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**REEXAMINING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH
SUCCESSFUL PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS**

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**REEXAMINING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH
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by

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Treatise

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of Texas at Austin
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2014

Dedication

To God, who has blessed me beyond what I could have ever imagined.

To my dedicated father, Basilio Garcia (BG) Renaud, retired principal, who laid the path of educational leadership, providing me with the opportunity to shadow him at the age of eight. I have picked up his list of duties, administrator radio and passion for public education!

To my mother, Dora Avila Renaud, who devoted 55 years of service teaching elementary students throughout Dallas and South Texas.

Finally to Dr. Lombardi, my mentor and dear friend, whose unwavering support and belief, has given me the confidence to conquer the world.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this study was made possible by the support of many individuals. However, special recognition must be made to my committee chairman, Dr. Mark A. Gooden, whose guidance and counsel went beyond the confines of my treatise.

A special thanks to my committee members, Drs. Valenzuela, Good, Lombardi, and Olivarez: The time and effort you spent with me to ensure my success will not be forgotten.

This work would not have been possible without Drs. Michael Hinojosa, Denise Collier, and Donna Micheaux, who believe the importance of building leadership within your own people. In addition, I appreciate the support these three offered throughout the Program with their encouragement, inspiration, and leadership! The efforts that were made to improve student achievement and increase instructional leadership were on the cutting edge. I especially treasure the valuable mentorship that I received from Dr. Collier.

To a remarkable leader, Dr. James Ponce, who always believed in me, your decision-making process of asking “is it best for the kids” will forever be engrained into my leadership style.

Finally, to Dr. Olivarez, whose wisdom and commitment to instructional leadership have built the foundation for superintendents across the nation.

Reexamining Professional Development through Successful Principals' Perceptions

Publication No: _____

Dora Louise Renaud, Ed.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

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Principal professional development is vital to the field of education because the principal is expected to be the instructional leader of a school. Even though principals do not provide instruction directly to students, their instructional leadership practices can greatly affect teacher practice and student learning. This descriptive case study examined the variety of professional development models created in Texas ISD (a pseudonym) to determine if one model is more effective than another in enhancing job performance. This study highlighted the principals' perceptions of a variety of components within professional development such as the delivery, design, how the learning needs are met, and how they helped enhance principal job performance.

This qualitative case study design was seated within the constructs of Donald L. Kirkpatrick's (2006) Four-Levels of Learning and Evaluation Model that was utilized as the analytical tool to frame the initial and heuristic questions for the principal questionnaire and interviews. This Model guided the data collection, categorization, and emergent themes. Specifically, this study investigated the following: (a) aspects of principal professional development that enhance job performance as an instructional

leader, (b) types of delivery and the impact it has on instructional leadership, and (c) comparisons of delivery models to identify the most effective.

Ultimately, the findings of this study seek to provide supporting information to researchers and district leaders as they plan, design, and implement future effective principal professional development. The study focused on a group of nine successful principals in a Texas urban school system identified as Texas ISD. Examining the delivery models added to the body of literature regarding how to create effective principal professional development that helps principals enhance jobs performance and offer districts an alternative to the costly price of professional development. In Texas ISD, principal professional development was used as the vehicle for scale and sustainability of districtwide educational reform. In addition, the professional development assisted with K-12th grade vertical articulation of the school system's curriculum and educational plan.

To analyze the impact of professional development on instructional leadership practices, questionnaires were given and interviews conducted in which individual perceptions of successful principals in Texas ISD were conducted.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

National attention on the performance of principals in public schools has increased a growing interest in principal professional development as a means to change leadership practices to increase and sustain student achievement. Webster-Wright (2009) defined professional development as professionals learning in a way that shapes their practice from a diverse range of practices, from formal professional development programs, through interactions with work colleagues, to experiences outside work, in differing combinations and permutations of experiences. Leadership is widely regarded as a key factor in accounting for differences in the success with which schools foster the learning of their students (Leithwood, 2004). Yet, with the wide variety of principal professional development available, districts have a hard time deciding the most impactful on developing principals' instructional leadership practices to enhance their job performance. Various educational organizations do not achieve projected results linking professional development to effective instructional leadership, thus failing to produce a positive learning experience, an increase in intellectual capability, and inevitably implementation of new learning on the campus.

Background of the Case Study

In 2005, the Board of Trustees of a large Texas urban school system referred to as Texas ISD in this study, selected a new superintendent to guide the district through major educational reforms and transformations. This board took the action in response to a 10-year period of lack of communication and instability between district governance and superintendent leadership. This period also coincided with the introduction of major

education institution accountability and educational reform measures brought on by the U.S. Department of Education and the Texas Education Agency. In response to Texas ISD's overall history of instability and condition of struggling student performance, the new superintendent, guided by a well-delineated entry plan, proceeded to develop a major comprehensive and strategic long-range plan. This plan significantly altered the existing organizational structure of Texas ISD and redefined the mission of the board of trustees, central office, and campus-level instructional delivery and support systems.

The Board of Trustees participated with five other Texas urban school systems in a year-long leadership process called Reform Governance in Action (RGA), led by the Center for the Reform of School Systems. The board leadership work sponsored by The Meadows Foundation, focused on the development of administrators to improve poor performing schools. As part of this process, the Board of Trustees commenced a significant review and refinement of all Board policies. It was through policy setting that the Board of Trustees established the district's mission and vision and set the course for attainment of the vision. In addition to refinement of current policies, the Board, as part of the RGA process, adopted a series of "reform" policies. Most recently, the Board adopted a Theory of Action policy. During the RGA policy development training, the Board examined major educational theories of action—the ways in which most urban districts choose to lead and manage their work toward the achievement of their mission and goals. Through the RGA process, the Board of Trustees clarified the theory of action and adopted it into policy. The Texas ISD theory of action was one of managed instruction combined with earned performance empowerment, or Managed Instruction

with Earned Empowerment (MIEE). Texas ISD believed that MIEE combined the efficacy of an instructional management system with the dynamics of performance empowerment that leads to principal autonomy. MIEE districts set standards (academic content, graduation/promotion, business process, etc.), have tight accountability systems, centralize formative and/or summative assessments, and have data-driven decision-making systems. The percentage of principals who had earned principal autonomy was much lower than half of all the principals in the district in 2005. Since then, there existed a critical need for principal professional development that focused on instructional leadership practices so that principals were able to earn empowerment and reach an autonomous level. Several studies strongly suggest that schools are more successful when a principal is autonomous in order to be able to make the critical decisions for their own campus. Waters and Marzano (2006) argued that principal autonomy is positively correlated with higher student achievement.

In Texas ISD, as in other MIEE school systems, the central office accepts responsibility for directly managing the district's core business, teaching, and learning, within flexible parameters that balance accountability with empowerment according to the needs and performance of individual schools. Texas ISD holds their core work of teaching and learning to a high level of expectations and provides earned empowerment options for high-performing schools. This MIEE theory of action formed the foundation for the design and delivery of Texas ISD's education plan. The Texas ISD plan outlined the roadmap for implementing the MIEE theory of action and the education plan that

included a strong focus on the improvement of principal professional development. This roadmap was known throughout the district as “The Road to Broad.”

The Texas ISD education plan created an expectation that all students experience a college-ready curriculum for PK-12 and that all students be prepared to succeed in college and the workplace. Three key strategies from the plan related directly to principal professional development:

1. Using data and student work in both formative and summative processes to inform instructional decision-making, determine appropriate interventions/extensions, and support student self-management of learning.
2. Building instructional capacity through engaging in tiered professional development and campus-based professional learning communities focused on the District’s curriculum and its enactment in the classroom.
3. Providing tiered supports for schools that are underperforming, while allowing performance-based autonomy for the highest performing schools.

The rationale for the well delineated secondary education plan ensured that all students were college and workforce ready upon graduation. In addition, the plan developed an articulation of Texas ISDs vision with clarity and created a roadmap for the secondary schools.

The organizational structure districtwide for the principals in 2005 was divided into seven geographical areas led by its own Area Superintendent and a team that consisted of an academic facilitator, area coordinator, instructional specialists, and administrative assistants. Each area included approximately four high schools along with

the schools that fed into them that included approximately 7 middle schools and 20 elementary schools. Each of the Area Superintendents had an area office near their respective schools, which did not allow for much collaboration between area offices. This was significant because each area had planned their own professional development for their principals, which led to a vague vision and mission for the district.

One major change in the central office was the welcoming of a new Chief Academic Officer and shortly after followed a new Chief of School Leadership. The two had the same belief system of pedagogy and practice that led to the practice of aligning core beliefs between the two divisions of Teaching and Learning and School Leadership. Together they began the refinement of systems and practices to make the education plan come to life. One sound practice that both Chiefs agreed on was that it would take the two divisions working side-by-side to reach scale and sustainability. One system that was created at the time was the Joint Division Roles and Responsibilities Co-Accountability for Supporting Teaching and Learning (Table 1). This system allowed for transparency and clear expectations. The list was not intended to be inclusive, but illustrative of the roles and responsibilities. One final point that made this partnership of the divisions successful was regularly scheduled meetings throughout the year on the districtwide calendar. This provided for non-interrupted time for collaboration. The Superintendent of Texas ISD had a vision for principal professional development:

Great principals can have a significant impact on student achievement. Professional development that builds the instructional leadership capacity of the principal is the best lever to move the needle for academic achievement for students in a robust, substantive and sustained manner. It has to be a priority for any superintendent.

Table 1. Joint Division Roles and Responsibilities

Instructional Services/Learning Division	Interaction	School Support Services/Leadership Division
Design, deploy, support and improve curriculum & instructional programs,	Unit of purpose	Lead implementation of the curriculum & instructional program
Review, evaluate, and improve curriculum & instructional programs	Clear Expectations	Monitor, evaluate, facilitate, compliance, school organization, on-going professional learning, school climate/culture
Design/facilitate professional development for teachers, principals, and instructional support staff	Content and Pedagogy-focused professional development	Campus Instructional Leadership Team (teacher leaders)
Lead/facilitate the district improvement planning process	Communication	Lead for campus principal appraisal-growth and development
Lead/facilitate community involvement & support in district wide instructional initiatives	Collaboration	Lead resolutions for parental concerns/calls
Lead/facilitate approval process for district wide instructional initiatives	Feedback	Lead overall efficacy of school operations
	Improvement	Lead approval process for various school operations

In 2005, during the RGA era, Texas ISD implemented the institute model as the main principal professional development delivery model. There were approximately 300 participants in one room that included 220 sitting principals, 6 principal supervisors, core content directors, Executive Directors, and Chiefs from Teaching and Learning and the School Leadership division. These principals were required to attend these sessions three

times a year: (a) at the beginning of the school year, (b) mid-year, and (c) at the end of the school year.

The organizational design for the district was divided into seven quadrants covering every corner of the city. Principal professional development continued in each of the district's seven areas. Each area was expected to plan follow-up sessions for the principals to be able to bridge their new learning from the district professional development. Most but not all areas provided follow-up sessions that were connected to the district institute session. As a result, there was a perception that the Area Offices were silos that provided a disconnect of the District vision, mission, and educational plan. In 2008, due to lack of communication, the seven Area Offices were transformed into four Elementary Learning Communities and three Secondary Learning Communities. The Superintendent reconfigured the organizational chart within the district when he strategically relocated the offices of the Learning Community teams within the same building to allow for stronger collaboration and a push for professional learning communities.

A strong partnership of civic and business leaders working together with district leaders was purposefully being built with one major goal in common: to promote student achievement. During this period, part of the community partnerships consisted of several philanthropic organizations beginning with the Foundation for Community Empowerment, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, and the Broad Foundation. Each foundation had a critical role in the improvement of the Educational Reform Plan of Texas ISD. The services provided

ranged from redesigning systems and processes to honoring school systems that close the gap between high and low economic groups. Other partners in the Educational Reform Plan consisted of a commission that included approximately 60 leaders from businesses, higher education, civic and faith-based communities, as well as city and state officials. One of the main purposes of the partnerships was to get appropriate support for principals. The partnerships proved to be successful because of achievement gaps in student populations that had narrowed greatly.

One of the first steps was to create support systems for a change in the district culture. With a new pedagogy came resistance from principals who had not earned autonomy, who had limited access to instructional materials, and who had access to consultants providing professional development. Committees and councils consisting of a variety of stakeholders were developed to advise and assist the Chief Academic Officer to resistance by including principals and teachers on the committees in the decision-making process of implementing districtwide initiatives.

More students graduated from high school in 2010 in Texas ISD than at any time since the mid-1980s. The College Readiness indicators from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Practices (TAKS) showed gains that surpassed passing rate gains by close to three percentage points. Subject areas on track to meet 2009-2010 targets were reading, writing and social studies. The percentage of Exemplary and Recognized schools was greater than 58%. Based on only the TAKS indicators, the number of academically unacceptable schools decreased from 21 to 14.

These statistics were still not good enough for Texas ISD. There were still several concerns and gaps that needed to be addressed. The silos between the seven areas had transformed into Learning Communities in an effort to connect principal professional development to the educational plan.

