

**THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FOUR PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORS IN URBAN PUBLIC SCHOOL
DISTRICTS**

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This research study was conducted on four urban professional development directors. A qualitative research framework was embraced to hear four administrators describe their perceptions of professional development programs and the factors they believe impact teachers in their districts; as well as how the administrators describe their personal attributes contributing to their programs. The goal of my study was to expand the narrow research base concerning the lived experiences of urban professional development directors, whose voices and experiences can inform others about relevant issues and leading urban professional development programs. In order to create a stronger understanding of the director's perceptions on leading urban professional development programs, this study examined constructed meanings through a narrative interpretive lens.

This qualitative study utilized the authentic words of the participants to convey their story, as it yielded a rich representation of the thoughts depicted. Data was gathered through in-depth, open-ended interviews and semi-structured interviews through which the events, beliefs and perceptions molded the phenomenon under investigation. Analysis of the data transpired immediately after each interview. Analytic conclusions were formed by classifying ideas and statements from the data to determine that significant constructs, themes and patterns surfaced.

The findings of this study produced the following as it connected to the voices of the four urban professional development directors and their perceptions of successful

professional development programs: (1) multi-faceted professional development programs had to be created by each director; (2) the teacher was perceived as the dominant vehicle impacting student success; (3) programs that helped increase teacher confidence were a priority for each director. Two secondary themes emerged supporting the primary themes. The secondary themes were (1) strong strategic planning ability and (2) a high sense of accountability.

DEDICATION

This was quite the journey, one of my own making. First and foremost, I want to thank my parents, whose endless love and support never let me give up. They have always been my biggest fans and I am truly grateful for them each day. Even though I took the long way around, they never gave up hope and stood by me as I wandered and then found my way again. To my Mamaw, who is not here to see this moment, I would not be where I am today without her guidance and love. I miss her every day and know she will be smiling down on me when I walk across that stage. To my dearest friends and partners in crime, Claire Carson Benckenstein and Racheal Branch. To Claire specifically, I honestly don't know what I would have done without your patience and meticulous organization. We started this journey many years ago, just the three of us. I could never have done any of this without your company, your humor, and your reminders. I am ever thankful for friends like you. We spent many hours and many miles on the road back and forth and I cherish every minute.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Professional development has become entrenched in urban public school districts due to a belief by educators that the most efficient method of improving teacher practice is through professional development (Eun, 2008). Ideally, professional development for educators utilizes the most current application of pedagogical theories, stresses professional rejuvenation and development, and focuses on individual commitment to organizational sustainability and transformation (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. xii). In its purest form, professional development assists in the development of novice teachers, hones the professional skills of veteran teachers; as well as, enhancing the knowledge, self-confidence and dedication of all professional educators (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. xii).

The primary purpose of professional development is to elicit change in the instructional practices of teachers, in their mindsets and attitudes and in the academic success of students (Guskey, 2002; 2014). The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) (2000) contends that in order for professional development to be effective it must be “dynamic and integrated” (NJCLD, 2000, p. 3). The NJCLD (2000) additionally maintains that professional development for teachers must attend to crucial structural, system-wide and cultural supports; the content-specific knowledge, skills and attitudes teachers need and the manner in which learning, instruction, skills and attitudes are developed. This essentially means that professional development should address *the context, the content* and *the process* in order to be successful (Klingner, 2004).

Ingvarson, Meiers, and Beavis (2005) outline a nine-part definition of professional development. They assert that professional development programs should utilize a variety of research-based delivery methods. Additionally, they define the term "practice" as: a) establishing strong and clear links between classroom teaching goals and classroom activities; b) effectively organizing classroom structures and activities; c) selecting teaching and learning strategies most appropriate for the content; d) selecting teaching and learning strategies most appropriate to the classroom context; e) choosing teaching and learning strategies that challenge and engage ensuring that learner's individual learning needs are met; f) strongly connecting assessments with teaching and learning; g) using meaningful feedback to reinforce learning; h) engaging in higher order thinking with all students; and i) selecting the most appropriate and meaningful instructional materials and resources (p. 10). The multiple components of this definition illustrate the complexities of providing quality professional development for professional educators.

Sparks (1983; 2013) believed that the foundation of instructional improvement lay with professional development. For district and campus administrators, professional development is the primary method at their disposal to elicit effective change in classroom instruction and by extension improve student achievement. Educators embrace professional development, albeit grudgingly at times, due to a need to improve their effectiveness with students, contribute to the deepening of their pedagogical skill set and content knowledge as well as enhance individual growth as an educator (Guskey, 1991, pg. 382). The American Federation of Teachers (2002) has stated that "the nation

can adopt rigorous standards, set forth a visionary scenario, compile the best research about how students learn, change textbooks and assessment, promote teaching strategies that have been successful with a wide range of students, and change all the other elements involved in systemic reform - but without professional development, school reform and improved achievement for all students will not happen” (p.1).

Evidence continues to accumulate showing that student performance is influenced by high quality professional development for teachers and that the effects of increased teacher knowledge are observed across subject matter fields (Darling-Hammond, 1999). The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (1996) reported that investments in teacher knowledge and skills result in greater increases in student achievement than other uses of educational funds. The American Federation of Teachers espouses that high quality professional development is essential to the nation’s goal of high standards of learning for every child and that the most important investment school districts can make is to ensure that teachers continue to learn (“Professional Development for Educators,” n.d.).

Staff development, professional development, continuing education and in-service are all terms used interchangeable in early literature on educator professional development. Many definitions of professional development exist. Beeler (1977) defines staff development as “in-service continuing education or staff training, designed to enhance the competencies, skills and knowledge of individuals and to enable them to provide better services to their clientele” (p. 38). Another definition contends professional development is a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to

improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (Killion & Roy, 2010). The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, referred to as Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), refined which practices qualify for federal, state, and district funding and denotes that professional development ought to directly influence the practices of classroom teachers' and ultimately improve student achievement. The two major sections of the definition are:

- (A) Professional development means activities that "(A) are an integral part of school and local education agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in the core academic subjects and to meet challenging State academic standards; and
- (B) are sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, and short-term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, classroom-focused...." (ESSA, *S. 1177, Section 8002, page 295, paragraph 42*)

Varying opinions exist regarding the purpose of professional development for teachers. In *The International Handbook on the Continuing Professional Development of Teachers* Day and Sachs (2004) pose several questions

regarding the focus of professional development for educators. Should professional development be about "...the nurturing inquiry, self-reflection and individual professional identity for example, or should focus on compliance and conformity to specified reform agendas? Will improvements more likely arise from deepening teachers' understanding of how children learn or from clarifying expectations, defining standards, specifying practice and exercising sanctions?" (p. xii). Guskey, (2002) researcher and writer on the subject of professional development, emphasizes that "...the three main goals of professional development programs are change in the classroom practices of teachers, change in their attitudes and beliefs and change in the learning outcome of students" (p. 383).

For my theoretical framework, I explored Jackson's (2011) theory of Pedagogy of Confidence and Pang's (1999) theory Caring Centered Education. The Pedagogy of Confidence asserts that a teacher's confidence in his or her student's potential and his or her own competence to nurture that potential directly affects a student's motivation to learn (Jackson, 2011). Under a Pedagogy of Confidence teachers exhibit their confidence in a student's ability to learn by constructing and nurturing high academic expectations. Caring Centered Education concentrates on relationships and culture to advance equity in education. Part of creating a caring approach is the nurturing of trusting relationships as the foundation for building an effective and motivating classroom environment. To achieve this, teachers should understand the cultural, linguistic, economic differences of all students (Pang, 1999).

Personal Story

Growing up I always knew I would become a teacher. My grandmother was an elementary teacher in Greenville, Ms. She lived across the street from the school she taught at for over thirty years. She had old school desks and chalk boards and during my visits I would "play school" with my siblings and cousins. I returned to Mississippi to receive my Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education from Delta State University in Cleveland, MS, right in the heart of the Mississippi Delta. My first teaching assignment was in Greenville, MS where I split my time between a junior high school teaching a 7th grade Career Preparation class and 8th grade U.S. History and a high school teaching 9th grade Mississippi Studies and Geography. To say I was unprepared for this first year is a vast understatement. I had no idea what I was doing most of the time. Because I was moving from campus to campus it was difficult to feel settled and to plan appropriately, I was always rushed. My classroom management was practically non-existent. My students were all African-American from economically disadvantaged families. The Mississippi Delta is considered one of the poorest places in the nation. I fell into the normal new teacher mode, I was teaching them how I had been taught and what worked for me and this of course did not resonate with my students. I did not understand why it wasn't working and I blamed the students. I recall attending in-service; however, I do not recall anything memorable or helpful from those sessions.

After three years of teaching in Mississippi I moved back to Texas where my immediate family lives and where I grew up. I obtained a job teaching high school social studies. The high school population was ethnically, linguistically and

economically diverse. The move home did not magically improve my teaching skills so I settled back into my old routines with the same success. However, this time I found a strong and organized professional development program with support and follow through. The training and support I received began to make a huge difference in my teaching. One year my principal picked a small group of teachers to plan and implement campus professional development, this is when my life changed. I loved planning the professional development days for teachers. A couple of years that same principal moved to a new school and selected me as one of his assistant principals where I was allowed to continue planning professional development. Eventually, I moved in to the position of district professional development director for an urban school district in Texas. I have experienced quality professional development and know firsthand the difference it can make for a teacher. I found my passion and was able to pursue it. I am able to help teachers who are struggling as I once was.

Statement of the Problem

In order to elicit effective change in classroom instruction, districts must invest time and resources in designing, implementing and maintaining a targeted systematic program for professional development. In order for professional development programs to be successful they must be viewed not as an event but as a process (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1987, 1998). “When viewed systemically, professional development is seen not just in terms of individual improvement, but also in terms of improvements in the capacity of the organization to solve problems and renew itself. Unless individual learning and organizational changes are addressed simultaneously and support one another, the gains

made in one area may be canceled by continuing problems in the other.” (Guskey, 2000, p. 21). Guskey (2000) states that in order for genuine professional development to occur it must be a comprehensive process which takes into account change over an extended period of time and includes all levels of the organization.

Formal professional learning and teacher collaboration are essential methods of providing teachers with long-term learning opportunities (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future 1996). Formalized district professional development is typically characterized by learning opportunities which are initiated, developed and conducted by campus and district personnel (Fullan, 2007). These programs have habitually been criticized for being short term and lacking in continuity and adequate follow up (Fullan, 2007). In its current state, professional development for educators is inadequately conceived and profoundly defective. Predominantly, professional development is intermittent, myopic and is often perceived as disconnected from classroom realities by its intended audience, the teacher.

Overall, the literature on professional development is lacking sufficient information on how to better meet the needs of teacher participants. Most professional development research has focused on the problems associated with it, rather than solutions or effective staff development programs. Existing literature on the subject predominately approaches staff development from the teacher perspective and has traditionally been collected using surveys about opinions, which allows a glimpse at professional development programs, but fails to acknowledge the voices of the individuals developing and implementing school district professional development

frameworks, the professional development program director. Therefore, additional studies on the perceptions of effective directors of professional development are warranted.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to hear the voices of urban professional development specialists and interpret the meanings they describe about their programs. I seek to capture the essence of district professional development programs and the participants' learning experiences regarding the elements of effective district professional development programs with the voices of the participant district directors.

Significance of Study

An examination of the experiences of urban professional development directors will contribute information and insights to those who need it such as superintendents, community leaders, principals, teachers, parents and other impacted by professional development programs. An examination will afford school districts the opportunity to evaluate their own professional development structures in order to meet the needs of the urban teacher.

Research Questions

1. How do professional development directors in urban public school districts describe their personal attributes that contributed to their programs?
2. How do professional development directors in urban public school districts describe the professional development factors that impact teachers in their district?

Definition of Terms

Professional Development: Professional development means activities that "(A) an integral part of school and local education agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in the core academic subjects and to meet challenging State academic standards; and are sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, and short-term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, classroom-focused...." (ESSA, *S. 1177, Section 8002, page 295, paragraph 42*)

Professional Development Director: An individual employed to develop, implement, coordinate, and evaluate professional development plans and activities for a school district.

Urban: The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) defines urban areas based on the results of the 2010 Census as areas of 50,000 or more population and urban clusters of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 population.

Urban School District: Based on the National Center of Education Statistics (2006) school locale classification system, an urban school district is defined more on proximity to an urbanized area and less on population.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Professional development activities traditionally were little more than “adult pull-out programs” where teachers attended workshops or faculty meetings with guest speakers (Sparks and Hirsch, 2000). These ‘hit and run’ workshops were typically inadequate in length or depth to elicit any sustained, significant change in a teacher’s instructional practice (NJCLD, 2000 as cited by Klingner, 2004, pp. 248-49).

Historically, professional development has been described as “too linear or top-down in approach”, in which teachers sat passively while being exposed to the newest trends concerning teaching and learning from so called “experts” (NJCLD, 2000). Teachers were provided with few, if any, opportunities for follow-up activities and rarely applied their new knowledge or skills when they returned to their classrooms (Joyce and Showers, 2002). Over the years, professional development has evolved from the ‘in-service’ approach of topics presented one time in isolation, followed by ‘staff development’ in which the ultimate goal of training was to produce a teacher who would be an expert on that topic and then deliver said professional development to their colleagues. Staff development gave way to ‘coaching’ which would provide more support to teachers as they implemented the techniques and strategies learned during professional development. As professional development continues to evolve, we see a

move towards a more collaborative approach in which professional dialogue among colleagues is an essential element of the teacher's learning.

History of Professional Development

In-Service

In the 1970s, professional development was referred to as in-service. Teachers were given the distinction of adult learners and “this ‘revolutionary’ insight coincided with an increase in knowledge about adult learning” (Lambert, 1989, p. 78). Based on their awareness of adult learning, school districts during the 1970's, delivered in-service programs to teachers as a single, isolated event. The in-service event might include motivational speakers or the occasional conference on a particular subject matter. This method of in-servicing teachers did not meet the teachers' needs for targeted training for improving classroom instruction (Lambert, 1989). As a result, in-service evolved into staff development.

Staff Development

Staff development focused on teachers becoming experts in content and techniques which they would then teach to their colleagues (Lambert, 1989). This new method was problematic in that these so-called expert teachers lacked a sufficient knowledge base to train and assist their colleagues, thus causing them to run to outside researchers to answer their questions (Lambert, 1989). Individuals like Madeline Hunter and David Berliner, assisted school districts by providing frameworks and techniques on how to deliver information to other teachers (Lambert, 1989). During this time, Bruce Joyce began to put forth the idea of coaching.

Coaching

Joyce & Showers (1981; 2002) define coaching as a combination of hands-on, in-class assistance coupled with collegiality and collaborative planning. Coaching integrated supporting elements such as, companionship, technical feedback, analysis and adaptation as a teacher integrated their newly acquired knowledge in their classroom (Sparks, 1983; 2013). By and large, coaching served as an effective model of professional development. Research supports the use of coaching in the classroom as a positive method to aid with improving classroom practices. Joyce, as cited by Lambert (1989), emphasized that it was not enough to show and tell a teacher about a new skill or technique, that in order for newly acquired skills to be successfully integrated into the teacher's classroom routine modeling, practice and feedback were all a vital part of the teacher's development. Learning about a new skill and transferring it to the classroom constituted a fresh new approach to teacher development. This new approach inspired by Joyce & Showers (1981) incorporated presentation of theory, demonstration of skill, practice, feedback as well as coaching by a skilled colleague. Numerous districts still use the coaching model of professional development today.

During the 1990s, it was some educators suggested that traditional forms of professional development were inadequate for meeting the educational needs of students; some researchers claimed it was missing the focus, intensity and continuity required to change classroom practices (Choy, Chen & Bugarin, 2006). Therefore, researchers began to establish "best practices" for staff development and numerous experts created guidelines for high-quality professional development (Choy, Chen &

Bugarin, 2006). Teacher collaboration became an essential element advocated by the new guidelines. The collaboration process is multi-faceted, it involves teachers identifying their needs and assisting with the creation of professional development opportunities, it devises a method to meet individual teachers' needs while promoting a system of collaboration, is sustained over a period of time along with monitoring coupled with support and ultimately evaluates the impact on teaching practice on student performance (Choy, Chen & Bugarin, 2006).

Collaboration

Lambert (1989) asserts that the virtues of collegiality are well founded, in that it leads to “thoughtful planning and reflective practice, and increases teachers’ satisfaction with their work” (p. 79). Teachers prefer to attend staff development which provides opportunity to dialogue with other teachers. Rather than participating in ‘sit and get’ sessions on how to improve their practices, teachers should be encouraged to collaborate with their peers and develop professionally while at the same time helping one another. Lambert (1989) influenced the evolution of professional development with the following ideas: opportunities for teachers to express their own thoughts and opinions, opportunities to work towards change within the school setting, contributing to the knowledge base of the profession and playing an active part in the leadership of schools. Participating in reflective practice and collegiality allows teachers to gain a greater understanding of their own practices, resulting in an alternate approach to their work, ultimately causing a shift in what they perceive to be normal (Lambert, 1989). Little’s 1981 study, as cited by Sparks (1983), found successful professional development

included an expectation of experimentation and collegiality, in other words, professional development had the greatest impact on teaching when teachers shared their ideas about instruction and attempted new techniques with their students. This new vision of staff development helped spark the discussion and evolution of how we have come to know professional development today.

Characteristics of Effective District Professional Development Programs

What constitutes effective professional development for educators? Opinions are vast and varied regarding this question. Professional development must be more than training in new knowledge or instructional procedures. A primary goal of professional development is to design training that enables staff to learn and transfer knowledge and skills to their classroom practice. Professional development must have a significant impact on what is taught, how it is taught, and the social climate of the school so that students gain knowledge and skill and their ability to learn increase (Joyce and Showers, 2002b). As described by Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), what is needed is “top-down support for bottom-up reform” (Klingner, 2004, p. 252).

No one specific type of professional development has been found to be most effective (American Federation of Teachers, 2002). Research has shown, however, that successful professional development programs have clear, specific goals and objectives; engage teachers intellectually; actively involve participants; consist of multiple sessions over an extended period of time; allow teachers to learn with and from their colleagues; and provide the opportunity for teachers to practice and adopt new strategies (Joyce and Showers, 2002; Licklider, 1997).

