assumptions to interpretive lens, and on to the procedures involved in studying social or human problems. Creswell and Poth (2018) also differentiate between three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. In the instrumental case study design, the researcher seeks to use their findings to contribute to an improved understanding of the phenomenon. As Stake (2010) noted, "The purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case" (p. 460). While the researcher may caution that the findings are only generalizable to the case, the reader of the research may draw their own connections, see shared similarities in contexts, and generalize the research findings to these similar contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

My case study will be a single case study engaging in an instrumental analysis of the teachers' experiences. In this case study, I will explore the perceptions of teachers in order to understand how they perceive a professional learning opportunity and its impacts (or lack thereof) on their pedagogical practice. I will embark on an exploration of the operational process of implementing professional development and the ensuing perceptions of the teachers involved.

Strengths and Limitations of Qualitative Case Studies

There are strengths and limitations of every research design, including qualitative case studies. Case study research has strengths. For one, case studies are a research design seeking to understand or describe an individual (Cetinkaya, 2019), group or

cultural situation (Bassey, 1999), to reveal uncertainty about an event (Gay et al., 2009), and focusing on *how* and *why* questions, providing an opportunity to collect in-depth data (Yin, 2018). Another strength is that the researcher investigates the phenomenon under study within a context rather than outside of it (Yin, 2018). Another final strength of case study research designs is the ability to inform further research and different forms of research into the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2018).

Case research also has limitations. Scholars note that case study research may have the perception of a lack of rigor and issues with generalizability (Yin, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). One important reminder that Yin (2018) makes is the need to generalize from the case study and not the case. The case, he explains, is the sample under study; the case study, he writes, is the "opportunity to shed empirical light on some theoretical concepts or principles" (p. 38). He states that these learned lessons can apply to a variety of situations that go beyond the initial case or cases like the initial case. In contrast, Stake (2010) argues that qualitative research is difficult to generalize, and more specifically, case studies. He argues that case studies have the inability to replicate and therefore, researcher bias may form. Yin (2018) explains it is important to recognize the flaws in the research claims and engage in a discussion of the generalizations rather than simply stating them as facts. It is important, therefore, to draw generalizations about the overall perceptions of future professional development to influence teachers' pedagogical practice with the understanding that this study does not look at more than a single case.

Context of the Study

In this study, I will undertake a qualitative case study within a suburban Kentucky school district, Bullitt County Public Schools (BCPS). BCPS, located directly south of

Louisville, Kentucky. It is the seventh largest district in Kentucky, serving approximately 13,000 students. BCPS employs 792 certified teachers: 372 elementary school teachers, 176 middle school teachers, and 244 high school teachers. Of the 769 certified teachers, approximately 167 teachers are inexperienced, meaning they have taught less than one year. The average years of teaching experience is 11 years (Kentucky Department of Education, 2020).

Research shows that no other in-school factors influence student learning experiences more than teachers do (Hattie, 2012; Schomaker, 2012). Teachers, like students, need continual professional development opportunities to improve their pedagogical skills to enable students to reach their academic potential (Bailey & Jakicic, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2002; Long; 2014; Wallace, 2014; Wei et al., 2010; Yoon et al., 2007). According to 704 KAR 3:305, professional development "aligns with standards and goals, focuses on content and pedagogy, occurs collaboratively, is facilitated by educators, focusing on continuous improvement, and is on-going" (Annual Professional Development, p. 1, 2014). According to Annual Professional Development Plan (2014) professional development program is defined as a "sustained, coherent, relevant, and useful professional development learning process that is measurable by indicators and provides professional learning and ongoing support to transfer that learning practices" (p. 1). BCPS followed the directive of Kentucky Administrative Regulation (2014) to implement required minimum professional development hours and days for its teachers, but felt the district was lacking a quality professional development platform to improve teacher effectiveness and ultimately improve student achievement.

Bullitt County Public Schools developed a Thinking-Focus Cohort model to provide teachers with a yearlong professional learning experience that includes training, classroom visits and coaching to create the foundation for deeper learning experiences from changed pedagogical practices. Teachers are selected based on feedback from instructional coaches and administrative teams. Teachers must continuously display flexibility within their classroom, growth mindset, and willingness to take risks supported by expert teachers.

The Thinking Focus Cohort was modeled after the Public Education and Business Coalition (PEBC) Thinking Strategies (Public Education & Business Coalition [PEBC], 1983). Instead of focusing specifically on Thinking Strategies (PEBC, 2015), Bullitt County's Thinking Focus Cohort was initially composed of three pillars: community, thinking strategies, and gradual release of responsibility. The content was created from previous professional development experiences and the use of seven professional texts, the meta-analysis research of Hattie (2012) and Fisher and Frey (2014).

6In the 2014-2015 school year, Bullitt County Public Schools implemented the Thinking Focus Cohort, beginning with a cohort of 21 educators from across the district and expanding to 68 in 2019-2020 (See Table 1). In October 2015, three PEBC staff members, Ms. Nancy Meredith, Ms. Heather Kuzma, and Ms. Stevie Townsend evaluated Bullitt County's professional development. From their feedback, the Thinking Focus Cohort expanded to include 21st Century skills. In 2016-2017, the second cohort expanded BCPS educators to include all content areas, ensuring at least one career and technical education teacher from each high school was a part of the cohort. In 2017-2018, the Thinking Focus Cohort continued to expand with an implementation of Think Camp,

a two-day intense professional development focused on gradual release of responsibility. This served as two-fold, one to provide continued support for previous attendees and two, to serve as a Lab Classroom host for the "new" cohort group. It also included administrators from throughout the district. In 2018-2019, the Thinking Focus Cohort predominantly included career technical education teachers with at least one co-teaching pair. In 2019-2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic led to the suspension of the Thinking Focus cohort, but included all co-teaching pairs that will continue into the 2021-2022 school year.

Table 1. Thinking Focus Cohort Participation in BCPS, 2014-2015 to 2019-2020

Level	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Elementary	6	21	14	24	13	31
Middle	6	23	23	23	19	21
High	9	17	18	20	19	16
District	21	61	55	67	51	68

One means of changing teachers' pedagogical practice and meeting the demands of rigorous expectations is by creating curriculum based professional development (Short & Hirsh, 2020). A powerful avenue and effective form of professional development for teachers is through coaching (Van Ostrand et al., 2020). Coaching, within the Thinking Focus Cohort, is personalized and authentic to the needs of the teachers and collaborative. Instructional coaches are also able to facilitate teacher rounds, assisting the teacher to experience the desired instructional strategies. Table 2 provides a curriculum overview of the TFC and facilitators that is used currently.

Table 2. Curriculum and Facilitators of Thinking Focus Cohort

Month	Curriculum	Facilitator
July	Welcome & Introductions	Director of Secondary & Elementary Education
August	Community	Instructional Coaches
September	Thinking Strategies	Instructional Coaches
October	Teacher Rounds	Instructional Coaches
November	Coaching Cycles	Instructional Coaches
December	Gradual Release of Responsibility	Instructional Coaches
January	Teacher Rounds	Instructional Coaches
February	Gradual Release of Responsibility	Instructional Coaches
March	Academic Discourse	Instructional Coaches
April	Coaching Cycles	Instructional Coaches
May	Celebration & Closing	Director of Secondary & Elementary Education

Data Sources

For my study, I will draw upon data collected from three sources: document analyses, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and a group level assessment (GLA). Qualitative document analysis (QDA) provides a systemic, reflective, methodological process for gathering meaning from document evidence (Bowen, 2009). The QDA will consist of a review process of all training materials collected and notes from outside observers ranging from the infancy of the cohort groups in 2014-2015 to the present. Participant selection will be based on homogenous convenience sampling, which is a mixed sampling style focusing on reducing the invited participants to those who meet

the criteria for the embedded case and then choosing those who respond and are willing to participate (Jager et al., 2017). In total, 30 participants who have already participated in the Thinking Focus Cohort will be selected to participate in this study. I will purposefully select 10 participants from elementary level, 10 from middle school level, and 10 from high school in an effort to ensure maximum variation across all three school-levels (Palinkas et al., 2015). This participant selection strategy may be subject to participant availability, teacher attrition, mobility, and retirements. Furthermore, participation is voluntary and some cohort members may opt out of participation.

A semi-structured interview has its basis in human conversation, and it allows the interviewer to modify the style, pace, and ordering of questions so that the most beneficial information is received from the participant (Qu & Dumay, 2011). A semi-structured interview also enables the interviewees to respond to the questioning in a way they feel most comfortable and, on their terms, concerning how they think and speak (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Semi-structured interview questions will propose *how* and *why* questions. Preliminary themes from the semi-structured interviews will derive the structure of the group level assessment. The group level assessment is a qualitative, participatory and collaborative data collection model that allows the researcher to work with subunits within a case (Vaughn et al., 2011; Vaughn & Lohmueller, 1998; Vaughn & Lohmueller, 2014). GLA allows for simultaneous and interactive participant voices, rather than semi-structured interviews, and is an appropriate strategy because it models much of the interaction of participants during their time in TFC (Hinds, 2020; Vaughn et al., 2011).

Data Collection Procedures

As previously stated, I will draw upon data collected from three sources: a document review, one-on-one semi-structured interviews and group level assessment. Having established what will be collected and analyzed, I now will discuss how I will collect these data sources. In terms of district and school documents, I will collect archived presentations, other training materials, feedback (formative and summative) from Public Education and Business Coalition (PEBC) representatives, and feedback (formative and summative) from cohort participants over the years in which Thinking Focus training was provided (2014-2015 to 2019-2020). These documents will provide additional contextual information about the professional learning teachers' experiences. The purpose is to synthesize all of this information and generate a narrative history of the professional development offered by the school district.

For the next two components of data sources, I will utilize purposeful sampling of 30 teachers; however, there will be 10 from each level, from across the annual cohorts. The interview protocol (See Appendix A) will consist of open-ended questions, starting with how and why, provide respondents an opportunity for freeform answers, which will allow them to reveal more information. Open-ended questions provide for richer data and do not limit responses, but do require a coding process for data analysis. Therefore, after each interview is completed, journaling and recorded interviews will be transcribed to capture any initial thoughts and reactions to the interview process.

The final data collection is from the Group Level Assessment (GLA), where 15 different participants, five from each level, will participate (See Appendix D). To maximize the participant base for this study, the 15 participants in the GLA will be a

different set of teachers than the interviews. The GLA is suited for formative evaluation of programs and professional development to assess the needs within a larger group setting where stakeholders have knowledge, experience, and expertise (Vaughn & Lohmueller, 2014). Prior to beginning the GLA, an established purpose and icebreaker will be conducted to relieve any tension and create a more participatory atmosphere. Following these first steps, participants will respond individually to both the preliminary themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews and additional prompts generated from this study's research questions. Allowing time for interaction and discussion, participants will contribute to the data set based on their experiences in TFC, enriching the findings and exploring commonalities in order to confirm emerging themes and identify any additional ones. The purpose of the GLA serves as threefold for this qualitative case study. First, it serves as confirmation of previous themes as well as deeper dive into unclear ideas. Second, it will increase trustworthiness because of the increased number of participants to confirm the themes. Finally, GLA will serve to ensure that the study has reached a data saturation point and confirm there are no unexplored themes related to the research questions.

Ethical Considerations

Researchers face ethical challenges in all stages within a study, from designing to reporting. These include ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent for the study participants, the researchers' potential influence over the participants (e.g., power and authority dynamics), and the potential influence of the participants and context over the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research involves the researcher studying a phenomenon (or phenomena) in their natural settings and interpreting

meanings that participants and the researcher make by drawing upon non-numerical data. As such, interpretations can be incorrect or biased and the findings may be controversial (Cheraghi, 2014).

Due to my position as a district administrator and a member of the facilitation team for the Thinking Focus Cohort in BCPS, it is imperative that I am mindful of my roles within the district and with the implementation of the professional development that serves as the focus of my study. I will ensure clear communication of the purpose of my study, the potential benefits and risks of participation, the rights of participants (e.g., participation is voluntary), and what I will do with the data collected (e.g., data storage, confidentiality). I will accomplish this by ensuring informed consent forms and procedures (See Appendix B and C). In doing so, study participants have the right to receive information about the study and ask questions so that they can make well-considered decisions about whether or not they will choose to participate. Doing so fosters trust, sound decision making, and facilitates the collection of open and honest data from the participants. I will seek to establish a setting in which the participants feel comfortable to share their beliefs and perceptions during the group level assessment and individual semi-structured interviews. Before collecting data from each participant, I will consider the potential for hidden agendas, strengths of the group, and potential conflicts of interest (Vaughn & Lohmueller, 1998). Before each interview, I will email the purpose of the research and answer any questions they may have about the study and their roles as participants. I will also reiterate the purpose of the research and emphasize the non-evaluative nature. Finally, I will share the transcripts of the interviews as evidence of our time together and their willingness to share their experiences.

Throughout the semi-structured interviews, group level assessment and the discussion of analyses and findings, I will not identify the participants in order to protect their identity. I will use pseudonyms in lieu of real names.

I will also utilize a Structured Ethical Reflection (See Appendix E) process to identify values assigned to my research questions because these will guide me through the challenges of the vast number of available values (Stevens et al., 2016). I chose the values of trust, adaptability, open-mindedness, respect, self-awareness, transparency and integrity because these are at the core of my beliefs as an educator and a leader. I feel these values are paramount for interactions with participants, collecting data through interviews and group level assessment, conducting data analysis independently and collaboratively with participants, and data interpretation. Overall, focusing these values at the start of my research study allows me insight into the trustworthiness and reliability of my study.

Data Analysis

Coding is not an exact science but rather an interpretative act. Coding provides the link between data collection and their explanation of meaning. In qualitative data analysis, a code "is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes or translates data" (Saldaña, 2016). I will use both descriptive coding and in vivo coding in order to assign a single label to data with common themes (Saldaña, 2016). This approach allows researchers to go through the data and highlight significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants perceived the experience. The data for this analytical case study consists of document analysis, group level assessment, and one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

Throughout the study, data collection and analysis will occur simultaneously following Miles et al. (2014) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Qualitative data analysis was initially theory-driven, drawing upon Knowles's (1973, 1980) constructive theory, in particular, andragogy (1980), and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, in particular the construct of teacher efficacy (1997) through the use of Bakhtin's (1975) literary theory with the use of dialogism. The core tenets of andragogy and social cognitive theory serve to provide a lens through which to view the emerging findings; particularly that the meaning of language is being socially constructed and emerges from interaction and dialogue among participants. To these initial codes, I will add codes that emerged inductively, adding them to the original deductive codes until a final list of codes and themes emerge.

Documents are *social products* that must be examined critically as each artifact has a history of its reasoning and meaning (Saldaña, 2016). Therefore, direct interpretation will be utilized to analyze the district and school documents and to develop themes and categories for interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A process of reading through the specified documents, such as curriculum and feedback, and annotating margin notes will be used to form initial codes. The codes will then be analyzed for emerging themes or patterns and represented visually to develop a representation of what is learned (Creswell, 2018). Themes derived from documents will be utilized to create open-ended questions for semi-structured interviews.

The next phase of data analysis of the coding of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews will provide an opportunity for the participants to share in-depth information on their experiences. It will allow the participants to discuss their perceived

impact on their pedagogical practice, including the use of, or lack thereof, instructional coaches and teacher rounds to support the perceived change. The interviews will be transcribed to produce narrative data which will be organized and utilize multi-cycle coding in order to uncover more prevalent themes. After every fourth interview, the batch of four will be coded manually and reviewed for emergent themes, allowing a sequential explanation of the professional development. Thus, through coding or labeling to assign meaning to the descriptors (Miles et al., 2014), an inductive process will occur to allow themes to emerge from the transcriptors (Saldaña, 2016). The purpose is to provide a deep level data dive to produce major themes on its impact, if any, on teachers' pedagogical practice, the support, or lack thereof, of instructional coaches and teacher rounds. During the first coding cycle, coding will reveal the unique and individual voices of the participants, while still allowing for the categorization of repeated themes (Miles et al., 2014). I will review the transcript using a process outlined by Saldaña (2016), first at the elemental level and assign data chunks providing a descriptive label to summarize findings. The use of words or short phrases offered by the participants, utilizing an inductive process, as they emerge from the data collection. A second cycle of coding will be used to explore patterns revealed in the first cycle through the use of axial codes to uncover relationships among the descriptive codes from the first cycle.