Statement of the Problem

Public schools are spending about \$20 billion annually on professional development practices (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008). There has been a relationship between principal professional development and instructional leadership practices that many district leaders strive to improve. The key assumption is that principal professional development will have a positive impact on instructional leadership practices. Various studies have investigated the relationship between principal professional development and instructional leadership practices. The traditional approach to principal professional development has been (a) external consultants planning the learning, (b) disconnected practices from the district vision, (c) insufficient follow-up, (d) disconnected needs of the campus, and (e) outdated researched-based practices. Furthermore, there has been a continuous need to improve the relationship between professional development and instructional leadership practices to help principals perform more effectively. Professional development has historically been disconnected to principals' individual learning needs—costly and lacking in a variety of delivery options.

Purpose of the Study

This study brought a deeper understanding of the critical role of the principal professional development to help principals do their jobs more effectively. Furthermore,

this study sought to determine if one model was more effective than another in enhancing principal job performance. Specifically, this study highlighted a variety of professional development delivery models to enhance principal performance to deliver the learning on their respective campuses. The term models used in this study is not related to any formal research but rather specific to what principals from Texas ISD participated in.

Section 2112 from Title II-A of the No Child Left Behind (H.R. 1 [107th]: Congress: No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2001) provided a description of how the State Educational Agency encouraged the development of proven, innovative strategies to deliver intensive professional development programs that are both cost-effective and easily accessible, such as strategies that involve delivery with technology, peer networks, and distance learning.

Research Questions

1. What aspects of professional development do principals identify as being critical to enhancing their job performance as an instructional leader?
2. Based on principal perceptions, does the type of professional development delivery impact instructional leadership?
3. Which delivery model did the principals perceive to be most effective and why?

Professional Development Theoretical Framework

This case study is grounded in Kirkpatrick's (2006) Four-Levels of Learning and Evaluation Model. Kirkpatrick's (2006) model measures: (a) reactions to the learning experience (Level 1); (b) increase to intellectual capability (Level 2); (c) application of

the new learning (Level 3); and (d) overall principal effectiveness (Level 4). For a full and meaningful evaluation of learning, each level is measured by principal responses from interviews and questionnaires. Kirkpatrick's (2006) structure includes a description of the type of evaluation and its characteristics, examples of evaluation tools and methods, and relevance and practicality.

Significance of the Study

Scientifically based research that links professional development opportunities to professional growth in urban principals is almost absent in literature (Nicholson, Harris-John, & Schimmel, 2005). This study offers leaders in urban school systems an opportunity to replicate the aspects and delivery of principal professional development for principals in their respective school systems. Furthermore, the study offers an avenue for cost-effective and timesaving professional development. Finally, the principal perceptions provide an opportunity for district leaders to create professional development that best meets the learning needs of principals.

Overview of the Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive research design for a qualitative case study to address the research questions. The case study was especially suitable for learning more about a little known or poorly understood phenomenon, by the employment of as many variables as possible and the triangulation of multiple sources of evidence (Leedy & Olmrod, 2001; Merriam, 1998, Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). As Merriam (1998) suggested, the current study employed a descriptive case study to develop a rich, "thick" description of the actions taken by successful principals that were perceived as critical to the

transformation of the delivery of principal professional development for all principals in Texas ISD.

This study positioned the design within the framework of Kirkpatrick's (2006) Four-Levels of Learning Evaluation Model. The framework measured the training and learning of the professional development design. Based on the results from the questionnaires and interviews, this study identified the critical areas that are necessary to provide professional development that meets the learning needs of principals to help them enhance their job performance. Finally, this study depicted the types of principal professional development delivery models implemented in Texas ISD from 2005-2011.

Assumptions

The first assumption was that principal professional development was used in all urban school districts. The second assumption was that when professional development learning needs were met, then instructional leadership practices would improve. The third assumption was the belief that recent research-based practices affected principal learning. The fourth assumption was the delivery model of professional development had a positive impact on principal job performance.

Definitions of Terms

Instructional leader. Instructional leader is defined as a principal of a school whose main purpose is the practice of teaching and learning for all stakeholders such as teachers, parents, students, and themselves. Instructional leaders reflect on their language and consider the messages about teaching and learning that are implied by the statements and questions that are asked. They use tools that reflect on teaching and learning and

those that help teachers generalize ideas across a set of lessons. Nelson and Sassi (2000) argued that instructional leaders understand that classrooms functioning to help students construct subject-matter knowledge, knowledge of pedagogical process, and content knowledge must be fused.

Instructional leadership practices. Instructional leadership practices are common to an instructional leader, such as being able to appropriate data and other vital information to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses and move resources to better address them. Another instructional leadership practice is setting up structures to have teachers and other school leaders visit classrooms as a group to find common trends from the observations of teachers and students. Most importantly, was creating structures to provide time for teachers to have deep discussions to improve their practice. Fink and Resnick (2001) have identified five core instructional leadership practices that include: (a) nested learning communities, (b) principal institutes, (c) leadership for instruction, (d) peer learning, and (e) individual coaching. The Chief Academic Officer of Texas ISD specifies instructional leadership as:

Instructional leadership is the core work of the principal. Despite the competing pressures inherent in the day-to-day management of schools, great principals carve out the time and build the structures and systems required to lead the instructional program. And districts that effectively lead, support, and build principals' capacity to do this work can move the needle in student achievement.

Principal professional development delivery models. To provide clarity, principal professional development delivery models are defined as structures that are created by Texas ISD district leaders to develop principals to not only become more focused on teaching and learning, but to also know how to improve the quality of

teaching. Delivery models include specific learning conditions consisting of structures, practices, and content to develop principals' instructional leadership practices. Delivery types are institutes, vertical articulation, modules, and virtual PLCs. Characteristics of the delivery types include: (a) self-selecting the topic that connects to campus improvement plan, (b) self-selecting the time of session that is convenient to the learner's schedule, (c) learning with colleagues who are in one feeder pattern, (d) viewing video format to revisit learning if needed, and (e) learning along with campus leadership staff.

Successful principals. The concept of successful principals is used as the focus group in this study. This group served as a “think tank” to the Superintendent of Schools, on a host of items that impact student achievement from key departments within the district. Successful principals are given the opportunity to provide direct feedback and input to current proposed district initiatives, with a continual focus on leadership development. This group consisted of 27 comprehensive and magnet elementary, middle, and high school principals. Texas ISD provided an annual stipend to the identified principals. For this study, the participants were middle and high school principals. Texas ISD defined successful principals who met at least 50% on a school climate survey, performance targets, and demonstrated leadership with fellow principals within a set of feeder schools. The nine participating principals in this study did meet this specific criteria mentioned previously.

Theory of action. For the purpose of this study, a theory of action provided a framework to align goals, policies, strategic plans, budgets, and administrative actions to the Board's mission and vision for the district. The concept of a theory of action

originated by Argyris and Schon (1974) is considered to be a cognitive-behavioral management theory to help leaders produce a new way of thinking and acting in the real-world.

Vertical articulation. This principal professional development delivery model assisted with the K-12 vertical articulation of the district's curriculum and educational plan. Until this delivery type was put into place, only horizontal articulation occurred. In addition, this purpose of the delivery type was to strengthen the academic achievement in a feeder pattern that consists of elementary and middle school campuses in Texas ISD that feed into one particular high school. Specific intentional actions occurred in each of the delivery types that are highlighted later in the paper.

Limitations of the Case Study

While the case study is vital to advancing knowledge about professional development structures and practices, there are limitations to the design. According to Merriam (1998), case studies are limited by the ability of the researcher to: (a) devote the necessary resources to obtain a rich, thick description of the phenomena; (b) rely on his or her own instincts and abilities throughout most of the research effort; and (c) suspend personal bias.

The limitations associated with this study included the following:

1. The breadth and depth in the professional development of the successful principals included many variables beyond the resources of this researcher.
2. The recollections and perceptions of the participants may or may not have been accurate.

3. Although this researcher made every attempt to suspend personal biases, her close proximity, direct involvement, and stature with the successful principals may have precluded objectivity on her own account as well as with the participation of the study.

Delimitations

The study did not attempt to predict success of the Texas ISD. The study did not determine or evaluate the preparation and training for teachers. In addition, the study was limited to successful principals who have participated in the professional development in Texas ISD from Fall 2005 until Spring 2011.

Overview of the Remaining Chapters

The remaining chapters identify the current research in professional development for sitting principals that was reviewed from a variety of scholarly sources, a description of the methodology that is used to measure the perceptions of the selected principals, findings of the study, and an overview of the research.

Summary

This qualitative case study focused on the delivery of principal professional development, their learning needs, and the impact it has on principals to perform their jobs more effectively in Texas ISD. The ultimate goal of principal professional development is for the principal to lead the learning on his/her campus. DuFour and Berkley (1995) defended that the success of school improvement efforts will depend on the professionals within those schools. They go on to argue that principals can create conditions that ensure professional growth is part of school culture. Principals who

function as staff developers not only ensure that collaboration takes place, but they also ensure that the focus of that collaboration is teaching and learning.

There is a great need to critically assess and evaluate the effectiveness of professional development to meet the needs of all principals. This study utilized a tight design grounded in Kirkpatrick's (2006) theory of Four-Levels of Training and Evaluation used semi-structured interviews and closed format questionnaires. This study was motivated by a lack of information regarding professional development and will provide information that will assist researchers and practitioners in the area of principal professional development as it pertains to a major urban systemic change effort.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature concerning principal professional development for sitting principals in urban education. This review is not intended to examine all research related to principal professional development but rather the objectives of this review are to focus on relevant research that helps identify the significance of the delivery and a guide to identify how the learning needs of principals are met in professional development sessions. Given the number of educational reform efforts that incorporate leadership development for principals, there is a need to understand principal professional development as it pertains to major urban systemic change efforts. In order to provide background and information for the study, the method validation for the researcher began with a plethora of research articles that were collected, read, and highlighted. Key points were placed on sticky notes. The researcher categorized the sticky notes into broad themes on large charts. The charts were numbered one through four. The researcher numbered each pertinent article from one to four. Impactful quotes were added to the bottom of the charts. Supporting themes appeared and were added. The researcher unveiled four bodies of literature from the following themes: (a) school reform to empower principals, (b) elements of effective school leadership, (c) implications of district practices on school leadership, and (d) professional development that impacts instructional leadership practices.

The review of literature uncovered some additional supporting trends regarding principal professional development. There were three studies on theoretical frameworks

for principal professional development. Eight studies focused on principal professional development models. There were eight empirical studies found that revealed policies and school reforms in urban education. Eight of the studies focused on leadership practices and protocols that were identified in principal professional development. The earliest study was published in 1983 and uncovered instructional leadership practices. Many of these studies were part of the Wallace Foundation research. In addition, the literature review established a definition of the Instructional Leader, provided the history of principal professional development, stated reasons for the need of improvement, explored the practices needed to create a principal professional development, and examined delivery options.

School Reform to Empower Principals

President Obama declared in the Executive Summary of the *Race to the Top* (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), “It’s time to stop just talking about education reform and start actually doing it. It is time to make education America’s national mission” (p. 2). This powerful statement from the President summed up the most significant theme from the literature, which was education reform. In addition, accountability and standards appeared to be essential themes as well that evolved from the literature regarding School Reform to Empower Principals.

Lawmakers’ voices were well heard throughout the nation during the 2009 legislative session in regards to professional improvement of education leaders. Measures were enacted across 23 states to make these critical improvements. One competitive grant that came out of the 2009 legislation was the federal grant known as The Race to the Top

(U.S. Department of Education, 2009) program that added up to a \$4.35 billion fund for improving a variety of education practices. The grant was designed to encourage and reward states that were creating the conditions for education innovation and reform: achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers. The Texas Commissioner of Education at this time left it up to the school districts to make the decision whether to apply for the grant. The *Race to the Top* Program Executive Summary under Section D.2, Great Teachers and Leaders, Improvement of Principal Effectiveness, was identified as the central focus (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

There was a new heightened interest in leadership development as a major reform strategy that had been largely overlooked in various reform movements from the past two decades. Educators have long considered professional development to be their right—something they deserve as dedicated and hardworking individuals. But legislators and policymakers have recently begun to question that right. As education budgets grow tight, they look at what schools spend on professional development and want to know, “Does the investment yield tangible payoffs or could that money be spent in better ways?” Such questions make effective evaluation of professional development programs more important than ever (Guskey, 2002).

If there is a national imperative to improve our failing schools, there is also an imperative to strengthen the professional development of those who lead them. The Wallace Perspective describes the key attributes of effective principal preparation and

offers a set of action-oriented lessons that could help states, districts, and universities do a better job in providing that training. The good news is that new research from the Council of Great City Schools and a growing range of efforts by states and districts point more clearly than ever to effective ways to greatly improve the training in which principals so often participate.

The U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, delivered an address to the Council of the Great City Schools' Annual Legislative/Policy Conference in Washington, DC in the spring of 2012. Mr. Duncan discussed how local districts could lead education reform. The focus of the address was highlights from a report known as *The School Improvement Grant Rollout in America's Great City Schools: School Improvement Grants 2010-2011*, which indicated that the number of urban turnaround schools has increased significantly since the School Improvement grant program underwent transformation and expansion.