Effective professional development programs are “dynamic and integrated” (NJCLD, 2000, p. 3) and address the organizational, systemic, and cultural supports that are necessary (the *context*); the content-specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed (the *content*); and the way in which knowledge, pedagogy, skills, and attitudes are acquired (the *process*; NJCLD, 2000). Continuous evaluation of student outcomes must be a driving force in shaping plans (Klingner, 249). Effective professional development begins with a clear sense of what students need to learn and be able to do and includes a thorough analysis of where students are in relation to where we want them to be (Sparks, 2002; Killion, 1999). Programs must be matched to school and district instructional practices and based on standards for student learning, teaching, and professional development (Sparks & Richardson, 1997). Training and activities that are disconnected from school or district goals will not produce results for students or provide the intellectually challenging learning experiences educators need (Killion, 1999).

Although research has found that the most effective professional development is aligned to the standards and curriculum teachers use, there is often little connection between the performance that districts or states expect of students and the professional development curriculum provided to teachers (American Federation of Teachers, 2002; Killion, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Planners of professional development programs should study the curriculum and review district, state, and national standards. Professional development should help teachers understand what standards mean; how professional development strategies can be implemented to attain local, state, and national standards; how to determine if students meet a standard; and the

difference between standards-based and other forms of instruction (American Federation of Teachers, 2002). Professional development must help teachers gain a thorough understanding of the content they teach, effective instructional strategies for teaching the content, the ways students learn the content, and the problems students typically have learning the content (Guskey, 2003). Kennedy (2000) found that successful professional development programs give teachers a greater understanding of how students think and learn and allow teachers to develop their own practices, rather than prescribing routines for them to follow. Kennedy (2000) concluded that the most effective programs provide teachers with the least specific information about what to do in the classroom and the most specific information about the content they will be teaching and how students learn that content. In addition to the development of knowledge, skills, and strategies, training activities should teach participants how to transfer the knowledge and skills they acquired to their classroom practice. Educators must understand that the transfer of training is a task that is separate from the acquisition of knowledge and skills (Joyce and Showers, 2002). Professional development must be closely aligned with school and district goals to produce changes in teachers' instructional practice and improve student achievement (Blazer, 2005).

A 2000 survey by National Center for Educational Statistics of public school teachers who participated in professional development activities revealed that public school teachers were most likely to participate in professional development focusing on curriculum and performance standards rather than activities that address the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds and with limited English proficiency. This

study also reported that the amount of time teachers spent in professional development activities related to the degree to which they felt that participation would help improve their teaching. Those that spent more than eight hours in professional development activities were more likely than those who spent less to report that their teaching was improved a lot (Parsad, Lewis & Farris, 2001).

Adding to the dialogue regarding quality professional development practices, The National Association for Elementary School Principals' (2001) report, *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*, encourages principals to provide time for teacher reflection; invest in teacher professional development; connect professional development to school learning goals; provide collaborative opportunities for teachers to plan, and think together; and recognize the necessity of improving their own professional practice. Principals who are instructional leaders maintain a focus on changes needed to produce high levels of learning and performance for all students and staff members. Principals who are designers understand that school structures and culture exert a powerful influence on learning and performance and help design a system that produces the desired result.

An argument inherent to professional development has been that district designed programs traditionally do not have a lasting impact upon a teacher's behavior and class success unless a specific effort is made to connect the teacher's training to what happens in the classroom (Fullan, 2007). Fewer than twenty percent of teacher reported their professional development was linked to other activities on their campus to a great extent; in the same report fifteen percent of teacher respondents indicated that no link existed

between the professional development they attended and campus initiatives (Parsad, Lewis & Farris, 2001). A major hurdle for any district professional development program is teacher perception. Less than thirty percent of teachers in the NCES 2000 survey believed the professional development they attended improved their teaching (Parsad, Lewis & Farris, 2001). For each professional development activity examined in the survey, the degree to which teachers believe participation in a professional development activity improved their teaching depended on whether that activity was followed by campus based activities.

Firestone, Mangin, Martinez & Polovsky (2005) suggest teachers are able to strengthen their knowledge base with professional development that is focused on relevant content matter and coherently organized. Areas such as knowledge about subject matter, teaching methods and understanding children's special needs are examples of content that can be included in district professional development programs. However, the amount of content covered in a given year depends largely upon the coherence of the program. Professional development that focuses on a variety of topics will not allow teachers to accrue sufficient in-depth knowledge to facilitate change in teaching practices. "Unlike the typical 'one-shot' workshops, the preferred mode offers a threaded set of activities that introduce teachers to new materials and ideas and then offer opportunities to try those same ideas with time to reflect on and refine them (Firestone, Mangin, Martinez & Polovsky, 2005, p. 416).

Goldenberg & Gallimore (1991) believe a solution to genuinely improving teaching is to say goodbye to one-shot workshops. They feel that instead we must

“create contexts in teachers’ work lives that assist and sustain meaningful changes” (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991, p. 69). The context should include the engagement of teachers in rigorous examination of teaching, the daily contextual challenges teachers face, probable solutions to these challenges, and most importantly, close examination of any progress in addressing these challenges (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991).

Professional development must be grounded in actual experiences of teachers and in a manner that engages them and allows for collegiality. Allowing for collegiality, or “instructional conversations” (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991), is essential for a new and productive framework of staff development. While professional development has taken on a variety of formats throughout its existence the one thing that has remained consistent is the intended outcome: the altering of teacher behavior to benefit students in all aspects of education.

In an effort to gain deeper insight into effective professional development programs, a 2016 collaborative study conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future and Learning Forward conducted conversations with teachers, teachers who became district professional development directors and school administrators. The study found the importance of teacher agency as a key element to successful programs (Calvert, 2016). The study defines teacher agency as ‘the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues’ (Calavert, 2016). The lesson learned from the conversations places priority on partnering with teachers instead of dictating to them;

as well as, providing the time, structure and support to design their own professional learning opportunities to meet individual teacher needs (Calvert, 2016).

Impediments to Effective District Professional Development Programs

Researchers and practitioners have concluded that when professional development programs are not effective, a variety of factors are present (Blazer, 2005). Programs are characterized by a one size fits all approach that ignores teachers' individual learning needs are an impediment to successful professional development programs. When school districts mandate that every teacher in the system be "staff developed" en masse, it is likely that many teachers will have little interest in the training topic (Dunn, 1998). Additionally, when presented with professional development that is divergent from the teacher's individual learning style, a disconnect will occur and it is doubtful the transfer of knowledge will take place (Dunn, 1998). Often professional development directors fail to consider and plan for the various learning styles of their teachers (Bowgen & Sever, 2014).

An additional impediment to effective professional development programs is that teachers are often expected to change their classroom practice after sitting through an awareness-level program. Studies conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) found that only 12 to 27 percent of teachers felt their professional development activities significantly improved their teaching. Professional development programs are fragmented, with teachers receiving bits and pieces of training on the latest topics. Teachers are then asked to implement numerous strategies in their classrooms at once. Instead of focusing on a few critical areas that will have the biggest impact on

student learning, their school improvement plans specify goals for improvement in every area such as student achievement in all content areas, student behavior, school climate, and family involvement (Dunn, 1998).

Another impediment is that teachers have stated they see no connection between their professional development and everyday classroom needs (Murphy, 2000). Regularly, teachers find the professional development they attend is not related to school improvement efforts or to real classrooms and students (Black, 1998). A survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) found that only 18 percent of teachers felt the training they received was connected “to a great extent” to other school improvement activities at their school.

Professional development programs also suffer due to a lack of teacher voice in determining their own professional development. Teachers have little or no input into the planning process, with training topics selected in a “top down” manner by district or school level administrators (Dunn, 1998). Teachers’ lack of involvement often results in delivery of training that is not related to their interests or professional needs (Dunn, 1998). There are no plans for follow-up activities during the school year. Even when teachers become enthusiastic about a new approach, studies have found that new concepts and strategies are rarely transferred to classroom practice when follow-up support and assistance are not provided (Joyce and Showers, 2002; Dunn, 1998).

Impediments to Sustained Use of Professional Development

After receiving professional development and attempting to integrate it into practice, factors exist that impeded the sustained use newly acquired knowledge after

attending. Teachers have identified numerous factors contributing to a lack of sustainability of professional development.

High-Stakes Testing

There is much to be said about high-stakes testing, particularly in urban, public settings. Teachers felt intense pressure to prepare their students for the state-level assessments, and to do this they needed to use published test preparation materials. High-stakes testing are assessments that can have dramatic and life-changing consequences attached to the scores obtained from them (Nichols & Berliner, 2007). In an urban schools setting, a high stakes testing culture can result in school districts employing a gaming strategy which excluded students from testing and eventually from school in general (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2007). Additionally, this strategy reduced the educational opportunities for African-American and Hispanic high school students (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2007). The pressure is elevated for teachers in urban schools to produce high student scores, some fearing termination or reassignment for failing to do so (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2007). Teachers become increasingly concerned with depth versus breadth, although they recognize that covering content was not the same as knowing it, they still felt pressure to get through the textbook or curriculum.

Mismatch Between Teacher's Needs and the Professional Development Offering

Teachers will characterize professional development as inefficient when it is unrelated to their individual needs (Bayer, 2014). Professional development that presents teachers with highly detailed lessons and activities does not prepare them to

deal with the complex and unexpected classroom situations they will encounter or the varied backgrounds of their students is often rejected by teachers (American Federation of Teachers, 2002). Professional development is effective when activities are directly aligned to the needs of the teacher and they are sustained over a period of time (Bayer, 2014). In order for teachers to implement professional development, it is important for teachers to sense relevance; otherwise it will be ignored and never implemented.

Teachers want to create learning experiences that are relevant for them personally.

Challenges Faced by Professional Development Decision-Makers

Dufour (2000; 2014) maintains to overcome the long history of entrenched isolation in our schools a job embedded, collaborative approach must be created and cultivated so teachers can develop and grow. The principal must identify and put into action specific, deliberate structures to foster a collegial culture where teachers can work together rather than alone (DuFour, 2000; 2014). Du Four (2000; 2014) provides recommends for administrators who wish to be staff development leaders. He recommends the structural redesign so every teacher is a member of a team, provide collaborative time for teachers during the school day, insist teacher collaboration produce products focused on teaching and learning, monitor both the process and the people, and provide the framework for change and persist in pursuing it (DuFour, 2000; 2014). Implementing a system of change in an urban educational environment can be an uphill battle. Getting teachers to change their teaching practices to elicit improved student results starts with improving their knowledge base, the change becomes manifest with implementation. Without guidance, structure and support from administrators

change in unlikely to occur on any campus at any level.

One of the biggest issues facing any district professional development program, urban or otherwise, is eliminating barriers (real or perceived) which prevent teachers from implementing the newly acquired knowledge or skill into their daily instructional practice. The reason traditional professional development is ineffective is that it doesn't support teachers during the implementation stage. Studies have indicated that even experienced teachers struggled with a new instructional technique in the beginning (Joyce and Showers, 1982). Additionally, studies have shown it could take up to 20 separate instances of practice, before a teacher has mastered a new skill, with that number increasing along with the complexity of the skill (Joyce and Showers, 2002). In order to change practices, professional development should occur over time and preferably be ongoing. During the implementation stage, initial attempts to use a new teaching strategy are almost certain to fail, and mastery comes only as a result of continuous practice despite frustration in the beginning (Joyce and Showers, 2002). Without support during this phase, it is highly likely that teachers will continue will abandon the new strategy. Therefore, if districts want real changes in teaching practice, they have to provide ample and ongoing support during implementation. Studies show that effective professional development programs require anywhere from 50 to 80 hours of instruction, practice, and coaching before teachers arrive at mastery (Yoon et al., 2007). In short, the hit and run approach of most workshops habitually has not modified teacher practice and most importantly has had little or no impact on student achievement.

Perhaps the biggest barrier of implementation of professional development practices is that teachers do not see a relevant connection of the new practice to their student's achievement. In a recent study, researchers found that although 90 percent of teachers reported participating in professional development, most of those teachers also reported that it was a complete waste of time (Darling-Hammond et al, 2009).

Professional development is best delivered in the context of the teacher's subject area. More importantly, teachers need to see a clear connection between the new practice and student results before teachers will implement a new practice (Abadiano & Turner, 2004). Kelleher (2003) writes that for professional development to be effective teachers must see its value in the larger context of their classroom, one that is focused on student learning, it is driven by data, and is linked to school and district goals. Professional development that focuses on teachers analyzing the specific skill and concept they will teach in their discipline is not only well received by teachers, but has also been shown to improve both teacher practice and student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; 2015).

Numerous barriers exist to proper implementation of professional development. According to Klingner et al. (1999), lack of time to implement programs, and inadequate support from administrators are two such barriers teachers perceive they face in their efforts to implement new practices. Klingner (2004) additionally found teachers listed high-stakes testing, the pressure to cover content, directives to complete non-teaching tasks, disconnect between teacher style and the instructional practice and some teachers indicated they would simply forget how to use a practice when they returned to their

classrooms. If the primary goal of professional development in any district is to elicit lasting change in the classroom and the teacher is the primary vehicle for this change, then a sustained effort from school leaders to eliminate the barriers teachers perceive can help foster implementation of new strategies. Teachers learn best by studying, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see (Darling-Hammond, 2008). Leaders can assist with the implementation process by promoting a collaborative environment where teachers are able to ask for and provide help to their colleagues, providing research results which link an instructional practice with improved student outcomes, providing resources that support implementation, affording the flexibility to modify a practice to meet the needs of teachers and students (Klingner, 2004).

Multicultural Education

As the United States sees an increase in its culturally, ethnically, linguistically and religiously population it becomes increasingly important to education a citizenry which can function in a pluralistic society (Banks, 2009b). This strong diversity produces unique challenges as well as opportunities. Diversity enhances society due to providing alternate points of view to solve social, economic and political problems. A key challenge face by multicultural society is how to find a balance between diversity and unity (Banks, 2009b).

A primary goal of multicultural education is to ensure that students from racially, ethnical, linguistically and economically diverse backgrounds encounter educational equality (Banks, 2012). Culturally responsive teaching is a key component in

multicultural education which emphasizes the capacity of teachers to respond to their students by integrating aspects of students' culture into their teaching (Irving & Armento, 2001). In order for multicultural education to be implemented successfully, institutional changes must be made. These changes include teaching and learning styles, teacher attitudes and perceptions; as well as the goals, norms and culture of the school (Banks & Banks, 2004; Banks, 2015).

The Need for Urban Professional Development Programs

A need for strategically created urban professional development programs has been growing over the past several decades. The urban professional development program is necessary to combat the common practices of deficit thinking, hegemonic practices and an avoidance of addressing the appropriate learning styles of the urban learner. Studies have shown that students in urban, high-poverty areas are consistently served by teachers in need of improvement. Nearly two-thirds of U.S. middle school teachers work in schools where more than thirty percent of students are economically disadvantaged (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Sanders and Rivers (1996) found that African American students were nearly twice as likely to be taught by the least effective teachers. Results from the U.S. Department of Education's Schools and Staffing Survey (2013) indicated students in high-poverty secondary schools were 77 percent more likely to have teachers lacking degrees in the subject they were teaching than students who lived in more affluent areas. In high-minority schools, students were 40 percent more likely to be taught by teachers lacking a degree in the subject they taught. This issue is especially grave in the intermediate/middle school grades (Jerald and Ingersoll 2002).

Poor and minority students were about twice as likely to have teachers with less than three years of teaching experience; and districts in which the majority of students were poor or minority were considerably more likely to employ uncertified teachers (National Center for Education Statistics 2000; Darling-Hammond 1999).

The impact of quality teaching on student success cannot be underestimated. Research has indicated that high quality teachers have the potential to close the achievement gap between students from traditionally poor, non-white, and/or urban districts and their peers from more well off districts. Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) found teacher quality influenced differences in student performance more than race, class, or the school the student attended. African American students were found to have almost three times the achievement gains over white students from having a high-quality teacher (Sanders and Rivers 1996). The effects of teacher quality accumulate over the years. Fifth-grade math students in Tennessee who had three consecutive highly effective teachers scored between 52 and 54 percentile points ahead of students who had three consecutive teachers who were least effective, even though both groups had the same achievement rates prior to entering second grade. A similar study in Texas showed a difference of 34 percentile points in reading and 49 percentile points in math (Sanders and Rivers 1996; Jordan, Mendro, and Weerasinghe 1997).

Deficit Thinking

A major factor contributing to the need of urban professional development programs is a propensity of beginning teachers to enter the profession inclined towards deficit thinking and exhibiting a low sense of efficacy as a teacher of urban students

(Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011). Deficit thinking indicates an assumption that some students due to genetics, cultural or experiential diversities are inferior to other students; that is, they have a deficit (Nieto & Bode, 2012). Traditionally, teachers are apt to identify a student's weaknesses in order to develop an individualized learning plan. And many teachers view students from urban environments as possessing numerous weaknesses or deficits (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011).

This deficit way of thinking influences a teacher's expectations for their students, but more significantly, it influences the teacher's own feeling of efficacy about the student's learning. A diminished sense of teacher efficacy and deficit thinking contribute to a teacher's belief that attempting instructional interventions makes little difference and their students' lives contribute to their overall success or failure (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011). Teachers who subscribe to deficit thinking believe that circumstances prevent student learning and these circumstances are beyond their control which results ultimately in the teacher not taking responsibility for teaching all students (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011). It is critical for teachers to contend with the challenges they can resolve by creating classroom practices and environments focused on helping all students learn to the best of their capabilities (Nieto & Bode, 2012). To combat deficit thinking, professional development programs should focus on a resilience model which builds on students' strength and focus on high expectations for all learners (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011).

Hegemonic Behavior

Perhaps one of the most difficult concepts to address by professional

development programs is the concept of hegemonic behavior due to its unconscious nature. Apple (1996) defines hegemony as the process in which the dominant groups in society work together to construct an alliance and maintain authority over subordinate groups. Apple (1996) also asserts that since the subordinate groups feel their concerns are validated, the dominant groups do not need to utilize coercion. This makes hegemonic practices extremely subtle but nonetheless powerful since the party experiencing the discrimination does not realize it is happening (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011). Hegemonic practices in the classroom can be very subtle. Frequently, a teacher will unwittingly encourage students who mirror their own cultural beliefs which reinforces the dominant culture. This does not empower all students and can lead to a shared expectation of low performance by both the student and the teacher (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011). Hegemonic behavior can be combatted through a professional development program which helps teachers expand their knowledge base by understanding the needs of diverse ethnic groups (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011).