Open-ended prompts and questions from the second-cycle pattern coding of semi-structured interviews will inform the development of GLA. The analysis of GLA is different from semi-structured interviews because it is simultaneously individual and social. Participants will have the ability to provide their unique perspective related to each prompt and/or question and have the opportunity to read the responses of their peers

to the same prompts. Throughout, participants will have near-anonymity, as it is unlikely for participants to know who wrote individual comments (Vaughn & Lohmueller, 1998), unless standing by the participant when they wrote their response. Simultaneously, the social context of the GLA, its co-constructed themes and group level priorities, ensures that only the most relevant and important themes emerge from the public discussion (Vaughn & Lohmueller, 1998; Vaughn & Lohmueller, 2014). Once the GLA is completed, both descriptive coding and vivo coding will be used to assign a single label to data with common themes (Saldaña, 2016). This allows deeper dive into the data through GLA responses and highlights significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of the participants perceived the experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Process for Exploring Researcher Positionality

My positionality in relation to the study will inform my interpretation, self-learning, and action steps for future work of this single instrumental case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, it is essential that researchers do not use their own perceptions and experiences to predetermine a participant's perspective (Holmes, 2020). Milner (2007a) reminds researchers can acquire truths in research when they listen to self in relation of others. Therefore, I must accept "truth," or what is real, and thus meaningful to the participants, because it depends on how they have experienced the world, school, and our professional development (Milner, 2007b). This is something for me to consider and be keenly aware of as my positionality provides me with a potential roadblock by serving as an outsider within my current role as the Director of Secondary Education and facilitator of the professional development our educators experience.

As educators, by law, we are required to participate in twenty-four hours of professional development. I have experienced and believe in the power of life-long learners through the impact that professional development has on an educator's ability to improve student learning. Unfortunately, like many of my colleagues, I have also experienced dreadful, compliant driven professional development. I do not want any Bullitt County employee to have the same negative experience. As the Director of Secondary Education, and an educator at heart, I am intently aware of the challenges our educators face today to engage and empower our students with 21st century skills all while covering rigorous standards. Therefore, I want to provide teachers with energizing, impactful, and transformative professional development. I want our educators to have strategies that not only tie to their professional growth, but can also be immediately applied to their content and increase student engagement. I want them to have a community of learners through coaching sessions from their administration. Although I have a personal interest in this topic, there are still some unanswered questions, more specifically what are the teachers' perceptions of the impact of Thinking Focus Cohort on their pedagogical practice. Ultimately, we are lacking the data to determine our next steps and its success because the objective of professional development is to make a difference in teaching, to help educators reach high standards and ultimately having a positive impact on student learning (Shumack & Forde, 2011).

Strategies for Ensuring Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

Qualitative research is process-based, story data that is closely tied to the human experience (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Qualitative research does not see replication since

sets of data collected and shared generate unique outcomes (Stahl & King, 2020). This creates issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research, often demonstrated through techniques of reliability, validity, and credibility (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Therefore, qualitative researchers strive for trustworthiness in order for the reader to have a sense of confidence in what researcher reports (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018) credibility strategies such as prolonged engagement, triangulation of data, and member checks increase the researcher's trustworthiness. I will use prolonged engagement, asking my participants to support their answers in semi-structured interviews. Triangulation of data will be used to determine themes for document analysis, semi-structured interviews and group level assessment. Member checks will occur during group level assessment to gather additional feedback during focus groups and the sharing of the transcriptions from the semi-structured interviews. I will also provide a rich, thick description of the participants and research process to enable the readers to determine my findings are transferable to other educational settings involving professional development.

Summary

This chapter explains the proposed research methods and procedures that will be used to explore the perceptions of teachers' pedagogical practice through the participation of the Thinking Focus Cohort, a professional development for Bullitt County teachers. This chapter also described the prospective research design, data sources, data collection and analysis within the study context. Last, this chapter gives insight into the proposed study's strengths and limitations, ethical considerations, and research positionality. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the research through a

descriptive and analytical articulation of the data generated in the document analysis, group level assessment and interviews. Chapter 5 gives the conclusion of the study by discussing how the study has informed the research questions, how the study fits into the broader realm of literature and discussion of the significance and impact on future research.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this qualitative case study, I explored teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical practice after participating in a customized professional development, the Thinking Focus Cohort. Three research questions guided this study, with the first serving as the overarching question and the subsequent two examining perceptions of its impact on practice. They are as follows:

RQ 1: What are the teachers' perceptions of the Thinking Focus Cohort and its influence on teachers' pedagogical practice?

RQ 2: What role did instructional coaches play in district effort to improve teachers' pedagogical practices within the Thinking Focus Cohort?

RQ 3: What role did teacher rounds play in district efforts to improve teachers' pedagogical practices within the Thinking Focus Cohort?

I begin this chapter with an exploration of my positionality as a scholar and practitioner, examining teachers' perceptions as a facilitator and overseer of the customized professional development. I utilized the Structured Ethical Reflections (SER) and Milner's framework (2007b) to organize the examination of my researcher positionality as outlined in Chapter 3. The next several sections summarize the data collection phase of my study, which drew upon three data sources: document analyses, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and a group level assessment (GLA). I then

discuss the findings, organizing them around my three research questions. This chapter ends with a summary of the finding.

An Exploration of Researcher Positionality

As I explored my positionality as a researcher, I utilized Milner's framework (2007b) as discussed in chapter 3. I first researched myself to uncover how I came to position myself in the field of education and ultimately in a position to conduct this research. As a middle school student, I struggled especially with reading comprehension, but more importantly, to fit in with my peers. My love of sports combined with my lack of feminine dress resulted in many criticisms. Each time things were rough at school, I was fortunate enough to have teachers pick me up, who constantly reminded me to be true to myself and that "this too shall pass." I worked the hardest for those teachers and it was their mentoring that drove me to want to coach, both in the classroom and on the soccer field.

While earning my teaching certificate, I noticed a common theme that spoke directly to me: those who have positive relationships with students can move mountains of learning and obstacles. The students perceived as the most difficult to work with could work just as hard and experience success like their peers. However, I noted that when these relationships are lacking, no matter how academically strong the teacher, students were likely to struggle. The exposure to these experiences, personally and professionally, enabled me to become keenly aware of the impact of creating a community of learners built around positive relationships. I served students within the classroom for nine years with positive relationships as the foundation in order to challenge, support, and celebrate the scholars I served. I continued to seek professional development that enhanced my

instructional toolkit built around the foundation of positive relationships. One professional development, Oldham County Learning Institute, left me craving more - more coaching, more classroom visits, and more exposure to other instructional strategies. Whether compliance driven or not, I am left to wonder which professional development experience had the greatest impact as an educator for my students.

As I shifted into an administrative role, I saw the same themes as I mentored teachers, yet I often wondered if a teacher does not know how to build relationships with students or does not realize he/she has not built relationships with students. If we can empower these teachers and cause an intentional focus on relationship building in the context of learning, then we can improve their instructional strategy toolkit.

The second component of Milner's framework suggests that a researcher reflects on self in relation to others. To this end, I reflected on my position and relationship to those I studied as my research centers on professional learning for educators. As the Director of Secondary Education, I serve multiple roles both in providing instruction to teachers through professional development as well as examining our own professional development at the district level. Based on my experiences, I challenge myself as an instructional leader to support the foundation of relationships within the community in order to increase the teachers' pedagogical toolkit. While I believe we provide our Bullitt County educators the best instructional and action based professional development, I need to recognize my subjectivity from my previous experience and my professional position. I further need to explore defining the impact of professional development for educators, specifically the perceived impact, or lack thereof, on their pedagogical

skills. This qualitative case study design sought to mirror the professional development it intended to explore.

In order to achieve that parallel, I undertook a structured ethical reflection process (Stevens et al., 2016) at the onset of this research. Through the structured ethical reflection (SER), I engaged in reflection of values that are at the core of my beliefs as an educator and a leader: trust, adaptability, open-mindedness, respect, self-awareness, transparency and integrity. In turn, this process enabled me to shift my reflection from myself to the research process. Qualitative research views participants as vital, collaborative partners in this process. Completing a structured ethical reflection (see Appendix E) gave me a new lens from which to view my research seeking to understand the phenomenon of teachers' perceptions of a customized professional development. Completing the SER enabled the continual analysis of any potential bias to ensure I was accurately representing the teacher's voice and adhering to the values and experiences they shared throughout the process. The goal of study was to actively listen and gain an understanding of the perceptions of the teachers that will affect the work supporting future teachers as they continue to experience this customized professional development.

An Overview of Data Sources and Analytical Strategies

I drew upon data collected from three sources: document analysis, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and group level assessment. I used district-level documents pertaining to a customized professional development called Thinking Focus Cohort as the initial data source. I undertook a descriptive analysis of each level, first reviewing curriculum from the training materials, searching for underlying patterns and processes in their year-long cohort. I then examined notes from outside observers and implications of

their feedback on the training materials. After examining these documents, I created a table to interpret and analyze the patterns developed.

I then collected the second round of data through one-on-one semi-structured interviews (See Appendix A for interview protocol). I recorded each semi-structured interview in order to complete the next phase of data analysis, which was to transcribe and code the data from the semi-structured interviews. I reviewed the transcripts using a process outlined by Saldaña (2016), first at the base level and assigned data to *chunk* (open code), providing descriptive phrases to summarize findings. I used in vivo coding, analyzing phrases or words often offered by the participants, therefore utilizing an inductive process as they emerge from data collected. During the second cycle, I developed axial codes to uncover relationships among the in vivo codes from the first cycle. In the third cycle of coding, I utilized selective codes to elicit core themes expressed by the former participants in the customized professional development, Thinking Focus Cohorts. I used a matrix display in an Excel spreadsheet for the process.

My final data collection phase came from the Group Level Assessment (GLA) process (Appendix D), whereby former participants in the customized professional development, Thinking Focus Cohort, discussed their perceptions of the experience of their pedagogical practice. I derived these five prompts from the unclear ideas and unexplored themes of the semi-structured interviews in order to explore research question 1: What are the teachers' perceptions of the Thinking Focus Cohort and how (if at all) does it influence teachers' pedagogical practice? During the GLA, participants individually responded to prompts to generate responses and jointly developed themes (axial codes) in order to access deeper and richer data. In the third cycle of coding, I

developed selective codes in collaboration with the participants to elicit core themes they had expressed, which matched the same elicit core themes as the semi-structured interviews. I used a matrix display in an Excel spreadsheet for the process. Table 3 outlines the data sources used to answer each of my three research questions.

Table 3. Data Sources Aligned to Research Questions

Data Source	*Research Question #1*	*Research Question #2*	*Research Question #3*
Document Analysis	X	X	X
Participants Semi-Structured Interviews	X	X	X
Participants Group Level Assessment	X		

Document Analysis

Document analysis provides a systematic procedure for reviewing documents (Bowen, 2019). I reviewed district-level documents pertaining to the customized professional development, Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC). These included training materials, such as curriculum, agendas, outsider observer feedback, and participants' feedback. Regretfully, the only documentation for the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 cohorts available at the district-level were the sign-in sheets labeled as *Thinking Strategies* (TS). The district-level documents were easier to access from the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 cohorts, which were called TFC.

The first district-level documents I examined were the notes from three Instructional Staff Developers from the Public Education & Business Coalition (PEBC). Bullitt County contracted with PEBC from October 18, 2016 through October 20, 2016, during which three Instructional Staff Developers visited classrooms from the previous

two years' worth of cohort participants. Table 4 displays each level of participants observed, by whom, and the number of schools they visited within Bullitt County. During the debrief on October 19, 2016, Stevie Townsend stated that, "elementary has implemented enriched classrooms focused on community and thinking strategies. Teachers are asking and needing support on workshop and academic discourse" (personal communication, October 19, 2016). Heather Kuzma shared that, "middle schools matched the elementary strengths and areas of improvement" (personal communication, October 19, 2016). Nancy Meredith stated:

> "High schools feel like the teachers are just learning but are willing and wanting to learn. Each teacher I observed had a strong community but needed more time and intentional support on thinking strategies and gradual release of responsibility to allow the students to do the thinking and learning." (personal communication, October 19, 2016)

The three Instructional Staff Developers facilitated a professional development tailored to gradual release of responsibility (GRR), focusing on workshop and academic discourse for the participants observed. The intended outcome was to elevate instruction, creating a shift from lectures of content to facilitators of collaborative learning.

Table 4. PEBC Observations

Instructional Staff Development	Level	Number of Participants Observed	Number of Schools Observed (Number of Schools Available in Bullitt County)
Stevie Townsend	Elementary	6	1 (13)
Heather Kuzma	Middle	6	2 (6)
Nancy Meredith	High	7	3 (5)

Note: See Table 1 in Chapter 3 for the number of previous participants for the first two cohorts.

I next examined each level's curriculum documents and sign-in sheets for the 2016-2017. I first observed the name shift from TS to TFC. I also noticed each level had a year-long unit plan focusing on the four pillars of learning: Community, Thinking Strategies, Gradual Release of Responsibility/Workshop, and Academic Discourse. The facilitators of each professional learning consisted of the director of each level, elementary or secondary, and instructional coaches within each level, also elementary or secondary. After examining each level, I observed that the elementary level embraced GRR, embedding the workshop model as the key component for facilitating learning. Each professional learning opportunity showcased one of the four pillars of learning within the workshop model. The secondary level, middle and high school, focused on building literacy skills across content areas while exploring each pillar. Within the curriculum documentation of 2016-2017, I examined an agenda for June 13, 2017 in which Townsend and Kumza facilitated a professional learning opportunity centered on gradual release of responsibility for any participant from across the three cohorts, 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, specifically modeling the workshop. The instructional coaches, along with the Director of Elementary Education and Director of Secondary Education, facilitated this opportunity. The final document examined for the 2016-2017 cohort was a PEBC Reflection Tool, in which participants provided feedback to support TFC growth. Two themes emerged. First, the participants felt renewed, and second, they wanted to observe other teachers in the district who effectively implemented the four pillars.

I continued my examination of curriculum documents and shifted to 2017-2018 TFC. By this time, teacher rounds occurred twice a year, once in the fall and once in the winter. The fall agenda included an observation of a previous participant in a lower level or grade than the current participant of TFC. The winter session took place in January titled, "Think Camp" per the TFC Agenda. The Think Camp curriculum folder revealed all three levels participating in a two-day professional learning centered on GRR, specifically modeling and supporting the participants' depth of knowledge with the workshop. The second day included an observation of a previous cohort's classroom within the current participant level. Each teacher round was facilitated by an instructional coach as documented by Bullitt County Teacher Round Process (Appendix F). Teachers documented their experiences within the teacher rounds classroom visits utilizing the Bullitt County Teacher Round Tool (See Appendix G) which served as a note catcher and guide to discussions during post observations. In the 2017-2018 curriculum folder, I finally examined the TFC 2018 Reflections (See Appendix H) and four common themes emerged. These were intentional pedagogical practices to implement, increased collaboration within the district, improved coaching from the instructional coaches, and the need for more teacher rounds in other content areas.

My final examination of curriculum documentation included 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, where there were similarities amongst the two cohort years. Teacher rounds included previous participants in elective classes such as arts, choir, band, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes. The curriculum documents remained the same for the elementary level as previously observed. However, the curriculum documents for the secondary level evolved to match the elementary; with GRR and intentionally modeling

the workshop as the "vehicle" to facilitate learning through the four pillars. All three levels used themes of the year to hook the participants, such as September was a tailgating theme and October centered on Halloween.

