

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A P-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL  
DISTRICT'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

BY



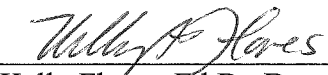
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A DISSERTATION submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

CITY UNIVERSITY OF SEATTLE

2014

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## ABSTRACT

This study addressed the problem that no formal evaluation of a P-12 Washington state school district's change from a traditional hierarchical district organizational structure to a three-region organizational structure based on the feeder patterns of its three comprehensive high schools was conducted. A mixed-methods approach was utilized to address the research questions and hypothesis centered on the original goals set forth by the superintendent to increase student achievement, collaboration, planning time, and professional development opportunities. The study incorporated data collected by the state in the five years before the change in district structure and the five years after the change in the district's organizational structure. Quantitative data were collected on student achievement defined by graduation rates and the 10th-grade state assessments in reading, writing, and math over the past 10 years. Data were also collected through the use of an online survey with classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators. A convergent parallel design was employed to analyze and interpret the data. Both theory generation and theories of organizational change provided the theoretical frameworks for the study. Results of the study showed no significant change in student achievement that could be correlated to the district's organizational structure change. Planning time and professional development was shown not to have increased but results from the data collected on collaboration did indicate an increase in collaboration for building administrators. This study is significant because it delivered a formal evaluation of a district's organizational structure change where none existed and offers a reference for current and future organizational leaders when considering a change in their own organization's structure.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I cannot begin to adequately thank my colleagues, family, and friends for their support throughout my educational journey. My committee chair, Dr. Margaret Chow, has consistently been responsive and supportive and the high level of feedback and guidance from my committee member, Dr. Elizabeth Fountain, has been invaluable. Thank you to Dr. Kelly Flores, dean, and Dr. Kurt Kirstein, dean, for their support and leadership through this process. A special thank you to members of my expert panel, Cliff Anderson, Dr. Anne Varkados, Dr. Mike Brophy, and Jeanette Derosier, for their time and expertise. Of course, I must acknowledge my friend and colleague, Cliff Anderson, whose unfailing faith in my abilities pushed me to do things I never thought I could. Cliff saw in me a leader and helped build my capacity through words, actions, and opportunities. The unwavering support from my husband, David Moloney, for me to pursue my dream of becoming a doctor, leaves me astounded that I was so lucky to find such a man to be my husband and father to my children. To Katherine and Jonathan who saw their mother not as often as they would have liked. A special thank you to them for their impromptu hugs and “I love you” notes slid under my office door as I studied. Thank you to my parents, Wayne and Judith Ginther, for instilling a love of education in me and encouraging me to never give up. Thank you to my friends, Ted and Trish Hardie and Tracy and Debbie Sorensen, who continuously supported me throughout the last three years. And for those who I have not named here, know that I have appreciated every kind and encouraging word. Thank you.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **Introduction**

The change in a Washington state P-12 public school district's organizational structure from a traditional hierarchical structure to a regional model structure was formally evaluated in this study. The original goals set forth by the superintendent for the change in the organizational structure of the district were the basis of this evaluation. A mixed-methods approach was conducted to provide more comprehensive answers to the research questions. The results of this research study provide knowledge of public school district organizational structures for school district leaders when they seek possible actions to support increased achievement for their students.

### **Study Background/Foundation**

#### **Current State of the Field in which the Problem Exists**

Public school districts in the United States are confronted with a national accountability system requiring a mandated level of proficiency in math, English/language arts (ELA), and science for all students or face a series of progressive consequences. The consequences range from identification by the federal government as a school in improvement to the removal of the principal and the staff (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). In this climate of high stake assessments imposed by the federal government through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and implemented by the individual states, public school district leadership must look for more ways to increase student achievement (Jackson & Lunenburg, 2010). The NCLB (2002) requires

that states meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals and disaggregate test scores for all students and subgroups of students based on race/ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, and English language proficiency. According to the NCLB (2002) 100% of all students will meet standards on these federally mandated proficiency assessments. Under scrutiny from the federal government, state legislation, and their communities, some districts' leaders have sought to reorganize their district leadership structure in an effort to become more efficient and increase student achievement (Howard, Wrobel, & Nitta, 2010). However, there is a lack of research specifically addressing a possible connection between public school district organizational structures and student achievement.

### **Historical Background**

Early twentieth-century management theories and models have shaped twenty-first-century school leadership (Gordon, 2009; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005; Spring 1997). Gordon (2009), Hoyle et al. (2005), and Spring (1997) examined these early twentieth-century management theories and models and concluded that twenty-first-century school administration and management styles were extrapolated from a variety of twentieth-century business models. According to Gordon (2009), the theories and models that current school districts have been founded on are extended from the work of early philosophers, such as Socrates and Plato, who sought to understand the organizations of society. Building on these early works, theories of bureaucracy were then developed that were later morphed into social-scientific methods of organizational structures (Gordon, 2009).

Senge (1999) and Gordon (2009) referred to Theory X and Theory Y put forth by McGregor (1960; 2000) when describing organizational structures. Gordon (2009) stated that Theory X has traditionally been utilized in American institutions. Theory X was based on the premise that employees needed to be directed and there should be strict organizational controls and strata of authoritative positions to which employees at various levels report within the organization (Gordon, 2009). In contrast, Theory Y was based on the foundation that employees were self-directive and the organization structure encouraged growth and innovation by employees toward organizational objectives (McGregor, 1960; 2000).

Spring (1997) presented an historical perspective of American schools in which he described a hierarchical school system, based on the scientific management theory, with divided responsibilities, requiring identified staff within the school system to be subordinates and placing men in the positions of authority as superintendent and principal. Spring (1997) also spoke to the specialization within the school district that promoted the expert within a given field or responsibility area. He described the school system as an organization in which individuals were appointed certain duties that could only be performed by that individual in a particular position much like assembly lines in factories (Spring, 1997). Gordon (2009), Hoyle et al. (2005), and Spring (1997) concluded that the scientific management theory in education was still present in modern school district organizations. These district organizations were characterized by the assignment of employees to certain tasks within a hierarchical system under the direct

supervision of a supervisor with the output of the organization considered a human resource for society.

The historical school district organizational structure has not changed significantly as teachers reported to principals, principals reported to district-level administrators, and district-level administrators reported to the superintendent. Within the structures of most American school districts, a strict reporting line was delineated where organizational policies and procedures limited employees to specific roles (Gordon, 2009; Spring, 1997). As districts became larger and expectations for increased student achievement intensified, school district leaders looked for new and better ways to address the demands and expectations found in the current American public school education system (Glaze 2013; Howard et al., 2010). Changing the traditional school district structure was a possible tool for school district leaders to use to improve student performance (Glaze, 2013; Honig, 2008; Senge, 1990).

Superintendents and district leadership today are looking to transform their public school districts from historically managerial organizations (Gordon, 2009; Senge, 1999; Spring, 1997) to the type of learning organizations defined by Senge (1990) and Kenny (2006) and expanded on by Honig (2008). Senge (1990) discussed learning organizations as organizations with a clear purpose, a defined and understood vision, and a climate in which assessment was utilized for learning and not for evaluation. These characteristics helped distinguish a learning organization from a managerial organization. Honig (2008) provided practical examples of public school district central administration redefining



traditional central office roles so that district administrators became focused on the support of teaching and learning and learned from experience, evidence, and collaboration. Becoming a learning organization required a change from the historical school district structure and its traditional functions (Glaze, 2013; Honig, 2008; Howard et al., 2010; Jackson & Lunenburg, 2010).

In their attempts to facilitate increased student achievement, some school district superintendents have chosen a regional approach to the district organizational structure. This type of regional approach creates a district-within-a-district fashioned after the school-within-a-school model. These district-within-a-district configurations encompass P-12 schools typically in the same feeder patterns and in close geographic location to each other. For example, in this study there are three-regions organized around the three comprehensive high schools. Research compiled by Dewees (2007) about the school-within-a-school model concluded that this model had a positive impact on student achievement. This research, when extrapolated by district leaders, can lead them to believe that a regional model, or district-within-a-district model, may also lead to increased achievement for their students.

Historically, public school district organizational structures have been fairly static, but, with increased demands for accountability regarding student achievement, some district leaders have begun to explore the option of changing their organizational structure with the hopes of increasing student achievement. The decision to change a public school district's structure has an impact on the district and its learning community.

District leaders researching this course of action will struggle to find research to support this option.

### **Deficiencies in the Evidence**

There were six Washington and Oregon state school districts identified by the district committee in which district leaders had adopted a regional approach as their organizational structure (T. Apostle, personal communication, 2007). No formal evaluations or case studies of a public school district organizational structure change to a regional format were found in the literature. However, a review of the literature revealed a correlation between leadership and increased student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2007), along with a correlation between the establishment of professional learning communities and student achievement (Dufour, 2012; Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Karhanck, 2004; Glaze, 2013). Even though these correlations were found in the literature the studies lacked any mention of the possible effects of the organizational structure on collaboration, planning time, professional development, and student achievement. Researchers have stated that organizational structures of school districts should support increased student achievement (Hoyle et al., 2005), but a study centered on this concept could not be found in the literature. Specifics regarding deficiencies in the evidence are provided in Chapter 2.

### **Problem Statement**

This study involved an evaluation of one school district's change in its organizational structure to a three-region model. The change in the traditional

organizational structure of this Washington state P-12 school district was implemented in July of 2008 to better organize professional time of the employees within the district in an effort to increase student achievement (T. Apostle, personal communication, 2007). The research was conducted by an administrator in the district who was present when the change to the three-region model was initiated and implemented. This employment status allowed for the acquisition of personal communications from the superintendent such as conversations, meeting notes, and presentations. The superintendent who initiated this change stated that the change in the district's organizational structure must do the following: (a) prioritize increased planning time for staff, (b) increase opportunities for collaboration, and (c) intensify efforts to increase professional learning opportunities for certificated and classified staff (T. Apostle, personal communication, March 22, 2007).