Learning Styles

An urban professional development program should also help teachers create instruction which capitalizes on various learning styles. Keefe and Languis (1983) define learning style as the "...constant patterns of behavior and performance by which an individual approaches educational experiences..." (p.1). Additionally, they state that the cultural practices of home, school and society as well as human development also shape our learning styles (Keefe and Languis, 1983). It is possible for a student to learn

to form their own knowledge; however, it will be examined through the lens of their particular cultural experiences. It is key for teacher's to comprehend that a student's culture does influence the manner in which knowledge is understood and that their students' perspectives function as a source for what they can accept as worthy of learning (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011). The two fundamental learning styles of field independent and field sensitive were defined by Ramirez and Castanada (1974). The field independent student typically is task oriented, prefers independent study and inquiry and perceives unconnected parts; while the field sensitive student prefers group work, is attuned to communal environments, has global awareness and prefers to be an observer (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011). Typically, diverse cultures are dominated by field sensitive students; however, it is the field independent student which has traditionally been favored in educational settings. As a result, many culturally diverse students can feel like failures when schools and assessments are predominantly geared towards the field independent student (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011). Understanding how students will relate to the teacher is also key to the student achieving success. Field independent students rarely seek out personal interactions with the teacher restricting interactions to the tasks at hand, while the field sensitive student will be express openly their feelings for the teacher, ask personal questions and is greatly impacted by the teacher (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011). Teachers should be taught how to determine the learning styles of their students and then how to construct learning opportunities to capitalize on them to create the best learning environment for all students.

Quality teachers are the strongest weapon to narrow the achievement gap and increase student performance. The most powerful tool a school district can use to increase teaching quality is effective professional development. Most school districts will agree with these two assertions; however, great disparity exists from school district to school district beginning with the philosophical purpose of professional development, how training be developed, how it will be delivered and by whom and even how teachers will participate. Therefore, additional studies on the perceptions of effective directors of professional development are warranted.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

The best approach to meeting the needs of the urban student is to employ culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching. Carter, Webb-Johnson and Williams (2011) describes culturally responsive teaching as "...using the cultural knowledge, prior experience, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant." (p. 35). By utilizing culturally responsive teaching it recognizes the validity of the cultural traditions of diverse ethnic groups, constructs relevance between home and school experiences, uses an array of instructional strategies to address various learning styles, teaches students to know and celebrate their own and each other's cultural traditions and integrates multicultural information, resources and materials across subjects (Gay, 2000).

Twenty-First Century teachers must remember they cannot ignore the unique needs of students of color. Teachers should deviate from traditional approaches of teaching and embrace a more critical and culturally relevant pedagogy (Carter, Webb-

Johnson & Williams, 2011). Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams (2011) outline five tenets to support culturally responsive teaching, they include: teaching behavior and approaches supporting culturally responsive pedagogy, identity development, contributions of diverse groups and dimensions of culture, and strategic and transformative intervention. Various research supports culturally responsive teaching as a vehicle for student success in diverse classrooms (Carter, 2003; Gay, 2000; Delpit, 1995).

Professional development for teachers can assist teachers in discovering who they are as cultural entities and classroom instructors. Professional development will aid in culturally responsive teachers gaining a fundamental grasp of self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-ideal (Webb-Johnson, Obiakor & Algozzine, 1995). This multidimensional identity helps the urban teacher embrace students who may come to their classrooms with dissimilar experiences, it helps decrease the development of contempt for their students and they begin to see opportunities for growth (Carter, 2003; Gay, 2000; Delpit, 1998). Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes culture as “dynamic, complex, interactive and changing, yet a stabilizing force in human life” (Gay, 2000, p.10). If a teacher is to impact the lives of all students, it is essential they teach the skills and knowledge increasing the probability of student achievement (Howard, 1999).

Challenges Unique to Professional Development Decision-Makers in Urban School Districts

Three challenges faced by professional development programs in urban school

districts are: providing learning opportunities for teachers which focus on the diverse learner and their unique needs, overcoming teacher perceptions of professional development and gaining support from administrators to support sustained implementation and transfer of knowledge. Professional development programs in urban school districts face the challenge of helping teachers understand the complex uniqueness of ethnic and cultural groups in American public schools and how student behavior is influenced by race, ethnicity, language and social class (Banks et al., 2001; Banks, 2015). Banks (2001) maintains that successful professional development programs should help teachers:

1. discover and recognize their own feelings with respect to racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups;
2. gain an understanding of the histories and traditions of the diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups within their schools;
3. realize diverse viewpoints exist within different ethnic and cultural communities;
4. comprehend the ways in which racial and ethnic stereotypes are perpetuated by schools;
5. obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and put into practice instruction that provides all students with an equal opportunity to attain academic and social success in school, also known as equity pedagogy (Banks et al., 2001).

Creating a culturally responsive professional development program involves helping teachers develop strategies for building and designing relevant cultural descriptions and experiences to bridge the gap between what students already know and

appreciate and what we need them to learn. An effective professional development program in an urban school district will focus on providing learning opportunities in which teachers learn to use culturally responsive activities, resources, and strategies to plan and implement instruction (Banks, 2001; 2015).

Geneva Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as the means for providing more effective instruction. The assumption is that academic knowledge and skills become more personally meaningful when they are placed within the student's lived experiences and individual frame of reference, the learning then has greater appeal to the student, thus accomplishing a teacher's ultimate goal of faster and more efficient learning (Gay, 2000). As a result, the academic achievement of a diverse student population improves when their own cultural and experiential filters are part of instruction (Gay, 2000). In order to increase learning for all students, teachers should to be knowledgeable about the social and cultural contexts of learning and utilize culturally responsive teaching methods to increase the achievement of a diverse urban student population (Banks, et al., 2001).

Successful urban teachers modify their teaching styles to meet the needs of all students; however, sadly most teachers are inadequately prepared to meet the needs of all students. Therefore, professional development programs in urban school districts should help teachers learn how to develop instructional materials and lessons for the diverse urban classroom. (Ilmer, Snyder, Erbaugh, & Kurz, 1997). Knowledge about cultural diversity is essential to meeting the educational needs of all students. Culture is

complex; it consists of subtle and overt nuances, some of which have direct implications for teaching and learning; making them more important for teachers to know than others. Geneva Gay (2000) in *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research and Practice*, provides a focus for professional development by outlining essential elements teachers should know when teaching culturally and ethnically diverse students. They include: which ethnic groups give value communal living and cooperative problem solving but most importantly how these preferences affect drive, ambition, and task performance in an educational setting; the set of rules various ethnic groups' have for how children interact with adults and how this could be exhibited in a classroom setting; and how gender role is perceived in different ethnic groups for implementing fairness initiatives in classroom instruction.

Professional development in an urban setting is vital to the improvement process. Change initiatives can falter along the way, and once they break down, the improvement process comes to a grinding stop. Cohesiveness and strong instructional leadership from principals is vital to high quality implementation of new policies and practices, and improvements in student learning will not occur without appropriate implementation (Joyce & Showers, 1982). The best training, with exceptional and powerful content, will not succeed without strong administrative support. If quality teaching is to occur, teachers must receive support from skilled, knowledgeable instructional leaders (Sparks, 2002; 2013).

Major Studies on Professional Development

There are numerous studies regarding professional development; however, there are four notable studies presenting essential information on the design and effectiveness of professional development. To begin with, a report published by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) authored by Choy, Chen & Bugarin (2006), offers an overview of professional development in the United States. Second, a literature review by Wilson & Berne (1999) of research on contemporary professional development conducted in response to the standards movement request for higher standards for teachers outlines the various methods of professional development and successful professional development practices. Next, are pieces of research conducted by Guskey (2003) and offer information about effective characteristics of professional development. The final study presented in this section was conducted by Hollins (1990) which presents a comprehensive plan for professional development for teachers of children of color.

Schools and Staffing

A 2006 report published by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) used the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) to describe professional development activities for the 1999-2000 school year. This is the fourth study in a series that began in 1987-1988; however, the 1993-1994 study was the first to begin examining data on the methods used by school districts and campuses to organize and manage professional development programs. The study additionally noted teacher participation in various professional development activities. This quantitative study involved data solicited from approximately 4,700 public school districts and 12,000 public and private

schools. Included within these schools were 12,300 principals and 52,000 teachers. This study offers a comprehensive picture of what staff development looks like in U.S. schools. Nearly all teachers reported participation in some sort of professional development during the year. About 90% of those teachers attended workshops, conferences or training sessions. Less than half of the teachers reported collaborating teachers (about two-thirds) participated in activities related to school reform, such as content and performance standards in their content area and use of technology for instruction, consistent with improving teacher knowledge of their subject. While over half of the teachers rated their professional development experiences as very useful, the ones that participated in the more in-depth studies within their fields were more likely to judge their experience as very useful. This statistic also held true for those that spent more time in their professional development activities. This report offers an ample amount of valuable information that can aid scholars and professional development designers in preparing effective programs for participants.

The Ticket to Reform

Wilson & Berne (1999) conducted a review of research on contemporary staff development in response to the standards movement that has called for higher standards for teachers. “New measures of student performance would entail new ways of teaching. Professional development was touted as the ticket to reform” (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p, 173). However, the information about teacher learning is puzzling, and research on effective professional development is incomplete. Wilson & Berne (1999) question existing professional development research because it lacks empirical evidence about

what professional knowledge teachers do or do not learn during traditional professional development activities.

This research was conducted through extensive reading selections of literature guided by three principles: high-quality examples of professional development, professional development projects that focused on the what and how of teacher learning and acknowledging that professional teacher knowledge included at least some understanding of various concepts. The collected research then fell into three knowledge categories: opportunities to talk about subject matter, opportunity to talk about students and learning and opportunity to talk about teaching. From this, the authors chose to focus on two exemplary instances within each of the categories rather than exhaustively reviewing literature relevant to each domain. The literature review found support for the following activities as common means of professional development: mandatory part-day or day-long workshops sponsored by school districts and pursuit of individual learning opportunities (i.e. signing up for master's courses, summer and weekend workshops and joining professional organizations). In conclusion, teacher learning has traditionally been "a patchwork of opportunities – formal and informal, mandatory and voluntary, serendipitous and planned" (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p, 174).

The authors also cited the following characteristics as common features in effective staff development: ensuring collaboration and interaction with peers, focusing on student-learning and crucial issues of curriculum and instruction, providing adequate time for learning and follow-up and recognizing teachers as professionals and adult learners. Wilson and Berne (1999) examined alternative approaches to teacher learning.

Of note in this literature review, was a three-year project created by Grossman and Wineburg, which allowed English and social studies teachers to meet monthly and select, read and discuss fiction and history. The discussions were intended to create a community of teacher-learners who could then develop integrated curriculum. After analyzing data, the researchers had evidence which supported that the offerings to the groups from the participants varied due to their nature as an English or social studies teacher. This too became apparent to the group time. This eventually led to the participants' ability to notice and value that these fundamental differences hold true for their learners as well. Participants took various strategies used by their colleagues and the researchers back to their classrooms, which is often not the case with traditional staff development.

Continuing their research on alternative modes of professional development, Wilson and Berne (1999) note the following patterns that emerge in the literature: Teachers enjoy the chance to talk about their work, that it takes time to develop a community, that teachers have very little experience engaging in professional discourse that is public and critical of their work and the work of their colleagues (p. 181).

Other essential ideas explored by Wilson & Berne (1999) include opportunities to talk about students and learning and opportunities to talk about teaching. Overall, several themes emerged from this literature review in regards to exploring the research on contemporary professional development and teacher learning. They are: communities of learners redefining teaching practice, teacher learning ought to be activated rather than bound and delivered and privileging of teachers' interaction with one another

(Wilson & Berne, 1999). This literature review confirms the notion that one-shot workshops are not an effective means of professional development and more research on professional learning contexts is needed. Researchers also have an obligation to move beyond reporting what teachers say they know and begin analyzing what professional knowledge is required and how that affects student achievement.

Approach to Change

In 2003 Guskey analyzed thirteen well known lists of characteristics of effective professional development in order to determine if they were developed using similar methods, possessed similar frames of reference, and to determine if there were related characteristics. Among the lists examined were those created by Education Research Service, American Federation of Teachers, the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching and the U.S. Department of Education. In analyzing these lists, he concluded that little consensus exists among professional development researchers regarding characteristics of effective professional development. Results additionally show that individual characteristics differ extensively in their rate of inclusion and that no characteristic appeared in all lists. Guskey (2003) also states that research evidence supporting nearly all of the identified characteristics is contradictory and frequently conflicting. The implication of this analysis is that improvement in the quality of professional development is doubtful to change unless clear criteria exist regarding what represents effective professional development. Guskey (2003; 2014) also discusses implications for educational leaders concerned with improving professional development activities.

Guskey is widely known for his research in education reform, professional development and assessment and grading. He has written numerous articles and books addressing the topic of professional development. He states professional development is a systematic effort “to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcome of students” (Guskey, 2002, p. 381) and high-quality staff development is a vital part of improving education. Teachers are attracted to professional development because of their beliefs that “it will expand their knowledge and skills, contribute to their growth, and enhance their effectiveness with students” (Guskey, 1991, p. 382). They hope to gain specific, concrete and practical ideas that relate directly to their daily routines in the classroom (Guskey, 1991).

Guskey (1999; 2014) offers a practical guide to evaluating professional development programs with five levels of assessment. The five levels are arranged from simple to complex. With each subsequent level, the process of gathering evaluation information is likely to require more time and resources. More importantly, each higher level builds on the ones that came before. In other words, success at one level is necessary for success at the levels that follow. The levels are: 1). the participants' reaction to professional development; 2). what new knowledge and/or skills participants gained; 3). evaluating organizational support and change; 4). how participants use their new knowledge and skills; 5). improvements in student learning. Each of the stages generates information that can be used for both formative and summative evaluation. Formatively, it assists to determine elements done well and, if not done well, how they can be improved. Comprehensively, it helps determine the effectiveness of elements at

each level to assess the importance and value of the professional development. In additional writing on evaluating professional development Guskey, collaborating with Sparks (1991), states good evaluations are the product of thoughtful planning, the ability to ask good questions and a basic understanding about how to find valid answers. In many ways they are simply the refinement of everyday thinking. Good evaluations provide information that is sound, meaningful, and sufficiently reliable to use in making thoughtful and responsible decisions about professional development processes and effects (Guskey & Sparks, 1991).

Guskey (2000) makes a significant distinction between evidence and proof. Those who seek scientific proof of professional development's effectiveness are seeking the impossible. "Arguments about whether you can absolutely, positively isolate the impact of professional development on improvements in students' performance are generally irrelevant," he writes. "In most cases, you simply cannot get ironclad proof. To do so, you would need to eliminate or control for all other factors that could have caused the change.... The problem, of course, is that nearly all professional development takes place in real world settings where such experimental conditions are impossible to meet" (p. 87). Rather than seeking proof, Guskey (2000) stresses the importance of evidence, which could include pre-, and post-assessments, meaningful comparison groups, and testimonials.

Research by Guskey and Yoon (2009) summarized a massive analysis by the American Institute for Research of over 1300 studies on professional development. The authors examined professional development delivered by the workshop method and by

expert consultants; they also examined time devoted to professional development, follow up after the learning occurred, discussions of best practices and the content covered during the learning session. Their primary focus was to determine if there was a clear link between professional development and improvements in student achievement. Their conclusion verified the difficulty of linking professional development to student achievement in spite of a natural and logical connection between the two. From this analysis, Guskey and Yoon (2009) reference four implications: educational leaders responsible for planning and implementing professional development must learn how to critically evaluate the effectiveness of activities, all levels of education should insist upon better evidence from outside experts, implementation of any new professional development strategy should begin with a small, carefully controlled, pilot study designed to examine its effectiveness. The authors also concluded that there is a need for rigorous, scientific evidence to identify the precise facets of professional development which contributes to gains in student achievement.

In 1985 Guskey introduced an alternative approach to change associated with professional development. According to his model, teachers' beliefs and attitudes did not noticeably change until after seeing a change in student learning. The changes in student learning were a result of specific changes teachers made in their classroom practices. His research indicated changes in both academic and behavioral domains, such as, student participation; motivation for learning; and students' attitudes toward school (Guskey, 1985). This research indicates that experienced teachers seldom become committed to a new program or innovation until they have seen that the new practices work well in their

classrooms with their students (Guskey, 1985). Additional support was garnered from previous investigation in which a large group of teachers was trained in the use of a mastery learning procedures (Guskey, 1984). Teachers experienced positive changes in belief and attitude only when professional development and implementation led to evidence of improved student learning. Teachers who did not experience improved student learning did not indicate positive changes in belief and attitude. Concluding that neither professional development attendance nor professional development followed by implementation were sufficient conditions for change (Guskey, 1984).

Guskey (1985) offered three principles to reflect on when planning and implementing effective staff development programs. 1). Change is a slow, complicated, and gradual process for teachers. 2). teachers need to receive regular feedback on student learning. 3). Continued support and follow-up are necessary after initial training. At the time his model offered a positive stance on the potential of professional development; it illustrated that the evolution of teacher change is logical and that such change can be a smooth process (Guskey, 1985).

Models of Professional Development

In a 1989 article, co-authored by Loucks-Horsley and Sparks for the National Council of Staff Development, five models of staff development for teachers are discussed. The models presented in the article are: individually-guided staff development in which teachers plan for and initiate activities they believe will contribute to their own learning, the observation/assessment model which provides teachers with feedback and data which can then be used to identify future areas of learning, the involvement in a

development/improvement model engages teachers in curriculum development and the school improvement process, and the training and inquiry model typically referred to as traditional staff development seminars (Loucks-Horsley & Sparks, 1998). Their purpose was to advance the understanding of effective staff development practices. For each model they examined the underlying assumptions of the model, the theoretical and research underpinnings, phases of activity in the model, illustrations and outcomes. Loucks-Horsley and Sparks (1989) also examine the organizational framework necessary to support successful professional development; this included administrative support, district policies and participant involvement in decision making. They conclude that while the training/inquiry model is predominately used all models can impact the system. The successful impact depends on how the models are either used individually or combined and then implemented. The success also depends upon the organizational framework. They state "...staff development both influences and is influenced by the organizational context in which it takes place." (Loucks-Horsley & Sparks, 1989, p. 54). The significance of this article lies in the descriptions of each model and how it can be used to elicit effective change on a campus. At the time of their article, they do acknowledge further research is needed to establish a firm knowledge base contributing to factors which support and improve teacher practice.