During the National Conference of State Legislatures in 2000, it was concluded that effective professional development should be ongoing, embedded in practice, linked to school reform initiatives, and problem-based. It also should be linked to rigorous leadership standards. High-quality professional development should be available continually to strengthen leaders' capacities to improve curriculum and instruction and create a highly effective organization. During this same conference, the concept of principal professional development was argued further that it is not enough to improve principal training. States and districts also need to create standards that (a) spell out clear

expectations about what leaders need to know and do to improve instruction and learning and (b) form the basis for holding them accountable for results.

In a multistate multi-district study of district responses to increasing state-mandated reforms, Fuhrman, Clune, and Elmore (1988) found that more proactive districts leveraged the new state policies to their advantage as they promoted district-level agendas for change. As an area of concern within school reform, the issue of principal professional development has received a great deal of scholarly and political attention (Devita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007). At the 2007 Wallace National Conference, the theme was Educational Leadership: A Bridge to School Reform. During this conference, Leithwood (2004) argued that leadership provides a critical bridge between most educational reform initiatives. He went on to support having those reforms make a genuine difference for all students. The national conversation has shifted from “whether” leadership really matters or is worth the investment, to “how” – how to train, place, and support high-quality leadership where it is needed the most: in the schools and districts where failure remains at epidemic levels.

Historically, principal professional development has been a collection of courses covering general management principles, school laws, administrative requirements, and procedures, with little emphasis on student learning, effective teaching, professional development, curriculum, and organizational change (Elmore, 2000). Principals are held accountable for student achievement in their schools even though research reviews show that the direct effect of principals on student achievement is minimal (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Weitziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). Principals have a direct effect on

student learning that has been replaced by a focus on the indirect relationships that principals create through their interactions with teachers and the educational environment (Weitziers et al., 2003). Empirical evidence shows that although the principal has an indirect effect on student achievement, this indirect effect is very important (Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

Much of the reform literature advocates for the expansion of redesign of professional development for teachers and school leaders (Collinson & Ono, 2001; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Some studies describe the features of a redesign. For example, Sparks and Hirsh (1997) describe features included: (a) significant collaboration; (b) job embedded; (c) extended over long periods of time; and (d) significant involvement of school leadership (Sparks & Hirsch 1997). Implementing these features can be argued as the most challenging part of professional development for district leaders.

An organization that is well respected in the educational community is Learning Forward, formally known as the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). Learning Forward highlights professional development standards that were developed along with several other educational institutions. The standards are grouped into categories labeled as content, process, and context. According to the Learning Forward, successful staff development pushes for the intersection of the three categories. It pushes beyond content to include the actual practices or knowledge that educators need to acquire for the content to come alive; the process or means by which educators will acquire the knowledge and practices; and the organization, system, or cultural context that supports staff development initiatives (NSDC, 2001).

Elements of Effective School Leadership

Some of the specific themes that evolved from the literature regarding elements of effective school leadership are (a) autonomous leadership, (b) hiring the right people, (c) university preparation programs, and (d) collective leadership. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), there is a growing consensus regarding the knowledge, skills, and disposition commonly found among effective principals.

Autonomous Leadership

The first theme that unveiled from the literature was autonomous leadership. In one of the findings of effective school leadership, Waters and Marzano (2006) defined autonomous leadership as perplexing and surprising. They argued in one study that building autonomy has a positive correlation of .28 with average student achievement indicating that an increase in building autonomy is associated with an increase in student achievement. Waters and Marzano (2007) reported that effective superintendents provide principals with “defined autonomy.” That is, they set clear, non-negotiable goals for learning and instruction, yet provide school leadership teams with the responsibility and authority for determining how to meet those goals.

In Texas ISD, the theory of action used was Managed Instruction with Earned Empowerment, which meant that if the principal reached certain metrics in school effectiveness, then she or he had earned the title and rights of an autonomous leader in the district. A Texas ISD autonomous principal had the right to purchase any instructional materials that he/she felt his campus needed. Autonomy also meant that the principal

could bring in any consultant to provide professional development to the staff that he/she felt was connected to the work and mission of the campus.

Hiring the Right People

The second theme from the literature revealed hiring the right people. In *Good-to-Great*, Collins (2005) argued that leaders begin transformation by first getting the right people on the bus and the right people off the bus. Collins (2005) defended further that it is not just the idea of getting the right people on the team but rather strategically planning out “who” questions before “what” decisions. Before the vision and strategies, a leader needs to have the right people in place to assist with these critical areas. Being able to interview staff strategically so that the staff plays a critical role of selecting new members to the organization can prove to be a positive element of effective school leadership. This element of effective practice is powerful because it can prove to empower the staff by building a sense of responsibility, trust, and cohesiveness.

One recent study from the Wallace Foundation (January 2012) unveiled that hiring selectively supports a pipeline for effective leadership. Districts should hire only well-trained candidates for principal and assistant principal positions. Murphy and Hallinger (1986) revealed in a study conducted with 12 superintendents from California school districts that to be instructionally effective, a core set of leadership functions need to be in place: (a) setting goals and establishing standards, (b) selecting staff, (c) supervising and evaluating staff, (d) establishing an instructional and curricular focus, (e) ensuring consistency in curriculum and instruction, and (f) monitoring curriculum and instruction.

Resnick, McConachie, and Petrosky (2010) suggested enacting effective leadership practices such as (a) observing and analyzing instruction, (b) designing a lesson, (c) studying artifacts of practice, (d) examining student work and its connection to the task, (e) studying professional texts, (f) understanding features of rigorous professional development, and (g) assessing the instructional systems, such as visiting similar classrooms in a school or feeder pattern.

University Preparation Programs

Sparks and Hirsh (1997) were some of the first researchers to advocate partnerships between universities and school districts to provide and plan for professional development. Their work is similar to that of Desimone (2002) who argued that professional development success will be judged not by how many administrators participate in professional development programs or how they perceive its value, but by whether it alters instructional behavior in a way that benefits students. Subsequent research from Sparks and Hirsch (2000) has focused on the question of content of professional development. Their recommendations for the content to help principals include:

1. Learn strategies that can be used to foster continuous school improvement;
2. Understand how to build supportive school cultures that promote and support adult and student learning;
3. Develop knowledge about individual and organizational change processes;
4. Develop knowledge of effective staff development strategies;

5. Understand important sources of data about their schools and students and how to use data to guide instructional improvement efforts; and
6. Learn public engagement strategies, including interpersonal relationship practices.

Collective Leadership

One important finding from Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) is that there is a strong connection between student achievement and “collective leadership” of principals, teachers, parents, school administrators in making school decisions. The report goes on to argue that high-performing schools have “fatter” decision-making structures, meaning that almost all people associated with such schools have a greater influence on decisions than their counterparts in lower-performing schools. Collective leadership is an element of effective school leadership that does not make the principal weaker but rather strengthens the leadership team. This type of leadership practice is successful because effective principals encourage others to join in.

The Wallace Report argued that there is widespread agreement among educational reformers and researchers that the primary role of the principal is to align all aspects of schooling to support the goal of improving instruction so that all children are successful (Devita et al., 2007). Another potentially important factor that the research revealed is that few jobs have as diverse an array of responsibilities as that of the modern principalship, and any of these responsibilities can distract administrators from their most important role of supporting quality instruction. The motivation for the study was to provide parameters that support principals as instructional leaders through professional

development because principals are frequently “ill-prepared and inadequately supported by their district leaders” (Devita et al., 2007, p. 24).

Sinkin, Charner, and Suss (2010) revealed in a study with principals the importance of cultivating growth. Specific practices were identified from this study in a survey. One in particular was promoting growth whether in a formal or informal observation, commenting on what is going well and what is not. The survey revealed 83% of the participants found that cultivating leadership by visiting classrooms to promote growth in teachers is very important. A central part of being a great leader is cultivating leadership in others.

Implications of District Practices on School Leadership

Too often education leaders have relied on what is new and exciting in the field of professional development instead of what is known to work in adult learning. An area that has been widely researched is professional development evaluation. Evaluation is one of the key themes that evolved from the Implications of District Practices on School Leadership literature. The U.S. Department of Education recently focused on stressing the importance of evaluation during the 2009 National Conference of State Legislatures.

One important way for district leaders to gather evidence that the professional development is worthwhile and cost-effective is through a research-based evaluation tool. One evaluation model of learning and training that is most widely used as a tool to evaluate training programs in business and industry has also been used in professional development for principals is from Kirkpatrick (2006), known as the Learning and Training Evaluation Theory. Kirkpatrick’s model was selected as the framework for this

study over other models because it has been used all over the world and translated into several languages. Companies such as Motorola were interested in how their employees applied new learning directly to the job and to what extent their new learning impacted the work place. Kirkpatrick went on to write several award winning books which included his theory. Within this theory are four levels that essentially measure: (a) reaction of the participant in the training, (b) increase in knowledge of capability, (c) extent of behavior and capability improvement and implementation, and (d) effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance.

The actual tool that Kirkpatrick (2006) developed is a grid and within the grid are illustrations of structure detail. Level 1 of the grid measures to what degree (from 1 to 4 with 1 being the lowest level of difficulty) the participant feels that their training was relevant and a practical use of their time. Level 2 explores to what degree the participant mastered what was intended to be taught. Level 3 explores to what degree the behavior of the participant would change if the new learning were to be implemented into the workplace. Level 4 measures if the overall training had an impact on the way the participant utilizes the new learning within his/her own organization.

Kirkpatrick's (2006) model contains two different types of grids to measure the participant's experience in the training. The latest level to Kirkpatrick's model is known as the "Return on Investment" that is used to describe the costs of the training in order to assist the trainer's decision when planning for future professional development. This information could be critical to district leaders as they begin to plan principal professional development for the upcoming year. The main focus of Kirkpatrick's (2006)

theory is to transform training professionals and learning functions into true strategic partners and to equip leaders to create significant value for their organization's stakeholders. Kirkpatrick would prove to have an impact on future professional development theorists.

Guskey's theory was greatly influenced by Kirkpatrick's (2006) work and the levels and process for evaluation are very parallel. Guskey (2002) contended in his research that traditionally educators have not paid much attention to evaluating their professional development efforts. Several studies have revealed that many consider evaluation a costly, time-consuming process that diverts attention from more important practices such as planning, implementation, and follow-up. Guskey's (2002) evaluation tool offers a range of formative and summative results for the trainer that can be quite useful for diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of the participants.

One similarity in particular to Kirkpatrick's evaluation tool is Guskey's tool that has five levels that are evaluated as well: Level 1 – participant's reactions; Level 2 – participant's learning; Level 3 – organization's support and change; Level 4 – participants' use of new knowledge and practices; and Level 5 – student's learning outcomes. Level 1 measures how the facilitator attended to the needs of the learner. Room temperature, lighting, access to materials may seem basic but critical to the learning environment. Level 2 reflects back on the specific learning goals and if they are being met. One important goal for principals is to improve the instructional practice. If this goal is not met in Level 2, the participant will not value the learning experience and appropriate implementation of that practice will not occur.

Guskey (2002) argued that indicators of successful learning need to be outlined before practices begin. The information gathered from the evaluations can be used as a basis for planning and improving the content, format, and organization of professional development. It is critical to listen to the participants' perceptions in order to meet their needs so that future training can be more successful. The main focus for level 3 is to measure the degree of organizational support that is given to the participants. Comparable to Kirkpatrick's tool, is level 4, which measures if the new learning made an impact on an individual's professional practice.

Guskey's (2002) research supports the importance of including connected follow-up practices to ensure that learning from the training is taken to a deeper level. The most critical question is asked in Level 5 of Guskey's tool: "Did the professional development affect student learning?"

Webster-Wright (2009) argued that in order to improve the delivery of professional development, we must listen to the participants and work to support and not hinder their learning. One way to ensure that the participant's voice is heard is by not only providing professional development evaluations at the end of the session but also incorporating participants' valid suggestions to be incorporated immediately at the next session.

Guskey and Yoon (2009) contended clearly in their research synthesis that there is great difficulty in linking professional development to specific student achievement gains despite the intuitive and logical connection. Leadership development is widely regarded as a key factor in accounting for differences in the success with which schools foster the

learning of their students (Leithwood, 2004). If principals had an opportunity to have input into the type of professional development delivery that best fit their schedule and their learning needs, then the principal perceptions regarding professional development could prove to be positive.

Ongoing research from the Wallace Foundation (2006) supports the idea that behind excellent teaching and excellent schools is excellent leadership – the kind that ensures that effective teaching practices do not remain isolated and unshared in single classrooms, and ineffective ones do not go unnoticed and remedied.

The literature goes on to reveal that central offices need to “re-culture” themselves so they focus less on administration and more on supporting principals to improve instruction. (Augustine et al., 2009). For district leaders to be more effective they need to think more pragmatically, that is less emphasis on compliance and more on campus support such as additional clerical assistance to take on the paper work.

In 2007 New York City district leaders began a controversial practice of giving each school a letter grade based on student progress. Klein stood firm about giving school leaders greater independence in exchange for greater accountability. The letter grades placed pressure on the school leaders to drive improvement (Devita et al., 2007, p. 14).