School district leaders often initiate organizational change processes in response to community, state, and federal accountability demands without enough research-based knowledge of the types of changes that are most likely to be effective. In the absence of such knowledge, leaders run the risk of wasting time and effort and creating negative impacts on the community without achieving the desired result of improvement in student achievement. Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (2012) presented other issues that contributed to change initiative failures including the lack of human, material, and financial resources. Leaders of organizational change initiatives must take into consideration the culture, the goals, and the vision of the organization along with the

operational and financial effectiveness of the organization if they wish for the change to have a higher probability of success (Beer & Walton, 1990; Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011; Kirkman, Mathieu, Cordery, Rosen, & Kukenberger, 2011; Pierson, Ciliska, Dobbins, and Mowat, 2012). Without research-based knowledge, school leaders may find themselves investing time, energy, and resources into change efforts that might not be successful (Kotter, 1999).

This study addressed the problem that the district leadership could not find other examples of public schools changing its organizational structure to a three-region model. This study provides a formal evaluation of the change in the school district's organizational structure to a three-region model. The study was conducted to determine whether or not the organizational structural change resulted in the accomplishment of the goals stated by the superintendent. The goals set by the superintendent for the district's structural change were an increase in planning time, professional development opportunities, collaboration, and student achievement.

### **Audience**

Current and future superintendents and other district leaders could benefit from the findings of this study as they attempt to create organizational structures within their districts that will support and promote student achievement. In particular, school district leaders who are in charge of larger districts with more than one high school may benefit the most from this study. The audience is not limited to public education leaders but may also include business and other organization leaders who seek to change their

organizational structure. Washington superintendents, central office personnel, and other school leaders will benefit from the new knowledge generated from this research study. This research study provides school leaders with information and insight into a district whose leadership changed the structure of the organization with the expectations of increasing collaboration, planning time, professional development opportunities, and student achievement. The results of the study will help school leaders in their decision-making process regarding district leadership structures.

### **Specific Leadership Problem**

Changing an organizational structure takes time, money, and effort that school leaders need to weigh as they make decisions for their district. The specific leadership problem that was addressed by this study was twofold. There was a lack of literature regarding the effectiveness of the change to a regional model P-12 public school district organizational structure, and there was the absence of a formal evaluation of a particular district's change from a traditional school district organizational structure to a three-region model. The leadership problem that was addressed through this study was the lack of knowledge of the results of a change from a traditional school district organizational structure to a regional model. School leaders (i.e. superintendents) can refer to this study when determining whether or not they want to dedicate limited monetary and human resources into changing their districts' organizational structures.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to provide an evaluation of the impact of a district's organizational structure change from a traditional horizontal structure based on grade-level bands to a regional model. The study provides an evaluation of the intended results of the district's organizational structure change, which were to increase student achievement, increase planning time for staff, increase opportunities for staff collaboration, and intensify efforts to increase professional learning opportunities for staff. The study addresses the paucity of literature related to a regional public school organizational district structure and its effectiveness. Current and future superintendents and district-level leaders will benefit from the results of this study as they seek to align their own districts' structures to produce higher student achievement.

### **Methodology Overview**

A mixed-methods study was conducted. Quantitative data were collected on student achievement and encompassed the time frame of five years before the organizational structure change and five years after the change. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data were solicited through surveys of staff who have been employed by the district five years before and five years after the district's organizational structure change. The survey questions focused on the original goals set forth by the superintendent of increased planning time, collaboration, professional development, and student achievement.

A mixed-methods approach best suited this study as a more complete picture was drawn from the use of both quantitative data and qualitative data (Leady and Ormrod, 2010). Participants in the survey were classified staff, certificated staff, building level administrators, and central office administrators. Surveys were conducted via email with a link to an electronic survey program. Participants ranged in age, gender, ethnicity/race, education, and experience. The population included all employees who qualified as having been employed in the identified job classifications (classified staff, certificated staff, building administrator, central office administrator) for five years before the organizational structure change and five years after the change less any participant who chose not to participate.

### **Research Questions/Hypothesis**

The original goals set forth by the superintendent for the change in the organizational structure of the district were the basis for the following research questions:

1. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on collaboration among classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?
2. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on planning time for classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators,

and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?

3. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on opportunities for professional development for classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?
4. Is there a relationship between the implementation of the regional model and student achievement as measured by the estimated on-time graduation rates and the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments (High School Proficiency Exam [HSPE], Washington Assessment of Student Learning [WASL], End of Course [EOC] exam)?

The nondirectional research hypothesis and its corresponding null hypothesis in the quantitative part of the study that helped answer research question number four were:

Research hypothesis: District student achievement data, measured by the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments (HSPE/WASL/EOC) and estimated on-time graduation rates, before the implementation of the three-region organizational structure model will differ from district student achievement data after the implementation of the three-region organizational structure model.

Null hypothesis (H1): There is no significant difference between the district's student achievement data, measured by the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math



state assessments (HSPE/WASL/EOC) and estimated on-time graduation rates, before and after the implementation of the three-region organizational structure model.

### **Study Limitations**

This study was restricted in scope to one district's organizational structure change and was limited by time. The switch to a three-region organizational structure for this district occurred at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year and had been in place for five years at the time of this study. Therefore, data could only be collected for a period of five years after the district's organizational structure change. This data set was expanded to include the five years directly preceding the change to the three-region district structure. The data collection concluded by the end of May 2014.

Other limitations included a smaller sample size to choose from of participants who were employees of the district five years before and five years after the organizational structure change. The number of the potential participants who met the identified participant requirements was 1,214. Of the 1,214 potential qualifying participants, 204 responded to the survey. Nonprobability sampling retained the number of participants at 204. Nonprobability convenience sampling does not allow for calculating the error of estimation and limits the ability to generalize results (Leary, 2008). Within these limitations the study provided a valid and reliable evaluation of the change in the district's organizational structure to a three-region model based on the four goals set forth by the superintendent.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

Several key terms were used throughout this study and needed to be defined for the purpose of this research. Key terms used within this study included the following: regional structure, professional learning communities, certificated staff, classified staff, building administrators, and central office administrators.

The term regional structure or model was used interchangeably with the term three-region structure or model as the evaluation study of the school district that changed its traditional structure to a three-region structure was based on the number of comprehensive high schools within its boundaries. The regional structure mimics a school-within-a-school concept but on a larger scale at the district-level involving several schools within each region. The schools were determined to belong to a particular region through their high school feeder pattern.

A professional learning community has been redefined by Dufour (2004, 2012). Professional learning communities in education are based on four main ideas, according to Dufour (2004, 2012). These four main ideas included ensuring that all students learn, creating a culture of collaboration, focusing on results through data-driven decisions, and a continuous commitment and focus by educators on the hard work of educating children (Dufour, 2004, 2012). Thessin and Starr (2011) built upon Dufour's (2004) definition of professional learning communities and defined the actions of a professional learning community in six phases: (1) inquire/research, (2) analyze data, (3) look at student work, (4) examine instruction, (5) assess student progress, and (6) reflect. Professional learning

communities and their relationship to increased student achievement will be discussed further in Chapter 2. Professional learning communities can fall under the umbrella of professional development but for this study professional development was defined as the acquisition of skills and knowledge through trainings and classes to increase an employee's professional abilities.

The delineation of classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators was important to this study as each group offered a unique perspective regarding their personal understandings of the effectiveness of the district's organizational structure change to a three-region model. Certificated staff was defined as those staff belonging to the local affiliate of the Washington Education Association within the district and were comprised of teachers, counselors, district improvement specialists, school psychologists, librarians, on-time graduation specialists, and other related positions that worked directly with students and required a four-year degree at minimum. For the purpose of this study classified staff referred to para-educators, secretaries, office managers, administrative assistants, custodians, security, bus drivers, and food service personnel. Building administrators were defined as principals and assistant principals, and the term central office administrators referred to personnel who held the titles of assistant directors, directors, executive directors, chief academic officers, assistant superintendents, and superintendent.

## Summary

School districts have historically been hierarchical in structure with specific tasks allocated to certain employees and strict reporting structures in place. The high pressure environment that district leaders find themselves in today has created a push for change (Smylie, 2010). Some district leaders have turned to the action of changing the traditional organizational structure of their district in hopes of increasing student achievement (Howard et al., 2010). However, a review of the literature has revealed a paucity of research on public school district organizational change to aid school leaders in any decisions they make involving their district's organizational structure. The deficiencies in the evidence helped substantiate the need for this study and further exploration in the literature review solidified the necessity of this study. Four research questions and a hypothesis guided the study within the study limitations. A further review of the mixed-methods methodology undertaken during this study is presented in Chapter 3. The study of a district's organizational structural change to a three-region model adds to the literature surrounding educational organizational structures and may assist current and future district leaders in their decision making as they strive to create district organizations that serve the needs of all students and increase student achievement.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

The literature review begins with a foundational discussion regarding the theoretical and conceptual framework for this study. Following this discussion of organizational frameworks a deeper look at the literature surrounding organizational structures in public education is explored. Further examination of organizational structures in businesses and non-educational organizations provides a deeper understanding of the way leaders seek to change structures of their organizations to move their organizations forward and to produce high quality products and increase output. The sections on organizational structures are followed by an examination of the literature surrounding how leadership and professional learning communities and collaboration contribute to increased student achievement and facilitate the need for structures that support the main goals of the district. This review provided a solid foundation on which to build the mixed-methods study resulting in a formal evaluation of a P-12 Washington state public school district's organizational structure change to a regional model.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

Data collected through the empirical research study provided an opportunity for theory generation. The theory generation framework presented by Punch (2006) applied to this study. Data were examined in an effort to produce a theory regarding the possible impacts of the change of a public school district's organizational structure on student achievement, planning time, collaboration, and professional development opportunities.