Profile of Participants

Bullitt County employs 763 teachers. Table 5 provides a demographic breakdown in relation to gender and race for both Bullitt County teachers and the subset of Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC) participants. In total, 323 Bullitt County educators participated in the customized professional development, TFC. Of the 30 participants in this study, 15 participated in semi-structured interviews and 15 participated in the group level assessment (GLA). TFC membership among these participants ranged from its origination in 2014-2015 through 2019-2020. I utilized purposeful sampling to engage 10 participants from each grade band: elementary, middle, and high school, five for semi-structured interviews and five for GLA. Table 6 provides a breakdown of the individual participants within each level, including those who were promoted within the district, those who no longer work in Bullitt County, and those available for the research. Table 7 provides a breakdown of the individual participants by level, who participated in semi-structured interviews and GLA through its existence.

Table 5: Bullitt County Teacher & Thinking Focus Cohort Participants Demographics

	Gender		Race	
	Males	Females	White (Non-Hispanic)	African American
Bullitt County Teachers	169	594	756	7
Thinking Focus	4	26	30	0

Participants

Table 6. Thinking Focus Participants Available

Level	Total Number of Participants	Participants Promoted within District	Participants who Left the District	Number of Participants Available for Research
Elementary	109	19	33	57
Middle	115	25	29	61
High	99	18	29	52

Table 7. Participants and Cohort Membership

Level	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Elementary Total			3	1		6
			1*	1*		3*
			2**			3**
Middle Total	1		5	2	1	1
	1*		1*	2*	1*	1*
			4**			
High Total		1	3	3	1	2
		1*	2*	2*		
			1**	1**	1**	2**

Notes: * = Semi-Structured Interviews; ** = GLA

Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews provided insight into each participants' unique perspective on their experiences throughout the customized professional development, Thinking Focus Cohort. More specifically, participants shared their perception on how the customized professional development influenced their pedagogical practice, as well as the instructional coaches and teacher rounds. This particular section of this chapter reveals their perspective through inductive coding aligned to each research question.

The coding process began by inputting line-by-line statements of the participants from the transcripts and subsequently sorting by alignment with each research question. The first level of coding, in vivo, unveiled tentative labels for chunks of data by utilizing the participants' terminology through their response. The codes revealed the thoughts and feelings in response to the 11 interview questions. This level of classification enabled me to uncover relationships among in vivo coding through the second cycle to elicit axial codes.

During the second cycle of coding, I used deductive reasoning looking for relationship identification between in vivo coding to axial coding. Axial coding involves relating data together into categories and subcategories by how they relate to each other (Saldaña, 2016). Through axial coding, I rooted out centralized themes. Links emerged between the first cycle of codes in which I saw patterns across the data.

The data revealed 31 centralized relationships among codes. I determined that a third cycle of coding was necessary to refine the relationships discovered during cycle two. I began inductive coding, seeking patterns linked to a core value or values related to

research in the literature review. Table 7 displays the codes that became apparent during this process representing the greatest to lowest total frequency.

Table 8. Selective Coding Alignment to Research Questions

Selective Codes	Research Question #1	Research Question #2	Research Question #3
Intentional Pedagogical Skills+	190		
Transformational*	120	22	21
Student Efficacy*	134	5	8
High Teacher Efficacy	63		10
Low Teacher Efficacy	63		
Exemplar Modeling+++			60
Collaboration within the District			37
Fostering++		33	
Mentoring		24	

Notes: * Codes in all 3 research questions; + = Highest Frequency for RQ 1; ++ = Highest Frequency for RQ 2; +++ = Highest Frequency for RQ 3

Group Level Assessment (GLA)

After transcribing the semi-structured interviews, there was a gap of information missing from Research Question 1, which addressed teachers' perceptions of the Thinking Focus Cohort and its influence on teachers' pedagogical practice, specifically focusing on the participants' experience as a community of learners as well as their intentional pedagogical practices they or may not have implemented within their classrooms. Therefore, the 15 participants, five from each grade level band, answered

five open-ended questions in the Group Level Assessment (GLA). The purpose of GLA was to confirm preliminary findings, going deeper into the perceived experience about their perceptions of the customized professional development, Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC) had on their pedagogical impact.

Saldaña's (2016) manual for coding qualitative data served as the guide for the multi-phase coding process of the open-ended questions. The first cycle of codes emerged from the initial assigned data chunks. The second cycle of codes derived from the first coding cycle. I used in vivo coding in the first round to capture the authentic language through short phrases each participant wrote on the chart paper per each open-ended question.

The second round of coding was completed using collaboration amongst the GLA participants. The participants randomly selected their seat in order to create five groups of three. Each group rotated each chart paper annotating and developing themes through deductive reasoning. Table 8 shows the most frequent occurring themes after the second round of coding.

Table 9. Highest Frequency Themes Resulting from Open-Ended Questions Coding

Questions	Themes	Frequency (Highest to Lowest)
Q1: How did the Thinking Focus Cohort create a community of adult learners within the district?	Building Connections/Collaboration	6
	Growth	5
	Common Language	2

Q2: What were intentional practices that you put in place to foster the usage of thinking strategies within your classroom?	Workshop	6
	Intentional Assessment - Flexibility	2
	Community Building	1
Q3: What were intentional practices that you put in place to foster academic discourse amongst students?	Common Language	4
	Questioning Techniques	3
	Teach Students How to Talk	3
	Modeling	1
Q4: How have your lesson plans changed as a result of having participated in the TFC process?	Shift in Teaching	7
	Shift in Students Role	2
	Student Empowerment	2
	Common Language	1
Q5: How did you feel after participating in the Thinking Focus Cohort?	Renewed	8
	Ongoing Support	3
	Overwhelmed	2
	Shift in Students Role	1

After two rounds of coding, there were still codes that did not conform into the existing set of codes the GLA participants had collaboratively developed. A third round of coding was necessary. I began using inductive reasoning to create selective codes in order to seek patterns linked to a core value or values related to research in the literature

review. I also examined the semi-structured codes, specifically with RQ 1, to determine if there was any parallelism. Table 9 shows the selective codes evident during the third round of coding, noting all four of the codes also were the same codes in semi-structured interviews.

Table 10. Selective Coding Group Level Assessment

Selective Codes	Frequency (Highest to Lowest)
Transformational	21
Intentional Pedagogical Skills	14
High Teacher Efficacy	10
Student Agency	5

The overview provided in this section details the demographics of the suburban district, Bullitt County, as well as the Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC) participants and how the data was collected and functions to provide clarity regarding the coding process of the data from this study's three driving research questions. The presentation of data collected occurs in three forms: document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and group level assessment (GLA). The document analysis provides an outline of the historic progression of TFC based on internal and external feedback. The semi-structured interviews provided data for the initial coding cycles and discussion of how the themes were generated as well as the development of the prompts for the GLA and its focus on the first research question. The analysis of GLA is unique because it is simultaneously individual and social in its focus on that prompt. Therefore, the GLA provides further clarity of the common themes developed through dialogism. While this chapter is largely structured around the primary three research questions, findings also indicated several important

issues related to the process of the professional development itself and the concept of andragogy as described in my theoretical framework.

Professional Development and Its Process

Teachers' professional development is an integral part of schools and districts as a critical way to support the complex needs of teachers, in turn, seeking to improve teaching and student outcomes. As previously described in the literature review, Kentucky teachers are required to complete 24 hours of professional development each year to not only build their pedagogical skill, but also to maintain their certification. To stand up in front of a group of educators and demonstrate an instructional strategy can be a daunting challenge. When professional development facilitators deliver content by lecturing, for example, the delivery method itself works against the principle of how adults learn and how students should learn (Bouchrika, 2022). Because of this, many professional developments initiatives lack support from teachers, who feel professional development is compliance-driven and ineffective (Vontz & Leming, 2005).

Bullitt County Public Schools (BCPS) created a professional development called Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC) in 2014-2015 to support the changing needs of students by enhancing the teachers' pedagogical skills. Findings indicate that expectations of those participating in the program changed depending on the school year in which they participated. Throughout this chapter, direct quotes represent data collected from the semi-structured interviews as no direct quotes were collected from the group level assessment. SM, who participated in the initial cohort, stated, "I was very hesitant at first because it felt like another mandated district-wide professional development. If it weren't for my principal nudging me to get better, I don't know I would have participated."

Participants DH, KS, and NP from the 2016-2017 cohort expressed similar concerns. DH shared, “I didn’t know what I was getting into. I was asked to participate, so hesitantly I did.” KS was very similar, “I had no expectations because I had no idea what it was as I was new to the district.” NP explained, “Whenever I got asked, I was nervous about it, just meeting so many different people and concerned about what I would learn would transfer to social studies.” As TFC developed a reputation throughout the district, the initial expectations began to change. 2017-2018 participants reported different initial perceptions. JH described “I came from a traditional Catholic lens where teacher talks and students learn. I wanted to learn through the student’s eyes, not mine.” WP stated their instructional coach “kept pushing me to improve on student engagement. I trusted him. I was excited to have the opportunity to learn more specific strategies to structure my lessons so that they would be more engaging to keep students’ attention.” 2018-2019 participants were similar to the 2017-2018 in their initial expectations. CM shared “I was just really excited, especially the opportunity to work with and see other teachers in action.” NT explained, “I thought it was a great opportunity. I was excited to learn strategies that I had not been taught in my college courses that might help me be a better teacher.”

Andragogy is a problem-centered rather than content-oriented professional learning, allowing the adult learner to explore and discover through content of daily work versus rote memorization (Bouchrika, 2022). Professional development supports the adult learner by encouraging a culture that values knowledge and growth. Creating learning communities, peer coaching, collaborative action research, and live lesson observation all

support the principles of adult learning, and are exemplified in the following findings from participants.

Participants of TFC met once a month where the instructional coaches facilitated and followed a guided curriculum utilizing each pillar as the focus of learning; community, thinking strategies, gradual release of responsibility through workshop, academic discourse. At the conclusion of each meeting, participants provided feedback in order for the instructional coaches to support the growth of the participants. Feedback received from KK described, "You always had a team of instructional coaches. I asked for support on community building activities. They always provided community-building activities at every meeting, which I have been able to bring into my classroom to build community." SR stated, "I wanted to learn more about thinking strategies to use in my math classroom. The instructional coaches taught us the strategies and provided examples of how to implement them in the various content classrooms." AL shared, "I wanted to see themes come to life to excite students in their learning. The instructional coaches provided this by providing movie themes and camp fire to ignite our excitement with learning."

Throughout the year, participants were able to visit teachers' classrooms, completing teacher rounds, who have implemented pillars into their classrooms. Participants, in the fall, saw a classroom with students younger than the participant teachers. In the winter, participants completed a teacher round with someone who taught the same content or the same grade level. TP explained, "I visited a math classroom, yet I taught agriculture. I worried I wouldn't come out with much. Afterwards, I was completely wrong. The things I saw the teacher use in such a routine manner were things

I could incorporate." WP described, "Getting into classrooms, especially middle school, when I teach high school was impactful. It just clicked." NT, a primary classroom teacher, stated, "I was amazed how well the teacher had her class under great management, but also interacted with each other. The closure and reflection sealed the deal. I believe I can do this and so can my students."

Even though seeing classrooms in action is imperative, it was also the collaboration within the district, whether with other teachers or the instructional coaches. KA shared, "I really enjoyed the aspect of being able to talk with other science teachers in the district to bounce ideas off each other." ST explained, "My instructional coach was amazing. She helped me create math stations that were so impactful." LM expanded on teacher rounds and its impact. LM described, "I loved hearing how the teacher set up the classroom and reflecting afterwards. I immediately participated in a coaching cycle afterwards with my instructional coach, helping me to implement the same practices but with my teaching style."

Education is a never-ending process, especially for teachers. Professional development is one form of continued education for teachers. Kentucky teachers are required to obtain 24 hours of professional learning each year. Districts and schools attempt to make internal professional development relevant. However, little research or follow-up is systematically done to measure the impact the professional development has on teachers' pedagogical practice and student learning.

This qualitative case study examined the impact of a specific type of professional development and its influence on teachers' pedagogical practice. However, the participants didn't focus solely on the professional development itself, but also the

experiences throughout TFC. Additionally, this study addressed concerns with professional development as identified and discussed within the literature review. As described above, TFC participants described how these specific professional development activities helped them move toward a continuous model of improvement with regard to their pedagogical skills.

Teachers' Perceptions of Thinking Focus Cohort and Influence on Pedagogical Practice

Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9 of the semi-structured interviews and all of the group level assessment questions, 1-5, align with the first research question. They also provide insight to the overall experience of the customized professional development, Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC) through the teacher's perception of the influence on their pedagogical practice. Increased pedagogical skills, self-efficacy of both teachers and students, and transformation were the selective codes that appeared throughout the participants' responses. Throughout this section, all direct quotes represent data collected from the semi-structured interviews as no direct quotes were collected from the group level assessment.

Pedagogical Skills

Participating in a year-long cohort can feel overwhelming and create a sense of nervousness. This can result in teachers questioning their pedagogical skills to meet the needs of their students. There is an abundant amount of curriculum covered within each pillar during the cohort, as each cohort meeting has at least five instructional strategies presented. The strategies presented are implementation-ready within the participant's classroom. However, a participant can question where to begin on implementation.

Prior to participating in the TFC, participants described how they had feelings of hesitation or caution with regard to trying out new pedagogical practices and approaches. However, these changed as participants navigated through the TFC, thus improving their pedagogical skills. Participants were able to identify and speak broadly with regard to their experiences and were able to identify specific instructional strategies, both of which influenced their teaching performance.

After participating in TFC, participants in the semi-structured interviews and the group level assessment had increased pedagogical skills as evidenced by the fact that this was the selective code with the highest response at 190 coding instances. Participants in both semi-structured interviews and group level assessment revealed they learned intentional pedagogical strategies, as they choose words like gradual release of responsibility during workshop and academic discourse. Gradual release of responsibility, as stated in the literature review, is the theory to support the implementation of the workshop model. Workshop model is a pedagogical tool which uses "I do, we do, you do it together, and you do it independently" as an instructional strategy to demonstrate and release learning to the students.

JH stated, "The gradual release of responsibility was the most difficult to master. However, it has made a huge impact on my student engagement, which is why I am still working on it." NT was similar to JH but spoke specifically to a component within the workshop model to increase gradual release of responsibility. NT shared "I have always struggled with allowing students time to reflect at the end of the workshop lesson. After attending the Thinking Focus Cohort, I intentionally implemented it throughout my lessons." KK explained, "I have gotten better at releasing the students and letting them

struggle, as if it is okay if it takes a bit to process." NP described "By using the workshop model as a wheel guide, it really made me intentionally have a starting and stopping point every day. It taught me to be intentional about my time and give students time to reflect." SM discussed a similar component of the workshop wheel as NP. SM stated, "I used a T-Chart during my mini lesson. This provided me a snapshot into the students' knowledge of what they already knew and where I needed to go with the lesson."

During the semi-structured interviews, participants discussed how they learned strategies to teach students to participate in dialogism. WP shared, "I didn't understand the value of community building and its impact on students talking to each other. Therefore, each day we do a community building piece that can serve as a hook into class." LM explained, "Another strategy I have used a lot is academic discourse where the students can agree and disagree with their partners, they can talk about the content, and they can go deeper with the content." CM described an area of growth for their students, "My students are struggling to have academic discourse with each other. I have gotten some good ideas on how to have students talk by focusing on questions that ask them to dig deeper." SR stated, "Academic discourse is ongoing. I make the students talk about which Thinking Strategy he/she used and how it helps them solve the math problem."

During the group level assessment discussion, the workshop model was an intentional strategy all participants put into place. Academic discourse for students can be challenging as some may lack background knowledge on the topic while others may lack confidence to speak in groups. The group level assessment participants brought up both

questioning stems and modeling through think alouds as instructional strategies they learned to improve academic discourse with students.