In *Continuing to Learn*, Loucks-Horsley (1987) working on the assertion that teachers who continue to learn make more effective instructors, and by supporting their continual development we will keep the best and brightest in the profession. The book provides suggestions for practical application of strategies and approaches for continued

professional development. Activities such as collegiality and collaboration, appropriate time devoted to learning and implementation, sustained administrative support, and integrating individual goals with school or district goals. Also detailed are the conditions necessary to be successful and lists the benefits to students, teachers, and schools. Issues, concerns, and possible pitfalls are raised. Characteristics of good staff development programs are defined, followed by recommendations concerning ways to establish and improve these programs. Several case studies and evaluation methods are presented.

Loucks-Horsley (1999) identified fifteen learning strategies for teachers, acknowledging that little attention has been paid to the different learning styles of teachers. The identified strategies fall into five categories developing awareness, building knowledge, translating into practice, practice teaching and reflection. "Selecting strategies is really the process of designing staff development," she points out. "It is a dynamic process similar to one teachers go through in designing lessons for their students. Staff development leaders have to ask themselves which strategies make sense to use at what particular time with that particular set of teachers for a particular set of outcomes" (p. 56).

Darling-Hammond has written extensively and participated in national research projects regarding professional development. She advocates for powerful learning opportunities for teachers. She promotes a professional development model centered around studying, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing (Darling-Hammond, 2015). Darling-Hammond (1994) also advocates for the creation of Professional Development Schools,

where new teachers receive current instructional practices in addition to coaching and collaboration with more experienced teachers.

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) examine various design principles to guide policy-makers and school reformers who seek to promote learner-centered professional development. A shift in the approach of professional development would engage teachers as active and reflective participants in the change process (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Success, according to the authors, is based upon how well teachers are able to acquire new skills and discard preconceived beliefs and practices (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Designated time for teachers to work and learn collaboratively and strategies for team planning, sharing, learning and evaluating contribute to the success of a professional development program (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (1995) challenge educational leaders to re-evaluate how schools are staffed, funded and to professional development policies which create collaborative networks in which teachers investigate new practices. The authors affirm that teachers must be at the center of change and all systems of professional development must be accommodating and able to respond to changing needs of teachers (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

In her work she has also lists professional development strategies that foster improved teaching (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995). Among them are engaging teachers in relevant work focused on teaching, assessment, and observation; creating a collaboration environment; related to and derived from work with students, an examination of current subject matter and teaching methods; sustained and supported by

modeling, coaching; and connected to school change (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2015). Darling-Hammond (1997) declares professional development of this nature makes teachers feel better about their practice, but also increases student achievement.

Bayer (2014) conducted a study involving elementary teachers over a 12-month period seeking to provide a clear meaning of effective professional development and to present a list of significant elements innate to effective professional development. The participants were invited to create a list of the key components to be included in an effective professional development (Bayer, 2016). The findings reveal that any effective professional development should include the following elements: alignment to existing teacher needs, alignment to existing school needs, teacher voice and involvement in the design and planning of professional development, active participation opportunities, long-term commitment, and high-quality instructors (Bayer, 2014).

An increasingly popular model of professional development emerging is one that puts the teacher in charge of their own learning. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) maintain professional development should be placed in the hands of teachers, recognizing that “teaching is not just technical, it needs reality to make it authentic and applied” (p. 132). Teachers come to professional development with prior experience, specific intended learning outcomes, and a motivation to collaborate with colleagues (Tannehill, 2014). Permitting teachers the autonomy and influence to establish individual professional development goals, decide what they need to accomplish those goals, and afford them

the ability to work together to achieve success helps shape the foundation of teacher development (Patton, Parker, & Pratt, 2013).

Systemic Changes through Professional Development

Sparks and Hirsh (1997) focus on shifting the nature of professional development to cause systemic change. Results oriented education, systems thinking, and constructivism form the foundation of their model. Results-driven education judges a school's success by what students actually learn and how they are able to apply that learning. Systems thinking is a holistic approach to analysis that focuses on the way a system's fundamental parts are related and how the parts function over time and within the context of a larger systems. Under the theory of constructivism students construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences rather than receiving the knowledge from an outside source. Using these three foundational elements, Sparks and Hirsch (1997) explain how the focus of professional development has shifted from the improvement of the individual to improvement of both the individual and the school as a whole. Schools and school districts are abandoning improvement plans lacking focus and meaning in favor of strategic, data-focused plans aligning all levels of the organization. The focus of the professional development framework should move towards increasing student learning and eliciting a positive change in teacher behavior by focusing on job-embedded training emphasizing not generic skills but specific content and pedagogical improvements (Sparks and Hirsh, 1997).

In Designing Powerful Professional Development for Teachers and Principals, Sparks (2002) give a comprehensive look at creating a multi-faceted professional development program. He starts with a straightforward three-part principle: 1). quality teaching makes a difference in student learning; 2). the professional development of teachers and administrators is a key factor in shaping the quality of teaching; 3). the organization and culture surrounding the school contribute significantly in determining the quality of professional development experiences (Sparks, 2002). Sparks (2002) creates an elaborate picture of professional development that results in increased student learning. He emphasizes a systemic cultural make over to provide focus on a strong vision of student learning and a data-based assessment structure to support new learning which includes strengthening teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills, anchored on collegiality and collaboration among teachers, a focus on research based best practices, and continued support from administration. Sparks (2002) claims a total cultural shift will influence the knowledge, mind-set, and practices of teachers and administrators. Additionally, it will cause a shift in the cultures and structures of the school and district as a whole (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Sparks (2013) offers a guide to district professional development directors seeking to transform the professional learning structure from one mired in passive compliance to a relevant system focused on holistic change.

Transfer of New Skills

The work of Joyce and Showers primarily focuses on the transfer of newly acquired skills and knowledge into the teacher's classroom. They advocated "modeling,

practice under simulated conditions, and practice in the classroom, combined with feedback” as the most productive professional development model (Joyce & Showers, 1980, p. 384). They theorize that teachers attempting to master new skills and knowledge needed continued assistance in the classroom through peer coaching (Joyce & Showers, 1982, 1984). The assertion is that few teachers, after learning a new skill, will transfer it into their daily practice; however, when coaching is used the teachers almost always incorporate the new skill into their teaching practice (Joyce & Showers, 1982). Joyce and Showers (1982) sketch out a process consisting of five components: peer assistance and dialogue, giving and receiving technical feedback, analyzing application; modifications for their students and personal implementation of the new skill. Overtime Joyce and Showers (1995) evolved their research from focusing on small groups of teachers to entire faculties. All teachers on a campus had to agree to participate in the peer coaching teams, practice and use agreed upon initiative, support each other, share lessons and collect data about implementation and its impact on students (Joyce & Showers, 1995). While feedback was part of their initial tenants, as their research progressed they found it necessary to eliminate feedback from the coaching component. They discovered the feedback took on a supervisory or evaluative tone, which hindered the coaching relationship (Joyce & Showers, 1995). The power of peer coaching comes not from observations and conferences but from planning instruction, developing materials, observing teachers interact with students and collaborative dialogue about their actions of student performance. Joyce and Showers (1995) advocate forming collaborative peer coaching teams the first day of professional

development and sustain it throughout the implementation process. As Joyce and Showers (2002) strive towards a more efficient model to facilitate implementation of newly acquired knowledge and skill they turn their attention to the importance of learning how to learn. They explore a model of coaching in which collaborative planning and material development, coupled with reciprocated observation and learning are the key elements (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Of equal importance, they recommend, the need for training to help teachers learn how to become more effective learners. Their approach is to identify the desired result wanted from the professional and to select the elements most likely to accomplish the result (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Joyce and Showers (2002) identify practices, attitudes and skills which appear to facilitate teachers in developing a better capacity for learning. These include: persistence, acknowledgement of the difficulty of transferring new skills and knowledge, pitfalls of teaching new skills and knowledge to students, an understanding of the importance of theory, a proactive and productive use of colleagues, and flexibility (Joyce & Showers, 2002).

A three-year study by Thomas, et al. (2015) regarding the longitudinal effects of instructional coaching found a significant difference in coaching conversations overtime. Specifically, coaching conversations developed from a focus on implementation during year one where the conversations centered on their change in teaching practice, without the coach actually observing teaching practices, to coaching conversations embedded in collaborative teaching and implementation in year three (Thomas et al., 2015). Year three saw the conversations deepen to focus more on how their teaching practices

changed following observation instructional coaching (Thomas et al., 2015). This led to the assertion that coaching conversations help teachers to examine old beliefs, tackle faulty assumptions and eliminate ineffective teaching practices (Thomas et al., 2015).

Stewart (2014) writes about transforming professional development into professional learning and how it is a transition from something that is done to the teacher to an endeavor in which the teacher is an active participant. Teacher learning has a stronger impression when participants belong to a community of practice with colleagues who teach similar grade levels and content (Stewart, 2014). Stewart (2014) asserts that professional learning ought to be job-embedded, informed by data, centered on student work and how students learn, active, and occur over a period of time to allow for phases of development, implementation, and evaluation. The content of the professional development should be focused, specific (Stewart, 2014).

Hollins' Comprehensive Professional Development for Teachers of Children of Color

Hollins (1990) presented a comprehensive plan for professional development for teachers of students of color. Recognizing the need for public school teachers to familiarize themselves with the “discrepancy between the school curriculum (content and pedagogy) and the experiences and competencies of the youngsters taught” (Hollins, 1990, p. 1), she conducted research on a program that placed interns from California State University in inner-city classrooms. While this research was conducted using preservice teachers, the ideas presented in the study can also be utilized with in-service teachers. Hollins (1990) points out that teachers of students of color need to examine a variety of things in order to better teach them. Some of these ideas include: examining

their own cultural origins that could cause conflict with students that are different from them, understanding the home culture and community of students, listening to the voices of students of color and rethinking the school curriculum and redesigning it in a way to use student experiences and strengths. Hollins (1990) deems that these issues can be examined through staff development when teachers act as scholars, attend seminars about issues regarding children of color, observe master teachers of such students and create portfolios of their teaching accomplishments.

During this study, conducted throughout the 1989-1990 school year, interns attended monthly seminars where they shared classroom experiences. They also developed portfolios consisting of lesson plans, student work and a reflective journal. The results showed that the interns progressed throughout the year, and the researcher was confident such a model of professional development would enable teachers to improve their practice (Hollins, 1990).

Operational Theories: Confidence and Caring

In her 2011 work *The Pedagogy of Confidence: Inspiring High Intellectual Performance in Urban Schools*, Jackson outlines *The Pedagogy of Confidence*. According to the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education's website, Jackson is the Chief Executive Officer for the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education. She is a visiting lecturer at Harvard University, was the Executive Director for Instruction and Professional Development for the New York City Board of Education and is a member of ASCD's Differentiated Instruction cadre. *The Pedagogy of Confidence* is derived from research aimed at engaging and developing high intellectual performance

in gifted and talented students, this research and best practice recommendations are used to offer solutions to close the achievement gap between student potential and student achievement (Jackson, 2011). Jackson's Pedagogy of Confidence rests on a simple assertion, that a teacher's confidence in their student's potential and their own competence to nurture the potential directly affects a student's motivation to learn (Jackson, 2011). The Pedagogy of Confidence focuses on the strengths of students, not their weaknesses. Jackson (2011) writes that urban school systems are predisposed to focus on the deficits of poor, urban students when they enter school resulting in a rush to provide remediation, stifling a teacher's creativity and weakening their confidence in the effectiveness of their teaching. Under a Pedagogy of Confidence teachers demonstrate their confidence in a student's capacity to learn by creating and fostering high intellectual expectations. Additionally, they are supported and encouraged by campus and district administrators to strengthen their expertise as a teacher (Jackson, 2011). Teachers who deviate from a district's prescribed educational policy are often criticized and possibly penalized resulting in a decline in the teacher's motivation, initiative and confidence, thus perpetuating the underachievement of students.

Pedagogy of Confidence believes that all students possess inherent and broad intellectual capacity and all teachers possess hidden and far-reaching pedagogical power. A district supports a Pedagogy of Confidence by acknowledging, honoring and integrate the culture of the students in the very fabric of the district's culture. Pillars of a Pedagogy of Confidence as outlined by Jackson (2011) are what she calls High

Operational Practices. The High Operational Practices work to create a strong sense of confidence within the teacher and the student in an urban school. They are:

1. Identifying and Activating Strengths- Education, principally for urban school-dependent students, have long overlooked the strengths students possess. An inventive teacher will encourage students to disclose their strengths in a manner that allows recognition. Affirmation is a compelling ally to identifying student strengths and interests for developing self-concept and self-esteem (Jackson, 2011).
2. Building Relationships- Establishing strong relationships displays a conviction in the limitless potential of students (Jackson, 2011).
3. Nurturing High Intellectual Performances- An indisputable conviction in the ability of all children to attain the high levels of learning and thinking demanded by our ever-changing global community (Jackson, 2011).
4. Providing Enrichment Experiences- The more opportunity students have for enrichment that stimulates interests, the greater their engagement and motivation to apply effort to develop those interests (Jackson, 2011).
5. Incorporating Prerequisites for Learning- Urban students urgently need teachers who believe in their potential to significantly grow intellectually. Professional development is necessary to build the competence and confidence of these teachers to effectively elicit the strengths and address the needs of their urban students. This development should help the teacher engage students in applying the connection of culture, language, and learning

to identify and design strategies that will augment cognitive growth and stimulate learning in their students (Jackson, 2011).

6. Situating Learning in the Lives of Students- Positioning learning in the lives of students is the practice of highlighting and using their strengths to illustrate the connection of their world to academic concepts (Jackson, 2011).
7. Amplifying Student Voice- Teachers help guide students to communicate their opinions and point of view by means of explicit protocols and a variety of formats (Jackson, 2011).

Teacher Efficacy

Of course no conversation about teacher confidence would be complete without work on teacher efficacy. Self-efficacy or the belief in one's abilities to achieve desired outcomes, strongly affects people's behavior, motivation, and, eventually, their success or failure (Bandura, 1997). The most effective means of creating a solid sense of efficacy is through mastering experiences. Bandura (1997) advocates that teachers evaluate their self-efficacy based four sources: the verbal encouragement (verbal persuasion) of colleagues they regard as knowledgeable, the success or failure of their colleagues (vicarious experiences), perceptions of past experiences of teaching (mastery experiences), and their level of excitement as they anticipate and practice teaching. When a person encounters success they see an increase in their self-efficacy, while failure reduces it. Failures are most likely to lower our self-efficacy if they happen early in the learning process and are not a result of an absence of effort or challenging situations (Bandura, 1977).

A teacher's self-efficacy is their perceived ability to convey knowledge and to influence student behavior, even that of unmotivated or demanding students (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Guskey (1986) linked a teachers' self-efficacy to their behavior in the classroom and the implementation of instructional change. A teacher's self-efficacy can be influenced by the effort they put into teaching, the goals they set, and their determination and resilience when faced with an obstacle (Bandura, 1977). This is a crucial concept as it relates to urban teacher professional development and the implementation of a new strategy into teaching practice. When examining models of professional development, it is prudent to search for elements embedded in the model which will support and promote teacher self-efficacy, because after all, the chief goal of professional development is to elicit a positive change in the teacher's instructional behavior. When evaluating models of professional development to determine the likelihood of implementation one should look for opportunities to bolster and support teacher self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) noted that "it is easier to sustain a sense of efficacy, especially in times of difficulty, if significant others express faith in one's capabilities than if they convey doubts" (p. 101).

A second professional development model contributing to self-efficacy is one including an observation component. This can help the observer set goals for their own teaching and gauge their potential success. When the teacher observes the successful implementation of a new skill, they are more likely to view that task as manageable. Conversely, when the implementation fails despite strong efforts, the teacher may determine the task to be out of reach (Bandura, 1997). In keeping with Bandura's (1997)

assertion, the most effective professional development models include an authentic mastery experience embedded in the teacher's own classroom with the support of a coach providing specific verbal persuasion and feedback. This has important implications for teacher professional development. The actual use of the new knowledge presented in a professional development workshop has been shown to contribute significantly to changes in teacher self-efficacy, whereas simple exposure to the material did not (Ross, 1994); therefore, a professional development model which does not include an opportunity for the teacher to practice the new skill will most likely not succeed.

One of the most motivating and significant reasons for school leaders to pay attention to teachers' self-efficacy is its impact on the actual implementation of new teaching strategies presented during professional development. In his model of teacher change, Guskey (1986) theorized that most instructional improvement programs fail because they do not consider what motivates teachers to participate in professional development and the process leading to a change in a teacher's actions. A teacher's self-efficacy has been found to be the strongest influence on their willingness to implement a new instructional strategy (Guskey, 1988). The professional development model a school or district uses is a key variable in the likelihood a new instructional strategy will be implemented in the classroom. Researchers have found that experiences limited to telling (verbal persuasion) and observation (vicarious experiences) were modestly successful in facilitating instructional change and have stressed the importance of providing teachers with feedback and support in their implementation efforts (Guskey,

1989; Joyce & Showers, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988; Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009).

Successes build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided.

Caring Centered Education

Pang is a professor in the School of Teaching at San Diego University, a research fellow at National Center for Urban School Transformation and a former senior fellow at Annenberg Institute for School Reform. She is the author of *Multicultural Education: A Caring Centered Reflective Approach* (2nd ed. 2005) in addition to many journal articles addressing such topics as narrowing the achievement gap, race, ethnicity and education and the needs of Asian American children.

Pang (2010) states a Caring Centered Educational framework celebrates the importance of education and the development of citizens who care for others and collaborate to build a compassionate and equitable society. Caring Centered Education concentrates on relationships and culture to advance equity in education. Proponents of this theory are dedicated to developing the fullest potential of all students resulting in a more just society. A goal of Caring Centered Education is to close the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged and culturally and linguistically diverse students and other student groups.

Pang's Caring Centered Education takes a holistic approach to teaching, in which teaching is a complex combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs that work together to create an environment that encourages the full potential in the student and teacher. Part of creating a caring approach is the nurturing of trusting relationships as the foundation for building an effective and motivating classroom environment. To achieve this, teachers should understand the cultural, linguistic, economic differences of all students (Pang, 1999).