Professional Development That Impacts Instructional Leadership Practices

Instructional leaders today must have a deeper understanding of the teaching and learning process in order to improve the quality of instruction. The overarching theme found from the Professional Development that Impacts Instructional Leadership Practices

literature proved to be instructional practices, protocols, and authentic work experiences. In the early 1970s, a growing concern about the effectiveness of in-service education resulted in a spate of studies to determine the attitudes of educators about these programs (Ainsworth, 1977). The findings indicated nearly unanimous dissatisfaction with current efforts, but there was a strong consensus that in-service for school programs and practices needed to improve. During the late 1970s and 1980s, several major studies and reviews contributed to the understanding of the characteristics of effective staff development. Some of the characteristics of principal professional development at that time were: (a) programs conducted in school settings and linked to school-wide efforts, (b) participants as helpers to each other and as planners of in-service practices, and (c) self-instruction with differentiated training opportunities.

Marzano and his colleagues' (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) meticulous effective-schools research documented factors that positively influence student achievement. Among the factors identified by this group, the following relate to professional development: (a) effective feedback, (b) cooperation, (c) collegiality, (d) practice-oriented staff development, (e) a culture of shared beliefs, and (f) relationships. At first glance, these factors seem logical from an organizational standpoint, but the implementation of them is neither simple nor common in school systems. Moving in this direction will improve the likelihood of optimal learning and also elevate professional development to an inquiry-based profession, rather than a haphazard set of practices based on business as usual.

Although principal professional development programs were becoming more engaging and interactive, many were still lacking in evidence of authentic work experiences (Hawley & Valli, 1999). In several studies, time also proved not to be a critical factor in professional development. Kennedy (1998) showed, in fact, that differences in the time spent in professional development practices were unrelated to improvements in student outcomes because doing ineffective things longer does not make them any better.

The practices within principal professional development in Texas ISD were created to empower principals to identify quality lessons being delivered by teachers. In Texas ISD, the delivery designs were (a) Institutes, (b) Modules, (c) Vertical Articulation, and (d) Virtual Professional Learning Communities (vPLCs). The relating factors that will be discussed in each model are: (a) delivery frequency, (b) session facilitators, (c) participants, (d) content of the sessions, (e) set-up, and (f) expenses involved in preparing and conducting the training.

Institutes

Institutes were known throughout the district as the Road to Broad Principals' Instructional Leadership Institute series that occurred three times each academic year starting with a two-day session in the fall to kick off the school year. The Road to Broad Instructional Leadership Institute was reflective of the Texas ISD Board's work in the Broad Academy. The second two-day session would occur soon after the closing of the first semester to see if targets were being reached and to regain momentum. And the last two-day session would be at the end of the second semester to reflect and celebrate

successes. Each session began promptly at 8:30 and ended at 4:30 with lunch and breakfast provided.

The Chief Academic Officer along with the Chief of School Leadership would welcome the participants and ensure that the same message was being delivered. It was critical for the participants to see the calibration of the two divisions. The Chief Academic Officer would open with setting the purpose for the learning and then introduce the district's learning partner, the Institute for Learning (IFL) out of the University of Pittsburg. The learning for the session was mainly directed toward the principals but included central office staff that directly supported the campuses as well.

The Superintendent opened with the welcoming and delivered the message for the direction of the district for the day with a focus on student achievement and closing the achievement gaps between student populations. The Superintendent then introduced the Chief of School Leadership who always started the presentations with operational functions such as welcoming the principals back and introducing the newest principals to the team. The Chief Academic Officer then followed by setting the tone for the learning. She continued the conversation regarding most recent achievement data that included the commended rates of the state assessment. For the next few hours, the fellows from the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburg would proceed with the "teach piece" for the institute session. Leadership practices such as observe and analyze instruction, design a lesson, study artifacts of practice, and examine student work and its connection to the task took place during each institute. The Chiefs along with the IFL fellows would follow with agenda items such as:

- Organizing for Equity and Access
- Using Coherent and Rigorous Education for All Students
- Implementing for Equity and Access
- Leading and Supporting the Core Academic Programs
- Embedding Principles of Effective Teaching & Learning
- Using Leadership for Culturally Relevant Curriculum/Intercultural Competency
- Creating a Community of Learners through Distributive Leadership
- Using the LearningWalk Protocol to Improve Instruction

There were additional items on the agendas between the years of 2005-2011 but these were the main items. The preparation for the learning objectives and agenda included the two Chiefs, Executive Director of Core Curriculum, Curriculum Coordinator, Executive Director from Professional Development, and fellows from the IFL. The initial preparation would take place at the IFL. Follow-up planning would be conducted over conference calls between the Texas ISD and the IFL. During the first planning phase of the Institute Model, the Chief Academic Officer and Chief of School Leadership determined the main needs of the district based on achievement data and the educational plan. During the second planning phase, the Chiefs brought in the Executive Directors of Core Curriculum and Professional Development and the IFL fellows to discuss professional development goals and gather more input toward the outcomes and delivery of the model.

On Day 1, all participants would be in one room for approximately 3.5 hours to hear the same message from the Superintendent, Chiefs, and keynote speakers. Participants would report to their breakout sessions right after lunch to continue the learning for an additional 3.5 hours. The day would end with everyone back in the same room for reflections. Day 2 of the principal's Instructional Leadership Institute would begin with all participants in one room for two hours and then the learning would continue for the rest of the day in breakout sessions. The closing of the day occurred from 4:00-4:30 for next steps, evaluations, and final reflections.

Student work was collected by principals and brought to the institute session. Some of the critical practices for principals to be focusing on were: (a) observe and analyze instruction (actual and virtual), (b) review a lesson through the lens of protocols, (c) study teacher artifacts, (d) examine student work and its connection to the task, (e) study professional texts, (f) understand features of a rigorous lesson, and (g) assess the instructional systems such as visiting similar classrooms in a school or feeder pattern. Some of the major expenses for the institute model included costs for the keynote speaker, IFL contract, printing, use of a public facility, and food (breakfast and lunch) for all participants.

Modules

Just like students, principals as adult learners also have a variety of learning styles. A menu of structured modules that provided ample opportunities for principals to be able to choose what area they needed development in were offered to sitting principals in Texas ISD. In Texas ISD, the principal was expected to participate in one module at

least three times a year. There were windows of time provided to the principals to allow for flexibility of time. The facilitators for the modules included the IFL fellows, core content directors and specialists, and instructional coaches. The participants for this model were sitting principals who were welcome to bring an associate principal or an instructional leader from their respective campuses. This model included a pre-reading and a follow-up activity.

The majority of the time during this training was dedicated to teaching and learning information including high-level tasks, formative assessment and feedback, culturally relevant pedagogy, and others. In some cases, there were opportunities to participate in the book study of *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck, which was a strategic focus in the district during the 2010-2011 school year. Participants could choose from a menu of sessions that were all connected to Texas ISD's initiative. The modules were in smaller settings and offered at a variety of locations across the district and dates that would best meet each principal's schedule. For example, some modules were offered from 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. several times during the week or on Saturdays. In addition, the sessions were offered on set professional development days that were already in the district-wide calendar. The only cost was the printing of the documents used in the sessions.

Vertical Articulation Model

The vertical articulation model was created as a developmental support between high school, middle school, and elementary school of conceptual knowledge, which helps to provide for a clear focus on potential gaps in curricular and instructional resources. A

report from state legislative efforts to support school leaders (2009) revealed special attention should be given to building strong leadership teams, to support continuous improvement and address school-specific challenges. This model allowed time for schools within a feeder pattern to address unique socio-cultural needs from their neighborhood and specific challenges that the community was experiencing. The vertical articulation meetings were monthly sessions with other principals and guests within their respective feeder pattern. Most of the Successful Principals served as the vertical leader within a larger group of principals ranging from 8-12.

Successful Principals had regular sessions with the Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, and the Chief Administrative Officer to provide them with information about the feeder pattern schools as well as knowledge and information. These meetings provided opportunities for these top-performing principals to replicate the same professional development that they participated in and then turn around and deliver the same training to the principals in their feeder pattern. This model was originally used in Texas ISD as a train-the-trainer model.

Specific intentional actions occurred in several sessions of Vertical Articulation model to support the content: (a) central focus on the subject matter teachers will be teaching; (b) alignment of principals' learning opportunities with their real work experiences, using actual curriculum materials and assessments; (c) embedded learning opportunities in principals' actual work; (d) extended opportunities to learn observing and analyzing students' understanding of the subject matter; and (e) adequate time to develop new behaviors and practices. These meetings usually took place on a campus in

one large room where principals and guests would sit together at a large table facing each other. Sometimes the training was completed at noon and then participants conducted a walkthrough of similar content classrooms on the same campus. The critical part of this training was the conversation that took place immediately following the classroom walkthroughs. The discourse that took place included wonderings, trends, and observations in order to improve instructional practices. Wonderings are non-judgmental and can address anything viewed in the classrooms visited including displays of student work in the hallways. Trends can be both strengths and weaknesses that are identified practices found across visited classrooms and may be an upcoming topic for future trainings.

One helpful tool that assisted in the planning for this principal professional development was the schedule template. Table 2 is a tool to assist in the planning and provides clarity for all stakeholders dealing with principal professional development within a vertical articulation. Through this in-depth learning model, principals shared knowledge and skills to principals in their feeder patterns and across their Learning Communities, which offered a major link in the information and implementation progress for change across the district.

It was critical to plan for the entire year and to communicate it early with all principals in order to ensure for full attendance from participants. The learning should include pedagogy and practice in depth in each of the core content areas. Resnick et al. (2010) defended the content matters when providing professional development.

Table 2. Vertical Articulation Schedule Template

Vertical Articulation Schedule for Years _____						
Feeder Pattern						
Meeting	Time	Lead Principal	Meeting Location	Day/Month/Year	Content Area Focus	Additional Presenters
Meeting 1						
Meeting 2						
Meeting 3						
Meeting 4						

Virtual Professional Learning Communities

A key to school improvement is the willingness and ability of principals to assume the role of staff developers who make it their mission to alter the professional practices, beliefs, and understandings of school personnel toward an articulated end (Fielding & Schalock, 1985). One type of professional learning community (PLCs) in Texas ISD was known as the Virtual PLCs (vPLCs). The vPLCs’ professional development model differs from the Institute model. In the Institute model, the principal is considered a participant. In the vPLC, the principal plays a more active role in the professional development as a facilitator. Leithwood (2004) argues that principals play a major role in developing a “professional community” of teachers who guide one another in improving instruction. The expectation for developing a professional community in a vPLC was three times a year. The principal was expected to facilitate the vPLC session. The participants were the principal with their Campus Instructional Leadership Team (teacher leaders from each of the content areas). The principal determined the content area from Table 3, PLC Session Topics Menu, for the vPLC based on respective student achievement data. Upon completion of the entire seven-hour cycle, participants were to

submit the completed forms and certificates to the campus designee for verification of vPLC completion in order to receive attendance credit.

Table 3. PLC Session Topics Menu

Content Area	PLC Structured Session I	PLC Structured Session II	PLC Structured Session III
Math	High Level Tasks – Set-up phase	High Level Tasks – Explore phase	High Level Tasks – Share and discuss phase
Science	Going beyond science note booking: claim, evidence, and reasoning	Going beyond science note booking: claim, evidence, and reasoning	Going beyond science note booking: claim, evidence, and reasoning
Reading/ Language Arts	Launching Writers Workshop	Writers Workshop: conferencing with students and feedback	Writers Workshop: revising and editing
Social Studies	Argumentative writing in history	Argumentative writing in history	Argumentative writing in history

All vPLC sessions were scheduled during off contract time (before/after the regular work hours), which allowed participants to earn credit for attendance. In the vPLC, the campus was to complete the virtual session and the scaffolded field experience in order to get credit for attendance. The expectations were to log on to participate in the vPLC session during the viewing period that was scheduled before or after work contract hours. A window of time was allowed to complete the requirements for flexibility. The documents provided campus leaders with information they needed to know in order to complete the virtual PLC experience. Staff members along with the principal were to complete the survey at the end of each vPLC session and print the certificate of completion.

The costs included printing the materials and filming the sessions. One helpful tool that assisted in the planning for this principal professional development was the planning menu. Table 3 is a tool to assist in the planning and provide clarity for all stakeholders dealing with principal professional development within vPLC.

The expectation for the principal was to facilitate the learning of his/her teacher leaders. In order to do this, the principal had to have a strong understanding of the training material. The principal was able to invite an instructional coach from the curriculum department to support the learning of the teacher leaders as well. With the vPLC, the training could be paused to allow time for deep discussion; in addition, the training could be replayed for a deeper understanding and for clarification.

The four models mentioned beforehand were carefully designed by the Chiefs and Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The models provided a rich variety of learning environments to suit a diversity of adult learning styles for the purpose of developing instructional leadership practices.

Practices and Protocols

Additional themes that evolved within the literature regarding practices and protocols were (a) follow-up, (b) studying student work, and (c) content practices. A major argument that researchers such as Guskey and Yoon (2009) make regarding professional development has shown that a key component to a successful professional development is the application. They concluded that to build a deeper understanding instructional practices must include just-in-time, job-embedded assistance, while they struggle to adapt new curricula.

Follow-up

Guskey and Yoon (2009) intimated the vital importance of application through follow-up. Principals can be held accountable for their own learning and to their professional learning community if a model is in place to ensure for follow-up at their own campus and includes gathering an artifact that is evidence of the new learning. This type of loyal commitment to improving the practice of teaching and learning becomes embedded in a system's culture and functions as the guiding force that keeps the district on target for quality at every corner of the organization. A professional development model that is structured incompetently can add up to increased costs and fail to sustain goals and maintain success.