Participants further responded by identifying specific strategies, such as chunking, routines, intentional reading strategies, catch and release to increase their pedagogical skills. TP shared, “There are several strategies I implemented but there is one I like and it's called the wonder explore.” DH explained the different instructional strategies used to improve comprehension, “I use annotating to improve comprehension. I also use chunking when I am giving students an opportunity to take one piece of information, grapple, digest, and reflect on their learning before moving on to the next portion of information.” KA described, “I have implemented catch and release. Students start working and misconceptions pop up. By using catch and release, I am able to address these misconceptions as a class and then dismiss them to continue working.” These statements were similar during the group level assessment conversation where participants discussed how they learned a variety of instructional strategies at each TFC meeting. Instructional strategies, such as catch-n-release[1] and vocabulary strategies, are formative assessments that support content growth.

Teacher Self-Efficacy: Low to High

Self-efficacy is a person’s sense of their belief in dealing effectively with a particular task by exerting control over their motivation and behavior to produce desired performance (Bandura, 1997). A teacher with a strong sense of self-efficacy has greater

[1] With this instructional strategy, the teachers respond to student misunderstanding of concepts with a detailed explanation of what it is they are supposed to know or do. The students respond to teacher clarification with another attempt to correct their misunderstanding. In small groups, students discuss the issues together. As students confide in one another, they share this new knowledge. After some time has passed, all students come together as a whole class to discuss the work at hand (Bennett, 2007).

capacity to transform their lesson planning (Barni et al, 2019). This discussion of self-efficacy results from a pattern noted during the coding process.

Prior to participating in the TFC, participants in the semi-structured interviews only revealed a frequency of low self-efficacy of 77 incidences in their responses. KS stated, “I didn’t know how to come up with stuff on my own. I didn’t know my voice as a teacher. I didn’t know anything about myself as an educator.” LM mirrored KS sharing, “I know where I wanted to be as an educator but I didn’t know how to get started.” SR explained, “I was very new. I wanted to try things but I wasn’t sure exactly what I was doing.” KA described, “Oh goodness, I was a hot mess. I didn’t have anything together, classroom community or instruction strategies as I just tried to survive.” WP was similar to KA, explaining “I was drowning truthfully because I couldn’t keep the students engaged.” NP stated, “I felt like every year I was starting over.” In her interview, ST described a similar sentiment that was shared by NP, sharing, “I was a newbie. I was figuring it out. Some days I felt like I didn’t know anything and other days it was ok.”

After participating in TFC, participants in both semi-structured interviews and the group level assessment reported high self-efficacy as evidenced by a frequency of 63 times in their responses. KS explained, “What was most beneficial for me was that Thinking Focus Cohort enabled me to find my individuality. It gave me my voice as a teacher.” TP described, “it recharges you, building the internal belief I can do this and what else can I try without fear.” Like TP, ST stated, “I had already taught for a few years, so I knew how I wanted my classroom to run. This rejuvenated me to focus on the students.” CM shared, “I became a teacher because I love learning. Thinking Focus Cohort excited me and took me to the next level of my teaching.” AL explained, “I have

confidence in myself as I have immediately implemented some strategies and they work for my students." DH described, "I didn't understand or appreciate the power of movement. I know we have built a class mission around success. I am seeing students succeed and I feel successful."

During the group level assessment, a discussion took place with the participants about their being "overwhelmed." Participants shared they had received a variety of what they perceived as valuable new instructional strategies and had seen them both modeled and implemented within classes. However, participants revealed a struggle with knowing how and when to incorporate them with their current practices. As the dialogue continued, participants shared how they felt TFC had built their capacity and pedagogical tools, provided a structure to follow while implementing the workshop model, and created a community of learners. The group level assessment participants summarized it by saying being overwhelmed was not a bad thing, as TFC renewed and empowered the participants, thus resulting in higher self-efficacy in their teaching.

Student Efficacy

Teachers with high self-efficacy experience higher levels of job satisfaction, improved well-being and school effectiveness, specifically with student success (Gulistan et al., 2017). Teachers use peers as models, teach specific learning strategies and allow students to make their own choice. I document this as the participants in both semi-structured interviews and group level assessment report student efficacy 134 incidences, the second highest frequency of selective codes.

LM stated, "Before I thought student engagement was just listening. I quickly realize that is not active engagement. Now my students have tools such as a white board

or a graphic organizer to support their thinking and learning." JH was similar to LM sharing, "I went from a low engaged classroom to a completely student-centered engaged classroom. I give them opportunities for productive failure where we discuss what went well and what didn't. Shifting to this style of lesson has increased student ownership." KK explained, "Before I talked too much and now the students are doing the work. The students are doing the thinking and shaping the way the lesson goes." KA was similar to KK and described, "Students want to collaborate together through talking and doing the work. The skills we work on through our graduate profile puts the ownership on the students and off the teacher. It's their learning coming through not memorization." CM stated, "When I implemented the workshop model, students were empowered with gradual release of learning." KS shared how shifting from the age of giving answer to allowing the students to think through questioning, "I ask what do you think this means? How could this relate? And where have you heard this before? Students are now showcasing their thought process more than I could have imagined." DH was similar to KS and explained how students are taking risks and owning their learning, "I allow students the choice on which strategy to use. I also provide them work where they have to think and defend their answer, instead of leading down one path of an answer." WP was able to discuss how catch and release empowered the students when described, "We do a lot of talking in 10 minutes to address misconceptions of learning and/or the process. They know the rest is their show and they are owning their learning." SM stated, "It was an emotional experience for me to see excitement in the students' faces, knowing that they were capable of taking more control of their learning." ST best summarized by

sharing, “Gradual release of responsibility creates a student-led classroom. Student-led classroom is engaging, where every student wants to participate.”

During the group level assessment, participants reiterated higher student engagement due to student empowerment. Participants shared student ownership increased as students were doing more of the learning when using the workshop model to allow for increased intentional feedback and support for student success. Participants also shared how student ownership has increased through student choice. Since student engagement increased, participants shared their self-confidence and felt a sense of empowered autonomy in their teaching.

Transformational Teaching

Transformational teaching involves creating dynamic relationships between teachers, students, and a shared body of knowledge to promote student learning and personal growth, such as improved lesson planning or pedagogical skills. Transformational teachers share best practices, build mentoring relationships, observe their peers, keep things fresh by modeling their subject's usefulness (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The final selective code, transformational, in which participants in both semi-structured interviews and group level assessment reported 120 incidences.

Participants chose words such as transformational lesson planning, which caused educators to become facilitators of learning instead of dictators for learning. WP explained, “Thinking Focus Cohort has been a game changer for me. I have been able to create lessons that are engaging, provide opportunities for students to work in groups, and have a much higher classroom synergy than ever before.” AL statement supported WP by describing “Some of the activities we learned during the cohort, I immediately brought

back and implemented. The results of student engagement and student success have changed my way of thinking, especially with lesson planning." SM stated how Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC) make her a better teacher, "I thought I was a great teacher. However, my principal kept telling me I could be better but I didn't know how. Now I realize I improved from the teacher prior to now implementing all of those instructional strategies." TP was similar to SM and shared how TFC changed for the better, "There are a lot of things you can do to change for the better of your kids and for me as an educator. This change has helped transform my lessons and my belief about coming to school every day." JH was similar to TP and explained the shift from dedication to the content to the shift in teaching, "It was a hugely eye-opening experience. The thinking Focus Cohort took a lot of work off me and put it onto the students. They are doing it better than I gave them credit for."

Other participants during the semi-structured interview discussed specific components that transformed their lesson planning and pedagogical skills. For example, KK stated the shift in engagement, "My students were used to sitting in rows. I did the talking. I have implemented the workshop model I learned. It has made me a better teacher. Its help students talk about their learning." ST shared, "I thought I was doing the workshop model before. I didn't have all of the parts, and I was still doing most of the work. Having something concrete I could put into place changed the way that I plan." DH explained, "My student engagement is three times higher than prior to participating in the Thinking Focus Cohort. I have implemented chunking, where I intentionally chunk the material throughout the lesson. I would have never thought to have done this." CM

stated, “I have gotten better at questioning because of the Thinking Focus Cohort. This has improved their discourse and thinking in my classroom.”

Participants in the group level assessment discussed a shift in the role of the teacher because of the increased pedagogical tools. Participants mentioned specific instructional strategies, such as catch and release, they learned during TFC. They also added intentional use of metacognition for students, such as reflection of and on their learning. Both of these items discussed, per the participants in the group level assessment, caused a transformation in the way they planned and implemented instructional strategies because of the impact on their students' engagement and learning.

Role Instructional Coaches Play to Improve Teachers’ Pedagogical Practice

The instructional coach is an on-site, ongoing resource for teachers. Instructional coaches are someone who can provide targeted, job-embedded professional development and support to meet teacher specific learning needs (Mangin & Dunsmore, 2015). Instructional coaches are assets for both systemic and individual, teacher pedagogical reform. Ensuring coaching cycles, which include observations, modeling, and performance feedback to teachers are components that contribute to the success of the coaching process (Pierce, 2019). However, positive relationships serve as the foundation of success for all the work instructional coaches conduct with teachers. Therefore, instructional coaches can increase teachers’ self-efficacy and pedagogical skills (Shinder, 2009).

Question 6 of the semi-structured interview aligns with the second research question, which ties to instructional coaches. Participants' responses revealed the following selective codes: fostering, mentoring, transformational, collaboration, and

student efficacy. Throughout this section, all direct quotes represent data collected from the semi-structured interviews as the group level assessment did not examine this question.

Fostering

To encourage pedagogical skills of the Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC) among teachers, instructional coaches were supportive, listeners, accessible, and encouraging, according to the participants. These components foster enactment of the pedagogical skills tied to curriculum aligned to that of TFC. Fostering was the highest selective code at 33 coding instances among participants. CM stated, “The instructional coach is a member of the team, who has been a great resource for us.” KK was similar to CM and shared, “Our instructional coach is very supportive, always being accessible and in my classroom to help.” KS explained, “Our instructional coach has been very, very helpful in listening and supporting me in anything I want to try to implement.” NT described, “Our instructional coach knew how to make me better through their ideas and creative thinking.” JH stated, “The instructional coach is instrumental in illustrating what outcomes are possible and giving you a goal to work towards.” DH shared, “Our instructional coach supported your learning allowing you to determine your growth and draw out from other observations to get you further than you thought you could get on your own.”

Other participants identified content specific opportunities within the TFC modeled curriculum. WP explained, “The instructional coach had a huge impact in my classroom. He would help me create engaging lessons and then follow through with it with me.” SR was similar to WP and described the support of their instructional coach, “I

didn't know how to activate a schema with parallel lines and angles. The instructional coach gave me a simple idea of printing pictures of real-life examples and having students identify them." AL shared something similar to SR, but focused on one pillar. AL stated their instructional coach, "encouraged and coached me through my growth process. The instructional coach first supported me in the implementation of community building, truly focusing on creating a space for students to own their learning and feel safe to take risks." SM summarized it best when shared about their instructional coach "Who knows if my experience would have been a lot different. The instructional coach kept me calm during teacher rounds and had a wealth of ideas to make something simple much more engaging, which was better than my ideas."

Mentoring

Teachers do not always know what it is about their teaching that is effective and/or areas of improvement. Instructional coaches provide continuing training and professional learning for teachers to develop, improve and implement pedagogical skills (Pawl, 2019). Mentoring was a selective code with response at 24 coding instances described by participants. Participants used words such as coaching cycles, supporting the creation of new and different ideas. LM explained after completing the TFC, "I realized I had work to do so I signed up for a coaching cycle because I had a lot to process. My instructional coach was there and ready to support me through the coaching cycle." ST described, "Our instructional coach is one those people I could approach. She coached me in reading and writing multiple times." WP stated, "I would develop an idea in science and our instructional coach would watch me deliver during class. After we would debrief and with his coaching, we developed ideas to see if engagement would be

better." JH explained, "My growth area is goal-oriented planning. My instructional coach coached and showed me what those outcomes could be." KS stated, "I am a very rigid person. Things, in my mind, were due at a certain time. Our instructional coach has pushed my thinking in coaching cycles, helping me manage that internal drive to slow down, letting the kids think."

Participants also used words as modeling as key words in which instructional coaches propelled the growth of teacher participants. AL shared, "Anytime I asked, she has done things for me. One time our instructional coach modeled a thinking strategy in math, which I implemented in the other classes. At the end of the day, we debriefed over my implementation." NP explained, "Our instructional coach would come into our classroom, observe and provide feedback. She even helped plan a lesson and even came into our classroom to help or model when I was struggling."

Other participants identified specific ideas or overall impact on their teacher from the instructional coach. KA stated during science classes, "You should incorporate thinking strategies while reading scientific information, but I didn't know how. Our instructional coach helped coach me on how to implement a thinking strategy to support my students to increase their literary components as a scientist." SR was similar to KA but instead of mentioning literacy, SR focused on the workshop model, specifically with mini lessons. SR shared their instructional coach, "helped capture the attention of my students through their creative ideas of hooks as I designed lessons using workshop model. The instructional coach coached me on hooks. Due to their coaching, my students were more engaged through my implementation."

Transformational

Change agents, thinking partner, facilitator of thinking and at times, an accountability partner are components to describe the role of instructional coaches. In order for transformation to happen, instructional coaches need to implement goal setting, action planning and reflection with teachers to generate different results (Hine & Levy, 2019). Transformational was a selective code with responses of 22 instance participants described during semi-structured interviews.

Participants used a phrase, challenge thinking, to support their transformation of their pedagogical skills. JH explained, "Without our instructional coach my thinking and setting a goal to work towards, I wouldn't have guidance to improve my teaching. I'm getting more support and better at my craft. I know this because my students are showing me." LM described their instructional coach, "helped me think about those students who already get it and how I can push their thinking, while still pulling those who need re-teaching. Our instructional coach challenged my process I originally used to make me a better educator." KS stated their instructional coach, "Helped me to manage that drive that I believed centered around the pacing guide. The instructional coach helped me through reflection of my teaching and student assessment to let the kids take longer to think and showcase their learning." SM shared their instructional coach as a, "phenomenal asset. I ask how to make something exciting after I described what content I wanted students to learn. The instructional coach would challenge my thinking by focusing on the learning outcome rather than the activity, making it better." SR was similar to SM, in which SR explained, "I wanted my students to talk more. Our

instructional coach challenged my thinking to set up activities to allow for more discussions, which was awesome."

Other participants described how instructional coaches increased their pedagogical skills through reflection or professional learning, which transformed their teacher and increased the teachers' self-efficacy. NP described their instructional coach implementing a book study and its impact, "Our instructional coach would observe me teaching. Afterwards we would meet, reflecting on my implementation by discussing strengths and what I would like to change. I changed because of her coaching and support, not because I was told to." DH was similar to NP, stating, "Every time we have a cohort meeting we reflect on our progress. Our instructional coach was more beneficial and powerful because she helped see, support and continue to reflect on our progress to improve my teaching craft." KK shared, "Our instructional coach would meet regularly with me. We would discuss upcoming learning outcomes and design lessons together. We would reflect on the past lessons I implemented to make new lessons better. Our instructional coach is always helpful." CM focused on the instructional coach's ability to help her increase her self-efficacy as a teacher. CM explained their instructional coach, "caused me to dig deeper, realizing I have great ideas. When we met, I shifted from 'I don't know'' to 'here is what I think we could do', which was such a change in my belief as an educator."

Collaboration

Good coaches create collaborative partnerships with teachers in which invested teachers have ownership of the work (Pierce, 2019). Collaboration with the instructional coaches was a selective code used by the participants a total of 22 times. KS stated, "I

would always get writer's block when coming up with lessons. Our instructional coach was always good at collaboration of ideas. Some of the best lessons have come from bouncing ideas off the instructional coach." NP was similar to KK, stating, "Throughout the Thinking Focus Cohort and beyond our instructional coach was in and out of my classroom. We would collaborate before, during and after school, focusing on what I want to try in order to stretch my teaching." KK explained, "Our instructional coach was always in my classroom. He was always helping me design lessons through collaboration." NT was similar to KK, describing, "Our instructional coach would come in my class. Afterwards, we would glow and grow to let me know what I was doing well. We would then collaborate to develop lessons around my areas of growth."