Pang (1999) stresses that culture is an integral aspect of the caring-centered framework. All students and teachers must develop strong cross-cultural communications. The framework advocates for teachers developing a deep understanding of cultural differences; as well as, developing comprehensive instructional programs using effective teaching methods to develop the maximum potential of all students. The caring-centered teacher uses culture as his or her primary lens of understanding, they work to integrate culture naturally into the classroom atmosphere and curriculum (Pang, 1999). Because the teacher understands culture from many perspectives, he or she provides a wide range of teaching strategies, motivational styles, and contexts to reach each student. The caring-centered multicultural classroom uses the experiences of people who have touched students' lives-family, friends, and even historical figures. The caring-centered approach believes that schools work toward justice by providing an effective, culturally affirming, and successful learning environment for all students (Pang, 1999).

Both the Pedagogy of Confidence and Caring Centered Education act as anchors for an urban school district's professional development program. Underlying elements of a program should be to ignite and sustain a teacher's belief in the student's potential to achieve, to shift from focusing on deficits and remediation to a focus on individual strengths, quality initial instruction and high intellectual attainment. It is important that the systemic stance of the school district is one of non-negotiable expectations of high intellectual performance for all students. It is incumbent upon the school district to create a professional development framework which advocates the belief in the intellectual capacity of all students and provide opportunities to learn how to identify, encourage and capitalize on student strengths to increase achievement.

The focal point of a professional development program under both the Pedagogy of Confidence and the Caring Centered Education shifts from training on what must be taught; to training teachers how to recognize, understand and value the cultural differences among their students, use that understanding to create strong positive relationships within the school and to cultivate student strengths in order to maximizing learning and inspire high intellectual performance. To create a strong urban professional development framework focused on developing confident caring teachers the plan must help teachers develop skills which will allow them to use the student's culture, language and experiences to create relevant and rigorous learning experiences.

In order to gain a better understanding of the evolution and current state of professional development, this chapter outlined a review of literature on professional development. The first section examined the history of professional development in

public schools followed by a discussion of characteristics of effective district professional development programs, elements impacting sustained use of professional development, the need for urban professional development programs, the unique challenges of an urban professional development program, impediments to effective district professional development programs as well as factors that impeded their sustained use of practices. The final section was a presentation of key research studies regarding professional development. The research presented focused on professional development for teachers of children of color, models of professional development, how professional development is used to transfer new skills, and is a tool for reform. The theoretical framework was embedded throughout this chapter.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study utilized a qualitative methodology. The intention was to use qualitative methods, such as field notes, interviews and discussion sessions in order to examine how professional development directors in urban school districts describe successful professional development programs and the elements necessary to create a successful program.

Background

Our public school system is facing increased pressure is to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students and for all students to perform at high levels. The most powerful tool at a school district's disposal to elicit the desired results is the teacher and the primary resource available to teachers to assist with the improving teaching and learning is professional development. As a result of this school districts are looking for the magic solution to help teachers perform better to elicit greater student achievement.

Urban school districts face unique challenges as they strive to develop their teachers. Urban classrooms face the unfortunate outlook of typically having under prepared and inexperienced teachers (National Center for Education Statistics 2000; Darling-Hammond 1999). As a result, a clear need exists for professional development director's to provide targeted quality learning opportunities for teachers, especially in

urban educational settings. Professional development programs in urban school districts encounter the unique challenge of providing professional development which will help teachers comprehend the intricate uniqueness of ethnic and cultural groups in American public schools and how student behavior is influenced by race, ethnicity, language and social class (Banks et al., 2001). In order to make meaning of the information gathered, I chose to organize the data in the following manner: a description of each district to include student enrollment numbers, student demographic breakdown, and the average household income in each district.

The Districts

District #1 is a medium sized urban school district located approximately twenty miles north of a major metropolitan area. The district services approximately 37,000 students from pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade. The student population is ethnically, culturally and economically diverse. According to 2015 district demographic data, the student demographic data is comprised of 43.52% Hispanic/Latino, 40.20% African-American, 9.51% White with the remaining student population consisting of Asian-American, American Indian and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Additionally, 70.56% of the student population is considered economically-disadvantaged, 72.78% participate in Title I eligible programs and 58.69% meet one or more markers to be considered At-Risk. The district's linguistic diversity includes 22.01% students who are considered Limited English Proficiency, 9.52% who are English as Second Language learners and 11.94% are Bilingual students. The average household income is \$98, 471.

District #2 is a medium sized urban district southwest of a major metropolitan

city which services approximately 47,000 students. District #2 is comprised of an ethnically diverse student population which is 53% Hispanic, 30% African American, 12% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% White. The student population is also 80.3% economically disadvantaged, 72% of the students meet one or more of the At-Risk qualifying conditions and 39.8% of the student population is Limited English Proficiency. The average household income in District #2 is \$41,305. There are approximately 3,300 teachers in District, 33% of which have 5 years of less of teaching experience. The ethnicity of District #2's teachers are as follows: 38% African-American, 24% Hispanic and 29% White.

District #3 is located southwest of a major metropolitan city in Texas. It currently services 22,661 students. Their student population is 59% Hispanic, 15% African - American and 21% White. Their economically disadvantaged population is currently at 64% with 49.6% meeting one or more of the At-Risk indicators. Additionally, 14% of District #3's student population are English Language Learners. The average family income for District C is \$56, 453. The district has 1,513 teachers, of which 63% are White, 14% are African-American and 19% are Hispanic and 36% have less than five years of teaching experience.

District #4 is a large urban district in central Texas west of a major metropolitan area. District D services 63,167 students. The student ethnic distribution includes 24.8% African-Americans, 45% Hispanic, 21% White and 6% Asian-American. District #4 has 69.4% of its student population categorized as economically-disadvantaged, 67.7% of its students meet one or more of the At-Risk indicators and 26% are English

Language Learners. There are 8,141 teachers in District D with 13.7% being African-American, 15.7% Hispanic and 66.5% White.

Procedures

In this research study, four professional directors in urban school districts were purposefully selected. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym and each participant was asked questions developed prior to the interview session. The crux of this research is found in the data. A narrative approach was employed using the actual words of the participants; thus providing a strong depiction of the beliefs presented. Sarbin (1986) defined narrative as:

“a way of organizing episodes, actions, and accounts of actions; it is an achievement that brings together mundane facts and fantastic creations; time and place are incorporated. The narrative allows for the inclusion of actors’ reasons for their acts, as well as the causes of happening.” (p. 9)

For this study, I interviewed four professional development directors in urban school districts; all located in urban educational settings. A detailed description of each school district as well as a description of the participants is included after the interview sessions.

Criteria for Participants

The sample selection of participants in this study represented a purposeful rather than random sample. Purposeful sampling includes participants who have experienced the event under deliberation and those whom the researcher can gain knowledge of the

most (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1988). Patton (1990) asserts that the carefulness and potency of purposeful sampling is in opting for information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information rich cases allow a researcher to learn a great deal regarding issues central to the purpose of the research. (p. 169)

The criteria for inclusion into the examination was a public school employee who has been employed as a district level professional development director and or supervisor for at least one year, the participant could have been either male or female.

Research Design

My study is designed to answer two specific research questions:

1. How do professional development directors in urban public school districts describe their personal attributes that contributed to their programs?
2. How do professional development directors in urban public school districts describe the professional development factors that impact teachers in their district?

This research study was conducted using an interpretive analysis of urban school district professional development directors. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2011), interpretive practices seek to make sense of the world around them in terms of the meanings people bring to them. I employed a qualitative research framework to expand understanding of how these district level directors created their professional development programs. The intention of this interpretive analysis is to extend the narrow research base relating to the lived stories and experiences of professional

development directors whose voices can assist in informing others about pertinent issues of effective professional development for educators.

This qualitative research used a naturalistic approach to understand phenomena in context specific, or real world settings, in which the researcher makes no effort to influence the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2005). Separate from quantitative researchers who search for causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings; this qualitative research searches for enlightenment, understanding, and extrapolation to like situations (Hoepfl, 1997). It is necessary for qualitative researchers to test and demonstrate their research is credible. In qualitative research, the researcher is considered the instrument (Patton, 2005)

Research maintains that qualitative methods come more easily to the human-as-instrument; qualitative methods are stressed within the naturalistic paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is meant that the human-as-instrument slants more towards an approach that is an extension of normal human behaviors, such as observing, listening, speaking, and reading.

Interpretist epistemology is a basis for qualitative research, in that a social reality is viewed as a collection of meanings which are constructed by the individuals who are involved in a particular reality. For this reason, the chief intention of my study was to ascertain the nature of those meanings. The focus of my study was on interpretation and meaning. Characteristics of qualitative research as explained by Merriam (1998) included an underlying interest in comprehending the meaning people construct of a particular event, and a logical approach to knowledge generation. I was the primary

instrument for data collection and analysis for this research, and my end product is narrative and descriptive

Positionality

A qualitative study relies heavily on the researcher as the primary instrument. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that naturalistic inquiry is always carried in a natural setting. Such a contextual examination necessitates a human instrument, who is adaptive to the situation that will be encountered. The human instrument builds upon their undeclared knowledge as much as declarative knowledge and uses methods that are suitable to humanly implemented investigation: interviews, observations, document analysis and unobtrusive clues. (p. 187)

I am the primary instrument in this study. However, the interviews served as the principal source of information obtained from the participants' perceptions of the creation of successful professional development programs. The interview protocol was a result of a review of literature as well as from my own experience and curiosity regarding information concerning the purpose of the study.

In order to diminish predetermined responses when gathering data, I used an open-ended approach when asking the interview questions. The interview guide in this study consisted of three main issues: 1) personal information of the participant; 2) program development and effectiveness and 3) program impact on student academic performance. Even though the questions were created prior to interviewing participants, I still had the flexibility to word questions in a way to establish a conversational style interview. A conversational style interview allowed me to develop new questions while

continuing the flow throughout the interview. I requested follow-up interviews as dictated by a review of the interview transcripts when further explanation, elaboration or information verification were warranted.

In each case study, the interviews were conducted initially with the participants to seek an understanding of their self-perceptions regarding the effective of professional development programs. The interviews were held in the office of each participant, when appropriate, which provides a location conducive to conversation. When not convenient, such as a participant being out of my immediate vicinity, a video or phone interview was held. I scheduled the interviews ahead of time. Organization and transcription of notes and voice recordings took place immediately following each interview.

Alongside the research design in qualitative research methodology sits the researcher's positionality, which is an illumination of the researcher's viewpoint of and stake in a study which influences their perception of a particular event. Contrasting with quantitative inquiry which strives for researcher neutrality, qualitative inquiry assumes the researcher cannot be separated from their research nor is this separation altogether advantageous (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the positionality of the researcher encompasses any research design by virtue of the selecting one research design over other designs; the selection is based on the researcher's epistemological stance. By the overt acknowledgement of a researcher's positionality, the researcher establishes credibility which invites the reader to ponder how that specific position is related to the data presentation and the interpretation of findings.

Data Collection

Among the various data collection techniques, interviews can be considered the optimum way to acquire the information that is wanted (Merriam, 1998). In this study, I conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews, and semi-structured face-to-face interviews through which the events, beliefs, and perceptions, influential to the phenomenon under examination were explored. However, for the purpose of triangulation, I utilized sources of data such as audio-taped interviews, non-verbal cues, and participant observations.

Field notes were maintained as written accounts of observations, conversations, experiences, and descriptions of the participants and the events that directly or indirectly affect the professional development programs under examination. As defined by Marshall and Rossman (1989), observations “are the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study” (p. 79), and can vary from structured to unstructured formats. I scheduled observations with each participant prior to my arrival and analyzed data as each interview is completed. Prior to the interviews, a human subject form was submitted and participants were assured that all personal information (name, etc.) would remain confidential.

Data Analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), it is not possible to understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which participants interpret their thoughts, emotions, and behavior. Merriam (2009) states that qualitative data is “conveyed through words,” and the collection of qualitative data is about “asking,

watching, and reviewing” (p. 85). The main source of data for this study will be interviews.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) declare qualitative research has a focus which is multi-purpose, and involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Furthermore, the utilization of qualitative methods will allow me to understand, from the perspective of the participants, the intricacy of their situations as well as the method and meaning of the events in their professional lives. Lincoln and Guba (1985), state that data analysis in a naturalistic inquiry is open-ended and inductive. Consequently, data analysis begins during the data collection process, and continues after the collection is complete.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Critical to naturalistic inquiry is the process of building trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To cultivate trustworthiness, the researcher must establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. An audit trail which will indicate triangulation of the data during the course of interviews, recorded field notes, and individual follow-up interviews were used to develop trustworthiness and credibility in this study. This procedure aided in the preservation of the data in a logical and retrievable form.

Transferability

Transferability has been offered as the qualitative equivalent of external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln & Guba (1985) state that “if there is to be transferability, the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the

person seeking to make the application elsewhere. The original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do” (p. 298).

Meaning, that the researcher seeks only to describe one specific situation and the meaning of that one specific situation for the participants of the study, the reader of the research is free to apply the research findings to a variety of similar situations in which they are involved. Additionally, Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue that “the naturalistic cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility” (p.316).

Dependability and Confirmability

Lincoln & Guba (1985) assert that dependability, which substitutes for reliability in a naturalistic inquiry, is expressed by “taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change” (p. 299). Objectivity or confirmability, was utilized during the data collection and data analysis to authenticate and build findings that could be significant in increasing knowledge in this particular area of study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the experiences of the district professional development directors in my study through my own lens. In my study, I utilized the authentic words of the participants to communicate their personal stories in the hope of offering a rich depiction of the viewpoints presented. My intention is to expose each director's story through the interview data collected. To make meaning of the data, I elected to organize the data in the subsequent manner: (a) an introduction and description of each director, (b) an individual review of interview responses by each director, and (c) presentation of themes organized categorically and supported by the data from the individual interviews, and the overall responses to the research questions. The participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Through a thorough examination of the rich description of experiences the director's passion for their programs became evident; therefore, it became my desire to express these director's voices with the same passion observed during the interviews. The two over-arching research questions to guide this study were:

1. How do professional development directors in urban public school districts describe their personal attributes that contributed to their programs?

2. How do professional development directors in urban public school districts describe the professional development factors that impact teachers in their district?

The eight interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended in nature (See Appendix A). They were devised according to the theoretical framework discussed previously in Chapter II. The individual interviews allowed the directors to share their stories as they related to the experiences they have had while maintaining the position of professional development director in an urban educational setting.

The section begins with a portrait of each participant, a chart of the characteristics of the participants can be found in Appendix D. There were three major themes to emerge from the interviews with the directors and two subthemes. The major themes were: (1) multi-faceted professional programs; (2) teachers as the vehicle for student success; and (3) a sense of accountability. The two subthemes to emerge were (1) an emphasis on building teacher confidence in the classroom and (2) a focus on strategic planning. The director's responses to the individual interview questions as related to the research questions will be discussed and the section will be summarized.

Proud Mary's Story

This director is one of 76 district administrators. Her specific responsibility is to oversee all professional development in the district both instructional and non-instructional. The director was extremely proud of the professional development program she had created, and verbalized this thought. She also expressed the necessity of continuous progress through the use of professional development. She was also very

energetic and had an out-going personality. As a result, she will be referred to her as “Proud Mary”.

Proud Mary grew up in an urban setting and attending an urban school. Her father being a school counselor placed great importance on education. His career as a counselor resulted in him taking in children occasionally who needed help, be they African-American, Hispanic or White. She grew up in a very diverse household. Proud Mary relayed a story that a local school where she grew up was named after her father as a result of his good work in the school district. From the stories she told I could gather a sense that the members of her immediate family were high achievers. One played professional football in the National Football League, one is an entrepreneur who owns numerous commercial properties and all three of them have college degrees. She was in the one school district, a major urban district, for over twenty years before moving to her current district. Her only educational experience has been in urban environments.

Proud Mary has a department consisting of 3 directors as direct reports who each supervise a specific area of professional development: elementary education, secondary education and non-instructional employees. She additionally manages a team of “Development Specialists” who assist with delivering district wide professional development and engage in daily embedded instructional coaching on campuses. Proud Mary has been in public education for over 30 years, during which she has been an elementary classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal of an elementary campus, School Support Officer overseeing a zone of 30 campuses and has been in her current position for 3 years. She received a Bachelor’s degree in Fashion Merchandising and

entered education on an alternative certification and has a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. It is also worth noting that the professional department in the district did not exist prior to her coming to the district when a new superintendent was named. This professional development department is in its infancy.

Proud Mary was extremely welcoming and excited to participate in my study. Her office was full of chatter and laughter as I entered and those in the office were very friendly, creating an inviting and comfortable atmosphere. We joked and chatted personally for a few minutes, however, when the interview process began, she became professional and took on a serious demeanor. My impression was that she took a great deal of pride in the program she was building. Proud Mary described the professional development in her district as varied.

With regards to obtaining insight into personal attributes contributing to her program I asked "What particular challenges do professional development directors face in urban school districts? How do you meet those challenges?" Her reply was:

"One of my challenges would certainly be to make sure what we do is timely.

You cannot create something and say this is what we are going to use for the next five years, is it relevant to what is going on in the district right now, does it meet the needs of the teachers for just in time learning. However, it also has to be on-going learning. Can it be sustainable? Does it rotate from year to year? What are the pieces so you can get to see the growth so it is not a one shot deal? That you build systems of quality learning".

When asked to elaborate on how she meets these challenges Proud Mary responds was:

“The main way we keep up to date on what is relevant, well there are two ways. We are constantly in our schools observing classrooms, talking to teachers and principals getting their input, seeing what they are saying and what they need. We also use a lot of data, benchmark data, common assessment data. We definitely want to be data driven. We really try to stay on top of things and not lose touch with what is happening in our schools”.

Additional comments from this director indicated a deep feeling of accountability. She commented:

“You know sometimes people think that just the schools do the accountability, that the school has to make it or the department has to make it. I think that one thinks a successful professional development program is that you are accountable, you’re accountable to the people that are accessing your work. So, a sense of owning outcomes is very important in terms of professional development. And that you are not only taking it but you are building capacity so that those people feel they can do this job, they are not scared, they have everything they need so they can move forward”.

As the interview evolved, we could hear lots of activity and laughing in the outer office. It seemed like normal business, the atmosphere was light hearted but definitely focused on the work. We turned our focus to what professional development factors impacted teachers in her district. When asked the question “What particular teaching skills do you consider necessary for teachers need in urban school districts and what

steps does the district's professional development program take to develop those skills?"

Proud Mary responded:

"One thing that I'm going to say is that might be a little different, one skill teachers teaching in an urban district must have is the willingness to learn. I'm going to say that teaching in this environment you can never get to a place where you feel as though I know how to do this work because in an urban setting the work is always changing and you have to be able to change with it to meet the needs of the teachers and students".