Studying Student Work

One effective professional development practice included studying student work along with the related teacher task. Knowing how the teacher presented the task to the students can shed some light on where the students may not have mastered the objective. Before a principal professional development, ask principals in a timely manner to bring student work and the related teacher task with them to the training. Another option is for the curriculum team to collect a variety of student work with the teacher task from the campuses.

Content Practices

Resnick et al.'s (2010) research has an emphasis on the critical importance of using content practices to increase instructional leadership practices. One practice, in particular, is engaging school staff in pedagogy and content routines with a more focused

opportunity to interact frequently with colleagues about instruction and student learning. Another practice is to study and solve problems related to content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and issues pertaining to students around this content and its core concepts. A third practice is to become familiar with observation tools that support specific content area work. The tools used should allow a platform for deep instructional conversations between principals and supervisors and between teachers and principals. These tools will enable assessment of the extent to which the intended curriculum is being enacted across classrooms.

Summary

There is a common practice throughout the nation of transforming principal professional development into a school effectiveness system aimed at internalizing the desired change initiatives associated with instructional leadership development. There were various accounts given for change in specific campus operations strategies and district support for instructional leadership development and accountability. Among the factors frequently mentioned influencing the need for change were financial resources, issues of training, and the utility of school effectiveness profiles in the principal accountability and evaluation process.

The president of the Wallace Foundation argued that the best-trained leaders in the world are unlikely to succeed or last in a system that too often seems to conspire against them (Devita et al., 2007). State and district policies should be aimed at providing the conditions, the authority, and the incentives leaders and their teams need to be successful in lifting the educational fortunes of all children. Better leadership training

surely is an essential part of that mix. Yet, with all of the attention on improvement of leadership development, education has yet to make significant changes that have resulted in the type of achievement envisioned.

Some effective practices mentioned in this study to improve principal professional development could be high-performing principals (a) give input to the preparation of the professional development, (b) lead the training to the principals in their vertical articulation, (c) offer a variety of trainings to choose from that will best meet principals' needs, (d) give an assignment that is job embedded and hold principals accountable with submitting an artifact, and (e) evaluate their learning and provide feedback for improvement.

One way to ensure that the principal professional development is working is to make sure that an evaluation tool is in place similar to the ones Kirkpatrick (2006) and Guskey (2002) created. Implementing evaluation tools after the professional development could assist in transforming the way a district prepares, plans, and structures the development of their principals. In order to create true strategic partners between central office and principals, principals must be given a chance to share their perceptions and reflections of their learning. Education is a monumental task that asks us to examine our purposes and goals, and perhaps even our underlying assumptions if we are to use data-driven collaborative practices to build the capacity of principals to change the lives of our students for the better.

This literature review has summarized arguments and their shortcomings and, more importantly, has proposed alternative delivery methods for principal professional

development that attempt to improve instructional leadership practices. Clearly, a focus on principal professional development is necessary, but changing the delivery alone will not create or sustain the necessary change of student achievement where a climate of respect and teamwork among the faculty, administrators, students, and parents is the norm.

Having reviewed the literature, much work is still needed to better understand organizational principal professional development and its relationship to student achievement. What is needed is more empirical work to show the correlation between the principal perceptions around the professional development they receive within their organization and if it is truly tied to the improvement of their instructional practices.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology and study design that was used to collect, analyze, and interpret data to answer the research questions. According to Willis (2007), a critical theorist needs an external reality and methods to empower people who might feel oppressed. While the positivist seeks universal truths, interpretivists believe in an understanding of the context, in which any form of research conducted, is critical to the interpretation of gathered data (Willis, 2007). As I studied principal professional development, I used an interpretivist approach. As a result, this allowed me to gain an understanding of how people feel about a particular situation and gave me an opportunity to understand their perspective on what it means to take part in an optimal districtwide principal professional development that was intended to help principals perform better instructionally. This chapter details the (a) purpose of the study, (b) research design, (c) participants, (d) limitations of the study, (e) delimitations, (f) writing style, (g) data collection (h) questionnaires (i) interviews, (j) data analysis, and (k) procedures.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the perceived needed practices in professional development. This study determined if one model was more effective than another in enhancing job performance. In addition, this study determined if the type of professional development delivery model impacted principal learning based on selected principal's perceptions. The study was bound by the period from the beginning of the school year in 2005-2006 to the end of the school year 2010-2011.

Research Design

The research utilized a qualitative case study with a descriptive research design to answer the research questions. A case study is an in-depth exploration of a practice, an event, a process, or an individual based on extensive data collection (Moerrer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Qualitative approaches have several commonalities: (a) they focus on the phenomena that occur in the natural settings, (b) they involve studying those phenomena in all their complexity, and (c) they are useful for understanding the meanings that individuals have constructed about the phenomena (Leedy & Olmrod 2001; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994).

The qualitative case study is especially suitable for learning more about a little known or poorly understood phenomenon, by the employment of as many variables as possible and the triangulation of multiple sources of evidence (Leedy & Olmrod, 2001; Merriam, 1998, Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Yin (2003) noted case studies like experiments are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. He went on to argue that an individual case study is like a laboratory experiment, and multiple cases are like multiple experiments that involve analytical generalizations. As Merriam (1998) suggested, the current study employed a descriptive case study to develop a rich, “thick” description of the actions taken by the successful principals that were perceived as critical to the transformation of the delivery of professional development for all principals in Texas ISD.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected because they were successful elementary and secondary principals during 2005-2011 for at least two consecutive years in Texas ISD. The researcher specifically planned to examine the perceptions of successful principals who played an important role as principal leaders within their respective feeder patterns. The successful principals also played an important role as a “think tank” for the superintendent of Texas ISD in regard to major initiatives and districtwide reform.

In order to ensure equity and cultural diversity in this study, the researcher selected participants based on ethnicity and gender. Ely and Thomas (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Thomas & Ely, 1996), who focused on learning in diverse teams, argued that if teams believe that cultural identity is a resource for learning and growth, they are more likely to be high-performing. Members of the same cultural identity group often, though not always, have similarities of background and experience that shape their way of seeing the world. The factors underlying these different dynamics are numerous and complex. The significance of including cultural diversity in this study is that group members will provide different life experiences that have shaped their values, approaches, and perspectives. Members of culturally diverse groups may be more likely than those of homogeneous groups to differ in how they define a problem, arrive at a decision, or view potential solutions. These differences of opinion can represent a mother of creativity or a quagmire of conflict, depending on how the group handles conflict and differences.

The ethnicities included in this study were two African Americans, four Anglos, and three Hispanics. There were exactly four male and five female participants. The target population of participants worked at least two consecutive years in Texas ISD as a principal between the years of 2005-2011. The sample size of participants was nine. The relationship of the researcher to the participants was unique. The researcher served as a coordinator to the Chief Academic Officer during these years and had a major responsibility in the roll out and design of the professional development models.

Inclusion criteria with the selection of the participants included being a successful principal between two consecutive years within the years of 2005-2011. Exclusion criteria consisted of principals who were low-performing based on federal accountability ratings and school effectiveness indices. Even though there were no direct benefits for the participants in the study, there may be benefits of this research toward the field of principal professional development. The potential for loss of confidentiality was a risk considered no greater than everyday life.

Participants were recruited in the study based on campus successful leadership between the years of 2005-2011. The specific parameters of successful leadership are outlined in Chapter 1. The participant's interest was elicited by informing them of the opportunity for their role as leaders to make a critical impact on the future of principal professional development. The recruitment took place face-to-face, in emails, and phone calls. The researcher conducted the recruitment procedures. Each participant received a consent form for consideration and approval. Participants indicated they were interested via face-to-face, emails, texts, and phone calls. Participants' current contact information

had been contained over the previous years of working in the district. The email contact information was available to district personnel, within the district online directory.

Writing Style

The writing style used in this study was a narrative approach, which was the framework for understanding the subject and interview data in qualitative research (Sandelowski, 1991). Using narrative writing allowed the revealing of perceptions in regard to practices in professional development needed in order to perform their jobs more effectively. Narrative writing also revealed whether the type of professional development delivery model impacted principal learning. An in-depth description of the principals' perceptions and experiences seemed to evolve easier in a narrative approach.

Data Collection

The case study “focused on data in the form of word – that is, language in the form of extended text” (Miles & Haberman, 1994, p. 9). Therefore, the study employed two of the major sources of evidence outlined by Yin (1994): (a) interviews and (b) questionnaires. The qualitative methodology of the case studies was heuristic. Heuristic “case studies illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomena under study” (Merriam, 1998, p. 13). According to Merriam (1998), “using case studies can bring new meaning, because it can expand the reader’s experience, or confirm what is known” (p. 13).

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was grounded in Kirkpatrick’s (2006) theoretical framework known as the Learning and Training Evaluation Theory. The

questionnaire (Appendix A) includes a four-level model that measures the following areas: (a) reactions to the learning experience (Level 1), (b) an increase to intellectual capability (Level 2), (c) application of the new learning (Level 3), and (d) overall principal effectiveness (Level 4). The questions were designed to gather qualitative data. The validity of the results was reliant on the perception of the respondent. The administration of the questionnaire was confidential to ensure participants would provide their perception. . Closed format questions were used, which take the form of multiple-choice questions. Some responses from the questionnaires were expanded in the interviews to allow for a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences.

The questionnaire included a Likert scale with a semantic differential scale using important to unimportant from a scoring range of one to seven. The Likert scale is used so that participants have to choose one side or another, which is sometimes called a “forced choice” method eliminating the neutral option that can be seen as an easy option to take when a respondent is unsure. Likert (1932) contended that a Likert scale is a good means for rating phenomenon being investigated to capture variation, which points to the underlying phenomenon.

Interviews

According to Stake (1995), two principal uses of case studies are to obtain the description and interpretation of others; therefore, the interview is the main road to discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case. This case study employed a semi-structured interview technique with structured questions. The format allowed this researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the

respondent, and to new ideas on the topic (Merriam, 1998). The case study was used to follow up significant issues that have emerged from a questionnaire that opens up a number of issues that lead to future research questions that are answered through questionnaires.

The interviews were person-to-person encounters guided by the Miles and Haberman's (1994) framework for agreement with study participants. First, the researcher revealed that the interview would be conducted to discover, understand, and gain insight concerning issues perceived as critical to meeting the needs of principals to perform their jobs more effectively through the transformation of the professional development in Texas ISD. The interviews consisted of one 30-minute interview. Guidelines for maintaining confidentiality were discussed with the participants. In addition, written permission was gathered from each participant to conduct the interviews. The interview protocol (Appendix B) contained prepared questions and allowed for contribution of additional comments in the open format along with ensuring that the same information was gathered from each participant.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data used the techniques offered by Miles and Huberman (1994). This case study utilized the well-delineated Kirkpatrick's (2006) Four Levels of Training Evaluation Model. This analytical tool enabled the description of the perceived practices needed in principal professional development and whether the type of professional development delivery model impacted principal learning in Texas ISD.

The analysis took place on four levels: Level 1: the initial coding into four levels of training evaluation, Level 2: the categorization within each of the four levels, Level 3: the identification of the perceived practice needs in a principal professional development, and Level 4: the identification of the perceived types of professional development delivery models impacting principal learning in Texas ISD.

Procedures

The methodology used in this study employed a qualitative case study with a descriptive research design. Participants took an online questionnaire and were in a face-to-face audio-recorded interview. The researcher was the sole member of the research team. All activities were conducted solely by the researcher. For the survey and interviews, the question items and measures were designed based on the Learning and Evaluation Theory Framework from Kirkpatrick (2006). The nine participants participated in the questionnaire on surveymonkey.com. The link was distributed to each participant in the Consent to Participate in Internet Research form and via email.

Location

Each 30-minute interview was one-on-one with the participant and researcher and took place on or nearby their respective campus during nonworking hours. Five interviews took place on the campus. Four interviews took place nearby the campus.

Resources

An electronic recording device known as an MP3 Application was used to record the 30-minute interviews with each of the nine participants who were principals during the designated years. A laptop was used to type notes and findings.

Study Timeline

Data collection took approximately two months, which included the one-to-one interviews and the online surveys. The transcriptions and coding then took an additional two weeks.

Measures

The questionnaire was called Principal Professional Development. There were exactly 10 questions. On this questionnaire, there were a variety of question formats. There were three questions using the Likert scale format. There was one question in a multiple choice format that pertained to gender and race. There were two questions with the drop box format that pertained to the number of years at each campus level and the approximate number of sessions attended within each of the professional development models. Open-ended boxes were included for the participant to add additional information if needed.

Obtaining Informed Consent

A waiver of documentation of informed consent was requested that allowed the absence of handwritten signatures from the participants on the form. This study met criteria for the waiver of documentation minimal risk and the research activities did not require written consent when performed outside a research setting. The process of providing the subjects with written information about the study was to email each participant with a copy of the Consent to Participate in Internet Research form that included the invitation and the purpose of the study. After providing them with the

information, the researcher obtained the participant's consent to be in the study by requesting email confirmations.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality of the participant as a person was ensured by the use of a locked filing cabinet in the investigator's home office. All names will be removed and replaced with a researcher-assigned pseudonym. There will be various appropriate methods of data storage, which include electronic and hard copy to be stored until May 2014 and at that time will be deleted from the audio device.