Some participants described specific instructional strategies while others described the time collaborated with their instructional coaches. DH and WP stated specifics they worked with their instructional coach to improve their pedagogical skills through collaboration. DH stated, "I wanted my students to talk more academically. I learned how to create dialogue through questioning. Our instructional coach and I collaborated to allow my students to experience this since this is where I had such growth." WP shared, "I wanted to improve the lessons I delivered. Our instructional coach and I explored certain ideas together by honing in on my thoughts to help generate better thoughts, which in turn were more engaging." CM, KA and SR described the frequency of their collaboration with each of their instructional coaches. CM explained, "Our instructional coach and I collaborated all of the time. It was easy to pick her brain and support my teaching capacity." KA described, "I met with my instructional coach on a weekly basis my first three years of teaching. We collaborated on everything, classroom

management, engagement, instructional strategies, assessments; basically everything." SR stated, "Our instructional coach and I met weekly. We collaborated on grading, assessment creation and results, and mini lessons to help improve my teaching."

Student Efficacy

One participant used the final selective code, student efficacy, five incidents during the semi-structured interview. SM was observed by other teachers through the teacher rounds, as SM was in the first cohort. SM shared how the instructional supported the pedagogy growth and student efficacy, "Students read out loud to the class the different things visitors said about them and received a Hershey kiss. It changed how they reacted, responded and took ownership of their learning; accelerating their self-confidence, craving to show more."

Role Teacher Rounds Play to Improve Teachers' Pedagogical Practice

The use of teacher rounds, as the literature review revealed, is a means to positively impact school outcomes, more specifically teaching and learning (Terantino & Hoyt, 2014). Teacher rounds have a process, which includes pre-observations, observations, and post-observations. It embodies a professional learning environment that provides teachers the opportunity to share their classroom practice with other teachers, which enables them to see pedagogical skills in action (Troen & Boles, 2014). Question #7 from the semi-structured interview protocol focused on teacher rounds to support the implementation of the instructional strategies of the Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC). Participants used words such as exemplar modeling, collaboration within the district, transformational, higher teacher self-efficacy, and student efficacy. Throughout this

section, all direct quotes represent data collected from the semi-structured interviews as the group level assessment did not examine this question.

Exemplar Modeling

Teacher rounds can provide the teachers examples of exemplar modeling through the best instructional classrooms that implement pedagogical strategies. Visiting these classrooms seek to increase teachers' understanding of a particular pedagogical skill in a given classroom by seeing the skill in "action " or "live" (Newlyn, 2013). Exemplar modeling was the highest selective code used by the participants with 60 incidents. CM stated, "One thing I really enjoyed was getting in and getting to see actual implementation of one component of the Thinking Focus Cohort." NT was similar to CM sharing, "I'm a visual learner. So definitely just seeing it happen during live instruction was powerful for me." WP explained, "When I went to another high school's classroom, I observed the science teacher in action. It was very helpful to see what implementation looks like in practice, not just theory, not just discussion." SR was similar to WP describing, "Talking and learning about each component of the Thinking Focus was good. Just getting to see how other teachers had implemented those components was really helpful for me." KS stated, "I observed a middle and high school science teacher. It was cool to just see them do their thing, teach a daily lesson. It was modeling what they want me to do but with my own teaching touch." AL reiterated what the previous participants shared and summarized by sharing, "Just being able to see the teacher in action with Thinking Focus implementation was extremely productive."

Some participants mentioned specific components of TFC they saw during teacher rounds. DH explained, "You can't understand the implementation of a strategy,

like Thinking Strategies, without seeing it in person." KK described, "It was really nice to see how a math lesson can be better and more engaging through the implementation of the workshop model." SM stated, "For me, to be able to enter into other teachers' classrooms and see how they put their own twist on think strategies and incorporating the idea of gradual release, merged all of the learning together." TP shared, "Planning periods are held tightly, but to see other teachers teach and implement academic discourse was amazing." ST was similar to TP explaining, "I wanted to change academic discourse for my students but didn't know how. Just seeing other teachers do this and seeing how it works helped me to see how I could change." KA summarizes, "I am a visual learner and not so much auditory. I heard all of the components of TFC and the instructional pillars. Definitely seeing it modeled was better, especially since I could see it in action."

Collaboration within District

Teacher rounds are an advanced type of collegial relationship. They are a stimulant for professional learning communities that explore instructional practices from others. They are also a catalyst for collaboration and feedback from the point of view of inquiry (Troen & Boles, 2014).

Collaboration within the district was the second highest selective code during the semi-structured interviews from the participants at 37 incidents. KS described, "It's nice to see my peers teaching. Seeing what they struggle with versus what I struggle with and then be able to talk about." AL stated, "The teachers I observed were very forthcoming when sharing the things she used. We also discussed other ideas she used to help implement the Thinking Strategies." NP was similar to AL sharing, "Having

conversations and having the ability to ask questions afterwards was huge. It gave me a plateful of strategies that I could use and a lot of people I could reach out to if I have any questions." SM explained, "I learned from every classroom because I witnessed with my eyes and ears teachers being creative in all these different pieces. Plus, I expanded my network of collaboration within the district." CM was similar to SM explained, "I feel like getting to visit classrooms, that's the golden opportunity we all want. It was great to hear someone else experiencing the same thing from a different point of view." DH described, "We immersed ourselves into a classroom for at least one hour. Yet the collaboration lasted longer." KK was similar to DH stating, "It's always nice to get into someone else's classroom to see the little routines and procedures. It's spectacular to have collaborative conversations. The collegial partnership still exists today." To summarized it best when TP shared, "It's always a good thing to see others in action. It's imperative if we want to continue to move forward with the Thinking Focus Cohort. Collaboration is impeccable and would not take the teacher rounds away because of this."

Transformational

As mentioned in the literature review, participants followed a protocol for teacher rounds. After observations of the teacher a post-round discussion was held where teachers reflected on both the instructional strategies they had seen and on their own pedagogical skills. This type of professional development that takes place in an "authentic world" of the classroom, such as teacher rounds, is more effective to cause change (Frederick, 2019).

Participants used the selective code transformational in reference to 21 incidents during semi-structured interviews. Participants used works such as reflection to begin to

cause a metacognitive shift. DH explained, “We were reflecting about what we saw during our observation but more importantly afterwards. We took intentional time after to discuss what we saw and how we could change.” CM was similar to DH describing, “When we would meet or see different teachers in action, we constantly reflected on what we saw and how we could change. Like I said, hearing different points of view caused a shift in my thinking.” SM's approach or entry was different from the previous two participants, yet still caused a change in her teaching. SM stated, “What I learned after going into every classroom I walked into, we all had some foundation. Everyone implements them differently in their classroom. We all get better each time because we see it in action.”

Other participants discussed how the teacher rounds were the most memorable activity leading to the overall transformation in their teaching. NT shared, “For me the Thinking Focus Cohort was definitely the most memorable professional development. The most powerful part was seeing others in action because I could then see how to make a change in my classroom.” LM was similar to NT explaining, “Seeing those classrooms do different things was huge. It was awesome. I mean Thinking Focus Cohort has totally changed the teacher I want to become or be at the end of the day.” NP summarizes it by describing teachers rounds as impactful, “I was trying new things throughout the year but still lacked something. The biggest turning point for me was being able to go in and see how different teachers implement the strategies I have tried and want to try.”

High Teacher Self Efficacy

Teacher rounds are mini professional developments to expose the learner to new pedagogical skills or pedagogical skills desired to implement (Del Prete, 2013). It helps

to prevent an educator from ever going obsolete in an ever-evolving educational world through inspiration. Once inspired a teacher will try something new. These positive changes increase teachers' self-efficacy (McGill, 2016). High teacher self-efficacy was a selective code with 10 incidences among participants.

Participants used words such as beneficial and inspirational when seeing different content. These left participants believing they could implement TFC pedagogical skills. ST stated, "I think watching other classrooms is the most beneficial professional development that anyone can get." JH shared, "I thought I had the only content, science, were learning drives curiosity. However, I saw English and math. Those contents inspired me more." CM explained, "It was great to hear somebody else experience the same thing from a little different point of view. It inspires you".

Other participants described their experience with teacher rounds, leaving them wanting more. TP described, "The teacher rounds were the most memorable component. Doing it in your own room is great, but going out and seeing them happen with kids in the room, it changes your whole aspect of what can and can't work." KA was similar to TP stating, "I think teacher rounds are extremely beneficial. That is what truly allowed me to see it working, wanting to be better for my students." AL summarized it by sharing, "The teacher rounds were extremely beneficial. I've gone back to my notes, even the slides the teacher I visited shared. I constantly pull from them because I know it works. I am better for this experience."

Student Efficacy

Student efficacy was the final selective code used in eight incidents by two different participants during the semi-structured interviews. Both participants focused on

how teacher rounds supported their need for their students to increase student ownership. LM stated “Teacher rounds. I saw higher order questioning and students nailed them. I want to make sure that my students are exposed to high levels of questioning in order to increase their academic discourse, knowledge and self-confidence.” JH explained, “I have the benefit of letting a student’s curiosity drive their learning through their interests. Teacher rounds showed me student ownership through a student’s curiosity to drive instruction, thus having students with higher investment in their learning.”

Chapter Summary

The participants of the customized professional development, Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC), who agreed to partake in the study from initiation of 2014-2015 through 2019-2020 participated in a semi-structured interview that consisted of 9 questions. These questions determined how participants felt about TFC and its perceived impact, or lack thereof, on their pedagogical practice. This data served as the foundation of this study and the springboard for the group level assessment with a different group of TFC participants.

By completing a qualitative case study, it is possible to draw conclusions about the impact of the pedagogical practices for the teachers’ perspective. As I reviewed the comments aligned with the selective codes and reflected as to how they answered the research questions, it is evident the personalized professional development, TFC, had a positive impact on the teachers’ pedagogical practice. As you examine the statement in each prior section and analyze what each participant shared in relation to the selective code or value inductively and deductively concluded, you actually “see” the change process in action. The statements surrounding pedagogical skills reflect the dependence on TFC, supported by the instructional coaches and teacher rounds, in order to affect

pedagogical practices. Their statements compare the teacher's belief of their teaching, specifically pedagogical practice, to their belief of their pedagogical practice after participating in the TFC as well as identification of specific implementation of instructional strategies that demonstrate the transformational process that occurred. The participants also voiced a clear understanding of the desired professional development and offered some practical ideas for future impact.

Oftentimes professional development is not evaluated on its impact towards teachers' pedagogical practices. This may in part be because of the required professional development hours or lack of time at the conclusion of the professional development. However, customized professional development is extremely beneficial and demonstrated through the participants' responses a keen understanding of its impact on their pedagogical practice.

Conclusions drawn from the findings appear in Chapter 5 along with research implications, recommendations for future research, and discussions of the limitations.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study, I sought to answer three research questions. These were:

RQ 1: What are the teachers' perceptions of the Thinking Focus Cohort and its influence on teachers' pedagogical practice?

RQ 2: What role did instructional coaches play in district effort to improve teachers' pedagogical practices within the Thinking Focus Cohort?

RQ 3: What role did instructional rounds play in district efforts to improve teachers' pedagogical practices within the Thinking Focus Cohort?

In this chapter, I provide a summary of the findings for each research question. I then discuss the implications of my findings for policy, practice, and future research.

RQ 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Thinking Focus Cohort and Influence on Pedagogical Practice

The first research question served as an overarching question for this qualitative study. I sought to investigate the teachers' perceptions of Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC) on their pedagogical practice. My initial look at the responses in both the semi-structured interviews and group level assessment (GLA) related to this research question indicated many changes. These changes aligned with implementation of intentional pedagogical practices, teachers' self-efficacy, transformation, and student self-efficacy.

Looking across the 15 semi-structured interviews and the GLA responses to five questions, intentional pedagogical skills appeared as the most frequent selective code. Across the responses, participants identified specific pedagogical skills he/she

implemented because of the TFC, such as various community building activities, gradual release of responsibility through workshop, intentional usage of thinking strategies, and strategies to improve academic discourse. Several participants mentioned how they refer back to what they learned during various meetings while collaborating with other participants. This is relevant, as the research literature reveals increasing pedagogical skills serves as the primary purpose of professional development (Bailey & Jakicic, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2011; Fields et al., 2012; Guskey, 2002; Learning Forward, 2013; Long; 2014; Roth et al., 2011; Schumacher, 2012; Shumack & Forde, 2011; Wallace, 2014; Wei et al., 2010; Yoon et al., 2007).

Participants also shared their challenges tied to their self-efficacy, a second selective code that revealed itself through the coding process. During the GLA, participants expressed a natural outreach for a formal structure in place to house all previous strategies. It left participants feeling overwhelmed, yet positively impacted. These responses matched the semi-structured responses as participants revealed how they shifted from low self-efficacy to high self-efficacy as they completed the TFC. Semi-structured interview participants described coming into their own as an individual and an educator. They felt supported through the collaboration amongst other participants and the district's intentional efforts to support their growth of self-efficacy. Their statements illustrate the significance of how this type of professional development can support a teacher through a process that can sometimes include feeling as if he/she is in a fog because it is a process of growth, yet the resulting change was impactful and powerful.

Self-efficacy tied directly to the third selective code that revealed itself through the coding process: transformation. Participants originally described their teaching and themselves as “a hot mess” to an “OK educator.” However, after participating in TFC, participants described the evolution of their lessons plans and the resulting shift in how their role as a teacher changed. Teachers described how their lessons went from being teacher-based (e.g., heavy lecture) to facilitators of learning. This transformation empowered student agency.

A student’s self-efficacy can develop through social interactions and learning experiences (Lent et al., 1994). The final selective code, student efficacy, emerged during the participants’ responses in both semi-structured interviews and the GLA. The shift from teacher-center to teacher-facilitated and student-centered has propelled student efficacy. Participants referenced how the intentional pedagogical skill, specifically workshop model, allowed for more gradual release of responsibility to students, yielding perceptions of higher student engagement. The participants also revealed the workshop provided protected time to give purposeful feedback to students, which resulted in higher achievement and promoted student ownership.

Designing professional development resulting in change to a teacher’s pedagogical practice is a difficult task, as the literature review described (Carter, 2013; Gambrell & Morrow, 2015; Porter et al., 2000). Teachers' professional development is one of the keys to improving the quality of schools (Desimone, 2011). High-quality professional development seeks to improve, enhance, or update classroom instruction (Shumack & Forde, 2011). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) provided clarity on the impact professional development should have in order to make a difference in educators

teaching and pedagogical practices. These seven features included: content focused incorporation of active learning utilizing adult learning theory, support for collaboration, job-embedded contexts, use of models and modeling of effective practice, providing coaching and expert support, opportunities for feedback and reflection, and sustained duration. A suburban district within Kentucky, specifically Bullitt County, provided a customized professional development, TFC, which included all components of professional development as described by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017). This customized professional development did affect the teachers' pedagogical practice as described above.

RQ 2: Role Instructional Coaches Play to Improve Teachers' Pedagogical Practice

In contrast to the first research question, the second research question serves as an underpinning to the first. I sought to explore the role instructional coaches took in supporting teachers' pedagogical practice. This research question drew only upon the semi-structured interviews. The participants were rich in their responses. First glance of the participants' responses revealed collaboration through coaching from the instructional coaches to support transformation in the teachers' pedagogical practices.

After examining the 15 semi-structured interviews, specifically the responses to question six, fostering, nurturing teacher growth, appeared as the most frequent selective code that revealed itself during the coding process. Participants described the instructional coaches in a positive manner. Through coaching, the teacher was able to implement intentional pedagogical practices at a self-determined rate and with more effectiveness and fidelity than the participant originally believed they could. This is applicable to the literature review of Bakhtin's (1975) different forms of dialogism in

which anticipated responses of the participant support the future work of instructional coaches (Apusiagh et al., 2012; Cuenca, 2011; Hsu, 2014; Wells& Mitchell, 2016).

Participants further described instructional coaches as mentors to their pedagogical shift, which was the second selective code that emerged through the coding process. Several participants revealed the intentional support for implementation of pedagogical practices through multiple coaching cycles. Participants described how they engaged coaching cycles not only during the Thinking Focus Cohort (TFC), but also after the cohort concluded. While discussing the various coaching cycles, participants reported timely, specific feedback that correlated directly to the TFC. This is applicable to the literature review because instructional coaches serve as the catalyst to facilitate change in a teacher's pedagogical practice through coaching and feedback (Couter, 2003; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Miller & Stewart, 2013; Pawl, 2019; Sweeney, 2011).