Punch (2006) defined theory generation as the process of developing a theory to explain the results of a study. Theory generation typically was found in qualitative studies but may occur when theory verification, typically found in quantitative studies, was not validated (Punch, 2006). The lack of quantitative studies on the area of study supported the use of the theory generation framework for the research. This mixed-methods study of a change in an organizational structure of a school district allowed the opportunity for a contribution to a generation of a theory involving changes in public school district structures and their possible impact on student achievement, collaboration, planning time, and professional development.

Theories of organizational change provided another framework for this study as reorganization of businesses and educational institutions has been a strategy regularly used by leaders today (Blanchard, Blanchard, & Zigarmi, 2007; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Groșanu, Rachișan, & Berinde, 2011; Kenny, 2006). Blanchard et al. (2007) discussed structural invention and stated that an organizational structure should be fluid and flexible so that it serves the primary purpose of the organization. Dunaway and Ausband (2008) analyzed the organizational patterns of North Carolina school districts in an attempt to lay the groundwork for further study regarding how to determine the best way to organize a public school district. Even though the scope of their study was limited and did not address the possible connection between the organizational structure and student achievement, staff planning, professional development, and collaboration, Dunaway and

Ausband (2008) encouraged further research on public school district organizational structures to be conducted in other states.

### **Organizational Structures in Public Education**

A look at the historical development of twenty-first-century school leadership by Gordon (2009) gave insight into the management models that exist within the majority of school districts in the United States. Honig (2008), in her research, saw school districts try to shift from these traditional public school management models, described by Gordon (2009), in order to focus on supporting teaching and learning for all students. The traditional school district management model contained defined positions such as para-educator, teacher, principal, and district administrator with exclusive roles, defined responsibilities, and specific demarcations of authority. This traditional school district management model, called a bureaucratic model, formed the foundation for current district organizational structures where responsibilities are specialized to certain positions and there is a ranking to the positions within the organization (Hoyle et al, 2005).

Hoyle et al. (2005) reviewed the hierarchical structure of the traditional school system in their research and suggested that a change was needed to address the current needs of all stakeholders. Contributing to the research regarding the current struggle for educational leaders to move away from the traditional system structure, Leathwood and Jantzi (2008) warned district leaders that an organization, its culture and structure, should support the work of its employees and that the structure of the district should be flexible enough to change and adapt to new directions determined by the needs of the school

district's stakeholders. Leathwood and Jantzi (2008) also concluded that leader efficacy was closely associated with their efforts at organizational redesign (e.g., building collaborative cultures and the structures that encourage collaboration). These findings opened the field to another set of questions for further research on the reasons why some superintendents decide to change a district's organizational structures.

Blanchard et al. (2007) helped clarify the importance of the structure of an organization needing to serve the people so that "energizing structures and systems" (p. 267) are sustained to support high performing organizations. Blanchard et al. (2007) based their conclusions on a previous study conducted by Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Essary. These researchers (as cited in Blanchard et al., 2007) identified a leadership-profit chain from reviewing hundreds of studies from 1980 to 2005 on the interaction between organizational and employee success, customer loyalty, and leadership. The resulting theory of operational and strategic leadership was shown to create customer loyalty, employee excitement, and organizational longevity (Blanchard et al., 2007). Blanchard et al. (2007) stated that creating organizational vitality through organizational structure was one way business and school leaders could move their respective organizations forward.

Though specific research is scarce regarding P-12 public school district organizational structures and possible impacts on student learning, collaboration, and planning time, there is some research available regarding the possible impact of organizational structures of higher education on college student learning. The research



(Berger, 2002) provided one example of how different educational institutions' structures affected student learning. Berger's (2002) study used a five-dimensional model of organizational structure that focused on ways in which those organizational dimensions influenced the development of student outcomes. The model Berger used was adapted from Bolman and Deal's organizational frames. Bolman and Deal's four organizational frames of structure, human resources, political, and symbolic have been utilized to support other research surrounding organizational structures and provided some understanding as to why certain structures were created and supported within certain school systems (Salazar, 2009).

Specific studies on P-12 public school district leadership organizational structures are difficult to find. One study focused on the organizational patterns of North Carolina school districts. Dunaway and Ausband (2008) built a foundation for identifying organizational patterns found in public school districts in North Carolina and how the organizational patterns varied in districts serving different numbers of students. In Dunaway and Ausband's (2008) literature review they found many works surrounding the reorganization of schools but little about the reorganization of school districts as a whole. Their work exposed a gap in the literature surrounding public school district leadership organizational structures.

Dunaway and Ausband (2008) analyzed the organizational patterns of North Carolina school districts through a qualitative study where they focused on document analysis. From the 115 school districts in North Carolina they were able to include 79

organizational charts in their study. Dunaway and Ausbund (2008) sorted the organizational charts into three main categories with five sub-categories based on the position of principals to the superintendent. All of the organizational structures were determined to be hierarchical except for one, and they noted that the bureaucratic model was predominant in the school district structures in North Carolina in their final discussion (Dunaway & Ausbund, 2008). Dunaway and Ausbund (2008) did not carry their research further to look for a possible connection between organizational structures of public school districts and student achievement but posed this as a question for further research.

Kerchner (2009), though he did not specifically address district leadership organizational structures, emphasized the overarching need to reorganize education. His four-year historical case study of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) highlighted the importance and the necessity to look at policies that have driven large urban school districts, such as LAUSD. Through his research and case study Kerchner (2009) was able to draw a connection between the policies of large urban districts and their resulting effects in the suburbs and small town districts of America. Kerchner (2009) listed four ideas from the old institution of education that evolved during the Progressive Era in the early twentieth-century that have been modified, erased, or challenged by many large urban districts, including LAUSD. These four ideas included the following:

- a political governance in which school board members are non-partisan and chosen from community leaders without obvious particular interests;
- local control of finance and educational policy with loose oversight from the state;
- a professional hierarchy of educators that controlled school operations; and
- a logic of confidence in which those outside the system were assured that those inside were up to the task (Kerchner, 2009, p. 9).

Gordon (2009) also discussed these aspects of early twentieth-century school administration and how these ideas had not stood the test of time. Kerchner (2009) analyzed the change in the organization of school districts and noted that many districts chose to hire superintendents who were non-educators and that there has been an erosion of the number of traditional hierarchical structures found in public school districts. He proposed five public policy initiatives to move education forward. These five public policies promoted autonomous schools, direct management of budgets by school leadership, strong recognition and incentive programs, technology innovations, and increase of choice (Kerchner, 2009).

Some literature focused on governance models of school districts. Namit (2008) explored a variety of governance models in his article, as well as how to develop a systemwide approach that is ultimately aimed at improving student learning. The traditional school board governance model was described and compared with the policy governance model in Namit's (2008) article. The policy governance model defined the

board and superintendent values by specific policies (Nमित, 2008). These specific values included a requirement that there was a strong relationship between the board and the superintendent with no division within the board that was made public (Nमित, 2008).

In Nमित's (2008) article the governance policies and the relationship between the superintendent and the school board were explored but connections to the actual structure of the district's internal leadership was not discussed. However, the two governance models Nमित (2008) presented may provide an avenue to follow in future research regarding which model may have a link to increased student achievement and whether or not the different types of governance models influence the type of district leadership organizational structure implemented.

The work of Waters and Marzano (2007) and Gomes (2011) highlighted the importance of the superintendent and board relationship and implied that student achievement was affected. Gomes' (2011) study explored the connection between the support of the school board for the district and the success of the district-level actions taken to increase student achievement. His research (Gomes, 2011) focused on a quantitative study of 113 K-12 superintendents in California and their reliance on the six district-level practices outlined by Marzano and Waters (2009) and their impact on student achievement. Gomes' (2011) research also included a citation from The California Alliance of Pre K-18 Partnerships [CAPK-18] (2004) that included organizational structure as one of eight elements making up a successful educational partnership between the district and the school board.

## **Organizational Structures in Business and Other Non-educational Organizations**

Because studies relating directly to P-12 public school district organizational structures were scarce in the literature, an exploration of business and other non-educational organizational structures is needed to provide further insight into organizational structures that increase output and/or quality. Peirson, Ciliska, Dobbins, and Mowat (2012) conducted a case study on organizational change within a public health unit in Canada. Their qualitative study was conducted between 2008 and 2010 with 70 participants in semi-structured interviews and focus groups along with a thematic analysis of 137 documents. They concluded that the findings of their study highlighted the importance of the relationships that were formed through formal and informal structures created within the organization (Peirson et al., 2012). Research cited by Peirson et al. (2012) supported their claim that it was not enough to have structures in the organization that bring staff together but that the organization needed to have structures in place that provided staff with open access to the knowledge and information they need to make decisions that will improve the final output of the organization.

To further support organizational change, Peirson et al. (2012) stated that the organization leaders must be excellent communicators of the vision and provide rationales, along with supporting implementation details and change implications, to the members in their organizations for an organizational change to be successful. Peirson et al. (2012) found in their study that more open staff relationships needed to occur along

with significant investments of money and technology to sustain an organizational change. Other researchers (Beer & Walton, 1990; Hartnell et al., 2011; Kirkman et al., 2011) came to similar conclusions in their studies that organizational change must have strong leadership and a shared vision, must develop structures in which essential organizational knowledge is facilitated, and must take into account the human component of the organization. To be successful Beer and Walton (1990) along with Hartnell et al. (2011) cautioned that a strong consideration of the culture of the organization must take place before leaders institute structural changes they wish to sustain.

Hartnell et al. (2011) applied a competing values framework (CVF) to a meta-analysis of their own theoretical suppositions regarding organizational culture and organizational effectiveness. They explored four types of organizations and how the cultures of these organizations controlled their output. From the four identified cultures of adhocracy, market, clan, and hierarchy, the researchers (Hartnell et al., 2011) devised three organizational effectiveness categories. These categories were employee attitudes, operational effectiveness, and financial effectiveness (Hartnell et al., 2011).