I probed for more detail asking her to elaborate on how the program responds to a teacher's willingness to learn. Proud Mary motioned to a wall calendar full of events and rested her hand on a paper catalog on her table while she stated:

"So what we do is offer a variety of sessions, at a variety of times so when a teacher is ready we are there. We don't want a teacher searching for learning opportunities. You know a teacher is all a kid has, we have to make sure that teacher is the best they can be so that student develops into the best they can be. We want to make sure we are offering as many quality relevant things as possible. We can't make them learn, but we sure can be there when they are ready".

The director also instituted an Urban Learner Series that provides on-going professional development which is relevant and research based offering insights into the urban learner experience as well as best instructional practices as one category of courses offered to assist teachers. She stated that many teachers are hesitant to work in

an urban setting so it was important to her to make sure they felt equipped and prepared to teacher in this setting. Her response to the question: “What factors do you consider unique to teaching in an urban school district and how does professional development in your district meet those needs?”

“One thing I think as professional developers we need to understand, and this is a good question, because we need to understand what the challenges of the community we are trying to serve right now. Some of those challenges might be that working with teachers in different generations, that learn different, that have different expectations. Part of it may be that working in an urban situation provides challenges such as can you teach a diverse population, financial diverse, ethnically diverse, all those different. Can you meet all of those? How do we help them meet the needs of the urban learner? So what we did was start an urban learner series which brings in quest lecturers, university trainers and other consultants to work with our teachers to improve their knowledge and skill sets when working with urban students”.

Specifically, she believed that a willingness to understand your content at the highest level, a willingness to build relationships at the highest level, and the willingness to be open to learn new pedagogy, new practices are all key to success in an urban district:

“You may have all of the background knowledge, you may have gone to the top universities but unless you have this as mission and commitment to do this type

of work you'll struggle. Because you have to want to do this work, students can tell when you don't have the buy in-so that's important."

As we concluded our interview Proud Mary's final thought was:

"I think professional development is internal in that you are embedding this work in those participants. It is not just something on the outside that you do to them; it's something you do for them".

As I was leaving her office her secretary asked "How'd she do? She better have done a good job. You just let me know if she gave you any trouble." It was light hearted and fun. On my way out everyone wished me luck on my study. I left with a positive feeling.

Kindred Spirit's Story

This director began her career in education as a high school science teacher, then becoming a content specialist on her campus, before moving to a district level administration position managing the district's K-12 science program. Next, she transitioned into her current position as the coordinator of the professional development program for the district, which she has held for nine years. She received her Bachelor's degree in Science Education, a Master's degree in curriculum and instruction and Doctorate is in Educational Leadership. As our conversation progressed I found that many of the programs and challenges she mentioned were the exact programs and challenges I was currently facing in position, this this director is referred to as Kindred Spirit.

Kindred Spirit is a White female who grew up in the suburbs near a major urban metropolitan area. She stated has had a normal childhood with a brother and sister both who are younger. Her father worked for a local company as a chemist before transitioning to teaching at a local college and her mother was a stay at home mom. Her father sparked her interest in Science from an early age, as he built a small lab at his house in which they would conduct small experiments. Her grandmother was an elementary teacher and she would attend summer school with her grandmother when they would go to her house in the summer. Kindred Spirit stated she always knew she would become a teacher, she would play school with her siblings and cousins in the garage and never really explored any other career choices. She laughed and said she never had any other ambition than just teach high school, she never thought she would become an administrator or direct a district program. She stated that these opportunities presented themselves and “they just happened, guess I was in the right place at the right time”.

The interview with Kindred Spirit took place after a training we both attended at a new by regional service center. We sat in an empty conference room for the interview. We began by discussing the overall structure of her professional program. She does not have a team working with her for planning or implementing district professional development; however, she does collaborate various departments when planning professional development.

“We offer continuous professional development at all times during the school day, after the school day and on weekends. The bulk of our teacher professional

development happens in the summer, in fact, at least 1000 sessions are offered over a typical summer. It's a never ending cycle of learning. We use a variety of formats, from face to face learning to online training. We find they want options; many teachers would prefer to have their professional development online than come to sessions with a group”.

We delved into particular challenges she faces as a professional development director in an urban district. With a sigh she identified teacher turn-over as her number one challenge. She mentioned

“Urban students have a lot of needs and teachers who are ill-equipped to meet those needs struggle and often leave when an easier opportunity presents itself. Of our 3,300 teachers, about 500 teachers per year are new to the district. It is a challenge to induct a large group of new teachers every year”.

To address this challenge and attempt to impart appropriate skills and knowledge to their newly hired teachers, Kindred Spirit has created a 3-year new teacher induction program. The district's contract states that newly hired teachers, regardless of experience level, will attend 35 hours of prescribed professional development for the first 3 years. They focus on district initiatives, their classroom management program and content. During the first year of a newly hired teacher's contract the professional development for students of limited English proficiency is emphasized. Year two of a new teacher's prescribed professional development plan focuses on working with students who live in poverty.

I continued by asking “What particular teaching skills do you consider necessary for teachers need in urban school districts and what steps does the district’s professional development program take to develop those skills?” Her reply was:

“Probably the number one thing we need teachers to be able to do is differentiate for their students. So in our third year of our induction program we start to bring that content in. We are going to start expecting that you can make some decisions on what this student needs versus that student needs. What does this plan look like in plans, what does it look like in action?”

As our interview progressed, we turned to the elements she considered essential to making an urban professional development program effective. One of her attributes of a successful professional development program is that teachers see an increase in their self-efficacy. As their confidence in their own abilities increases she believes leads to increased enjoyment in the job they are doing and also leads to increased teacher retention. She stated that teacher retention was a key issue with the district, thus the professional development department strives to build capacity in teachers in hopes they will elect to stay in district. However, Kindred Spirit emphatically insisted that the true measure of any professional development program boils down to achievement scores students receive.

“The hallmark of a successful professional development program is that the teachers feel confident, they can do the job, they enjoy doing the job and they stay in the district. We look a lot at our teacher turnover. And the truth is that whatever scores the students get are our scores, because they are being taught by

the adults who we are teaching. We feel like our state report card on student achievement is really the professional development report card.”

When our interview concluded, I thanked her for her time. We packed up our belongings and walked out to the parking lot together chatting about our plans when we left.

Proud Papa's Story

This participant was an elementary teacher for three years, then became an instructional coach on a campus, then transitioned to Family Involvement Coordinator working with Title I students and funds. Following that, he was an assistant principal for four years, a principal for five years and has been in the role of professional development director for the district the past 2 years. This participant received his teaching credentials through an alternative certification program. He received his Bachelor's Degree from a major state university in Political Science. His intention was to go to law school; however, upon receiving his undergraduate degree he took a part time job as a substitute teacher in a local school district. He said he fell in love with the elementary students and knew that teaching was for him which prompted him to pursue his teaching credentials. Additionally, he has a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership and a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction which he received from the same local institution. He is the youngest of four children, his three older siblings are girls. His oldest sister has Down's Syndrome, which gives him a unique perspective regarding special needs students. One of his sisters is a bookkeeper for a local business

and his other sister is one of the elementary curriculum directors in the district he currently works for.

The interview was conducted off district property in a local restaurant. The director was pleasant and friendly and eager to discuss his program. It was mid-day so the restaurant was not busy and we were able to find a table in a corner to minimize distraction and noise. After settling in and ordering our drinks, we chatted personally for a couple of minutes and then we began our interview. He expressed how proud he is of his district professional development model. For this reason, he will be known as Proud Papa. Proud Papa designed a required PD plan for teachers at every grade level and every content area.

“It’s called a tiered plan which addresses specific content in each tier, such as state mandated compliance training in tier one, district initiatives in tier two and specific academic content in tier three. The district has on-going professional development throughout the school year and summer which is predominately facilitated by in- district personnel, with a few consultants hired to initially train to build capacity.”

We began to explore the attributes of being a professional development director in an urban context. In discussing the challenges, he faces as a professional development director in an urban district, he emphasizes working with teachers to focus on establishing a strong positive relationship with students before they begin teaching content. A teacher’s tendency is to jump immediately into teaching content and ignore the relationship piece. He believes that a strong positive learning environment is vital to

the success of urban students. He works with teachers to understand how to relate to urban students whose backgrounds differ from those of their teachers. He stated "We can't just sympathize like we've been through their lives, we have to learn to empathize and understand that they've been through things that we can't understand". He was emphatic that it was critical to a teacher's success in an urban district that they feel they can teach in this environment. Proud Papa mentioned the turnover rate of teachers was high because so many of them simply could not handle the stress and high needs of the urban classroom. He went on to further state:

“We have several challenges, because we know our kids come at risk so you have to balance what the kids need and what the teachers really want. At the beginning of the year we stress relationships. We know urban kids require different kinds of environments. We know they need to come into an environment that is very positive. So we look at the teaching with poverty pieces and the Capturing Kids Hearts pieces. Another Major challenge is balancing how you place your PD throughout the year because people suddenly have urgent matters but you want to stick with the plan because it was developed the right way.”

Academically, his challenge is to develop a professional development plan to close the academic lag characterized by most urban students. He states teachers lack the skills to differentiate in their classroom; as a result, a great deal of his focus is placed on how to differentiate for the various academic levels in a classroom. As the professional

development director I try to create a plan that will focus on strategies teachers can use now that they can actually control.

We moved to discuss what he felt made a successful professional development program. His assertion was that the best designs are those that are prescriptive. Proud Papa believes that teachers need to know what is expected of them, what training they are required to take but also have some choices. He developed a plan that mandates specific elements the first five years of teaching. Because teachers at different points in the continuum they have different needs so his plan also has choice for them to meet their individual needs. Once he concluded speaking of the prescriptive model he began speaking about the strategic aspects of the job by saying:

“It is my job as the director to create a calendar that ensures course work and strategies we want to push out there are offered in ways that people want to actually access. Are people signing up for it, we’re not doing a good job if no one wants to come. And if no one comes how do expect to improve teaching and learning in the classrooms.”

Proud Papa gave off the impression that he was methodical and strategic in all of his decisions. While his tone and demeanor were both very friendly, his answers were straight to the point and very matter of fact. As we wrapped up our interview Proud Papa’s final comments were aimed at the future of his program.

“Teachers need different tools, different ways to access information. I am learning this as I go along. I need to learn more about virtual school so they can

learn online instead of sit and gets. We're still playing with what works. Don't think that because it didn't work this time that it won't work next time."

Rocking Robin's Story

This director has been in the education field since 1988. She began her career as an elementary bilingual educator transitioning to a position as a parent educator working with parents of special population students. She moved into a district level position as a bilingual curriculum specialist and a director of new comer programs for the district. She moved into a role as the Assistant Director, then Director of Bilingual programs which she held from 2001-2015 before moving to her current district as the Director of Professional Development. She has also been a national consultant for Modern Red School House, a comprehensive reform initiative sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. She holds a teaching certification in Pk-8 Bilingual/ESL Education, General Education Pk-8, and mid-management. She is currently working on her doctorate. With her vast array of experience and her detailed professional development framework this director will be referred to as Rocking Robin.

Rocking Robin is a Hispanic female who grew up adjacent to the school district she currently works for. Her parents immigrated to this country from Mexico before she was born and worked as day laborers in California before moving to Texas to live with relatives. Her parents did become U.S. citizens when Kindred Spirit was a young child. She spoke of her family with affection. She has two brothers who are both older. She was the only one of her siblings to receive a college degree; however, she was quick to mention that she was by no means the most successful one. Her two brothers own a

mechanic garage in the same city she currently resides and she says they are quite successful and she added that they recently purchased a food truck. Her parents emphasized hard work and being good citizens. She excelled at school and when accepted into a local university worked with her mother in a restaurant to help pay for college.

The interview with this director occurred over the phone, as we are located in different cities and were unable to coordinate a mutually agreeable time to travel in order to meet face to face. We exchanged email to schedule a phone interview. Rocking Robin was extremely pleasant and gracious in collaborating on an interview time. Rocking Robin began by informing me she was on her cell phone in her car on the way home from work. After exchanging pleasantries, we began our interview.

We began our interview with the director outlining her layered professional development framework which was engineered to occur vertically and horizontally across the district. Rocking Robin explained the framework of her professional development program. As we discussed They have what she called “five pathways”: foundational, continuous, job-embedded, compliance and new teacher orientation.

“Foundational is required for all teachers as part of on-boarding and professional learning. Foundation consists of programs and initiatives which are sustained by my office continually year to year. From foundational the plan moves to Continuous, which is an extension of foundation, but in Continuous the district plan differentiates to meet the needs of various stakeholders as it relates to their roles and responsibilities in the district. Job-Embedded is next, where we deploy

instructional coaches to campuses to support teacher's implementation of district expectations. The next pathway is just in the compliance courses; these are delivered either face to face or online. The final professional learning pathway we have is for newly hired teachers. This is my 'rising star' program. It's new and focuses on developing collective efficacy and deploying specialty teams from the district to support out new teachers."

I began questioning Rocking Robin about professional development in an urban setting. I initiated the conversation by asking "What particular challenges do professional development directors face in urban school districts? How do you meet those challenges?" We discussed the challenges she faces as a director of professional development in an urban school district. She began by equating it to the "whack a mole" game at Chucky Cheese then switched to an example of a machine with cylinders. However, neither of these examples seemed to explain the challenges she faced. She did finally go on to say:

"I think the role of professional learning in such a large district is being charged with bringing coherence and the enduring system wide implementation of expectations, it's challenging trying to foster the conditions for quality professional learning that we all aspire to."

During the course of answering this question, she mentioned that the district professional development department was a relatively new department, only in existence since 2009. She lamented:

“My challenge as a director of a new program is defining what professional development means for our district. I struggle defining the components of what a quality learning experience looks like for urban educators. I struggle with how to respond to the various types of teachers needing assistance, from the new teachers who are unaware of the challenges urban students face to the struggling veteran teacher who needs strategies to address the needs of a changing student population.”

She stressed that it was also challenging to find time to be on campuses to have a real sense of the district and not just sitting in well-meaning meetings discussing everyone’s observations but actually finding first-hand knowledge of how can best support campuses, of course funding and time are always issues.

At one point during our conversation Rocking Robin had to let me end our phone call to focus on the driving. She called me back about fifteen minutes later once she got home to continue our interview. I began again by asking “What particular teaching skills do you consider necessary for teachers need in urban school districts and what steps does the district’s professional development program take to develop those skills?” She paused and said she wanted to think more deeply about her response. After a brief moment, her response to this issue is the Problem of Practice series. It is a professional development series in which teachers bring current classroom concerns to a group of fellow teachers and district experts who help develop an action plan. Rocking Robin also works with teachers to balance the content knowledge they need with the instructional practices that work best with urban students. She called it a ‘fine balancing act’.

She additionally mentioned a need for teachers to know how to plan for and implement differentiated instruction. Her belief is that differentiations is critical to support not just urban students but all students. The way they are currently accomplishing that is by focusing on flexible grouping as a practice and they also model differentiating within the professional learning that they provide to teachers so they can see it in action.

I delved a little deeper asking her to discuss specific elements in her framework to address the needs of an urban district. We have a Professional Learning Advisory Committee which helps us to really narrow our focus, define our focus aligned with presenting needs. What came out of that was the need to really engage students through questioning, cooperative learning structures and quadrant D classroom in terms of rigor and relevance. After a brief pause she began framing her reply:

“I think the challenge would be competing priorities that teachers in the classroom are having to manage in response to increasing challenges associated with the continuum of learning variables. For example, not just isolating students who are English language learners, or served by special education or gifted that’s just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the diversity we are talking about. In the current context we are talking about race, ethnic relations playing out in classrooms, that teachers need support in how to build community in the classroom but yet we have this challenging pace within the system of accountability. How can we build a teacher’s skill set so they feel they are

capable to handle an urban setting? We work with our teachers to help build teacher agency.”

Rocking Robin was generous with her personal time and I thank her for it. She was supportive and said she was nearing the completion of her doctoral course work. She said to let her know if I needed anything else, she would be happy to help. As we ended our conversation we wished each other good luck.

Analysis of Findings

As the participants revealed their experiences as urban professional development directors and discussed the characteristics they felt went into making an effective professional development program, there were three major themes to emerge from the interviews with the directors and two subthemes. The major themes were: (1) teachers as the vehicle for student success; (2) multi-faceted professional programs; and (3) a sense of accountability. The two subthemes to emerge were (1) an emphasis on building teacher confidence in the classroom and (2) a focus on strategic planning.

All four directors indicated that the teacher was a critical factor in the success of the urban student. Each spoke of the necessity of properly preparing teachers to meet the unique needs of the urban student and working to impart a sense of empowerment to their teachers. Three of the four directors held themselves to a high accountable expectation. They believed a direct relationship existed between student success and the success of their professional development programs. Each director had created a professional development program containing multiple opportunities for teachers to learn. It became clear through the data that each urban professional development

program faced the challenge of assisting teachers' grasp of the distinctiveness of ethnic and cultural groups in urban schools and how student behavior is influenced by race, ethnicity, language and social class. The secondary themes complimenting the primary themes of teacher as the vehicle for student success was one of increasing teacher confidence to empower teachers so they felt they had a sense of control in the classroom and strategic and methodical professional development plans for their teachers.

Teacher as a Vehicle for Student Achievement

All directors indicated they designed professional development for the district for the purpose of creating well-rounded urban teachers who know how to meet the needs of all students. Proud Mary stated "You know a teacher is all a kid has, we have to make sure that teacher is the best they can be so that student develops into the best they can be". The only way to produce high quality urban teachers is by creating a high quality professional development program focused on the needs of the urban learner. Each program had components addressing the learning needs of the urban learner, as well as a strong focus on differentiated instruction, their programs aligned with the research of Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams (2011) as well as the research of Nieto & Bode (2012).

Proud Mary's professional development program has an Urban Learner Series which brings in speakers to host seminars with teachers to discuss the needs of the urban student and provide instructional techniques which capitalize of the strengths of the urban learners. Year two of Rocking Robin's new teacher program focuses on understanding students who live in urban contexts. The program is tailored to

understanding the environment of the students and strategies to engage and help advance urban student's achievement. An effective professional development program in an urban school district will concentrate on providing learning opportunities in which teachers learn to use culturally responsive activities, resources, and strategies to plan and implement instruction (Banks, et al., 2001).