Mentoring led directly to the third selective code, transformation. Participants revealed transformation occurred when instructional coaches facilitated challenging conversations. This dialogue was not confrontational or negative, yet encouraging in order to expand beyond what the participants believed about themselves. Participants revealed the change was propelled to both modeling and goal setting. This corresponded to the literature review through teacher-centered coaching, where the support and emphasis was on the teacher's move or lack thereof, and coaching is supported through goal setting to improve the teacher's pedagogical practice (Sweeney, 2011; Sweeney & Harrison, 2017).

Student efficacy is the final selective code found during the coding process. Even though one participant discussed the changes experienced in their students, this

participant also revealed how the instructional coach assisted in helping to facilitate this growth and change. The participant described how the coaching focused on student moves and outcomes. Within the coaching cycles, the participant described the forward thinking of the instructional coach of ideas, collaboration on workshop wheel planning, implementation, and reviewing the desired outcomes of the lesson through the lens of the students. This ties directly to the literature review tied to student-centered coaching, focusing on the collaboration of the instructional coach and the teacher making decisions for and about students using data to enhance student ownership (Sweeney, 2011; Sweeney & Harrison, 2017).

I would be remiss to neglect discussing the one participant who lacked an instructional coach for support in their pedagogical growth. The participant admitted there are instructional coaches who understand best instructional practices. However, this participant craved and expressed jealousy for lack of a content-specific instructional coach. This participant was not a core teacher but rather a career and technical educator. Bullitt County Public Schools does not employ instructional coaches for the various contents, such as this participant. It is a reminder how coaching emerged in education as one of the most effective elements of professional development (Miller & Stewart, 2013). Instructional coaches serve as stimulants to improve a teacher's pedagogical practice through coaching cycles. There are different coaching models for instructional coaches to use to support teachers' pedagogical growth, teacher-center or student-centered (Cooter, 2003). Whichever model is utilized, instructional coaches motivate teachers through mentoring, feedback and collaboration in order to create opportunities for teachers to become an active participant in their learning process (Pawl, 2019).

RQ 3: Role Teacher Rounds Play to Improve Teachers' Pedagogical Practice

In this question, I sought to investigate how teacher rounds influenced the teachers' perception of their perceived pedagogical change. Participants answered one question, number seven, during the semi-structured interviews. Participants provided plentiful information, specifically discussing modeling of the instructional strategies and collaboration within the district to cause a transformation in their pedagogical practice.

Exemplar modeling was the first selective code identified during the coding process. Participants revealed how they believed in what they were learning but lacked the skills to implement. Teacher rounds facilitated many epiphanies, which occurred for the participants because they could see the strategies implemented during "live" instruction. It was no longer an auditory learning experience but now had visual learning through teacher rounds. Participants revealed how teacher rounds were an incremental process that changed their pedagogical practice.

Participants went further to describe the teacher round process. Collaboration with the district was the second selective noted during the coding process. Participants disclosed the systematic process coaches facilitated prior to walking into another teacher's classroom. This process provided each cohort member a lens through which to observe. Participants praised the instructional coaches because it allowed each member to control the process of observing, analyzing and learning through their colleagues throughout the district. The formal process also created opportunities for the participants to step out of their classroom and school to collaborate with each other. Many participants expressed the desire to implement and allow more teacher rounds. They divulged the experience outweighed the time lost during protected planning. This refers

back to the literature review where the two main purposes of teacher rounds are for teachers to learn from and with each other, creating a culture of collaboration (City, 2011; Marzano & Troth, 2013).

Exemplar modeling and collaboration with the district fed into the third selective code, transformation. Participants remarked how seeing specific activities and practices in action through teacher rounds assisted in the transformation of their pedagogical practice. After each teacher round, participants revealed how they were able to set goals of improvement that tied directly to the Thinking Focus Cohort curriculum. After seeing it in action, they had increased confidence to take risks with their students. No longer were their mental blocks or fear of failure freezing them in place; rather, they became risk-takers. Participants revealed how they felt confident to try a new instructional strategy because they had the support of their colleagues and instructional coaches. Teacher self-efficacy began to rise, as evidenced by the fourth selective code. This relates to the literature review where Lent (1994) described Bandura's growth of self-efficacy through social interactions and pressure to perceive.

Participants' higher self-efficacy provided opportunities for students to own their learning. Participants revealed how their view of engagement shifted from compliance driven to teacher-facilitated and student-centered, thus increasing the student's efficacy. Participants disclosed how students began to engage in academic discourse and answered higher-order thinking questions. These results led the participants to gradual release learning by allowing students' interests to guide their learning.

Teacher rounds are valuable tools schools and districts can implement to help enhance and improve a teachers' pedagogical practice (Marzano & Troth, 2014). Teacher

rounds follow a formal process driven by inquiry. The collaborative learning environment that the teacher rounds create, support the professional development of the observer and the observed teacher (City, 2011). It provides tools, skills, strategies and supports aligned to any district goals (Troen & Boles, 2014). Teacher rounds combined with instructional coaches leads to teachers' pedagogical practice beginning to transform as described throughout the qualitative case study.

Implications

From desired results and pedagogical changes in teaching practice, there are implications for both policy and practice arising for both districts and schools out of this qualitative case study. With an increasing number of teachers leaving the profession, districts and schools need to support, grow and empower teachers. Therefore, the need to value high-quality professional development is critical to support transformation for education and stop the hemorrhage of teacher attrition.

Policy

As one examines regulations and policies in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, there are roadblocks to implementing high-quality professional development. According to 704 KAR 3:305, more specifically KRS 158.070 the Kentucky state-mandated professional development law, "each local board of education shall use four days (24) hours of the minimum school term for professional development." The regulation does provide clarity regarding the desired outcomes of each professional development offered. However, it does not provide optimal opportunities for job-embedded professional learning and intentional support. Therefore, compliance to regulations and laws drives districts rather than the desired intent of professional development.

When teachers and instructional leaders discuss the importance of professional development, the ultimate goal is to help the teachers learn, grow and apply new knowledge and pedagogical skills that can help them in their teaching. Professional development is not a workshop or an adult pull out program, but rather a collaborative professionalism (Learning Forward, 2013). With high-quality professional development, professional learning is intentional and driven by clear goals for educational changes. Teachers not only experience critical support but also pedagogical changes.

In order to see the desired changes in a teacher's pedagogical practice, the mandated professional development laws need revision by policymakers. Currently, districts and schools are required to develop a professional development plan that correlates to the needs of the students identified in the comprehensive school and/or district improvement plan. There are requirements of the professional development plan in which districts and schools must follow, as outlined in the literature review. However, the professional development plan lacks evidence and research tied to the effectiveness of the professional development plan. Therefore, districts and schools need to implement structures that will allow them to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development. While examining the professional development's effectiveness, district and schools need to examine the style of delivery and methods of support with implementation.

My research participants expressed the need for instructional strategies continually modeled in their professional development cohort meetings, time and coaching of implementation of strategies and teacher rounds to model strategies in "action" while in classrooms. Based on the findings of this study, what would be most useful for teachers would be implementing high-performing, high-quality professional

development driven by the needs of participants and supported long-term in an ongoing manner, in order to reach the vision of high-performing, high-quality professional development. At the district-level, this requires instructional leaders to be intentional with their funds, protect time for both instructional coach support and implementation of teacher rounds.

Practice

During semi-structured interviews, participants described the pedagogical changes they implemented after participating in TFC. Participants also shared how this professional development was the best they experienced, as it not only improved their pedagogical practice, but also increased collaboration amongst other teachers throughout the district. Due to these perceived changes, participants indicated the need for more professional development like this. This points directly to the implications for providing this type of professional development that includes at least a year long learning experience with content focus supported by instructional coaches and teacher rounds. These components were supported through the research of Desimone (2011) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) as discussed in the literature review.

There are barriers that prevent the district and schools from implementing professional development that is the most effective. Barriers include but are not limited to resources, external demands and the evaluation system. In order to allow for job-embedded professional development, substitutes need to be available. Current reality is that schools not only have a shortage of teachers but also substitutes to allow job-embedded coaching, such as teacher rounds or professional learning throughout the day. These demands are intensified with the pressures of state and district assessments.

Teachers are not wanting to leave their classrooms to observe others as their students are still expected to perform under a substitute, if available. At the end of the year, teachers are evaluated, in part, based on the test scores of their students. Time out of the classroom can negatively impact student growth. The current evaluation system does not allow for conversations nor evaluate on growth. Therefore, teachers may be hesitant to take risks and implement a professional development if they are hesitant on the impact of their overall evaluation, thus hindering their chances for tenure.

In order to achieve high-quality professional development, district leaders need to consider teachers first, not policy. My literature review revealed a positive link between high-quality professional development and impact of teachers' pedagogical practice. In order for this to happen, key recommendations need to be in place. Instructional leaders have the capacity to identify teacher leaders for not only teacher rounds but also future instructional coaches. They also need to plan for a minimum of one year to support a teacher's pedagogical growth. Within this year, instructional leaders need to participate in the TFC with their teachers. This would model continuous learning for leaders while providing a space and mechanism for collaborating with their teachers. Finally, instructional leaders need to observe and learn through modeling from instructional coaches on purposeful feedback. This type of feedback will continue to have a positive impact on teachers and their pedagogical practice.

The strategies outlined above help to mitigate the belief that professional development is not only compliance driven but also solely for teachers. These strategies can be the driving force to transform professional development. Ongoing support,

coaching, modeling and growing instructional leaders and teachers may be integral to positively impact educators teaching experience.

Future Research

Part of the continuous improvement process for districts and schools is to analyze professional development continually for its effectiveness in supporting teachers' pedagogical practice. This is particularly important when examining other professional developments offered throughout the district and schools and its impact. Further research should focus on this type of high-quality professional development, its impact on teachers' pedagogical practice, and particularly its impact on student achievement.

Another parallel to this current research and future research is to examine the change of assessments teachers created because of this type of professional development. When teachers' pedagogical practices evolve, it can cause teacher-created assessments to evolve, creating a different style of assessment. Teacher-created assessments may shift beyond the simple, multiple-choice assessment to a defense style, allowing students to display their learning. Thus, examining the teacher's assessment change, or lack thereof, represents important future research indicated by the findings of this study.

My study included one district implementing this particular style of high-quality professional development. Future researchers could expand beyond one district analysis to include other districts implementing this style of professional development. Comparing these results to other districts' results could provide greater insight as to the opportunities afforded to teachers, which then may increase the field of knowledge regarding pedagogical practices and self-efficacy for educators.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Please share a little bit about yourself, including but not limited to the number of years as an educator, classes taught and currently teaching, and the year you participated in the Thinking Focus Cohort.
2. What were your initial expectations about getting the opportunity to participate in the Thinking Focus Cohort? (RQ1)
3. Describe what you remember of participating in the Thinking Focus Cohort.
4. What part of the Thinking Focus Cohort has been the most beneficial? (RQ1)
5. What part of the Thinking Focus Cohort was the most memorable to you?
6. What instructional strategy/strategies did you implement as a result of your participation in the Thinking Focus Cohort? (RQ1)
7. How did you view yourself as an educator prior to participating in the Thinking Focus Cohort? (RQ1)
8. How has the instructional coach supported you in the content knowledge of the Thinking Focus Cohort or instructional planning? (RQ2)
9. In what ways have the teacher rounds supported the implementation of new strategies that have been a part of the Thinking Focus Cohort? (RQ3)
10. What impact has participating in the Thinking Focus Cohort had on student engagement? (RQ1)
11. How have you used the community, thinking strategies, gradual release of responsibility, and academic discourse in your instructional planning and delivery? (RQ1)

12. What elements(s) of the Thinking Focus do you think could inform our district, or any, with regard to professional development programs?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share?

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Semi-Structure Interviews

Project Title:

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE: A STUDY OF KENTUCKY SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Investigator(s) name & address:

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Site(s) Where Study is to be Conducted: The Bullitt County Central Office and/or virtual.

Phone number for subjects to call for questions: Rachelle Bramlage-Schomburg (502)802-6565

Introduction and Background Information:

You are invited to participate in a research study about the implementation of professional development, Thinking Focus Cohort. The study is being conducted by Rachelle Bramlage-Schomburg, a doctoral student at the University of Louisville, who is being supervised by Dr. W. Kyle Ingle, Associate Professor in Educational Leadership. The study will take place at the Bullitt County Central Office in Shepherdsville, Kentucky. Approximately 15 participants will be invited to participate.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of teachers regarding the implementation of Thinking Focus Cohort to see if the customized professional development has had impact on teachers' pedagogical practice.

Procedures:

In this study, you will be asked to participate in semi-structed interviews. This is an individual interview in which I will ask you to respond to ____ questions about your perception of Thinking Focus Cohort on your pedagogical practice. I will audio and/or video record the interview in order to conduct an analysis of all interviewee responses later.

Potential Risks:

There are no foreseeable risks other than the sacrifice of your time to participate.

Benefits:

There are multiple potential benefits of this study: (1) the findings may influence change in how Thinking Focus Cohort is implemented in the following school years; (2) the findings may be helpful to other schools and districts who are wanting to implement this type of professional learning to their staff; (3) participants may better informed about their own pedagogical practice after going through the semi-structed interviews; and (4) significant challenges with implementing this type of professional development along with suggestions of how instructional coaches and teacher rounds can continue to support teachers as they face challenges in their teaching.

Compensation:

You will not be compensated for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you participate in this study, but drinks and refreshments will be provided during the semi-structured interviews. Some small tokens of appreciation will also be provided to show gratitude for your participation.

Confidentiality:

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. Your privacy will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your name, the name of the instructional coach, or the name of your school, will be used. If the results from this study are published or used in reports, presentations your name will not be made public. Results will only be shared in aggregate form. The data will be stored on a recording device to allow the researcher to accurately transcribe the information from the recordings. Once transcription is complete, the video and audio recording will be erased. Only the researcher will have access to the initial data and paper records will be shredded.

Voluntary Participation:

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study, you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify. You will be told about any changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.

Contact Persons, Research Subject's Rights, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have three options. You may contact the principal investigator at (502) 852-6097 or william.ingle@louisville.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject, questions, concerns or complaints, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO) (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a subject, in secret, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the HSPPO staff. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this study. If you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. You will be given the chance to talk about any questions, concerns or complaints in secret. This is a 24-hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.
If you have questions about the study, you can ask me now or anytime during the study. You can also call me at (502)802-6565 or e-mail me at rachelle.bramlage@bullitt.kyschools.us. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at University of Louisville. You will receive a copy of this form for your records. This informed consent document is not a contract. This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Acknowledgment and Signatures:

This informed consent document is not a contract. This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

_____	_____	_____
Subject Name (Please Print)	Signature of Subject	Date
Signed		

_____	_____	_____
Name of Investigator	Signature of Investigator	Date
Signed		

List of Investigators	Phone Numbers
William Kyle Ingle, Ph.D.	(502) 852-6097

Rachelle Bramlage-Schomburg (502) 802-6565

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Group Level Assessment

Project Title:

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE: A STUDY OF KENTUCKY SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Investigator(s) name & address:

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Buckner, KY 40010
rachelle.bramlage@bullitt.kyschools.us

Site(s) Where Study is to be Conducted: The Bullitt County Central Office and/or Zoneton Fire Department.

Phone number for subjects to call for questions: Rachelle Bramlage-Schomburg (502)802-6565

Introduction and Background Information:

You are invited to participate in a research study about the implementation of professional development, Thinking Focus Cohort. The study is being conducted by Rachelle Bramlage-Schomburg, a doctoral student at the University of Louisville, who is being supervised by Dr. W. Kyle Ingle, Associate Professor in Educational Leadership. The study will take place at the Bullitt County Central Office in Shepherdsville, Kentucky. Approximately 15 participants will be invited to participate.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the perceptions of teachers regarding the implementation of Thinking Focus Cohort to see if the customized professional development has had impact on teachers' pedagogical practice.