The language used to describe the information for the potential participants was in English. The audio recordings were labeled so that no personal identifying information was visible or audible on them. The recordings were kept in a locked file cabinet in the investigator's home office. The recordings were heard only for research purposes by the investigator. The recordings were erased after they were transcribed and coded. The investigator utilized pseudonyms for each potential participant and maintained a master key that contained the participant's real name and the assigned pseudonym or code name. The master key file was securely stored, such that it was kept separate from the consent forms and collected data. The destruction plan of the master key file was to shred all documents once all data was collected and interactions with subjects were complete. The participants' name or other identifying information was important in terms of labeling and organizing the research data. The consent forms were maintained with participants' initials data to avoid association. The signed consent forms will be retained for three

years due to University policy requirements in a de-identified form, meaning that identifying information will be removed and the master key file will be destroyed.

Summary

This qualitative case study revealed the successful principals perceived practice needs in professional development that are needed to perform their jobs more effectively and determined if the type of delivery of professional development impacted principal learning in Texas ISD using Kirkpatrick's (2006) well-delineated Four Levels of Training Evaluation Model. This study was motivated by the need for an improved principal professional development that assists principals in performing their jobs more effectively and central office in planning principal professional development as it pertains to a major urban systemic change effort.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data

Introduction

This chapter describes the research design, purpose, process for interviews, questionnaires, and findings; in addition, this chapter also presents the results of the data analysis with respect to the research questions in a large urban school district referred to as Texas ISD. The results were presented in terms of a well-delineated construct of Kirkpatrick's (2006) Four-Levels of Learning and Evaluation Model. Kirkpatrick's (2006) model measures: (a) reactions to the learning experience (Level 1); (b) increase to intellectual capability (Level 2); (c) application of the new learning (Level 3); and (d) overall principal effectiveness (Level 4). Each level was measured by principal responses from interviews and questionnaires for a full and meaningful evaluation of learning.

Design

The design of this study employed a qualitative case study with a descriptive design for the purpose of understanding and an opportunity for the construction of knowledge pertaining to the phenomenon of study (Stake, 1995). Emergent themes evolved from the initial data collection and were identified by utilizing this tight design with the well-delineated constructs. The findings of the case study are provided to assist researchers interested in large scale systemic change in professional development for sitting principals in public education. In doing so, participants' professional development experiences were analyzed to determine to what extent those experiences were ongoing, job-embedded, and connected to school improvement goals, all indicators of high quality professional development (Hirsh, 2009; IEL, 2000; Nicholson et al., 2005).

District Demographics

Texas ISD's enrollment of approximately 158,000 students makes it the second largest school district in the state. According to Academic Excellence Indicator System data, the student demographics reflect a Hispanic population that grew from 47.3 % (97-98) to 65.3% (07-08), an African-American population that decreased from 40.7% (97-98) to 28.7% (07-08), a White population that decreased from 10.2 % (97-98) to 4.8% (07-08), a Native American population that decreased from 0.4 % (97-98) to 0.2 % (07-08), and an Asian/Pacific Islander population that decreased from 1.6 % (97-98) to 1.0 % (07-08). In the 1997-1998 school year, 72.5 % of the student population was categorized as economically disadvantaged, as contrasted to 84.7% in the 2007-2008 school year. The student population with limited English Language skills grew by 2.2% over the 10-year time span to 32.5 %.

District Performance

Data results from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) played a huge role in the vision of the professional development (Table 4). Most professional development sessions began with reviewing current TAKS data. The gaps set the focus for the learning. During the 2005 to 2008 school years, Texas ISD had experienced steady growth in all major categories as assessed by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (Dallas Independent School District, 2006). In conjunction with this steady growth, the district was experiencing significant challenges pertaining to adequate yearly progress (AYP) at the comprehensive high schools and academically unacceptable status at 8% of the schools.

Table 4. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Overall Performance Percent Passing and Number of Exemplary and Recognized Schools, 2005-2011

Content	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Reading	72	78	80	83
Math	60	65	66	71
Science	53	58	58	63
Social Studies	82	81	84	89
Exemplary & Recognized Schools	32	80	51	103

Research Process

Theoretical Framework

The exploration of Kirkpatrick's Four-levels of Learning and Evaluation theory that guided the study is presented below:

1. Reactions to the learning experience
2. Increase to intellectual capability
3. Application of the new learning
4. Overall principal effectiveness

Participants

The study sample of participants included nine individuals who were bound by the following selection criteria:

1. Direct involvement as a participant in principal professional development during the period 2005-2011.
2. In-depth knowledge about the history of professional development in Texas ISD.

3. Members of the Superintendent's Lead Principal team for at least two consecutive years.
4. Balance of gender and ethnicity.

The researcher intentionally included a balance between male and female, as well as a balance between ethnicities of Black, White, and Hispanic to provide a rich variety of cultural experiences and perspectives. Figure 1 exhibits 55.56% of the participants were female and 44.44% were male. Participant selection was 33.33% White, 33.33% Hispanic, and 22.22% were Black.

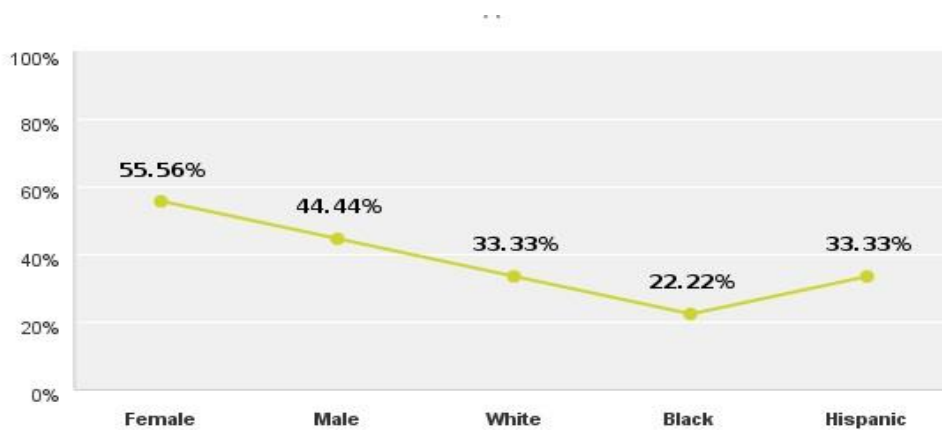


Figure 1. Total percentage of participants by gender and ethnicity.

Limitations

While the case study is vital to advancing the knowledge about innovative programs and practices, there are limitations to the design. According to Merriam (1998), case studies are limited by the:

1. ability of the researcher to devote the necessary resources to obtain a rich, thick description of the phenomena,

2. focus on a slice of the whole (limited to principal professional development in one district),
3. ability of the researcher to rely on his or her own instincts and abilities throughout most of the research effort (limited to researcher's experience),
and
4. ability of the researcher to suspend personal bias (limited by researcher's subjectivity).

Questionnaire

The study employed two of the major sources of evidence as outlined by Yin (1994): (a) a semi-structured interview technique with a flexible worded mix of more and (b) less structured questions with a person-to-person encounter. Closed format questions were used to take the form of multiple choice questions. Participants were asked to take the questionnaire before the interview to assist them in refreshing their memories of the professional development that they participated in between the years 2005 to 2011.

Findings from the Questionnaire

Participating principals were asked to take the questionnaire before the actual interview. The purpose for this was to create a contextual framework and allow for background knowledge building before adding more information during the interviews. Figure 2 from the questionnaire reveals that the model most beneficial to enhancing job performance was the vPLC. The vPLC was not ever mentioned during one out of nine interviews; however, it appeared to be the most beneficial model in the questionnaire. The institute model came in second and the vertical articulation came in last.

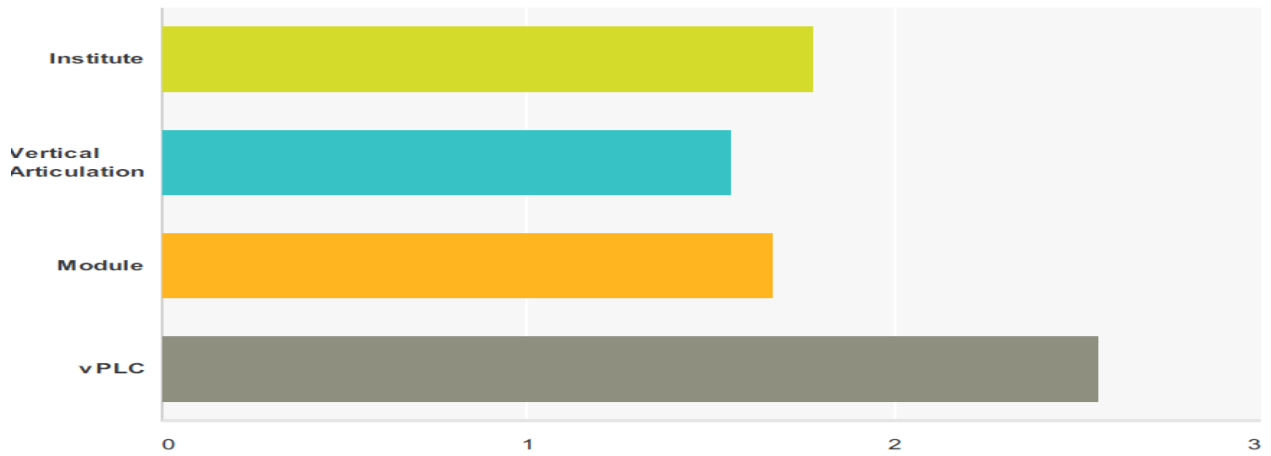


Figure 2. All principals' percentage of most beneficial to enhancing job performance.

Table 5 represents all principals experiencing immediate application of the principal professional development back on their campus; 87.5% of the principals said yes and 12.5% said no.

Table 5. All Principals' Percentage Experiencing Immediate Application

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	87.5%
No	12.5%
Total	100.0%

Figure 3 represents the principal percentage of most beneficial to enhancing instructional leadership skills. Vertical articulation had the highest at 58% with institute and module both coming in at 42% for most beneficial. All four models appeared to be above 30% beneficial. The vPLC was the only model that appeared to be inefficient.

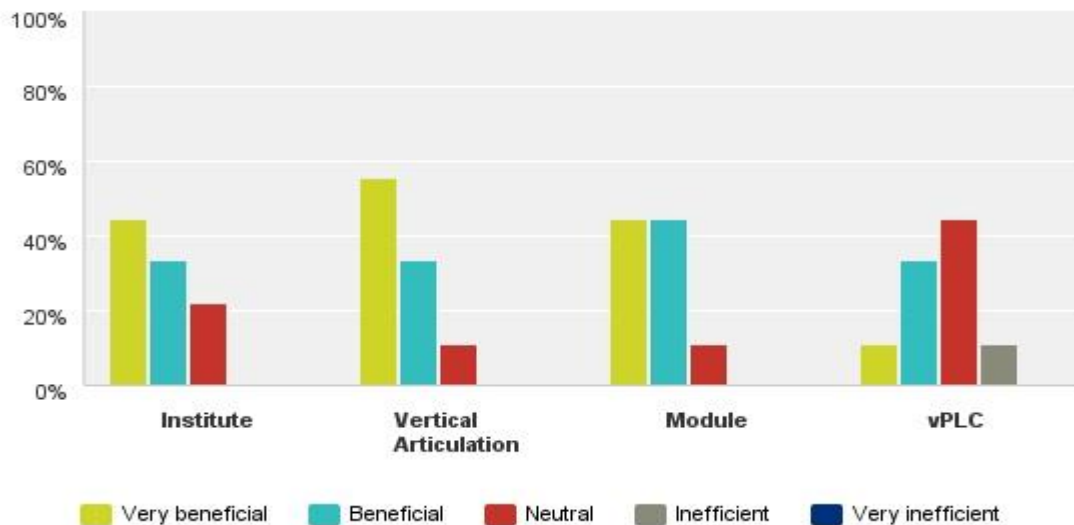


Figure 3. Principals' percentage of most beneficial model enhancing instructional leader skills.

The most impactful model is represented in Figure 4 with the vertical articulation at 44.44% and the institute model at 33.33%. The least impactful was the module model at 37.5%.

In Table 6, 88.89% of principals finds that PD is very important in changing behavior in leadership practices; 11.1% found PD to be important in changing behavior in leadership practices.