Proud Papa was very passionate about designing an urban professional development program which involved addressing the needs of children of poverty and helping teachers understand the cultural and economic gaps which exist between the teachers and the students in order to generate authentic learning experiences for students from urban environments. Proud Papa's philosophy of urban professional development works to combat hegemonic behavior among his teachers as illustrated by his statement, "We can't just sympathize like we've been through their lives, we have to learn to empathize and understand that they've been through things that we can't understand". This points to an understanding of the work around hegemony of Apple (1996) and Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams (2011). The academic achievement of a diverse student population improves when their own cultural and experiential filters are part of instruction (Gay, 2000). In order to increase learning for all students, teachers should be knowledgeable about the social and cultural contexts of learning and utilize culturally responsive teaching methods to increase the achievement of a diverse urban student population (Banks, et al., 2001).

Professional development programs in urban school districts face the challenge of helping teachers understand the complex uniqueness of ethnic and cultural groups in

American public schools and how student behavior is influenced by race, ethnicity, language and social class (Banks et al., 2001). Both Kindred Spirit and Rocking Robin indicated their professional development programs elected to emphasis differentiated instruction as a means of meeting the needs of a diverse student population. But it was Rocking Robin who went a step further in emphasizing specific issues in an urban classroom. She stated "In the current context we are talking about race, ethnic relations playing out in classrooms, that teachers need support in how to build community in the classroom but yet we have this challenging pace within the system of accountability. How can we build a teacher's skill set so they feel they are capable to handle an urban setting? We work with our teachers to help build teacher agency".

Increasing Teacher Confidence

Part of being an effective teacher is believing you can actually teach the students. Each of the four directors spoke in some fashion of building teacher confidence in their own abilities. Their programs are tied closely to Bandura's (1977) work on self-efficacy or the belief in one's abilities to achieve desired outcomes, strongly affects people's behavior, motivation, and, eventually, their success or failure (Bandura, 1997). They all wanted to avoid lowering a teacher's self-efficacy by providing professional development which addressed the challenges a teacher might face in an urban setting.

Proud Mary instituted the Urban Learner Series to help teachers gain skills to feel confident to teach in the urban classroom. Her series worked with teachers to develop instructional strategies which addressed and capitalized on the strengths of urban

students. The Urban Learner Series helped teachers understand the work of Ramirez and Castaneda (1974) regarding the differences between field independent students and field sensitive students and the best methods of designing instruction to maximize learning. Kindred Spirit advocates professional development as a tool to increase teacher confidence, stating that her professional development program is successful when "teachers feel confident, they can do the job, they enjoy doing the job and they stay in the district". A teacher's self-efficacy is their perceived ability to convey knowledge and to influence student behavior, even that of unmotivated or demanding students (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). Guskey (1986) linked a teachers' self-efficacy to their behavior in the classroom and the implementation of instructional change. A teacher's confidence in his or her own ability to nurture a student's potential directly affects that student's motivation to learn (Jackson, 2011). Proud Papa and Rocking Robin have very structured systems for teachers to help develop skill set leading to a boost in confidence. All four programs institute professional development targeting teachers new to urban school settings. Each director indicated the necessity of wanting new teachers to feel prepared to teach in an urban school setting.

Multi-Faceted Professional Development Programs

Each Director indicated they have a multi-faceted professional development program. The participants conveyed a sense of understanding the work of Webb-Johnson, Obiakor & Algozzine (1995) in that they believe professional development will promote culturally responsive teachers acquiring a fundamental comprehension of self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-ideal. The work of the directors helps solidify the

work of Irving & Armento (2001) in that culturally responsive teaching is a significant factor in multicultural education emphasizing the capability of teachers to respond to their students by incorporating features of the students' culture into their instruction. In order for multicultural education to be implemented successfully, institutional changes must be made. These changes include teaching and learning styles, teacher attitudes and perceptions; as well as the goals, norms and culture of the school (Banks & Banks, 2004; Banks, 2015).

Proud Mary indicated her program provides a variety of learning opportunities for teachers from professional development specifically designed for new teachers to differentiated professional development for struggling campuses and high performing campuses. Proud Mary offers learning opportunities which recognizes the unique needs of the elementary and secondary teacher. Her program also integrates specialized learning opportunities for teachers to increase their knowledge and skills to effectively work with the urban learner. She stated "what we do is offer a variety of sessions, at a variety of times so when a teacher is ready we are there". Kindred Spirit, Proud Papa and Rocking Robin created multi-year tiered frameworks of professional development, where each year professional development was prescribed for teachers to build their knowledge and skill base to effectively teach in an urban environment. Rocking Robin had the most specific multi-faceted structure with her "pathways". While Kindred Spirit and Proud Papa had a multi-year differentiated approach, meaning they had professional development packages for the first few years a teacher was in district. This multidimensional identity helps the urban teacher embrace students who may come to

their classrooms with dissimilar experiences, it helps decrease the development of contempt for their students and they begin to see opportunities for growth (Carter, 2003; Gay, 2000; Delpit, 1998). Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes culture as “dynamic, complex, interactive and changing, yet a stabilizing force in human life” (Gay, 2000, p.10).

Each professional development program consisted of a mixture of academic content and instructional best practices. Proud Papa and Kindred Spirit both spoke about the classroom management, relationship building aspects of their professional development programs. Professional development must help teachers gain a thorough understanding of the content they teach, effective instructional strategies for teaching the content, the ways students learn the content, and the problems students typically have learning the content (Guskey, 2003). If a teacher is to impact the lives of all students, it is essential they teach the skills and knowledge increasing the probability of student achievement (Howard, 1999).

Rocking Robin created a professional development series around problems of practice teachers face in the classroom. It is a collegial series during the school year, where teachers examine and find solutions to their challenges. As Goldenberg & Gallimore (1991) point out, professional development for teachers should contain the engagement of teachers in thorough examination of teaching, the day-to-day contextual challenges teachers encounter and reasonable solutions to these challenges. Professional development must be grounded in actual experiences of teachers and in a manner that engages them and allows for collegiality. Allowing for collegiality, or “instructional

conversations” (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991), is essential for a new and productive framework of staff development.

I was not surprised by the findings from my data. I too believe that the primary vehicle for student success is the teacher and the more confident a teacher is in his or her own abilities the greater success he or she will see in the classroom. Teaching is an art, when nurtured and cultivated will blossom into something beautiful and feed the minds of students. We readily recognize that not all students are created equal; however, we are slow to recognize that not all teachers are created equally. Where we have differentiated instruction for students, we should also have differentiated instruction for teachers. We therefore cannot take educating our urban teachers lightly, we must be engaged in a targeted and vigorous pursuit of creating the strongest teaching force, which in turn will create a strong student population.

Sense of Accountability

Proud Mary, Kindred Spirit and Proud Papa all three mentioned standards by which they help themselves accountable. Proud Mary stated "sometimes people think that just the schools do the accountability, that the school has to make it or the department has to make it. I think that one thinks a successful professional development program is that you are accountable, you're accountable to the people that are accessing your work. So, a sense of owning outcomes is very important in terms of professional development". Kindred Spirit expressed "the truth is that whatever scores the students get are our scores, because they are being taught by the adults who we are teaching. We feel like our state report card on student achievement is really the professional

development report card". Proud Papa used professional development attendance to gauge if his program was successful, "if no one comes how do expect to improve teaching and learning in the classrooms". While it might be as pressure filled as high-stakes testing is for teachers, where they fear termination or reassignment for failing to do so (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2007). Holding themselves to a high sense of accountability can only help create stronger programs.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND
FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

At this point, I think it appropriate to review the course of my study. Following the perspective of a naturalistic approach, I embarked on a qualitative research study, in order to understand phenomena in context, that is, the real world setting (Patton, 2005) of an urban professional development director in order to determine the constructed meanings of their professional development programs and how they interpreted success. Recognizing the participants in my study had multiple realities, I selected a qualitative methodology to gain theoretical and professional insights (Freebody, 2004, p.81) and to employ interpretive practices seeking to make sense of the world around me in terms of the experiences of others (Denzin & Lincoln (2011).

In an attempt to understand the professional experiences of four urban professional development directors selected for my study, I began with these research questions as guides:

1. How do professional development directors in urban public school districts describe their professional development program?
2. How do professional development directors in urban public school districts describe professional development factors that impact student achievement in their district?

I examined these questions via in-depth, open-ended and semi-structured interviews with four urban professional development directors. Additionally, the questions were investigated through a collection of data received from observations of the professional development directors and non-verbal cues during the interview process, excluding the one director who was interviewed over the phone. As I gathered and transcribed the data, I compared the directors' data and categorized their responses.

To deepen my understanding of this work, I examined the literature I felt would be pertinent to the study of urban professional development programs. I examined the evolution of teacher training from single occurrence in-service focused on isolated topics to staff development concentrating on teachers becoming experts in content and techniques (Lambert, 1989) which eventually morphed into integrated coaching supporting elements such as, companionship, technical feedback, analysis and adaptation as a teacher integrated their newly acquired knowledge in their classroom (Sparks, 1983) and collaboration with peers establishing strong collegiality among peers (Lambert, 1989). My study revealed that urban districts employ a variety of the professional development activities outlined in the research to grow urban teachers.

Examining major research studies associated with professional development, I reviewed the study conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (2006), which offered a comprehensive picture of staff development in U.S. schools. Wilson & Berne (1999) research touted professional development as the ticket to reform teaching, while Guskey's research (2003) analyzed characteristics of effective professional development and his book *Evaluating Professional Development* proposed five levels of

assessment for evaluating professional development programs (Guskey, 1999). My research also included work by Loucks-Horsley (1989), who proposed five models of professional development. Darling-Hammond's 1997 book, *The Right to Learn* encouraged strong learning opportunities for teachers. Additionally, I examined Hollins' (1990) work regarding professional development for teachers of students of color and the necessity for public school educators to familiarize themselves with the "discrepancy between the school curriculum and the experiences and competencies of the youngsters taught" (Hollins, 1990, p. 1).

One key theme that each program concentrated on was deepening the skill set of the teachers to meet the unique needs of the urban student. Understanding the diversity exhibited in each district's student population was a primary focus of each professional development director's framework. To support the academic achievement of students, the directors advocated professional development addressing the importance and understanding of relationship building between the teacher and the student. Therefore, caring centered education emerged as an element of an effective urban professional development program.

Professional Development Directors' Personal Attributes

The first research question posed was "How do professional development directors in urban public school districts describe their personal attributes that contribute to their program?" As the directors described their programs, two primary themes and one secondary theme emerged: placing emphasis on the teacher as the vehicle for student success, a high sense of accountability with the secondary theme being a strategic

planning ability.

Teacher as the Vehicle for Student Success

We see an alignment with the research on importance of quality teaching and the comments of the participant directors. Unanimously, each of the professional development directors placed an emphasis on building the capacity of the classroom teacher. Teachers are of significant importance to student success. The findings of my study align with research on the importance of quality teachers. Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) found teacher quality influenced differences in student performance more than race, class, or the school the student attended. African American students were found to have almost three times the achievement gains over white students from having a high-quality teacher (Sanders and Rivers 1996). The effects of teacher quality accumulate over the years. A study in Texas indicated a difference of 34 percentile points in reading and 49 percentile points in math (Sanders and Rivers 1996; Jordan, Mendro, and Weerasinghe 1997).

The experiences of the directors also connect to various researchers who espouse the importance of gaining a deep understanding of the content they teach. It is necessary for urban professional development to support teachers in acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the content they teach, best instructional strategies for teaching the content, the methods students learn the content, and the problems students typically have learning the content (Guskey, 2003). For a teacher to influence the lives of all students, it is crucial they teach the skills and knowledge improving the likelihood of student success (Howard, 1999). The directors affirm the research of Firestone, Mangin,

Martinez & Polovsky (2005), who suggest teachers are able to strengthen their knowledge base with professional development that is focused on relevant content matter and is coherently organized. With the NJCLD (2000) stating effective professional development programs integrate the context, the content and the process teachers should use in effective instruction. Professional development must help teachers gain a thorough understanding of the content they teach, effective instructional strategies for teaching the content, the ways students learn the content, and the problems students typically have learning the content (Guskey, 2003).

Proud Mary and Rocking Robin mentioned the importance of soliciting information directly from teachers in order to provide specific professional development. Proud Papa and Kindred Spirit spoke of high teacher turnover necessitating the need to focus on helping teachers improve practice in the urban classroom. Proud Papa and Kindred Spirit also pointed to an emphasis placed on classroom management and relationship building programs to increase the effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom. Proud Papa works to develop strong teachers who have deep understandings of the students they teach. Both Proud Papa and Kindred Spirit align their programs with the relationship components of Caring Centered Education theory of Pang (2010) and the Pedagogy of Confidence by Jackson (2011).

All four directors not only recognized the importance of the teacher in the success of the students, they initiated plans to support the teachers to ensure they were well prepared to face the realities of an urban classroom. The director's embraced the underpinnings of the work of Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams (2011) in that they too

found it vital for teacher's to comprehend that a student's culture does influence the manner in which knowledge is understood and that their students' perspectives function as a source for what they can accept as worthy of learning. This philosophy of urban professional development works to combat hegemonic behavior among teachers and is illustrated by Proud Papa's statement, "We can't just sympathize like we've been through their lives, we have to learn to empathize and understand that they've been through things that we can't understand". This points to an understanding of the work around hegemony of Apple (1996) and Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams (2011).

Since numerous research indicates students in urban, high-poverty areas are consistently served by teachers in need of additional support (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; the U.S. Department of Education, 2013, Jerald & Ingersoll, 2002,) With research also indicating poor and minority students twice as likely to have teachers with less than three years of teaching experience; and districts in which the majority of students were poor or minority were considerably more likely to employ uncertified teachers (National Center for Education Statistics 2000; Darling-Hammond 1999; 2015) , it is promising to witness urban districts making a commitment to properly prepare teachers for the classroom to combat what the research sadly indicates.

Quality teachers are the strongest weapon to narrow the achievement gap and increase student performance. As Nieto & Bode (2012) stated it is critical for teachers to contend with the challenges they can resolve by creating classroom practices and environments focused on helping all students learn to the best of their capabilities. The most powerful tool a school district can use to increase teaching quality is effective

professional development. Most school districts will agree with these two assertions; however, great disparity exists from school district to school district beginning with the philosophical purpose of professional development, how training will be developed, how it will be delivered and by whom and even how teachers will participate. Therefore, additional studies on the perceptions of effective directors of professional development are warranted. For urban professional development directors, as Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams (2011) stated, a major factor they must address is a need of urban professional development programs to address the predisposition of beginning teachers to enter the profession inclined towards deficit thinking as well as exhibiting a low sense of efficacy as a teacher of urban students.

Connected to the work of Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams (2011) and the work of Gay (2000) on culturally responsive teaching, the directors seem to adopt the idea that the best approach to meeting the needs of the urban student is to employ culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching. By touting culturally responsive teaching they recognize the strength of the cultural traditions of diverse ethnic groups, help their teachers construct an array of instructional strategies to address various learning styles, help find ways for students to know and celebrate their own and each other's cultural traditions and integrate multicultural information, resources and materials across subjects (Gay, 2000).

High Sense of Accountability

We are currently experiencing a public school system where teachers and administrators are facing immense pressure to produce high student achievement. As

teachers experience more and more pressure to produce high scores, they will often disregard new professional development instead falling back on what they have always done (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2007). They simply do not have the time for trial and error in the classroom when the stakes are so high. The pressure is elevated for teachers in urban schools to produce high student scores, some fearing termination or reassignment for failing to do so (Heilig & Darling-Hammond, 2007). Guskey (1999) outlined a five level evaluation system for professional development. While the directors did not specifically mention this work, they did have informal ways of evaluating their work. Proud Mary stated she and her team were constantly in schools talking to teachers and principals in order to receive feedback on past work and input on future offerings. She was also keen on owning student outcomes as her own. Proud Papa stated “Are people signing up for it, we’re not doing a good job if no one wants to come. And if no one comes how do expect to improve teaching and learning in the classrooms?”. Kindred Spirit placed a great deal of emphasis on teacher retention data.

While most professional development programs do not have an accountability system as high stakes as the ones for teachers and administrators it is promising to see the findings from my study indicate that the professional development directors are holding themselves to high standards.

Strategic Planning Ability

Each director in this study showed a remarkable ability to produce well thought out strategic plans for their districts. Aligning to the research we find that the most successful professional development programs have clear, specific goals and objectives;

consist of multiple sessions over an extended period of time; allow teachers to learn with and from their colleagues; and provide the opportunity for teachers to practice and adopt new strategies (Joyce and Showers, 2002; Licklider, 1997). Aligning to the research of Banks (2001; 2015), an effective professional development program in an urban school district will focus on providing learning opportunities in which teachers learn to use culturally responsive activities, resources, and strategies to plan and implement instruction. Proud Mary's plan included specifically differentiated professional development for elementary and secondary, employing an embedded model during the school day as part of the secondary plan while elementary used a combination of both traditional after school professional development and embedded support. Proud Mary also had an on-going Urban Learner Series designed to build teacher knowledge to better support the urban learner. While each director indicated their district plans had elements to support the urban learner, Proud Mary was the only director to have a designated program specifically designed and implemented for that purpose.

The strategic nature of the professional development programs created by the four directors cannot be undervalued. Study after study has indicated the need for professional development to be logical and relevant for teachers (Sparks & Richardson, 1997; Killion, 1999). As Wilson & Berne (1999) stated, teacher learning has traditionally been "a patchwork of opportunities" (p, 174). Proud Papa created a tiered system addressing specific content in each tier, such as state mandated compliance training in one tier and specific academic content in another tier. This provided teachers with a strategic plan for their first few years in district. He additionally stated that one of

his primary duties was to create an organized schedule of events to promote cohesion and sustained learning. Kindred Spirit's professional development program consisted of a 3-year new teacher induction program. Her district even went so far as to make it a contractual obligation for all newly hired teachers, regardless of experience level. Each year the induction program contains an element dedicated to support the urban learner. During the first year teachers focuses on students of English Language Learners, year two of a new teacher's prescribed professional development plan focuses on working with students who live in poverty with year three dedicated to differentiation strategies and practice. But it was Rocking Robin who had the most specific and detailed structure of the four directors. Her "five pathway" model was methodical and well organized. Additionally, it was all encompassing, including foundational training, advanced job-embedded training, compliance elements and an induction program characterized by a combination of traditional training and in-class support for implementation. The findings of my study suggest that professional development directors are creating programs which consist of targeted goals they work to achieve through strategic planning of professional development.