Procedures:

In this study, you will be asked to participate in Group Level Assessment (GLA). GLA is a participatory large group research method. Because of its participatory nature the process of GLA is interactive and collaborative. The GLA is a seven-step process in which you will respond individually, as small groups, and as a whole group to several prompts regarding the perceived impact on teachers' pedagogical practice after participating in the Thinking Focus Cohort. The large group segments will be video recorded for the researcher's benefit and the small group segments will be audio recorded for the researcher's benefit. The projected time allotted for the GLA process is three to four hours.

Potential Risks:

There are no foreseeable risks other than the sacrifice of your time to participate.

Benefits:

There are multiple potential benefits of this study: (1) the findings may influence change in how Thinking Focus Cohort is implemented in the following school years; (2) the findings may be helpful to other schools and districts who are wanting to implement this type of professional learning to their staff; (3) participants may better informed about their own pedagogical practice after going GLA process; and (4) significant challenges with implementing this type of professional development along with suggestions of how instructional coaches and teacher rounds can continue to support teachers as they face challenges in their teaching.

Compensation:

You will not be compensated for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you participate in this study, but drinks and refreshments will be provided during the GLA process. Some door prizes will also be provided to show appreciation for your participation.

Confidentiality:

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. Your privacy will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your name, the name of the instructional coach, or the name of your school, will be used. If the results from this study are published or used in reports, presentations your name will not be made public. Results will only be shared in aggregate form. The data will be stored on a recording device to allow the researcher to accurately transcribe the information from the recordings. Once transcription is complete, the video and audio recording will be erased. Only the researcher will have access to the initial data and paper records will be shredded.

Voluntary Participation:

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study, you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in

this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify. You will be told about any changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.

Contact Persons, Research Subject's Rights, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have three options. You may contact the principal investigator at (502) 852-6097 or william.ingle@louisville.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject, questions, concerns or complaints, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO) (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a subject, in secret, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the HSPPO staff. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this study. If you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. You will be given the chance to talk about any questions, concerns or complaints in secret. This is a 24-hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

If you have questions about the study, you can ask me now or anytime during the study. You can also call me at (502)802-6565 or e-mail me at rachelle.bramlage@bullitt.kyschools.us. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the IRB Office at University of Louisville. You will receive a copy of this form for your records. This informed consent document is not a contract. This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Acknowledgment and Signatures:

This informed consent document is not a contract. This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

_____	_____	_____
Subject Name (Please Print)	Signature of Subject	Date
Signed		

_____ _____ _____

Name of Investigator	Signature of Investigator	Date Signed

List of Investigators	Phone Numbers
William Kyle Ingle, Ph.D.	(502) 852-6097
Rachelle Bramlage-Schomburg	(502) 802-6565

APPENDIX D: GROUP LEVEL ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

Speaker	Script
Part 1 - Climate Setting	
GLA HOST (3 minutes)	Host say: Thank you everyone for joining us today. I know that your time is important, so we will try to be as efficient as possible. I expect this Group Level Assessment to take approximately one hour and twenty minutes. I will record this so that we can have a record of all of the responses and a transcript of all of the chats. I will begin the recording now. <<START RECORDING>> As you might be noticing, I am changing (or have changed) your names to correspond with a letter of the alphabet as I go over this information. All of the names are being changed to help protect your confidentiality and allow you to feel comfortable responding honestly and with candor. Let me explain what is going to happen today. A Group Level Assessment, or GLA, is a qualitative data collection method used to collect data that I am using to collect data for my dissertation. This process is done with everyone together in a room responding to prompts on poster paper, walking around and talking with each other to get ideas. Through individual work, reflection and group collaboration, participants co-construct meaning of the shared experiences of the Thinking Focus Cohort. After I finish going through these instructions, you will be asked to grab a random color marker. I will randomly assign you to start at a prompt. Today's prompts are focused on areas related to Thinking Focus Cohort and your experiences. Each participant will be given three minutes at each prompt and then asked to rotate to their right, moving onto the next prompt. We will repeat this cycle until we've been through all of the prompts. Are there any questions before we begin?
Part 2 - Generating	
GLA Host (32 minutes)	Participants are assigned to each prompt. This is the first of four parts. We have three minutes with each prompt,

	including the time it takes me to go over these instructions. You will have three minutes to respond to prompts written on flip charts placed on walls around the room. You may write words, phrases, complete sentences and/or draw pictures. I will keep the timer on my phone and give a 1 minute, 30 second and 10 second warning to allow you to finish your final thought on each chart paper. If you finish early, please remain at each prompt until directed to change. Do you have any clarifying questions? You may begin. (Host reminds participants of times - 1 minute, 30 seconds and 10 second warning.) Rotate - as you rotate to the next question, you may add on to the previous participants thoughts or create new thoughts. If you see a response on the page that you agree with or want to emphasize strongly, please underline once. If there are already underlines presented, add another line. Continue to repeat until all participants have cycled through all prompts. Finished - please return to your marker to your tub and return to your seat.
Part 3 - Gallery Walk	
GLA Host (17 minutes)	Thank you for taking the time to provide your input at each prompt. We are now going to the second of four parts, spending the next 15 minutes looking at all of the prompts. After I finish reading the directions, you will be placed into a group of three and provided one clipboard, with a blank sheet of paper and a writing utensil. Each group will be assigned a prompt to begin. Within your group, discuss the responses of the prompts on each chart paper and identify common themes. Recorders, record the themes your group discusses while circulating throughout the room. Please assign one person in the group to be the recorder. The group of three, please proceed to each prompt. You will have two minutes and fifteen seconds at each prompt. Please read through each prompt silently to yourself. Reflect, thinking about what each phrase means to you and/or themes you are reading through. Discuss common themes within your group, ensuring your recorder has captured the group's thoughts. I will let you know when the two minutes and fifteen seconds are up in order to rotate to the next prompt.

	Do you have any clarifying questions? You may begin. (Host reminds participants when the two-minute timer is up.) Continue to repeat until all participants have cycled through all prompts. Finished - please return to a seat, ensuring your group is sitting by each other.
Part 4 - Understanding	
GLA Host (22 minutes)	Thank you for taking the time to participate in a gallery walk, reviewing each participant's thoughts as a group. We are now going through the third of four parts, spending the next 20 minutes discussing what you and your group determined are themes after reading each prompt. I will record your thoughts on a separate chart paper, capturing your words using the "pop-corn" approach with each group presenting one theme at a time. If a theme has already been presented, you may share another and/or add onto what another group shared. Once all themes have been presented from each group, we will determine the three most important themes. I will provide a 5-minute, 3-minute, 1 minute and 30 second reminder of the timer. Before we begin, please identify one speaker of your group. Does anyone have any clarifying questions? Who would like to start? (Host reminds participants when the 5-minute, 3-minute, 1 minute, 30 second and timer is complete). Participants return to their original seat.
Part 5 - Selecting	
GLA Host (6 minutes)	Thank you for taking the time to participate in the understanding portion, reviewing each group's themes. We are now going to the final part, spending the next five minutes to determine the three most important themes. I will record your thoughts using stars next to the top three. We will use a "round robin" allowing everyone to share their thoughts. The themes with the highest stars will represent the groups top three themes. I will provide a one minute and 30 second reminder of the timer. Does anyone have any clarifying questions?

	Who would like to start? (Host reminds participants when the 1 minute, 30 second and timer is complete). Participants, please return to your original seat.
Part 6 - Summarizing	
GLA Host (2 minutes)	Today, you individually answered prompts based on your experience in the Thinking Focus Cohort. As a group of three, you categorized all of the answers into themes that relieve the experience identified in the prompt. You then worked collaboratively to determine which three of the themes presented are the most relevant to the experience identified by the prompt. Through this process, you captured your individual thoughts, reflected on the thoughts of your colleagues who have previously participated in Thinking Focus Cohort and engaged in discourse about the data. These steps allow you to construct meaning and identify the most relevant aspects of the Thinking Focus Cohort under investigation. Thank you all so much for participating in this Group Level Assessment. Any feedback you can provide is greatly appreciated.

Hinds, 2020; Vaughn et al., 2011; Vaughn & Lohmueller, 1998; Vaughn & Lohmueller, 2014

APPENDIX E: STRUCTURED ETHICAL REFLECTION

Values	**Developing Partnerships**	**Constructing Research Questions**	**Planning Project/Action**	**Recruiting Participants**	**Collecting Data/Taking Action**	**Analyzing Data/Evaluation Action**	**Member Checking**	**Going Public (Presentation & Publication)**
Trust	Considering the viewpoints of others.	Developing open-ended questions that do not demonstrate bias.	Clearly stating purpose of project and following through with plans.	Explaining the purpose of participation and how the information gathered will be used	Staying true to the words and responses of participants.	Ensuring that the data is the foundation of action.	Offering the opportunity for interviews to review the transcripts of their interview.	Accurately representing the voices heard through interviews.
Adaptability	Having the ability to be iterative in the process of relationship building.	Creating questions with the interviewee in mind.	Making choices in actions that meet the needs of the participants and do not interfere with their access and instructional time.	Remaining flexible in meeting the needs of the participants throughout the collection of data from interviews.	Ensuring that throughout the interview process, I listen, acknowledge and document the words of the interviewees posing follow up questions to gain a clear insight into their experience.	Follow what the data says and not finding data to support a specific answer.	Meeting individual participant needs in the member checking process.	Being mindful of the needs of the stakeholders and other audience members.

Open-Mindedness	Awareness of those with different and similar viewpoints	Develop questions that do not lead participants to specific answers	Take into consideration the input and perspectives from my committee members	Look for participant opportunities that may reflect varying perspectives	Listen to the meaning behind the words of participants	Delay conclusions of data until after member checking	Stay grounded in feminist standpoint theory in regards to multiple social positions	Understand that findings may compare and conflict with previous research
Respect	Be aware of partner needs and time constraints	Create questions that allow participants to reflect and benefit from the interview	Being aware of potential participant time and my responsibilities to them	Seek participants in a variety of leadership roles aligned to research	Honor requests of participants in regards to time and interview format	Be true to participant viewpoints	Provide revised transcripts to participants based on feedback	Keep to the authenticity of participants viewpoints and voice
Self-Awareness	Be aware of positionality when developing partners	Create questions that reflect purpose of study	Write about positionality as researcher before conducting study	Be aware of communication style; understand feelings of conflict of potential participants	Utilize my emotional intelligence to strengthen the interview process	Participate in self-reflective strategy of participant data initially	Review axial coding reader 2 alignment with my coding	Understand others may have differential opinions of the data
Transparency	Make the purpose of the study very clear	Ensure interview questions are aligned to research questions	Provide clear explanation of study process and product	Contact potential participants to share information and answer questions	Ask clarifying questions for accurate understanding	Be precise in data analysis steps	Allow participants to review interview data for adjustments	Communication of study purpose, process, and findings

Integrity	Complete agreed upon actions and follow-up with partners	Construct questions that are open-ended and adaptable to the research environment	Keep study purpose in mind in all research study actions	Confirming that participants are clear about the purpose and process of study	Ensure all interview questions are asked of each participant	Aware of responsibility weaving different individual perspectives together	Receive final agreement of data transcript from participants	Stay true to the research plan and actions from beginning to end

APPENDIX F: BULLITT COUNTY TEACHER ROUND FACILITATION PROCESS

Teacher Round Facilitation Protocol

Briefing supplies:

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Highlighters
- Post-it notes
- Thank you note for host
- Post-it sentences strips (optional: in case time becomes an issue—can use for posting understanding statement and synthesis statement)
- Extra copies of lab host letter (just in case participants don't bring them)

Briefing room prep:

- Chairs in briefing room—including one for you and host
- 4 extra chairs in classrooms.
- Posters of pillars (thinking strategies, community, workshop/GRR, discourse)
- Chart papers with headings
- Parking lot

Pre-Observation Briefing

Time: _____ to _____

1. Discuss "**understanding**" and its importance as the foundation for the observation.
    a. Can use Six Word Synthesis or free write to explore definition.
    b. Each observer shares.
    OR

    What lens are you using today? What do you want to gain from today?
    How do we make meaning? As teachers? As learners?

2. Skim **lab letter**.

3. **Host visits** briefly. (Approximate time: _____)
    a. Host shares context of class/lesson, learning goals, thinking strategy focus for the day.
    b. Host shares his/her focus for the day (what observers can look for) in order to set the tone for lab host as a learner.

4. Coach shares **note-taking strategy.**
    a. T-chart

Teacher Moves	Student Moves
Teacher plays music while students enter room T indicates time left for bell ringer T uses random name generator to call on student ts for feedback.	Ss enter room and pull out notebooks, begin to write down bell ringer on the smartboard. Ss quietly compare responses to bell ringer while T takes roll. S1 "I don't know that I remember this concept…" S2 – "Think back to our work on the industrial revolution…"

   b. **Model** a potential observation for observers. (Possible examples noted above.)
   c. Discuss **learner stance**: ethnographers, recording sound bytes, what you see and hear

5. Distribute and review "**Classroom Observation Norms**".

6. Prep observers for **sharing a statement** with students at the end of class, if pre-arranged with host. Model a typical statement that highlights positive actions of students.

Observation

1. Coach **models** note-taking and observing throughout the lesson. Takes the lead in circulating around the room at appropriate times.
2. If doing the sharing statement, coach gets attention of class and **shares first**.

Observation Debriefing

Time: _____ to _____

1. Coach directs observers to take a few moments to:
   a. **review** their notes.
   b. **highlight** notes that seem important to understanding and the four pillars.

c. direct any specific questions of lab host to be written on post-it notes and placed on parking lot chart for next day.
d. **Can send **thank you note** around during this time.

2. Determine Importance/Infer Beliefs

a. Reveal one chart at a time.

Determining Importance	**Inferring Beliefs**
I saw/heard… *(what teacher and students did and said)* *Ex. Students used sticky notes*	I think it means… *(value in doing this)* *Teacher values students holding their own thinking.*

b. Observers share observations, reflections as coach charts (by name, optional).

3. **Lab teacher visits** toward end of Inferring Beliefs. Time: _____

a. Coach asks lab host: "How did it go?" Then, "What is your next step?"
b. Host may bring artifacts/student products to share if time.
c. Address host's learning focus based on noticings from charts.

4. Move to **synthesis**.

Synthesizing Implications
And so I… *(This is important to me in my practice, for my students because…)*

a. Coach asks observers to **reflect** on overall take-aways based on observation and debriefing conversation. Allow a few minutes of writing time.

b. Ask observers to **select a sentence or phrase** from reflection to share with group.

c. Coach **charts statements** by name. **Remember that you can use these statements in future PDs, to follow up on labs, launch new labs, post in work rooms…endless possibilities. Kind of a gold mine.

d. Wrap up your time with a couple of words from you linking their synthesis statements back to your opening discussion of **understanding**. You can also be transparent and point out your own use of the pillars and how you as educators are building your own understanding.
    i. **Community building** strategies during these observations: small group, starting by sharing personal beliefs about understanding, making sure all voices included in sharing time, honoring their thoughts by recording their names when charting, etc.
    ii. **GRR** used when completing the charts.
    iii. All the **thinking strategies** they used—DI, inferring and synthesizing on the chart alone.
    iv. **Discourse** throughout the briefing process.

At mid-point of HS Cross district observations, have them write/share… "I used to think_____ but now I think_____.