Their analysis of 84 empirical studies with 94 independent samples suggested that organizational leaders should look at the culture, the goals, and the vision of the organization before they attempted to change the culture to one that they believed will better foster an economic advantage (Hartnell et al., 2011). Hartnell et al. (2011) recognized that their study was more suitable to profit organizations than to non-profit organizations. However, this study does provide some information for educational

leaders considering whether to change their district's organizational structure. As in profit organizations, school district leaders will want to consider the type of culture and the beliefs and values of that culture because of their possible influences on the effectiveness and output of the district.

Leaders of manufacturing companies have undertaken major changes to their organizational structure to gain a competitive edge in today's markets (Antioco, Moenaert, Lindgreen, & Wetzels, 2008; Gebauer & Kowalkowski, 2012). Gebauer and Kowalkowski (2012) conducted a qualitative study on 36 European manufacturing companies where they explored patterns of how these companies moved from a product-orientated company to a customer service-orientated company through the avenue of changing their organizational structures. Their research stated that company leaders realized that the organizational structure of their companies had to support a service orientation so that a customer orientation could occur resulting in the final outcome of increased profits for their companies (Gebauer & Kowalkowski, 2012). Gebauer and Kowalkowski (2012) found in their study that a change from a geographically focused organizational structure to a customer-focused organizational structure required collaboration across departments and throughout the organization. This need for collaboration to increase output was also seen in the literature on educational leadership and professional learning communities discussed later in this chapter.

Seminal research by Beer and Walton (1990) concluded that organizations with traditionally hierarchical structures must involve all of their stakeholders in the

organizational redesign process. Their study explored how organizations have become more complex, requiring members of the organization to work both vertically and horizontally within the organization. This vertical and horizontal work structure has created matrix organizations. These matrix organizations are organizations in which there are both vertical and horizontal reporting structures and flows of information specifically designed to increase coordination between departments and levels of management (Beer & Walton, 1990).

The sharing of knowledge within an organization was an essential component for organizational success (Denning, 2010; Kirkman et al., 2011). In their research Kirkman et al. (2011) found that many organizations instituted organizational communities of practice (OCoPs) to support innovation and increase knowledge within the organization. Kirkman et al. (2011) studied 32 organizational communities of practice (OCoPs) in American-owned multinational mining and minerals processing companies. They defined OCoPs as a team of employees who consistently collaborated together to gain knowledge and skills to solve problems (Kirkman et al, 2011). This definition was very similar to the definition of a professional learning community (Dufour, 2004, 2012; Dufour et al., 2004) found in the educational literature and discussed later in this chapter. Kirkman et al. (2011) found that leadership, empowerment, and the identified tasks contributed to the structure of the OCoPs within the organization. They found that when OCoPs were created as a core function within the organization they were more effective (Kirkman et al, 2011). This meant that the structure of the organization needed to accommodate the



functions of an OCoP so that learning could occur and organizational performance would be increased.

In response to the rapid increase and expansion in technologies in the past ten years a flurry of reorganization and restructuring was occurring within organizations regarding how information was shared (Denning, 2010; Hagel, Brown, & Davison, 2010; Kenny 2006). Denning (2010) and Hagel et al. (2010) discussed the need for collaboration and communication across various lines within the organization and outside of the organization with the intention of increasing innovation and aligning the human resources as well as physical resources to achieve a healthier bottom line. Kenny (2006) presented a framework for the strategic change process called the maturity model for strategy formation as a result of his extensive review of the literature. This maturity model was created to assist managers in establishing an environment of trust along with a structure within the organization where inclusion of employees and their experience-based knowledge would lead to greater success for the organization (Kenny, 2006). Kenny (2006) and Denning (2010) concluded that the agility of the organization to flex its structure and processes is essential in today's unpredictable flattening world. Literature regarding organizational change outside of the public education realm suggested that leadership, stakeholder involvement, collaboration, and culture were key factors to consider when implementing an organizational structure change.

A change in organizational structure can be a powerful tool for leaders to utilize when seeking to increase their bottom line, but this tool needs to be used with caution

(Bolman & Deal, 2003). Bolman and Deal (2003) examined organizations through four frames: structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. A structural frame sets forth the formal processes for people inside and outside the organization. Bolman and Deal (2003) contended that structure of an organization can hinder, as well as expand, its capabilities and that a tremendous amount of time and effort must be devoted to creating a structure in which employees can perform at their highest levels. Nadler, Gerstein, and Shaw (as cited in Bolman and Deal, 2003) stated that a huge advantage can occur for an organization if its leaders placed their emphasis on being flexible and mastering the ability to quickly adapt to change. Bolman and Deal (2003) discussed the alignment of vertical and horizontal integration and stated that leaders must be aware of both the internal and external environments in which they find their organizations to make sure they were able to create the appropriate structures to sustain success. Blanchard et al. (2007) and Bolman and Deal (2003) agreed that the structure of the organization must be fluid enough to not only support the vision and goals of the organization but allow for innovation and capacity building of all employees within the organization.

From an examination of the literature, commonalities have appeared between public school district organizational structures and businesses and non-educational organizational structures. Organizational structures were becoming more fluid to meet the demands of the changing global economy and the expectations of their stakeholders. Organizations were moving away from hierarchical management structures into structures reaching vertically and horizontally across the organization to maximize their

output and strengthen their positions. As revealed in the literature on organizational structures the commonalities of strong leadership and the cultivation of a culture of collaboration were key elements in increasing quality, output, and student achievement.

### **Leadership**

Changing the structure of an organization requires strong leadership. Hughes et al. (2012) defined leadership as a complex interaction between a leader, the environment, and followers. This identified interaction between the leader, the followers, and the situation (Hughes et al., 2012) has fostered numerous studies involving educational leadership. Studies on educational leadership are plentiful in the literature but research is lacking regarding how a leader led staff through changing the organizational structure (environment) of a public school district in hopes of increasing student achievement, collaboration, planning time, and professional development.

Murphy and Hallinger (1988) studied 12 California school districts that were deemed to be effective in earning higher student achievement scores than the majority of other districts in the state. Through their study, which included interviews with superintendents and analysis of documents, Murphy and Hallinger were able to delineate “17 themes under the four categories of (1) conditions, (2) climate factors, (3) characteristics of curriculum and instruction, and (4) organizational dynamics” (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988, p. 175). Murphy’s and Hallinger’s (1988) research did not explore organizational structures but looked at autonomy and decision-making processes within the districts they studied. Results from this study showed a consistency with other

research where strong instructional leadership has been related to a higher achieving district (Dufour, 2012; Dufour et al., 2004; Murphy, Hallinger, & Peterson, 1985; Robinson, Le Fevre, & Pattullo, 2005). The researchers suggested further investigation to be conducted on the role of districts in promoting educational effects (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988). Specific literature addressing the effects of a public school district's organizational structure on student achievement, planning time, professional development, and collaboration was not found. None of the research reviewed showed a direct connection to this study's research questions and exposed once again a scarceness of literature pertaining to P-12 public school district leadership organizational structures and a possible relationship to increased student achievement, planning time, professional development, and collaboration.

Howard et al. (2010) presented an administrative case study on the reorganization of the Little Rock School District in Arkansas and related their study to Richard Matland's ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation. One of the intended outcomes for the Little Rock School District through district-level reorganization was to "become the highest achieving district in the nation" according to the superintendent (Howard et al., 2010, p. 934). The study was performed as part of the evaluation of the reorganization of the Little Rock School District with interviews and telephone and written surveys conducted with the superintendent, central office administrators, principals, teachers, and other staff. However, the focus of this study was on the policy implementation, and it did not look at any possible relationship to student achievement.

In their conclusion the researchers suggested that stakeholders' perspectives of a school system reorganization was valuable information for the school leader to seek, so that the appropriate strategies were utilized with the different groups who were affected by the reorganization.

The school district leader should bear in mind the varying perspectives of stakeholders when considering a reorganization of their district's organizational structure (Howard et al., 2010). By keeping in mind these viewpoints the superintendent may choose to change course or make adjustments within the reorganization process to garner support of the implementation. This has implications for future studies on reorganizations of school districts. Do school leaders rethink and redesign their original proposed reorganization design of the school district as new information comes to light? Do school leaders choose an organizational structure based on their leadership style and comfort? If so, do these choices have an impact on student achievement?

Other literature has provided some information on the effects of leadership and collaboration on student learning as opposed to any clarification on the organizational structure and whether or not that structure had a relationship to student achievement. Waters and Marzano (2007) contributed more research on district leadership influences from their examination of the effects of superintendent leadership on student achievement. Their study was a meta-analysis of studies in the United States from 1970 to 2005. Waters and Marzano (2007) conducted their meta-analysis through the retrieval of 4,500 studies contained in the ERIC, PsychINFO, Dissertation Abstracts, and the

AERA online databases. From these 4,500 first identified studies the researchers narrowed their scope to 200 studies through their selection criteria. Upon further examination Waters and Marzano (2007) chose 27 quantitative studies that involved 2,714 districts, 4,434 ratings of superintendent leadership, and 3.4 million student achievement scores. These 27 quantitative studies included in the final meta-analysis were used to determine Waters and Marzano's (2007) results and supported the claim that the quality of a superintendent's leadership can impact the level of student achievement. The authors concluded that the superintendent should make sure systems were in place to support student learning, but a description of the actual structure of the system was not revealed in their work (Waters & Marzano, 2007).

Other researchers have looked at leadership as a contributing factor to student achievement and have also addressed the need for districts to provide resources to support student learning, establish positive school board and superintendent relationships, ensure board support of district goals, and formulate goal-setting and goal monitoring in order to affect student achievement (Jackson & Lunenburg, 2010; Murphy et al., 1985; Namit, 2008; Robinson et al., 2005; Waters & Marzano, 2007). Robinson et al. (2005) voiced concern that leadership in the school district had a responsibility to focus on teaching and learning in the classrooms rather than on generic leadership. To focus on instructional leadership, teaching, and learning in the classrooms, Robinson (2010) concluded that school leaders needed the capability of being instructional leaders to be effective in increasing student achievement. Robinson (2010) "used published empirical

research and associated theory to propose a tentative model of the capabilities required to engage in effective instructional leadership” (p. 3). Through a meta-analysis study, Robinson (2010) identified three capabilities of effective instructional leadership: (a) builds relational trust, (b) integrates educational knowledge, and (c) solves complex problems. It can be concluded that the capabilities identified by Robinson (2010) for effective instructional leadership have some implications for a district’s organization and potential structures created to support instructional leadership.