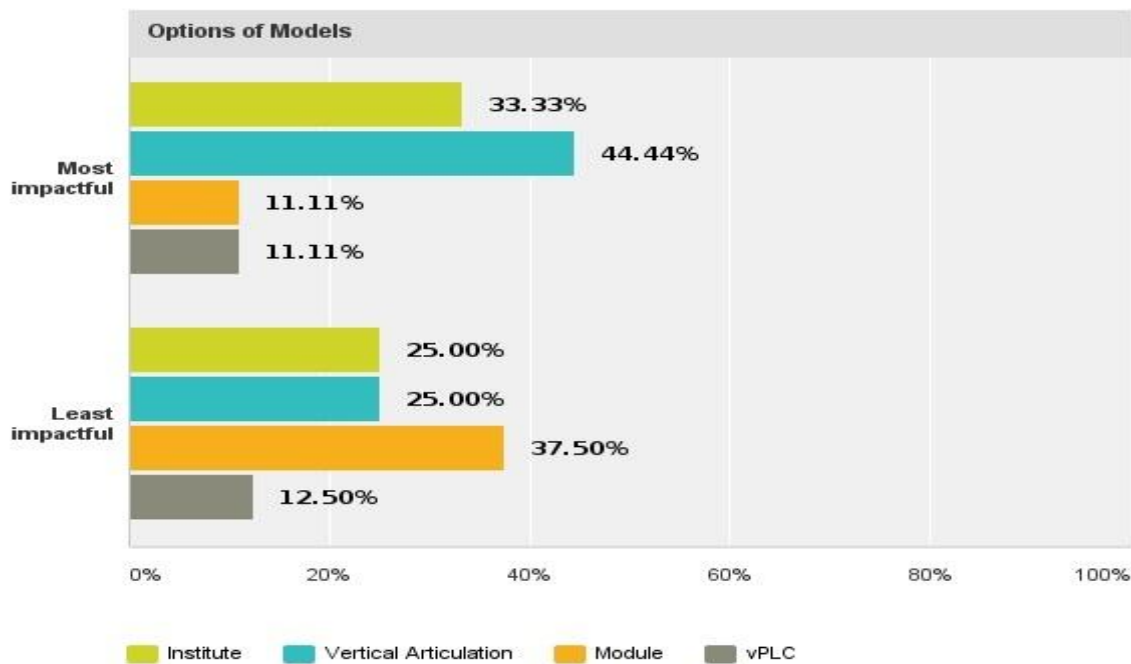


Figure 4. Most impactful to least impactful at enhancing job performance.

Table 6. PD Percentage Importance in Changing Behavior in Leadership Practices

Very Important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very Unimportant	Total
88.89%	11.11%	0%	0%	0%	
8	1	0	0	0	9

Interviews

Pre-determined questions were used during each interview. Additionally, highlights along with barriers to engaging in professional development were identified. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, principals' attitudes and perceptions regarding professional development were also revealed. During interviews, participating principals were asked to describe (a) if they felt that professional development (PD) has

made a permanent change in their behavior as an instructional leader, (b) if they felt that their knowledge base as instructional leader has expanded as a result of PD, (c) what they learned about instructional practices as a result of PD, (d) if PD changed their behavior in leadership practices, (e) in what ways PD changed leadership practices, and (f) what links PD to student performance.

Participation in the Models

In order to find out the frequency of the participation in each model, the questionnaire revealed the following information included in this study. Table 7 reveals the percentage of principals who participated in each of the four models. Of the nine principals who participated in the institute model, four of them participated 10-20 times, two of them participated 1-10 times, two participated 30 + times, and one participated 20-30 times. Of the nine principals who participated in the vertical articulation model, four participated 10-20 times, three participated 1-10 times, one participated 20-30 times, and one did not participate. Of the nine principals who participated in the module model, seven participated 1-10 times and two participated 10-20 times. Of the nine principals who participated in the virtual PLC model, five participated 1-10 times, one participated 30 + times, and three participated 0 times.

Table 7. Principals’ Participation Percentage in the Four Models

Model	0	1-10	10-20	20-30	30+	Total
Institute: All principals in one room with the session led by a keynote speaker from outside the district and central office	0% 0	22.22% 2	44.44% 4	11.11% 1	22.22% 2	0
Vertical Articulation: Principals meet with other principals in their own feeder pattern and the session is led by a principal.	11.11% 1	33.33% 3	44.44% 4	11.11% 1	0% 0	9
Module: Principal selects the session from a menu of sessions and the data he/she wants to attend.	0% 0	77.78% 7	22.22% 2	0% 0	0% 0	0
Virtual PLC: Principal is on campus and participates virtually with his/her teachers.	33.33% 3	55.56% 5	0% 0	0% 0	11.11% 1	9

Transcription Data

Transcriptions were conducted using an electronic transcription device. Verbatim interview transcripts were read in their entirety looking for findings that were relevant to Kirkpatrick’s (2006) Four-levels of Learning and Evaluation theory and for initial patterns across interviews. Transcriptions were then labeled by candidate numbers one through nine in an Excel spreadsheet. The interview questions were in the first column and then followed by last words and additional questions that evolved from the original interview questions. The last words included any additional information the principals wanted to add. All nine principals added last words that were highlighted throughout the major findings. Four of the principals were asked additional emerging questions that were not the same for each participant. The first row included the candidate number ranging from one to nine. Once the transcriptions were side-by-side, then patterns began to appear. This initial analysis uncovered patterns fitting into existing frameworks for classifying professional development, i.e., immediate application, follow up and support,

replicate training for staff, data disaggregation, effort-based learning, principal coaching, and PLCs, as represented in Table 8.

Table 8. Codes and Patterns Evolved from Interview Transcripts

Principal Candidate # & Evolving Patterns	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	Sum of Total
Immediate Application	X	X			X		X		X	5
Data Disaggregation	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	7
Follow Up And Support	X	X	X				X	X		5
Effective Campus Feedback	X	X			X	X				4
Replicate Training		X	X	X		X		X	X	6
Effort Based Learning	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	7
Principal Coaching				X		X	X			3
Collaborative PLC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	8
Keynote Speakers		X	X		X	X	X	X		6
Instructional Best Practices		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	8
Time Of Year For Training	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	7
Additional Staff	X					X	X		X	3

Additional patterns emerged that reflected keynote speakers, researched-based best practices, time of year for training, staff to bring to training, and providing effective feedback on campus. Relevant segments of text from all transcripts were identified, coded, and grouped separately for each of the interview prompts. The identifications were profound statements, instructional practices, and new models for consideration.

The use of standardized, open-ended interview questions helped to facilitate the analysis; however, participants' responses appeared to have different levels of

importance. Segments of text identified were labeled with the candidate number to allow for comparison across questions. Codes were grouped into three major categories of important principal statements, instructional best-practices, and recommended features of professional development to summarize responses for each interview question. The summaries depicted areas of similarity and contrast among and between participants.

Major Findings

Question #1

The major findings revealed more during the interviews than in the questionnaire in regards to question #1: *What aspects of professional development do principals identify as being critical to enhancing their job performance as an instructional leader?*

Principal Fernandez defended that it was during an institute model where she learned the most critical practice of being an instructional leader, which was the inclusive practice of learning the process of disaggregating data to identify needs of each group. Immediate application was a trend that appeared multiple times from several principal candidates.

The aspects of professional development that were critical to Principal Collins were: (a) changed behavior, (b) student self-management of learning, and (c) concept of walkthroughs to gain a snapshot of the instruction. “My behavior did change in that I began to focus more on what really mattered to the schools,” claims Principal Campos. “The academic discourse that took place during the years we worked with the IFL I believe was rigorous enough to affect not only my behavior but also of my colleagues.”

Principal Good believes that PD can be a permanent change in the behavior as an instructional leader:

The PLCs were opportunities to examine the instructional practices and strategies that were helpful or impactful to instruction. One big part of this was the learning walks from the IFL. During the learning walks in classrooms, especially instruction practices, were being examined as a team. The alignment of practice to the data was also reviewed to determine if the students were making academic gains.

Professional development most definitely changed the behavior of Principal Velasco in the way she implements programs, reviews teachers actions in the classrooms, and the way she prepares teacher PD.

Question #2

Do you feel that your knowledge base as instructional leader has expanded as a result of professional development? If so, give an example.

Principal Shaw defends that his training with the IFL was a concentrated learning that he could take back to his campus and use. It expanded his knowledge base because he had a growth mindset.

Principal Velasco claims that her knowledge base has expanded as a result of PD. She is now more reflective as far as her next steps in teacher PD. One example is that she now expands her thinking on how she is going to bring additional layers to teacher instruction, such as up-to-date articles about rubrics and how teachers are going to interact with each other.

Keynote speakers revealed to be a very prevalent aspect of expanding knowledge. Keynote speakers appeared solely in the institute model. Some of the most popular keynote speakers who were included from the candidates were:

1. Alan November, had the principals bring students and provide their perspective of quality instruction that was technology based. His focus was on meaningful contributions of technology to support student engagement and student ownership of the learning.
2. Rick Defour, developed a clear explanation and purpose for professional learning communities. He laid out three important questions for quality instruction: (a) What do you want the kids to know? (b) How do you know if they learned it? and (c) What do you do now that you know they did not learn it?
3. Denise Collier, Chief Academic Officer at the time, who principals proclaim built the philosophical foundation of effort-based education for principals across the district to support growth mindsets, sustainability, and buy-in. Principals claim that her passion for instructional leadership practices was cutting-edge and highly contagious.
4. Institute for Learning Fellows, helped the principals “delve into instruction at a level that they had not been privy to before” defends Principal Peters. She goes on to mention “that is when our district took a turn to looking at us as instructional leaders rather than just managers.” Principal Shaw goes on to refer to the IFL as the intellectual framework and a good roadmap. Principal

Marks compares the IFL to a graduate program for the principals, providing a foundational knowledge that can support practice as an instructional leader.

Principal Campos claims that the IFL helped the entire district to develop a strong common language: “It helped us to push each other’s thinking, which helped transform the culture of the district.”

Question #3

As a result of principal professional development, what did you learn about instructional practices?

“One of the most powerful things that I learned was the importance of differentiated instruction,” remarks Principal Fernandez. Principal Fernandez adds, “The most successful was when we looked at students as individuals, meeting each one’s needs, where they are, and where they need to go.”

Principal Collins highlights the importance of the PLC “to provide quality instructional practices such as vertical and horizontal planning to work on expectations for what the kids are to learn and deliberately making sure that the student expectations are clearly identified.” He goes on to mention that instructional leadership is more important than management type practices: “Instructional practices need to be taught during the PLC and then monitored on a regular basis.”

Principal Marks argues that the institute model when it focused on pedagogical knowledge, did not translate easily to practice. He goes on to say that for as many times and for as many ways people have tried to change instruction, to affect instruction, “The classic instruction (Madeleine Hunter) still works.”

One important factor Principal Velasco learned about instructional practices during PD is examining student work within the framework of the IFL:

This was important because of the practice of developing goals for how to move a teacher from a level one to a level five. A level one teacher uses worksheets versus a level five teacher who actually has students do more inquiry-based learning.

She learned that teachers come in with different levels of knowledge and it is her job as instructional leader to develop their attitudes toward teacher and learning to support their development and how they deliver instruction.

Question #4

Can principal professional development change behavior in leadership practices?

“You can hook your principals by providing them with something that is immediately applicable to their campus,” promotes Principal Fernandez. “Allow them opportunities to problem solve what they are currently struggling with on their campus to make students successful,” added Principal Fernandez.

Principal Marks claims that he is a huge advocate of coaching to change behavior in leadership practices. Principal Shaw said that there were two types of institute models that helped her. One was the mentor network and one was the IFL. The mentor network helped her to better understand the critical work that was needed to be accomplished because she could better identify the critical work in action. The IFL helped her to put the work into action at a deeper more sustaining level.

Question #5

In what ways does PD change your leadership practices?

Five key findings appeared for Principal Fernandez' response: "(a) more cognizant of the instruction in the classroom, (b) took greater ownership of teaching staff and providing well planned PD, (c) allowed teachers to teach teachers, (d) more collaborative in nature, and (e) provided opportunities for me to see the holes in my delivery."

The changes in leadership practices for Principal Peters were: "took more responsibility to train staff to make sure that they had the tools and foundation to change their practice and replicated district training at a smaller scale on campus."

Leadership practices that were changed by professional development for Principal Collins were forcing him to get into the classrooms and looking at data in a different way. "The IFL stretched me in ways that I needed to be stretched, which is a lot of ways," stated Principal Collins.

Practices began to change most drastically around the PLC for Principal Good. During PLCs, they were looking at data and things that are necessary to move student achievement. She was looking at gaps in student achievement every week or two weeks instead of at the end of the six weeks. She had her leadership team take a strong look at the instructional practices of highly effective teachers. During PLCs on her campus, she had teachers anticipate which students were going to struggle. Lesson planning was taken to a higher level of importance. The expectation was that the area of struggle would be embedded in the lesson plan and a plan would be created to overcome the challenges of slow learners.

The Harvard Institute Professional development changed Principal Velasco's leadership practices. During this PD, she was asked to create a case study based on actions that she would take back to her campus. She was able to take what she learned and put it into action. She was given an abundance of feedback on her action plan to change her school. The support was the critical piece in changing her leadership practices.

Question #6

What links principal professional development to student performance?

Principal Peters defends:

Research is pretty clear that one of the aspects to the success of the students is the leadership of the principal. So the better training you have to support principals in their work, then the better the teachers are going to perform, the better the school is going to run, and the better your students are going to do.

Principal Collins argues, "that implementation is the bridge that links professional development to student performance. If implementation is deliberately looked at and thought through, then the results may reflect improvement."

Principal Shaw holds, "that putting practice into place is how you link PD to student performance. Teaching it, then monitoring and adjusting it, and finally making sure that it happens are the keys to ensuring student success."

Principal Good defends:

The ongoing implementation of learning walks is what linked PD to student success. The evidence was clear in learning walks if changes needed to be made. If so, then the changes were made immediately to support teachers in their endeavor and efforts.