APPENDIX G: BULLITT COUNTY TEACHER ROUNDS TOOL

Teacher Moves	Student Moves
Teacher plays music while students enter room T indicates time left for bell ringer T uses random name generator to call on student ts for feedback.	Ss enter room and pulled out notebooks, begin to write down bell ringer on the smartboard. Ss quietly compare responses to bell ringer while T takes roll. S1 “I don’t know that I remember this concept…” S2 – “Think back to our work on the industrial revolution…”

APPENDIX H: THINKING FOCUS COHORT 2018 REFLECTIONS

Great things….	**Room for improvement….**
I still feel like I want support in integrating the thinking strategies. I'm so thankful to be a part of this cohort! It is making a huge difference in how I approach my planning and delivery...which has led to my students thinking more independently and gaining confidence while at it. Thank you for all you've all done to make this happen. :) Utilizing the full workshop model. Reflection time, discourse among students Lesson presentation in a workshop wheel model It's incredibly powerful to see teachers in action and to see this work implemented in so many different settings and styles. I love the model of this cohort as a vehicle to empower and inspire teachers to take charge of their own growth and to improve learning experiences for kids. I truly have valued this program! This journey has allowed me to reflect on the teacher I am, I am becoming, and the teacher that I would like to be. I believe that it is so easy to just settle into the swing of things and just fall into a set way, but this cohort has allowed me to pull myself out of that ever-going process, and become so reflective and intentional with the workshop wheel to better improve the engagement and instruction for my	I would love to see someone demonstrate the wheel out of the traditional order - I can't quite wrap my mind around that. While I love workshop, I wish those who are in elementary could also focus on thinking strategies instead of just the workshop wheel. Continue to work on "less teacher talk, more student engagement" More lab classrooms Think Camp - time to sit down with other teachers in your content area to think and plan workshop model lessons. Moving Workshop Model Lesson forward in the year. It was hard to put it all together before that was taught. Will also help with setting up routines in the classroom. More visits into the classroom. Feedback from ICs, Admin, other members from the cadre. More training for administration so that they know how to give feedback with walkthroughs. End of the year, compile the strategies that were learned during the training as a group. Google Classrooms to share lessons and communicate. Think aloud and writing workshop Can't wait to hear and see more. Resources are amazing along with all the teachers I have observed.

students. Going to other classrooms was effective. Examples and strategies introduced during training was used immediately. After Think Camp it all made sense. Before Think Camp it just felt like "we were just showing up" The pieces did not fit together until the two days at Think Camp.	

CURRICULUM VITA

Rachelle Bramlage-Schomburg

4106 Krispin Cove ◆ 502-802-6565

QUALIFICATIONS SUMMARY

Energetic administrator with successful administrative, teaching, and coaching record in a variety of grade levels and subject areas. Focused on establishing positive relationships, along with communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Hard working, team player, life-long learner, adept at sparking teacher and student interest through hands-on activities and relevant curriculum connections. Enthusiastic leader, dedicated to helping all staff and all students achieve at high levels.

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE, Louisville, KY
Education Doctorate with emphasis in Education Leadership and Organizational Development, *December 2022*

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE, Louisville, KY
Superintendent Certification, *December 2021*

INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTHEAST, New Albany, IN
Rank I/Graduate Study in Educational Leadership, *December 2012*
Supervisor of Instruction*, July 1, 2017*

SPALDING UNIVERSITY, Louisville, KY
Master of Arts in Middle School Mathematics and Science, *December 2005*

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE, Louisville, KY
Master of Science in Sports Administration, *December 2002*

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE, Louisville, KY
Bachelor of Science with emphasis in Exercise Science and Sports Medicine, Minor in Marketing, *May 1999*

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

BULLITT COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION, Shepherdsville, Kentucky
Director of Secondary Education from 06/2016 to present

- Development of mission, vision, and core values

    - Collaborated with stakeholders on the Strategic Planning Process to develop new mission, vision, and core values from various input and data.
    - Facilitated different Key Process teams, i.e. Educational Experience, to ensure our work is tied to our Board Aspiration Statements.
    - Contributed to the development, launching, and coaching of the Graduate Profile.
    - Researched and implemented Naviance, a college and career readiness software to provide our students with college planning and career assessment tools to support their Individual Learning Plan.
- Development and expansion of our Instructional Leadership Focus:
    - Planned and facilitated Leadership Team Meetings (LTM) with the mindset of supporting and growing Principals in instructional leadership.
    - Increased capacity with the instructional process systems and processes, tightened up our PLC process of expectations and support for administration and staff, building capacity around rigorous aligned assessment practices with the implementation of Mastery Connect, ensuring all students have access to curriculum, focused on students with disabilities.
    - Implemented usage of the eleot (Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool) form, focused on building capacity around each environment to allow trend data to support the PLC process and teacher growth.
    - Implemented Intentional Focus on Questioning Walk-Through with administrative team (principals and assistant principals in secondary level) which included bi-monthly walk-throughs followed up with bi-monthly meetings to continue to support the instructional leadership of administrators.
    - Conducted both school-created and school-specific walk-throughs with all secondary schools a minimum of three times in the school year. Collaborated and calibrated with principals to aid in the development of plans to support staff. Supports included, but are not limited to, conferring with teachers and providing professional development on questioning, feedback, effect size, increasing students' critical vocabulary and their ability to decode, and teaching with poverty in mind.
    - Held monthly meetings with Content Specialists (CS) and Instructional Coaches (IC) to build their instructional leadership and repertoire of coaching strategies.
    - Evaluated principals using the current Professional Standards for Education Leaders (PSEL) and former Professional Growth and Effective System (PPGES).
- District Instruction Initiatives – PEBC Model
    - Facilitated monthly trainings to increase teachers' toolkits with Thinking Focus Cadres, focused on PEBC with the four pillars (community, gradual release of responsibility, academic discourse, and thinking strategies).
    - Coached and mentored the Instructional Coaches to become facilitators of the Thinking Focus Cadres.
    - Developed and implemented "Think Camp" in February 2017 to expand teacher depth of knowledge and experience seeing other teachers within the district who have fully embedded Thinking Focus within their classrooms.
    - Facilitated the development and implementation of "Think Journey" in June 2017 to continue to support teachers in their progress while implementing a student-centered classroom as part of the Thinking Focus Cadres.
    - Expanded on the number of staff trained in Thinking Focus to a total of 289 staff trained, including administrators within the district, supporting elementary, expanding from 8 high school teachers to 92; expanding from 16 to 99 in middle school.

    - Collaborated with PEBC in Colorado to have them evaluate our progress in our Thinking Focus Cadres to become a district of lab classrooms. Walk-throughs in October with training to support the new teachers in the cadre. Two facilitators returned in June to support the 17-18 cadre in their foundational understanding.
    - Collaborated with Solution Tree to build the capacity of administrators on using the PLC process to transform schools to help ensure that all students receive a guaranteed and viable curriculum.
    - Collaborated with the Special Education Department to develop a cohort to support co-teaching for the educators and students.
- Focus on addressing the needs of our district with poverty in mind
    - Facilitated professional learning on poverty within our district and maintained the focus throughout the school year at LTM and within schools. Utilized the book, *Engaging Students with Poverty in Mind* by Eric Jensen to guide professional development; supported schools to address the needs of their "most vulnerable" students.
    - Collaborated with Dr. Cooter and Bellarmine University on the implementation of a poverty simulation to view poverty through the lens of the students and community as Bullitt County Free and Reduced lunch population had increased from 32% (1999-2000) to 52% (2015-2016).
- Worked with schools to create a guaranteed and viable curriculum for all secondary students that matched with Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)
    - Collaborated with Collaborative with Teaching and Learning (CTL) to support our Content Specialists and myself in the alignment and pacing guides for high school Mathematics, high school English, and high school Science courses. High school English and Mathematics have begun development of common summative assessments.
    - Collaborated with PISMER to facilitate curriculum alignment and pacing guides with high school and middle school science teachers.
    - Collaborated with high school and middle school social studies teachers to develop curriculum pacing and create professional learning around inquiry-based learning
    - Collaborated with middle school Instructional Coaches to develop and revise ELA and Mathematics curriculum
- Professional Development of ALL Teachers
    - Collaborated with the Director of Special Ed to complete co-teaching walk-throughs; met with administrations and teachers to support their growth and needs.
    - Expanded Ed Camps (intended to build and support teachers' professional growth displaying their talents within our district). Middle School - 2 within the 16-17 school year; High School - 1 second semester.
    - Collaborated with Area Technology Center (ATC) Principal to support the teachers in developing learning targets that are achievable by the end of the lesson
    - Supported the growth of various cohorts - Graduate Profile, Graduate Profile Assessment, Blended Learning, Bellarmine Literacy Project
- Encourage and exploration of personalized learning via visiting other schools who have implemented various forms of personalized learning.
    - Middle Schools focused on Summit Learning and visited Frankfort Independent and Royal Springs Middle School. Discovery School focused on blended

learning with an emphasis on Project-Based Learning and visited Columbus Signature Academy Middle School.
    - BAMS/ATC/CRC examined hybrid pathways with Project Lead the Way at iLead Academy in Carrollton, KY; blended learning with an emphasis on Project-Based Learning at Columbus Signature Academy High School.
    - Collaborated with PBL Works to support the growth of our Graduate Profile; mentoring Bullitt Central, Hebron Middle, Lebanon Junction Elementary, Mt. Washington Elementary, Nichols Elementary
- District Policy and Procedure Updates
    - Collaborated with all Principal and Counselor of BAC/T.A.P. P/CRC/BAMS, Principal and Counselor of Bullitt Central High School, and Director of Pupil Personnel to restructure our Teenage Parent Program (T.A.P.P.) for optimal opportunities and access to all career pathways, not just Early Childhood Education.
    - Collaborated with high school and middle school counselors to restructure the district GPA policy, particularly for middle school students, allowing middle school students to receive high school credit for taking a high school class with a grade of 80% or higher but NOT having it count towards GPA when the student enters high school.
    - Updated Travel Release Form to protect all students transported outside our district transportation vehicles.
    - Solicited approval from board members on various Memorandum of Agreements (MOA), textbook approvals, etc. for all secondary schools.
- District Athletic Director Liaison
    - Collaborated with High School Athletic Directors, Baptist Health Medical Group (medical team who provides a certified athletic trainer to each high school), Middle School Athletic Directors, Safe Schools Coordinator, Title IX Coordinator, and Director of Transportation to update and redesign our Athletic Handbook.
    - Collaborated with Baptist Health Medical Group to develop and implement protocol for sports related concussions for ALL sports and sporting activities supported by Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA). This included implementation of ImPACT^{TM} testing to protect the student-athlete's brain and remove subjectivity as much as possible.
    - Collaborated with Title IX Coordinator when a concern arises with athletics.
    - Worked with booster clubs to fundraise to improve overall athletic facilities.

NORTH BULLITT HIGH SCHOOL, Shepherdsville, Kentucky

Assistant Principal from 08/2014 to 06/2016

- Collaborated with the Director of Secondary Education and two other high school assistant principals to develop and implement Teaching Strategies Cohort, revolving around four pillars – community, gradual release of responsibility, classroom discourse, and toolkit to activate thinking. At NBHS, started with four staff members hand selected and currently have interest from twelve.
- Collaborated with the Special Education Director, Director of Secondary Education, Special Education consultant, and Special Education Department Chair to create a co-teaching model. Developed three-year plan, focused on professional development for co-teaching models, SDI – specially designed instruction to identify areas to visit as models.

- Collaborated with ATC Principal to increase ATC, CRC, and BAMS opportunities for NBHS students. Held open house forum for NBHS community to showcase talents in correlation with sophomore field trip. Took ATC number from zero enrolled in 2014-2015 to thirty-three enrolled for 2015-2016.
- Collaborated with staff to provide continual focus on increasing student achievement, which resulted in a significant rise in North Bullitt's K-PREP, EOC, and College and Career Readiness. Overall Score/Percentile: 2013 = 66.9/50th, 76.1/93rd.
- Collaborated with staff focusing on reducing retention and drop out:
    - 2014-2015 - 250 ½ credits were recovered.
    - 2015-2016 - 618 ½ credits recovered during FLEX; developed academic time with intentional focus. During academic time, 259 ½ credits recovered for sophomores and juniors and 60 ½ credits recovered for freshmen.
- Collaborated with staff to create a diagnostic tool to not only determine mastery, but also identify specific areas of focus for RtI and/or recover credits.
- Conducted Certified and Classified Evaluations: Evaluated staff and guided Professional Growth Plan (PGP) development with student achievement as the central focus.
- Collaborated with the Leadership Team to develop and facilitate Professional Development and Faculty Meetings, which addressed the needs of the staff. For teacher planning days, created menu options that were specific to the needs of our areas of growth.
- Collaborated with new teachers to assist in their transition and specific professional development to Bullitt County Public Schools.
- Collaborated with parents, students, and BAC, if needed, to develop behavior intervention plans to ensure both academic and behavior success.
- Collaborated with all grade levels in developing effective and powerful Professional Learning Communities (PLC), analyze assessment data and decide next steps in instruction.
- Recruited and developed a systematic approach to increase truancy filings. Went from three in 2013-2014 to thirty-three in 2015-2016.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

NORTH OLDHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL, Goshen, Kentucky
Various teaching and leadership opportunities from 08/2005 to 05/2014

- 8th Grade Science
    - Served as content grade level leader, evaluation of curriculum map, development and reflection of lesson plans and students' results through assessments; taught both integrated (general content) and accelerated science (biology); planned and coordinated a STEM science fair.
    - Created and updated website as communication tool of learning via teacherweb.com; maintained Infinite Campus (IC) grading system.
    - Served as a member of the Oldham County Technology Institute (OCTI), implemented technological tools to help increase transformation of learning for the 21st century learners.
- Team Leader - both 6th & 8th Grade
    - Attended leadership meetings to assist in the development of grade level team reaching for common goals; meeting monthly to discuss improvements and/or updates within our school; led meetings for grade team; collaboratively planned field trips to other facilities as well as day agenda; primary parent liaison for

parent-teacher conferences; planned & implemented student-centered celebration activities
    - Served as 8th Grade Specific - RTI grade level coordinator; develop & implement Mustang 11 lessons; liaison for high school mentors & requirements (meetings & preview day)
    - Served as 6th Grade Specific - created and implemented 6th grade TAG activities.
- New Teacher Cohort Leader
    - Served as new teacher liaison; Coordinate monthly meetings – reviewed specific requirements set by OCBE; reviewed NOMS essentials; discussed best practice with literacy across all contents; reviewed expectations of professional development, in particular to internal lab classroom observations.
- Student Leader Coordinator
    - Recruited teacher mentors, recruited students; developed and implemented leadership retreat to model students' expectations but also allowed student voice; created 3 groups & guided students to help improve NOMS.
- Administrator for Athletic Events
    - Assisted in the set-up of events including equipment & money; monitored facilities, participants & spectators for safety
- Site-Based Decision Making Council (SBDM)
    - Elected teacher representative who assisted in making decisions to improve the educational outcomes for the students by exploring our school policies, improvement plan, analyzed student data, and financial status.
    - Hired new principal 2012-2013 school year.
- 6th Grade Science & Math Teacher - General Science & Mathematics
    - Developed and taught lesson plans (Science - Introduction to Science, Physical, Space, Biological, & Unifying Concepts; Math – Decimals & Fractions, Number, Properties & Operations, Measurement, Geometry, Data Analysis & Probability, & Algebraic Thinking);
- 8th Grade Science Teacher - Chemistry/Human Anatomy
    - Developed and taught lesson plans (metric system, graphing, periodic table of elements, ionic bonding); created and evaluated students' growth of understanding through formative and summative assessments; updated computer grade book (STI); provided additional study skills for all students

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COACHING EXPERIENCE

NORTH OLDHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL, Goshen, Kentucky

Trained and coached middle school soccer team from 08/2005 to 05/2014

- Maintained & remained within designated budget; ordered equipment for both men's & women's teams; field maintenance (lining fields, putting up nets); obtained referees & communicated with referee coordinator; scheduled games, coordinated busses, held pre-season meeting to get proper signatures & required paperwork; hired an assistant coach
- Communicated with parents and players via weekly emails or one-call; trained concession stands volunteers; revised policies and procedures during season.
- Planned, marketed, & coordinated a pre-season soccer tournament; coordinated field usage with high school athletic director

ORGANIZATIONS

KWEL (Kentucky Women in Educational Leadership) Member

KASA (Kentucky Association of School Administrators) Member

NISL (National Institute for School Leadership) Certification

ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) Member

Solution Tree Member focusing on Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

Education Week Member