Even though Robinson et al. (2005) concentrated on the principalship responsibilities in terms of leadership, they also alluded to the district leadership’s role in increasing student achievement. The need to reevaluate the role of the principal and to reorganize and perhaps reassign some of the duties that are currently expected within the role of the principalship was an area where district leadership needs to step in if they expect an increase in student achievement. Robinson et al. (2005) discussed the role of the principal changing to one of an instructional leader and with this shift in emphasis for the principal suggested that reorganization was needed at the district-level. Horng and Loeb (2010) expanded on the role of an instructional leader and presented a view that the instructional leader was not a leader who was the master teacher in the school or constantly in a classroom observing. They described the instructional leader as an organizational manager with a focus on hiring the best teachers possible and providing an environment where teaching and learning were the relentless focus (Horng & Loeb, 2010).

The potential refocusing of district policy to support instructional leadership may lend itself to a reorganization of district leadership structures to support building level principals more efficiently, so that the principals can engage in a higher level of instructional leadership activities than generic leadership activities. The implication here is that reorganization of district leadership may increase student achievement but no other literature was found to substantiate this nor was there any reference to other research in Robinson et al.'s (2005) and Horng and Loeb's (2010) studies.

Research by Murphy et al. (1985) may shed some light on the topic of district leadership organization and student achievement. Their work on developing 10 control functions of effective schools and districts from the effectiveness and control literature also included in-depth interviews with superintendents and an extensive collection of documents. "The 10 control functions are selection, supervision, evaluation, staff development, rewarding and sanctioning principals, goals, technological specifications, resource allocations, monitoring, and socialization" (Murphy et al., 1985, p. 82). They chose 12 high-achieving California school districts to "(1) search for characteristics or factors related to district effectiveness, (2) examine leadership activities of superintendents, and (3) determine the way district offices attempt to coordinate the work activities of principals" (Murphy et al., 1985, p. 79). Their research suggested that a closer relationship between the school site and the district office promotes an environment in which students were more successful (Murphy et al., 1985). This conclusion implied that a district's organizational structure should support this close



connection between district leadership and school principals as it may have a positive effect on student achievement. Implications from their findings suggested that the organizational structure chosen by the superintendent may have an effect on student achievement.

### **Professional Learning Communities and Collaboration**

Another function of a district's organizational structure described in the literature was the ability for the organization's leadership to provide time and institute structures for teacher collaboration (Jackson & Lunenburg, 2010). Jackson and Lunenburg's (2010) quantitative study focused on 24 middle schools through the lenses of four performance indicators of academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures. English (2008) concluded that when there were structures in place to support teacher learning the teachers tended to participate in collaboration and increased their instructional skills through this process. Research cited in Jackson and Lunenburg (2010) supported Jackson and Lunenburg's claim that the district should change schedules and organizational structures so that teachers can participate in professional learning communities and other professional development opportunities focused on school improvement.

The work of Dufour et al. (2004) supported the idea that educators must learn together instead of in isolation from one another, and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003) also supported the structure of professional learning communities within districts by equating quality teaching to strong professional

learning communities. Schools must become professional learning communities to have a positive and lasting impact on student achievement in America (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003).

Leathwood and Jantzi (2008) in their study on leader efficacy and its effect on student learning brought forward the idea that the organizational structure must be designed to support professional learning communities. Their study was part of a larger mixed-methods multi-year study on leadership and student learning that was comprised of surveys of staff in 180 schools, 45 districts, and nine states. Classroom observations and interviews of school personnel and state level educators were conducted as part of the study. They concluded that it was essential that district leaders build positive and cooperative working relationships with schools by putting structures and cultures in place that promote collaboration (Leathwood & Jantzi, 2008).

Research in the education field established professional learning communities as effective and efficient means of improving teaching and learning (Dufour et al., 2004; Jackson & Lunenburg, 2010; Leathwood & Jantzi, 2008; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). Structures to support professional learning communities must be established by district leadership if they hope to have an impact on teaching and learning.

Participatory leadership frameworks, similar in structure to professional learning communities, where a select group of stakeholders worked together to develop, implement, and monitor a vision and plan, have been used by school leaders in hopes of

increasing student achievement. According to Hoyle et al. (2005), school leaders have sought participatory models that have involved site-based decision making (SBDM) and total quality management (TQM) in an attempt to increase student learning. The applications of SBDM and TQM have been sometimes voluntary on the part of school district leadership and in other instances mandated by the state. In Washington state, a comprehensive school improvement plan must be created, implemented, monitored, and evaluated by a school site-based team. The effective application of the SBDM model by some school leadership has created success at the school level within a district as teachers were empowered to be the experts in the classroom on instruction and learning in this model and helped guide decisions surrounding instruction and learning (Hoyle et al., 2005). The application of TQM, based on the work of Deming (1982), has been more helpful at the district-level and in 2002 led to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in Education for two school districts (Hoyle et al., 2005). These models supported the idea of professional learning communities and were a precursor to the now widely known professional learning communities defined in the literature today (Dufour, 2012).

Researchers have drawn connections between the creation of professional learning communities and the structures to support these professional learning communities with transformational leadership. Guajardo (2009) defined “collective leadership as relational, fluid and transformational” (p. 72) and Hernez-Broome and Hughes (2010) stated that the future of leadership was contained in the ability to build

capacity and create environments where each employee felt that they are contributing to the greater good. The research has uncovered the use of transformational leadership structures that underlie the actions of the leaders in districts where there was increased student achievement. However, the organizational structures of the district were not described or assessed in relationship to student achievement and collaboration.

An understanding of leadership models and leadership theories helped school leaders make decisions that produced better outcomes. As discussed by Hughes et al. (2012), Bass' theory of transformational and transactional leadership has provided clarity on how educational leaders interacted and led within the school district by providing examples of how the two leadership styles can produce different outcomes in the short and long terms. Transactional leaders have relied on rewards to help motivate their followers and do not establish strong relationships with their subordinates. Transactional leaders were a product of the traditional bureaucratic school system. Transformational leaders, on the other hand, sought to establish strong relationships and increase intrinsic motivation within their followers. The transformational leadership style lends itself to the development and sustainability of professional learning communities. Criswell and Martin (2007) stated that the ability to collaborate and be part of a team will determine future success.

Salazar's (2009) research pointed to a successful superintendent who purposely established the goal for his district to become a professional learning community focused on increasing student achievement. The superintendent then supported this goal by

making changes to the organizational structure of the district. Roles and functions of leaders within the organization were examined and changed to a “goals oriented, data-driven, performance focused, results-targeted, high expectation, and transparent accountability environment under the new superintendent’s leadership” (Salazar, 2009, p. 148). The superintendent was focusing the organization on instructional leadership by guiding his central leadership team to target their work on improving teachers’ instructional practice and student achievement through professional development reform.

In Salazar’s (2009) study, the superintendent utilized Bolman and Deal’s leadership framework (2003) to guide him as he reorganized the district to focus on and better support student learning. The superintendent in Salazar’s (2009) study changed the roles and functions of staff to focus on instructional leadership to address the structural frame. Relationships were cultivated by the superintendent in the human resource frame and in the political frame coalition building was emphasized with district stakeholders. For the symbolic frame the superintendent provided meaning and vision for his district based on core values.

As suggested earlier in this review the exploration of the different types of leadership frameworks in a future study may reveal a correlation to specific types of organizational structures found in public school districts. The type of leadership framework utilized in the participating district in this study may have some influence on its outcome.

## Summary

According to Hughes et al. (2012), the complex interactions between the leader, the followers, and the situation resulted in the process defined as leadership. The school system leaders, the staff, the students, and the district's organizational structure were part of a complex phenomenon that needed to be explored to offer new knowledge and provide a base of understanding in this area of research. Researchers presented findings that give some understanding of the history of school systems management theories and models, leadership styles, and frameworks that shaped the current organizational structures of public school districts, but the actual structures of public school districts have not been revealed nor related to student achievement in the P-12 public school system. This study answers Dunaway and Ausband's (2008) call for further study in this area.

The research reviewed did not show any direct connection to the problem statement in Chapter 1. There was a paucity of literature pertaining to P-12 public school district leadership organizational structures and a possible relationship to student achievement. There was also a distinct lack of literature focused on the regional organizational structure of a P-12 public school district.

The review of the literature found that the evaluation of a Washington state P-12 public school district regional leadership organizational structure was novel. The Regional Learning Communities committee for the district, heading up the reorganization initiative, looked for research as part of its charter but did not find any literature that was

helpful. The committee also looked at districts that had restructured and invited those superintendents to present their rationale for restructuring to the committee. The district did restructure into three-regions with the goal of increasing student achievement, increasing collaboration and professional development, and increasing planning time but no data had been collected and analyzed to this effect. There had been no formal evaluation of whether or not the implementation of the three-region organizational structure accomplished these original goals. Therefore, a formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the three-region organizational leadership structure of a P-12 Washington state school district assists in filling this literature gap. This research study provides a basis for further research and exploration. Research in this area provides data for district leadership to make better informed decisions regarding restructuring of district organization.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The lack of a formal evaluation of the implementation of a district's organizational structure change from a traditional managerial organization model to a three-region model was addressed through this mixed-methods study. The chosen methodologies answered the following research questions:

1. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on collaboration among classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?
2. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on planning time for classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?
3. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on opportunities for professional development for classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?