As the interviews unfolded each director revealed themselves through their responses. Their personal attributes aided in the development of their district's professional development framework. The directors all made comments related to the teacher as the vehicle for student success, believing in a high sense of accountability and employing strategic planning ability. It is a positive indication that directors are putting so much time and care into the creation of professional development programs, no

longer should we see haphazard programs focused on a myriad of unrelated topics. Their tight alignment of goals and strategies and a focus on developing the whole teacher is what is best for teachers and students.

Professional Development Factors Impacting Teachers

My second research question, "How do professional development directors in urban public school districts describe the professional development factors that impact teachers in their district?" was answered through the rich interview responses. The primary theme to emerge regarding professional development factors impacting teachers was the adoption of multi-faceted professional development program frameworks by each director, coupled with the secondary theme of programs with an emphasis on developing the confidence of the teacher to teach in an urban classroom.

Multi-Faceted Programs

Another area of alignment with the research is in the area of multi-faceted program frameworks. Consistently, each director outlined a multi-faceted approach as a necessity for an effective professional development program. Although each program possessed unique features each of them provided various layers and elements to help grow teachers. For example, Proud Mary had various layers to her program, although they were not formally delineated layers; while Rocking Robin has specifically prescribed levels each teacher was required to progress through. Guskey (2002) advocates for systematic efforts through professional development to help facilitate change in classroom practices, teacher's attitudes and beliefs, and in student achievement. Professional development for urban teachers cannot be one dimensional if

it is to be effective in growing students. Professional development for teachers must concentrate on helping teachers acquire a comprehensive grasp of the academic content, instructional strategies for teaching the content, the ways students learn the content, and the problems students typically have learning the content (Guskey, 2003).

For the urban teacher, it becomes even more important for professional development directors to create multi-faceted programs in order to meet the needs of the urban student. In order to increase learning for all students, teachers should to be knowledgeable about the social and cultural contexts of learning and utilize culturally responsive teaching methods to increase the achievement of a diverse urban student population (Banks, et al., 2001). Developing these skills cannot and will not happen quickly. It is key for teacher's to comprehend that a student's culture does influence the manner in which knowledge is understood and that their students' perspectives function as a source for what they can accept as worthy of learning (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011). Focusing on the work of Ramirez and Castanada (1974) and (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011) on learning styles, the participants professed an alignment with the research regarding a need to focus on differentiation in the classroom.

My findings indicated that each director saw the importance of having various facets to their programs. As in the case of Rocking Robin, her "pathways" progressed from Foundational, Continuous then to Job-Embedded; as well as a separate "pathway" just for new teachers. This indicates an understanding that a teacher's professional development needs change with years of experience. Research has indicated that

effective professional development programs are “dynamic and integrated” (NJCLD, 2000, p. 3) and address the organizational, systemic, and cultural supports that are necessary, the content-specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed; and the way in which knowledge, pedagogy, skills, and attitudes are acquired (NJCLD, 2000). Programs must be aligned to school and district instructional practices and based on standards for student learning, teaching, and professional development (Sparks & Richardson, 1997). Training and activities that are disconnected from school or district goals will not produce results for students or provide the intellectually challenging learning experiences educators need (Killion, 1999). These elements can only be accomplished when teachers participate in professional development that has been designed to provide training on multiple topics. A narrow scope for professional development will hinder the growth of a teacher.

Specifically, for the urban teacher, professional development should include not only academic content, but also essential elements of teaching culturally and ethnically diverse students; such as, which ethnic groups value communal living and cooperative problem solving, the set of rules different ethnic groups' have for how children interact with adults and how this could be exhibited in a classroom setting; and how gender role is perceived in different ethnic groups for implementing fairness initiatives in classroom instruction (Gay, 2000). The programs described by each director included multiple layers in order to meet the needs of a diverse teaching staff. They saw the importance of developing the whole teacher by providing content and non-content related professional development but they also so the validity of developing the teacher over time with multi-

hour requirements, in the case of Kindred Spirit's 35 hours of prescribed professional development for the first 3 years of teacher's contract to the multi-year frameworks of Proud Papa and Rocking Robin. Yoon et al. (2007) proposed 50 to 80 hours of instruction, practice, and coaching, the four directors in this study are also advocated for long-term sustained professional development requirements. No one way was touted at by any of the directors as the best way, but what they all had in common were diverse offerings to appeal and help all teachers.

Teacher Confidence

All of the directors' philosophies aligned with the research on teacher confidence. Acknowledging that the teacher has the biggest impact on student achievement, each director outlined elements embedded in their programs to help develop teachers' knowledge and skills for educating urban students, with one of the intended results being an increase in a teacher's confidence. A teacher's self-efficacy can be influenced by the effort they put into teaching, the goals they set, and their determination and resilience when faced with an obstacle (Bandura, 1977). This is a crucial concept as it relates to urban teacher professional development and the implementation of a new strategy into teaching practice. When examining models of professional development, it is prudent to search for elements embedded in the model which will support and promote teacher self-efficacy, because after all, the chief goal of professional development is to elicit a positive change in the teacher's instructional behavior. According to Jackson (2011) a boost in a teacher's confidence directly affects that student's motivation to learn. Teachers are attracted to professional development

because of their beliefs that “it will expand their knowledge and skills, contribute to their growth, and enhance their effectiveness with students” (Guskey, 1991, p. 382). All but one of the urban professional development programs contained specific features to assist teachers in understanding a diverse student population. Kindred Spirit specifically stated, "the hallmark of a successful professional development program is that the teachers feel confident...". It was Proud Papa who mentioned a specific district initiative, Capturing Kids Hearts, he sponsored to help teachers gain a sense of confidence that they can teach in an urban setting. His work on strong relationships is allied with Pang’s (2010) work on Caring Centered Education, which celebrates the importance of education and the development of citizens who care for others and collaborate to build a compassionate and equitable society. It was Rocking Robin who began working on this during a teacher's induction program. She immediately begins working on teacher agency in order to build confidence and to ultimately retain better teachers. Professional development assists in the development of novice teachers, hones the professional skills of veteran teachers; as well as, enhancing the knowledge, self-confidence and dedication of all professional educators (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. xii).

The findings from my study indicated that each professional development director worked to boost teacher confidence to foster student success. It is through strategic professional development that the confidence of the teacher is built. The necessity of building a teacher's confidence in the classroom is of utmost importance. Teaching in an urban environment has added challenges a teacher has to not only believe they can teach urban students they actually need the tools to do so. The findings of my

study indicate the director's philosophies regarding teacher development aligned with the philosophy of the Pedagogy of Confidence (Jackson, 2011).

Obtaining confidence in their teaching abilities is not the isolated the concern of teachers new to the profession; on the contrary, it is just as important if not more so for the experienced teachers as they encounter new challenges jeopardizing their long held values and beliefs about teaching and learning, especially if these may imply changes to their teaching practices.

Conclusion

Teachers as the vehicle for student success and a sense of accountability were the attributes demonstrated by these professional development directors. Supporting these two attributes was an underlying focus on strategic planning to accomplish their goals. While these attributes were not part of intentional design they all seemed to embrace them in one way or another and were prospering in their endeavors. The personal attributes of the directors would not be impactful without a multi-faceted structure focused on building teacher confidence.

Reflecting on the interviews, I found myself recalling the actual moments these directors shared their stories. The language and expression used to reveal their thoughts and ideas were more than just a plain written transcript representing their thoughts. These words were genuine and crowded with emotion, thus they formed the written embodiment of these urban professional development directors.

Their stories revealed a sound commitment to create strong, meaningful programs for their teachers. The 2002, The American Federation of Teachers report

concluded that high quality professional development was essential to the nation's goal of high standards of learning for every child and that the most important investment school districts can make is to ensure that teachers continue to learn. While no one professional development framework was common among the directors in this study, each director developed their own framework based on what they perceived as best for their teachers. Although they each created something different they all embraced the basic premise of professional development that it should benefit the teacher who in turn benefits the student. Professional development must have a significant impact on what is taught, how it is taught, and the social climate of the school so that students gain knowledge and skill and their ability to learn increase (Joyce and Showers, 2002b). Kennedy (2000) found that successful professional development programs give teachers a greater understanding of how students think and learn and allow teachers to develop their own practices, rather than prescribing routines for them to follow.

The primary purpose of conducting this study was to examine and describe the lived experiences of urban professional directors, of which I am one. My goal was to gain a greater understanding of the necessary elements of creating and maintaining quality professional development to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to help urban students be successful. The directors effectively articulated their vision for their professional development programs and the measures of success used. Consistently, the directors spoke of various professional development activities enacted to help prepare teachers to educate urban students.

I reflected during each interview as I transcribed the conversations. The lived experiences and the voices of these directors motivated me to assess my professional development program and inspired me to try new ideas. I began asking myself if I am doing enough to meet the needs of my teachers. Each interview yielded an idea I found interesting and would like to use for my teachers. The lived experiences of these directors illustrated a strategic mind set coupled with the flexibility to solve emerging issues. The conversations with the directors revealed strong leadership traits such as open communication, organization and a commitment to providing quality experiences for teaches.

Even though each program differed in its structure, the fundamental focus of guaranteeing quality education for all students through the development of teachers was shared by all. I was able to connect with each director on a positive professional level, and with a couple on a personal level as well. As the study progressed, I began to realize that we all shared a common dedication to the importance of life-long learning, which inspired me to stay my course and continue to provide professional development addressing the unique needs of the urban learner.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on the findings of my study:

1. Professional development directors in urban districts should engage in specific and targeted professional development focused on educating culturally and ethnically diverse student populations. The directors revealed they provided some elements of culturally relevant professional development

to their teachers; however, the depth and complexity of the professional development remained unclear.

2. Professional development directors need to have opportunities to collaborate with colleagues from other urban school districts for the purpose of exchanging best practices and working through problems of practice. The exchange of ideas could work to strengthen urban professional development programs across the board.
3. An organized system for the director to monitor and support the implementation of professional development is needed in order to assist teachers with developing their instructional skill set. The directors indicated that implementation was a challenge they faced. Once teachers leave the professional development session, the director had to rely on campus personnel to monitor the implementation of new learning.
4. A specific model for urban professional development should be followed by urban school districts in order to ensure that the needs of all students and teachers are met.

Urban Professional Development Model

I propose the following model for urban professional development for use by professional development directors in urban school districts. The model applies to the professional development of teachers and administrators and includes the following components:

1. **Academic Focus: Professional development for teachers should be data-driven based where students currently are academically and specific academic and performance goals they are to attain in the future as well as concrete strategies to help them achieve these goals (Sparks, 2002; Killion (1999). Professional development should help teachers gain a deep understanding of the content they teach aligned to the standards and curriculum the teaches use (NJCLD, 2000; American Federation of Teachers, 2002; Killion, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).**
2. **Multicultural Education Focus with Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices: Present professional development that provides opportunities for teachers to gain understanding and appreciation for a culturally, linguistically and economically diverse student population (Banks, 2009; Gay, 2000). Training should address the causes of and strive to eliminate deficit thinking among teachers (Carter, Webb-Johnson & Williams, 2011; Nieto & Bode, 2012), bring awareness to and supply strategies to suppress hegemonic practices (Apple, 1996), provide concrete instructional strategies for differentiated instruction to address the differences among field independent students and field sensitive students (Ramirez & Castanada, 1974) and methods of seamlessly integrating aspects of students' culture into classroom practices (Irving & Armento, 2001). The emphasis should be on providing concrete strategies which tie directly into the content the teacher teaches so they are able to see relevancy (Kelleher, 2003).**

3. **Guided Reflection Time:** For a teacher to improve classroom practices dedicated and organized reflection time must be afforded on a regular basis. Offering them structured collaborative time with peers or individually with help solidify new learning (Darling-Hammond, 2015). This allows teachers to closely examine their craft and make adjustments to better meet student needs. It is important for the reflection to be guided with structure so the teacher has focus for this time and can elicit better conclusions regarding instructional practices.

Administrators can assist with this practice by dedicating and supporting collaborative time and allowing flexibility to modify instruction (Klingner, 2004).

4. **In-Class Coaching to Support Implementation:** Providing dedicated classroom coaches to assist teachers with the implementation of new learning will help facilitate changes in classroom practices (Darling-Hammond, 1995; 2015). These coaches should be well versed in multicultural education theory and strategy, possess in depth knowledge of a variety of instructional strategies and have a thorough understanding of coaching techniques. Coaching support provides an objective voice for the teacher and a colleague to collaborate with for instructional changes.

5. **Sustained Long-Term Focus:** Research indicates that somewhere between 50 and 80 hours of instruction, practice and coaching in order for a teacher to attain mastery (Yoon, et al., 2007). It is advantageous for the professional development director in an urban school district to determine their long term focus and then

stay with it for a sustained period of time. This allows teachers to gain adequate knowledge and become comfortable with using the new learning as well as begin to see changes in student behavior and achievement. Obtaining 50 professional development hours over a nine-month school year would equate to approximately 5.5 hours of training, coaching and guided reflection each month.

6. **Formal Program Evaluation:** Each urban professional development director should develop and implement a custom evaluation instrument for their professional development program. Guskey's (1999) model is just one model for evaluating professional development. His model includes but is not limited to looking at participant reaction to the professional development, how the participants used their newly acquired knowledge and improvements in student learning. In order to determine future actions an evaluation method must be implemented by urban professional development directors.

Implications for Future Research

1. A vast amount of research exists on professional development; however, there remains a gap in the research regarding the individuals who create and implement district professional development programs, specifically in urban districts. More research would be valuable to examine the qualities and philosophies of these directors in order to improve professional development systems.

2. A mixed-methods study regarding an examination of the variations in explicit classrooms actions and student responses between the teachers in each of the four participant districts.
3. It would be interesting to compare and contrast the structure and guiding philosophies of urban, sub-urban and rural professional development directors. Do they approach and value learning for teachers the same?
4. An examination of professional development evaluation methods in urban school district would aid in determining effective methods for determining if particular approaches are effective.

It is my belief that continued learning is key to success not just in teaching but in all professions. I hope that this study sheds light on the individuals who are charged with developing and executing urban professional development programs and will offer insight to improving those programs. This study illustrates that the directors of urban professional development programs work to provide various opportunities for teachers to grow in their craft and they care very deeply about helping foster student achievement through teacher development. It is my sincere hope that leaders in urban school districts benefit from this study and provide support to the efforts of professional development directors.

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APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction:

The information you share in this interview will be kept confidential. You may be identified in the study in a way that will not reveal your individual identity such as, “a professional development director” as a result you are encouraged to be honest with your responses. Honest responses will be the most beneficial in attempting to determine elements used to create effective professional development programs for educators. I will be recording the interview in order to try to make sure that an accurate record is maintained of your view point. I will also take a field notes for the same purpose.

Do you agree to all me to record the interview? Yes _____ NO _____

Interview Details

Date and Location of Interview: _____

1. Please outline your educational and career path that brought you to your current position.
2. How long have you been in your current position, supervising professional development?
3. Please describe professional development in your district. (When and how often
a. it occurs, types of activities/speakers involved, etc.)
4. What particular challenges do professional development directors face in urban school districts? How do you meet those challenges?
5. Much of the literature I have reviewed indicates teachers in urban school districts face unique challenges. What factors do you consider unique to teaching in an urban school district and how does professional development in your district meet those needs?
6. What particular teaching skills do you consider necessary for teachers need in urban school districts and what steps does the district’s professional development program take to develop those skills?
7. What do you consider to be a successful professional development program? How do you assess if the professional development program is successful?
8. Is there anything else about professional development that I didn’t ask you that you would like to share?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Investigator: Advisor	Susan Pelezo	Dr. Norvella Carter,
	Cell: (281) 620-2515	(281) 550-5152
	Work: (281) 891-6730	(979) 845-8382

The purpose of this study will be to investigate urban school districts' professional development programs and to examine the program director's descriptions of the effective learning experiences for teachers in an urban educational setting. The researcher will seek to capture the essence of urban school district's professional development programs and the participants' learning experiences regarding the elements of effective district professional development programs with the voices of the participant district directors.

The study shall be conducted in greater Houston, Texas metropolitan area, with the length of each interview (approximately two) ranging from one to three hours.

I, _____,
understand that:

(1) The audio taped and written information obtained during this project will be used to write a case study which will be read by the respondents, the class instructor, and one class member who will conduct a check of the data. The case study will not be disseminated to others without the written permission of the participants involved in this project.

(2) All participants' names will remain confidential and no risks, benefits or compensation will be involved.

(3) I am entitled to review the case study before the final draft is written and negotiate changes with the investigator.

(4) I may withdraw (with no penalty) from this study at any time by speaking to the investigator and all data collected from me will be returned immediately.

(5) Audio tapes and interview information will be retained indefinitely by the investigator and will be stored in a secured file cabinet.

"I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, I can contact the Institutional

Review Board through Dr. Glen A. Laine, Office of Vice President for Research at (979)845-8585.”

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature of Subject: _____ Date: _____

Principle Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

VERBAL/EMAIL RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello, my name is Susan Pelezo, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture at Texas A&M University. I would like to conduct a research study with my advisor, Dr. Norvella Carter, a professor in the department, on urban school districts' professional development programs and to examine the program director's descriptions of the effective learning experiences for teachers in an urban educational setting. The title of my study is "An Examination of Professional Development Programs in Four Urban Public School Districts". I will be analyzing your responses to a series of questions in order to determine the elements leading to effective urban professional development programs.

The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss individual and group findings and will not include personal identification information. Research records will be securely stored and only the researcher and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records.

You will be required to sign an informed consent form showing that you are willingly participating in this study and will allow your data to be collected and used for research purposes. Your participation will greatly benefit the research community and professional educators by identifying the elements which contribute to effective professional development programs in urban school districts.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this study and your participation in it. Do you think you would be interested in participating in this study?

Thank you,
Susan Pelezo
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APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION CHART

	Proud Mary	Kindred Spirit	Proud Papa	Rocking Robin
Years as Professional Development Director	3 years	9 years	3 years	2 years
Ethnicity	African-American	White	White	Hispanic
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female
Highest Education Level Attained	Master's Degree	Doctorate Degree	Doctorate Degree	Master's Degree
Teaching Certification(s)	Elementary Generalist	Secondary Science	Elementary Generalist	Pre-Kindergarten-8th Bilingual/ESL Education and General Education Pk-8
Participant Educational Background	Urban	Urban	Sub-Urban	Sub-Urban