Looking for achievement gaps and taking action is what links PD to student performance. Taking action is supporting the teacher with resources, directing the teacher to pull failure reports to identify students who are not being successful, or putting the teacher on a growth plan.

Table 9 represents the principals' perceptions for each model reported in the findings during the interviews. Fourteen perceptions appeared for the institute including principals being able to speak on the same terms as a trend appearing most frequently. The most prevalent trend was theoretical versus practical. Nine perceptions appeared for vertical articulation. The trend that was appearing most frequently was closer to the work at the campus meaning that they could focus on agenda items that were more specific to their campuses, more practical professional development. Some of the perceptions that appeared revealed one finding that was not always connected to the district initiative. There were no findings in regard to module models and very few findings in regard to vPLCs. The three perceptions that did appear under vPLCs focused more on convenience because it occurred on the principal's campus with the leadership team. The feature to stop and rewind if needed for clarification was available and provided opportunities for the leadership team to collaborate and learn from each other.

Table 9. Perceptions Reported in the Findings from Interviews

Models	Principals' Perceptions
Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals could speak using the same terms • Purposeful break-out sessions • Packaged PD for the principal to replicate on campus • Principal had to become an expert of the content and delivery • Time for participant reflection • Protocols given to principals to be used back on campus • High expectations of pre-readings to be completed • Very purposeful learning • Safe place to grow and be on the continuum as a learner • Principal called off of the campus • Principal learning without their respective campus team • Not all principals had the capacity to lead it back at their campus • The focus was on theoretical versus practical which did not seem to be necessary by all • Seemed to be about compliance versus a useful tool • Time of the year for training was problematic
Vertical Articulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD was broken into quadrants • Closer to the “work” at the campus • Critical friends manner • Give feedback to specific issues on campus • Smaller setting • Conducted on campus • Set your own agenda • Facilitated by lead principal in feeder pattern • May not be connected to district initiative
vPLC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenient • Stop and start recording when needed • Include leadership team in the training
Module	No comments were made

The responses from the participating principals provided a rich body of evidence to determine the perceptions of model effectiveness in helping principals perform better as an instructional leader.

Chapter 5: Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Summary

One important trend that appeared in all interviews is that the principals looked toward the superintendent for leadership and support. In addition, principals viewed their professional development trainings, typically opened and equally led by the superintendent and chiefs, as an opportunity for specialized learning. The nine principals in this study had an overall vested interest in the direction and vision of the school district. One major part of the vision was to have all students college and workforce ready.

Despite the overwhelming attention for principal professional development, the direct link it has on instructional leadership must be considered. There is a continuous need to improve the relationship between professional development and instructional leadership practices to help principals perform more effectively. Professional development has historically been disconnected to principals' individual learning needs, costly, and lacking in a variety of delivery options. This study examined the aspects of principal professional development and the delivery models created in Texas ISD to determine that "Yes, there are models that are more effective than another in enhancing job performance."

Given the dearth of knowledge concerning the development of principal professional development in large urban school districts, this study intended to:

- contribute to a body of knowledge regarding urban educational reform efforts and the use of principal professional development;

- discover information from principals' perceptions pertaining to the development of professional development within a framework regarding urban educational reform efforts;
- inform those who design, enact, and implement professional development; and
- encourage subsequent research pertaining to principal professional development in urban educational reform efforts.

This study may intentionally inform policymakers, district leaders, and educational researchers to tighten the connection between principal professional development and instructional leadership practices. In most parts of the country, the problem is not a shortage of certified principals, but a shortage of well-qualified principals who are willing to work in the places of highest demand, especially in underserved communities and schools where working conditions are most challenging (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

Principals' Final Thoughts and Recommendations for Future Study

The significance of this study related to its implications for future study. Information from the principal interviews identified several areas where principal professional development can be studied.

One model not mentioned in the study but highly recommended by the principal candidates is a five-day institute in June or July with a one day follow-up three times during the year. Include a consultant who was able to come to the campus to assist the principal with proper implementation and provide critical feedback with opportunities for

trouble shooting. The training dates need to be provided to principals early in the school year for clarification and proper planning. Instructional calendars for professional development should be created and provided to campuses early in the school year.

Consider moving components of the training to an off season vs. in season when students are on campus. The components would include: (a) research articles, (b) reflection time, and (c) sharing best practices.

Use of a cyclical process, as seen in Figure 5, allows principal professional development to begin with the purposeful professional development, then the chance to immediately apply that newly found knowledge. The last step in the cycle would be to receive honest, meaningful feedback that leads to change in instructional practices.

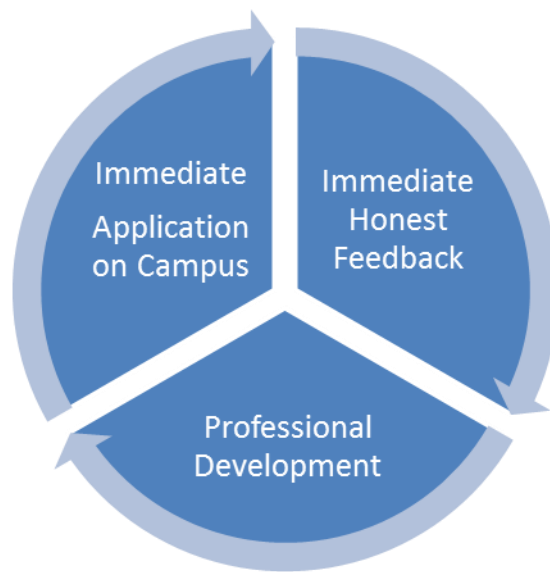


Figure 5. Cyclical principal professional development.

A final thought regarding professional development during that timeframe from Principal Peters was that the changes were very successful initially for the institute. She goes on to defend that she was not sure if it was the model or if we reached a point when it was time to do something else. “The first three years were successful and then we lost momentum with principal training.”

Principal Marks’ belief is that the best PD happens as close to the school building as possible, closer to the real work of what is happening today, yesterday, or tomorrow: “Break through coaching was more meaningful than any pedagogical curriculum. Principals need coaches to challenge their skills and practices, to expand and grow you.” He is a huge advocate of the critical friends’ model, a group of 12 people who build trust together over time to put practices that you can question and struggle with. He closes the interview with making a point that the closer you are to the classroom with the PD, the greater the chance to improve student performance. “Stick to a theme, a model, and embrace that and go deep with that so mastery can follow,” Professor Marks added.

Principal Shaw’s final words focus on the importance of virtual learning being a part of the future of principal professional development: “Video-conferencing is going to be easier and much more adaptable for a spur of the moment to have a conference, especially in a big city.” She would definitely enjoy a webinar with less stress worrying about any emergency back on campus.

Taking time to observe instructional systems is the most important element that Principal Velasco has taken from PD:

When you move to a new campus, you take about two to three months to monitor and observe to see if the teachers are moving in the right direction. I was able to

fix programs and gaps in student achievement in a faster manner because I knew what I was talking about. I was direct. I knew exactly how to meet with the teachers on what was needed for their development and I wasn't second guessing myself. I felt very confident to direct people in their right direction. This practice should be specifically taught to principals when they move into new schools and should not be left to chance.

Research Questions

The three research questions organized the final data collection and created the context by which to identify the major themes. The three questions that this study sought to understand are:

1. What aspects of professional development do principals identify as being critical to enhancing their job performance as an instructional leader?
2. Based on principal perceptions, does the type of professional development delivery impact instructional leadership?
3. Which delivery model did the principals perceive to be most effective and why?

The responses and final thoughts that the principals provided in their interviews and questionnaires were directly connected to the research questions. The major findings in the study revealed that a focus on relevant data was one of the most important aspects of professional development as an instructional leader. The type of professional development delivery that was most impactful as revealed in the questionnaires was the vPLC, with the institute model coming close behind. However, during the interviews, the focus on the institute model with keynote speakers appeared to be the most impactful in enhancing job performance because it built a strong instructional foundation and set the vision for the district.

Conclusions

Principals must continue to cultivate their leadership skills throughout their careers in education. Knowing what types of professional development experiences are most effective in leading to the enhancement of significant instructional leadership skills is critical. This study was a first step toward what should be a more in-depth look at professional development for principals. There is a need to determine which practices within a principal professional development will close the gap between what we know about quality instructional practices and what we do. More significantly, what evidence do we use to determine what works? To further illustrate the need, Vellios (2008) found that the best way to evaluate results of a training program is by asking a focus group of selected learners what results they achieved. These results could include not only what they did when they returned to the job, but also any new department initiative because of the ideas and suggestions that were brought back.

The interview and questionnaire data collected from nine successful principals in this study provided information regarding (a) the aspects of professional development that principals identify as being critical to enhancing their job performance as an instructional leader, (b) types of professional development delivery that impact instructional leadership, and (c) the delivery model that the principals perceive to be most effective and why. Reflection on the research process and data collected describing the nature of principals' professional development in the present study offer recommendations for conducting future research that employs methodologies to produce

findings that are conducive to principal professional development needed to enhance instructional leadership skills.

Appendix A

Questionnaire for Successful School Principals

[SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Principal Professional Development Survey

*** 1. What is your gender and race?**

Female

Male

White

Black

Asian

Hispanic

Other (please specify)

*** 2. Between the years 2005-2011 the level of your campus/s that you lead was:**

of Years at Each Level

Elementary

Middle

High

Other (please specify)

3. How many years total have you been a principal?

*** 4. Which of the professional development models did you participate in?**

Approximate # of sessions you attended

Institute: All principals in one room with the session led by a key note speaker from outside the district and central office.

Vertical Articulation: Principals meet with other principals in their own feeder pattern and the session is led by a principal.

Module: Principal selects the session from a menu of sessions and the date he/she wants to attend.

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/...E_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION&sm=3xSHqxYEqdqWesn3tympOyaN7aiW2Kzpodb7yyHnlbo%3d\[3/11/2014 3:37:53 PM\]](https://www.surveymonkey.com/...E_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION&sm=3xSHqxYEqdqWesn3tympOyaN7aiW2Kzpodb7yyHnlbo%3d[3/11/2014 3:37:53 PM])

virtual PLC: Principal is on campus and participates virtually with his/her teachers.

N/A

5. Which model was most beneficial at enhancing your skills as an instructional leader?

	Very beneficial	Beneficial	Neutral	Inefficient	Very inefficient
Institute	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vertical Articulation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Module	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
vPLC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Do you believe professional development is important in changing behavior in leadership practices?

- Very important Important Neutral Unimportant Very unimportant

7. Did you experience immediate application of learning as a participant when you returned to your campus?

- Yes
 No

Other (please specify)

8. Was the professional development aligned to your role and responsibilities as an instructional leader? If yes, provide an example below.

- Yes
 No

Other (please specify)

9. Which model do you feel had the most impact and which had the least impact on student achievement?

Options of Models

Most impactful

Least impactful

*** 10. Which professional development was the least aligned to your roles and responsibilities as an instructional leader? In what way?**

- Institute
- Vertical Articulation
- Modules
- vPLC

Comment (please specify)

Done

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Options of Models

Most impactful

Least impactful

*** 10. Which professional development was the least aligned to your roles and responsibilities as an instructional leader? In what way?**

- Institute
- Vertical Articulation
- Modules
- vPLC

Comment (please specify)

Done

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Appendix B

Interview Protocols for Successful School Principals

Theory of Learning & Evaluation Category	Interview Question	Principal Response
Reaction	Do you feel that the principal professional development has made a permanent change in your behavior as instructional leader? If so, provide an example.	
Reaction	Do you feel that your knowledge base as instructional leader has expanded? If so, in what way?	
Learning	As a result of principal professional development what did I learn about instructional practices?	
Behavior	Can principal professional development change behavior in leadership practices?	
Behavior	In what ways did principal professional development change my leadership practices?	
Results	What links principal professional development to student performance?	
Reaction	Do you feel that the principal professional development has made a permanent change in your behavior as instructional leader? If so, provide an example.	
Reaction	Do you feel that your knowledge base as instructional leader has expanded? If so, in what way?	
Learning	As a result of principal professional development what did I learn about instructional practices?	
	Any final thoughts you care to add about principal PD?	

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Dora Renaud began her career in education as a teacher's assistant with Dallas ISD when she was 18 years old. During that time she was awarded the Grow Your Own Scholarship that enabled her to go to Texas Woman's University to complete her Bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies with a minor in Professional Education and a Specialization in Bilingual Education. Since then she has worked as a Bilingual teacher, Reading Specialist, Coordinator for the Area Superintendent, Executive Director of Curriculum and served as the assistant to the Superintendent in facilitating "The Principal Group". With her administrative team she participated in the Executive Ed Teaching Trust year-long training. She has been a professor with University of Texas Arlington, Concordia, and American College of Education providing instruction to teachers of Dallas ISD as well as teachers from across the nation in the all areas of literacy such as Linguistics, Foundations of Literacy and Advanced Techniques of Reading.

Her philosophy of education is that "Learning is the Prize" which means that motivation should be intrinsic and educators must encourage students to view learning as the goal. Attendance, grades, etc. only have meaning in relationship to what is learned. Dora is an example of a life-long learner. She completed her doctorate in Education Administration from University of Texas Austin and was selected to be the liaison between the school district and the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh from 2009-2011, and the liaison to Score a Goal in the Classroom.

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