4. Is there a relationship between the implementation of the regional model and student achievement as measured by the estimated on-time graduation rates and the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments (High School Proficiency Exam [HSPE], Washington Assessment of Student Learning [WASL], and End of Course [EOC] exam)?

The nondirectional research hypothesis and its corresponding null hypothesis in the quantitative part of the study that helped answer research question number four were:

Research hypothesis: District student achievement data, measured by the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments (HSPE/WASL/EOC) and estimated on-time graduation rates, before the implementation of the three-region organizational structure model will differ from district student achievement data after the implementation of the three-region organizational structure model.

Null hypothesis (H1): There is no significant difference between the district's student achievement data, measured by the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments (HSPE/WASL/EOC) and estimated on-time graduation rates, before and after the implementation of the three-region organizational structure model.

This chapter begins with an overview of the origins of the regional model organizational structure followed by an explanation of the selected methodology chosen to answer the research questions. The research design and data collection techniques are then presented along with the types of instruments chosen to help measure the

effectiveness of the implementation of a three-region model. A description of the participants is included. Data analysis methods that are appropriate to the study are examined and possible and actual limitations to the study are discussed and then followed by the chapter summary.

### **Regional Model Organizational Structure Origins**

Under the guidance of the superintendent and the approval of the school board, a 30-member Regional Learning Communities Proposal Committee was formed in 2007 to investigate and present a recommendation to the superintendent regarding whether the district should move forward with the implementation of a K-12 Professional Learning Communities model in February of 2008 (T. Apostle, personal communication, August 21, 2007). The Regional Learning Communities Proposal Committee was to investigate the superintendent's proposed restructuring of the school district into three-regions divided by the feeder patterns of the district's three comprehensive high schools. The committee members were commissioned to contact other districts, review any literature that was available regarding restructuring, and identify possible impacts and potential solutions to impacts of the proposed restructuring. The committee was comprised of the superintendent, district and building level administrators, and the president of the teachers' union.

After the committee's recommendation to proceed with the implementation of a K-12 Regional Communities district organizational structure the superintendent presented the proposal to the school board for approval. With board approval the superintendent

then established the Regional Advisory Council in 2008 with the purpose of guiding the district through the implementation of the three-region model (T. Apostle, personal communication, September 26, 2008). Membership on this 12-person committee was chosen through an election process within each region with one representative from the high school, one representative from the junior high school level, and two representatives from the elementary level. The superintendent served in an ex-officio basis. This committee was active through the 2008-2009 school year.

### **Research Method**

The types of research questions posed in a study determine a qualitative or quantitative approach. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), “quantitative research involves looking at amounts, or quantities, of one or more variables of interest” and “qualitative research involves looking at characteristics, or qualities, that cannot be reduced to numerical values” (p. 94). To answer the research questions a mixed-methods approach was chosen. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to adequately address the research questions.

### **Qualitative and Quantitative Design Components**

Qualitative studies explore and seek to understand complex situations and use observations to build theories. The process for qualitative studies is holistic, and researchers may interact with participants as part of the process. Qualitative researchers view the process with an open mind and search for categories within the data they collect to make sense of what they observe. Maxwell (2005) defined the strengths of qualitative

research in its “inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers” (p. 22). He also went on to identify five intellectual and three practical goals of qualitative studies. According to Maxwell (2005) one of the goals of a qualitative study was to provide the means to which a formative evaluation can be conducted to improve existing practice. This study provided a formal evaluation of a district’s organizational structure change to help inform existing practice.

Quantitative studies search to generalize to other persons and places, validate or establish relationships, and contribute to existing theories (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The process for quantitative studies is more prescriptive and follows a traditional approach to research that involves hypotheses, variables, methods, and a set process before the research or experiment is conducted (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In quantitative studies the researcher tries to remain as detached as possible from the experiment and data collection process.

In this research study the purpose was to evaluate the results of a change in the organizational structure of a public school district according to the goals set forth by the superintendent for the change. This purpose could not be fulfilled through the utilization of a quantitative approach only as perceptions of the change within the organization along with quantitative data were sought to provide a more thorough evaluation based on the original goals set forth by the superintendent. By seeking perceptions a qualitative study must be conducted in which categories are identified within the data to provide a more complete understanding of the survey results. Both qualitative and quantitative

design components were utilized in this study to adequately address the research questions.

### **Research Design**

Both approaches, qualitative and quantitative, can look for causal explanations and “must identify and deal with plausible validity threats to any proposed causal explanation” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 24). Data were gathered to present an understanding of what perceptions existed regarding the implementation of the regional district organizational structure and its results. By understanding the context in which the regional district organizational structure was implemented, a co-relational explanation may be possible that can be generalized to other settings. The qualitative and the quantitative researcher must also address validity, reliability, and ethical and sampling issues in whatever methodology they employ. These topics are addressed later in Chapter 3.

### **Chosen Mixed-methods Research Design**

The convergent parallel design of mixed-methods research (Creswell & Clark, 2011) was determined to be the appropriate choice to guide the data collection and analysis for this study. In a convergent parallel design quantitative and qualitative data is collected simultaneously, each of the strands of data is analyzed separately, and then the data analysis is mixed for the overall interpretation (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The online survey instrument used for the collection of data simultaneously included quantitative and qualitative data.

In this research study another quantitative data set was also collected that could not be obtained from the survey instrument. Longitudinal data of student achievement five years before and five years after the implementation of the regional learning communities model was obtained from the Washington state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Specific data that were used to represent student achievement were the estimated on-time graduation rates and reading, writing, and math state assessment scores from the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE), Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and End of Course (EOC) exam. The student achievement data collected and used in this research study is publicly available on the OSPI website.

Electronic surveys were sent out and collected anonymously from classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office personnel. Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission and district permission were obtained before contacting the participants via email. Participation in the survey was strictly voluntary and included documentation of informed consent. The use of surveys along with the quantitative student achievement data provided enough evidence for an evaluation of the effectiveness of the regional district organizational structure according to the original goals set forth by the superintendent.

The data were analyzed through a combination of different methods. A triangulation of data collected from the quantitative and qualitative survey questions and student achievement quantitative data were part of the data analysis. Student

achievement data, five years before and five years after the structure change, were analyzed along with participant perceptions of student achievement. The survey answers provided insights into planning time, collaboration, student achievement, and professional development opportunities within the district. Through triangulation the reliability of the data were increased and the inconsistencies uncovered (Maxwell, 2005).

### **Survey Instrument**

#### **Structure and Content of the Survey**

A survey (see Appendix A) was utilized to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. A Likert scale with five categories (*strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree*), as described by Siniscalco and Auriat (2005), was used in the survey questions along with positive and negative statements. Survey questions also included questions that asked the participant to evaluate frequency and importance (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005). The survey questions allowed for perception ratings by the participants related to the research questions. The questionnaire was sent via an email link to potential participants (see Appendix B) utilizing the survey software SurveyMonkey.

The structure of the survey supported a more comprehensive response from the participant. The survey started with non-threatening questions, a strategy suggested by Leary (2008), to allow the participant to feel more comfortable and open to answering more intense questions later in the survey (Leary, 2008). Hunt (2011) stated that “asking fewer, broader questions can elicit much more relevant and richer information from

participants than asking a series of closed questions” (p. 298). Survey questions were developed that allowed for a deeper response. Questions in the survey focused on process theory (Maxwell, 2005) and asked participants about the meaning of the organizational structure change to them, results of the organizational structure change, and questions about the process by which the district’s organizational structure change and its outcome occurred. The survey incorporated open-ended questions and questions that asked for an example or evidence to support the participant’s answer. These types of questions provided an opportunity for richer detail in participant responses.

The survey was comprised of the following question amounts and types: one informed consent question, three demographic questions, four planning time questions, four collaboration questions, four professional development questions, four efficiency questions, one student achievement question, four process questions, one cost and resources question, and four overall questions. A definition of terms page was provided before the participant began the survey. The survey was 30 questions in length with space provided on appropriate questions for the participant to provide an example or evidence to support a multiple choice answer.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages**

There were advantages and disadvantages to the survey distribution. In this study an email survey link was used to collect the data. A deadline for submission of the survey was established and a follow-up email was sent to help increase participation rates. Two advantages of emailing the survey link included cost efficiency and easy



access. By using the internet to collect data through a commercial website used for data collection, SurveyMonkey, costs were lessened. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), collecting data through the internet has several advantages that include cost efficiency, “adaptability of the questionnaire to participant responses, and some research has indicated that online surveys yield data comparable to fact-to-face contact” (p. 203). Disadvantages of emailing the survey included: (a) it may bounce back as undeliverable, or (b) it may be easily placed in the recipient’s email trash bin or junk folder. To overcome these disadvantages a follow-up email reminder was sent to all participants to draw their attention to the original email and the request for participation.

### **Expert Panel**

The questionnaire used in this research study was not pretested but was reviewed by an expert panel. According to Siniscalco and Auriat (2005) pre-testing a questionnaire can help researchers focus their questions, check for questions that should be closed versus open-ended, discover errors in the written instructions, and provide an evaluation of the structure of the survey. The use of an expert panel has been determined to accomplish the same goals as a formal pre-test of a questionnaire (Lawshe, 1975; Yaghmale, 2003).

An expert panel was utilized to make sure the survey questions (see Appendix C) yielded valid data that was being sought to answer the research questions. The survey questions were sent to 10 potential members of an expert panel who were not employees of the district in this study. The potential members of the expert panel were sent an email

(see Appendix D) requesting their participation and allowed for the request to be declined or ignored without consequence. The potential expert panel was made up of two representatives from the different employee groups who were asked to participate in this study. The potential expert panel members had experience as a classified staff, certificated staff, building administrator, district-level administrator, and university professor. From the potential identified members of the expert panel a total of four experts responded and agreed to participate in the review of the survey.

The experts were asked to critique the protocol and evaluate the questions according to relevancy and content clarity. Each question was scored by the expert as yes or no for relevancy and yes or no for content clarity. If the experts scored a relevancy question as a no, the question was eliminated. If an expert scored a no for content clarity, the expert was asked to provide suggestions for improvement to the question. The panel of experts was asked to score the questions and share their results with the other experts on the panel through email. A discussion of the merits of the questions by the experts provided a stronger content validity for the survey questions.

The content validity index (CVI) (Lawshe, 1975) was utilized to determine which questions should be rejected and which questions should be retained as part of the survey. The CVI is derived from the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) of each question (Lawshe, 1975) and is the mean of the CVR values of the retained questions. The CVR for a single question is computed through a formula that provides a measure of interrater agreement

regarding the relevancy of the questions. The following formula was adapted from Lawshe (1975) to measure the CVR for relevancy:

$$\text{CVR} = \frac{n_r - n_2}{n_2}$$

In this formula the  $n_r$  is the number of panel experts indicating relevancy and  $n_2$  is the total number of panelists.

The minimum values used by Lawshe (1975) to calculate the CRV were supplied by Dr. Lowell Schipper, Professor of Psychology, Bowling Green State University at Bowling Green, Ohio. When all of the expert panel members agreed that the question was relevant the CVR was calculated as a 1.0 but adjusted to .99 for ease of calculation. When the expert panel members were not all in agreement the range of the CVR is from 0.0 to .99. The lower the number of members of the expert panel the higher the CVR must be to account for validity. For ten panelists the minimum value is .62, for nine panelists the minimum value is .75, for eight panelists the minimum value is .78, and for seven and fewer panelists the minimum value is .99. If a question did not meet the minimum CVR for the number of expert panel member responses it was discarded. The CVI demonstrated validity of the survey instrument.

An expert panel was utilized to provide content validity for the 30 survey questions regarding relevancy and clarity. Ten experts in the field of education were asked to participate as part of an expert panel. Four (40%) agreed to participate and represented a classified position, high school principal, assistant superintendent, and a

superintendent. The high school principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent had previous experience in a certificated position within a school district. All of the experts worked in other Washington state public school districts and were not associated with the district in this study.

The content validity index (CVR) (Lawshe, 1975) was used to determine which questions to reject and which questions to retain. The CVI was derived from the CVR of each question (Lawshe, 1975). The expert panel consisted of four members so a .99 minimum value of the CVR was required.

Table 1 shows the results of the expert panel critique of the survey questions for relevancy and clarity. The entire expert panel agreed that each survey question was relevant to the research study resulting in 100% consensus for relevancy. Overall clarity for the questions reviewed was 86.8%.

According to the entire expert panel the grouping of four questions on planning time was not clear. The expert panel did suggest changes to the questions they determined unclear. As a result the word prioritize was dropped to increase the clarity of the questions. These changes were implemented in the final survey.

Table 1

*Relevancy and Clarity of Survey Questions Determined by the Expert Panel*

	Survey Questions Content Validity					
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>		Total N	N %
	N	%	N	%		
Content Relevancy	120	100	0	100	120	100
Content Clarity	104	86.6	16	13.3	120	100

One expert suggested a replacement for the question, “If you answered yes to question 18, please describe what part you played in the process.” The question was not changed because the suggested question, “Were you provided an opportunity to give input into the change process?” was outside the scope of this study. Another suggestion by one of the experts to change the word “since” to “due to” in the student achievement multiple choice statements was rejected because it narrowed the statement.

Each of the experts suggested additions to the definitions of terms presented at the beginning of the survey. These suggestions were included in the final form of the survey. An additional definition of professional development was included at the suggestion of the expert panel. Some of the suggestions for revisions of the definitions were not included because the district in this study did not support those particular positions.

### **Protection of Survey Participants**

Confidentiality of the survey participants was protected through coding. Names of the participants were not used in the data collection, analysis, results, or final report.

The only three people who had access to the raw data were the student researcher, Christine Moloney, the dissertation chair, Dr. Margaret Chow at City University of Seattle, and Dr. Craig Scheiber, Dean of the Albright School of Education at City University of Seattle. The participants have a right to privacy. Codes were assigned to the survey data and any written or typed documents were labeled with the corresponding code.

Participation in this research study was strictly voluntary and included documentation of informed consent (see Appendix E). This complies with the concepts of ethical research (Horner & Minifie, 2011; Resnik; 2011). Each participant was informed of the topic and purpose of the study through the introductory email and the first page of the survey.

Because the surveys measured perceptions the possible influence of a respondent's attitude at the time of the survey on their responses needed to be considered. According to Siniscalco and Auriat (2005):

the main difficulties in measuring attitudes are that (a) the object of an attitude can range from the very specific to the very general, (b) attitudes are not static, and (c) attitudes are both shaped and changed by socio-demographic circumstances and life experiences. (p. 55)

Environmental risks may have included the different settings where the online survey was taken by the participant. A possible weakness of this sampling method was that the surveys may have been taken at different times and places which might have

contributed to reliability concerns. Interruptions might have occurred as district personnel are required to respond to emergency phone calls and messages. Surveys taken by building principals and assistant principals may also have been subject to interruptions for emergencies. Surveys taken by certificated staff and classified staff may have been susceptible to environmental factors whether or not they took the survey at their work site or at home.

### **Participants**

Participants for this study included classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators. Participants were identified through their job assignments and past employment with the district before the implementation of the regional structure. The list of emails of people employed for a minimum of five years before the change to the three-region model to five years after the change in organizational structure was obtained from the human resources department of the district in this study. This email list included building administrators, central office administrators, certificated staff, classified staff, operating engineers, substitutes, coaches, mechanics, and temporary hourly employees. After deletion of the employees who did not fit within the parameters of the study the survey was sent via email to 1,214 potential participants, the entire qualifying population.

These participants were asked to consent to participate in the online survey (see Appendix F). Permission was obtained from the district to communicate with and then survey classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and district leadership

staff. There were no gender, age, or race qualifications used for the identification of the selection of participants. Participants were selected strictly through their presence in the district as an employee before and after the implementation of the three-region district organization structure.

Purposeful selection (Maxwell, 2005) was used in this study. “This is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 88). Maxwell (2005) stated that there were four possible goals for purposeful selection. Through the use of purposeful selection in this study two of the goals of purposeful selection including an adequate representation of the setting and individuals and bringing to light the reasons for the differences between the different groups were achieved (Maxwell, 2005). From this purposeful selection, nonprobability sampling (Leary, 2008; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) was expected as there was no control over whether or not the same number of classified and certificated staff and building and district administrators would choose to participate in the online survey sent to the entire identified population. Nonprobability convenience sampling does not allow for error of estimation to be calculated. The overall number of the potential participants who received the survey and the actual number of respondents per subgroup is provided in Table 2 in Chapter 4.

As many employees as possible fitting the selected criteria were surveyed during the months of April and May 2014. The survey was set up so that the names of the respondents were not associated with their responses to preserve confidentiality. The



guidelines outlined by the academic institution to protect the integrity of the research process and the rights of each of the participants were followed in this study.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

Two distinct data analysis methods were used in this mixed-methods study. Qualitative data was collected through an online survey and the analysis included the discovery of themes and categories from the open-ended responses found in the surveys. Quantitative data was gathered through the online survey and descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the results. Quantitative data was also collected on student achievement through state assessment scores and graduation rates published on the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website. This quantitative data set was analyzed through the application of a *t*-test. A convergent parallel design (Creswell & Clark, 2011) was used to present both the qualitative and quantitative findings from this study found in Chapter 4.

### **Quantitative Analysis**

To address the student achievement research question and H1 a simple ex post facto design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) allowed for the comparison of student achievement data before the change to the three-region organizational structure to student achievement data after the change in district organizational structure. This design is commonly used to study the effects of environmental variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Manor, 1987). The ex post facto design fits the research questions as the change to a regional district

organizational structure has already occurred. Data was looked for after the fact to answer the research questions and hypothesis.

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) cautioned that the simple ex post facto design can show a difference between the groups being tested but does not provide a conclusion that the difference between the groups is directly related to the experience that one group had and the other did not. A firm conclusion cannot be drawn from the simple ex post facto design for this quantitative data a test must be applied to this data set to help answer the research questions.

Descriptive statistics were applied to student achievement data to measure whether or not there was improvement, maintenance, or regression in student achievement correlated to the organizational structure change. The use of the student achievement data obtained from OSPI through their public website was a secondary analysis of existing datasets. The student achievement data sets included the percent of students passing the 10th-grade reading WASL/HSPE, 10th-grade writing WASL/HSPE, the 10th-grade math WASL/HSPE/EOC, and the estimated on-time graduation rates. The points of central tendency (mean and standard deviation) were calculated for the student achievement data set collected on the five years before the change in district structure and then calculated for the student achievement data set for the five years after the district structure change. The Excel Microsoft application was utilized to analyze the data along with the functions available in SurveyMonkey.

The student achievement data was subjected to a *t*-test. Wright (2006), Leary (2008), and Salkind (2011) suggested that a *t*-test was appropriate in a situation where the researcher was more interested in examining the gain of each group than looking for the reasons why there were differences. The means of the two groups (i.e., the 10th-grade writing HSPE/WASL scores) were calculated and used to find the standard error of the difference between the two means. The value of *t* was then determined along with the critical value of *t* so that a decision could be made to reject or accept the null hypothesis, H1. The five-year data set of student achievement before the change in the district structure was collated and compared to the collated data set of student achievement for the five years after the change in structure.

Quantitative data was also collected through the online survey instrument. The analysis functions of SurveyMonkey and a code book were utilized to capture the quantitative data from the survey. Codes were connected to missing data and non-applicable data (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005). Descriptive statistics were applied to each of the organizational categories of the data collected. The sum of the responses of the individual participant subgroups of classified, certificated, building administrators, and central office administrators were compared to each one of the other subgroups to provide a clearer understanding of the subgroups' perceptions.

Descriptive statistics provided a data set to compare the answers of the individual survey questions from each of the subgroups pertaining to planning time, professional development, collaboration, and student achievement. The means and standard

deviations of each of the questions from the subgroups were calculated and compared to the other subgroups to provide a better picture of the overall perceptions of the individual subgroups regarding planning time, professional development, collaboration, and student achievement. The results of the data collection were presented through measures of central tendency and a percentage frequency table.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

The online survey was sent with organizational categories (Maxwell, 2005) already identified. These organizational categories were (a) demographics, (b) planning time, (c) collaboration, (d) professional development, (e) efficiency, (f) student achievement, (g) process, (h) costs and resources, and (i) overall. Substantive categories were created from the qualitative data collected through coding. Substantive categories are descriptive and are considered “emic” as the categories are taken from a participant’s own words or concept (Maxwell, 2005). The text collected was divided into phrases, sentences, or paragraphs and assigned a code (Creswell & Clark, 2011). These portions of texts were then sorted into like groups according to their content.

The analysis features of SurveyMonkey were utilized to assist with the coding process. The resulting categories of this coding process were entered into an Excel spreadsheet with the supporting text. The categories were then analyzed to discover emergent themes. The constant comparative method of data analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Fram, 2013; Malone, 2012) was used to compare segments of data with another to determine similarities and differences and allow for clustering of the data into emergent

themes to help better understand the open-ended survey responses collected on planning time, collaboration, and professional development.

The convergent parallel design of the research study resulted in a joint qualitative and quantitative data table that provided an overall interpretation of all of the data collected on collaboration, planning time, and professional development. This design was chosen because it “develops a complete understanding by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, because each provides a partial view” (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 151).

### **Limitations**

Limitations in this study are present as the study was based only on the four main goals set forth by the superintendent for the change to a three-region district organizational structure from a traditional hierarchical structure. The four goals of increased professional development, planning time, collaboration, and student achievement were measured in this study. Other improvements or consequences may have occurred as a result of the change to a three-region model that do not relate to the four identified goals. This study is limited in its scope and does not provide a full comprehensive evaluation of the three-region model effectiveness in other areas.

### **Validity**

Possible validity issues surrounding data collection, data analysis, and interpretations of the qualitative and quantitative data must be addressed in mixed-methods research (Creswell & Clark, 2011). For the convergent parallel design, potential

data collection issues can occur if the data is solicited from unsuitable persons (Creswell & Clark, 2011). To address this possible validity issue quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the same population of individuals. Another threat to validity can include unequal sample sizes between the quantitative and qualitative data. This was avoided because the same population provided equivalent amounts of both qualitative and quantitative data through the use of the online survey.

Some data analysis issues that can occur in the convergent parallel design may be the use of inadequate approaches to merge the data (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This concern was addressed through the development of a joint display included in Chapter 4 by using a research-based display configuration (Creswell & Clark, 2011). It is also important to use quotes that support the quantitative data. This procedure helps eliminate the possible erroneous comparisons of the analysis.

Validity can come into question regarding interpretation of the data if attention is not given to findings that are divergent. Divergent findings were noted and addressed through a reexamination of the data and procedures. Valid interpretation can become compromised if the researcher chooses to give more weight to one type of data over another or chooses data to specifically support an existing theory or preconception held by the researcher (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Maxwell, 2005). Each type of data was weighed equally to address this validity concern.

Reactivity, another validity threat for qualitative studies, can occur when the researcher's presence influences the observation or the interview to a point where the

participant begins to behave unnaturally (Leary, 2008). To counteract reactivity an acknowledgement of the potential influence of a researcher's presence in the setting and possible influence on the participants was accounted for in drawing conclusions (Maxwell, 2005).

Maxwell (2005) outlined a checklist of ways to increase validity of qualitative studies. This checklist included the following: (a) intensive long-term involvement with the study by the researcher, (b) collecting "rich" data, (c) soliciting feedback from participants (respondent validation), (d) intervention by the researcher in the process being observed, (e) searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases, (f) triangulation, (g) the use of quasi-statistics, and (h) explicit comparisons (Maxwell, 2005).

One possible threat to the validity of this research study was demand characteristics, "a participant's assumptions about the nature of a study that can affect the outcome of research" (Leary, 2008, p. 210). Demand characteristics may appear in both a quantitative and a qualitative study. For this study precautions were put in place to help participants feel comfortable enough to answer honestly and not feel pressure to respond in a certain way. An email was sent to potential participants that outlined the specific goals of the research and clearly stated how the participant's confidentiality was to be maintained.

Face validity can be found in both qualitative and quantitative studies. The survey questions used in this study have face validity because the questions were focused

on the goals of the district's organizational structure change and specifically asked about the participants' perceptions regarding this change. The CVI was utilized for the survey questions to provide validity to the instrument through the use of an expert panel (Lawshe, 1975; Yaghmale, 2003). The measurement instrument must measure what was intended to be valid (Leary, 2008). A review by the expert panel for relevancy and clarity helped ensure that the survey instrument measured what was intended to be measured.

To increase validity of the qualitative data collected through the online survey the a university graduate-level research class was engaged in the constant comparative method of data analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Fram, 2013; Malone, 2012) with precoded data from questions 6, 7, 8, and 9 on planning time. The research class included graduate students from Spokane, Vancouver, Pullman, and Puyallup campuses who confirmed the emergent themes identified in this study. This process increased the validity of the qualitative analysis.

### **Reliability**

Reliability is the consistency of results obtained through the use of a measuring instrument when measuring the same thing (Leary, 2008, Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Issues that needed to be considered in this study that may have affected the reliability of the results included the transient states of the participant, the stable attributes of the participant, situational factors, characteristics of the measurement (survey questions)



itself, and any actual mistakes made in the process of recording the participants responses (Leary, 2008).

Some possible limitations regarding the use of rating questions included in the survey include error proximity, central tendency error, error of leniency, error of severity, and the halo effect error (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005). Error proximity may occur when the respondent gives similar ratings to questions that are near each other in the questionnaire. Central tendency error occurs when respondents default to a middle rating score. Error of leniency occurs when the rater does not want to disagree or dislike the question or statement and will give high ratings or agree with everything. Error of severity is the opposite of the error of leniency. The halo effect error may occur when the respondent either likes or dislikes the general topic. To avoid these possible errors non-sensitive demographic questions were placed first, items that were central to the research question were included next, sensitive items were placed later on in the survey, section titles where similar topic questions are located were indicated, and items with similar response formats were placed together (Siniscalco & Auriat, 2005).

According to Siniscalco and Auriat (2005) “the main difficulties in measuring attitudes are that (a) the object of an attitude can range from the very specific to the very general, (b) attitudes are not static, and (c) attitudes are both shaped and changed by socio-demographic circumstances and life experiences” (p. 55). To address possible reliability issues the following actions were taken: (1) standardized administration of the

measure, (2) clarified instructions and questions, and (3) minimized errors in coding data (Leary, 2008).

### **Ethical and Sampling Issues**

Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden (2001) cautioned qualitative researchers to look for potential ethical conflicts in how they gain access to the groups they were studying and the effects that they had on the participants. Researchers must also present their processes and results clearly and honestly to avoid ethical issues and any possibility of misleading consumers of their research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

In this study the research was conducted by a member of the central office administration within the district being studied. Access to the participants was granted because of the administrator's position within the district but the possible effects of the position held by the administrator within the district corresponding to the participants' positions needs to be noted. According to Leary (2008), the researcher should take precautionary steps to avoid invading participants' privacy and influencing each participant's right to decide to be an active participant in the research. The administrator's position within the district may have caused some participants to feel obligated to participate. Upon reflection, the decision to conduct an online survey within the district was acted on and only one reminder email after the initial email request to potential participants was sent so as not to put pressure on the potential participants. According to Orb et al. (2001), if a researcher knows the participants and the situation the researcher may actually get better results because of their position and trust within the

group and/or organization. In this case, the administrator was familiar with the situation, and most of the staff have seen or heard of the administrator before so her conduction of an evaluation of a process did not raise any concerns that were expressed to the district or the university.

Research, as a process, provides information and generalizations for the benefit of society and the rights of individuals (Orb et al., 2001). Autonomy was one of the principles in qualitative research that is represented by participants being able to choose whether to participate in the research or decline their participation through the informed consent process (Orb et al., 2001). Participation in the study was strictly voluntary and selected participants could simply ignore the email survey by not responding within the response timeframe. For this study, if a participant in the survey became uncomfortable and did not want to proceed, she could simply log out of the survey.

Another limitation in this study was the number of members of the qualifying population. The qualifying population was the number of people who had been employees with the district for five years before the change in the district's organizational structure who continued employment with the district for five years after the district's organizational structure change. The entire qualifying population received the email request to participate in the survey. Two hundred and four (16.8%) participants responded out of the qualifying population.

A nonprobability convenience sample strategy (Leary, 2008) was chosen by using the sampling frame of the list of the entire qualifying population and including all of the

respondents from the original list. This convenience sampling strategy was selected because it allowed for the maximum amount of raw data to be collected. Because the number of respondents was 16.8% of the entire qualifying population the application of the results of the survey can only be applied to this study.

The lack of previous instrument samples and survey instruments that have already been field tested that could be adapted to this study are recognized as further limitations. Another limitation of this study was the lack of an evaluation tool in the literature to apply to an organizational structure change of a P-12 public school district.

### **Summary**

This mixed-methods study addressed the lack of a formal evaluation of the implementation of a district's organizational structure change from a traditional managerial organization model to a three-region model. A discussion of the origins of the regional model organizational structure was presented and the methodology to answer the research questions was explained. The research design for the study along with data collection techniques through the acquisition of identified documents and the electronic survey instrument were included along with a description of the participants. Data analysis methods that were appropriate to the study were examined and possible and actual limitations to the study were discussed in further detail. The study of a district's organizational structural change to a three-region model adds to the literature surrounding educational organizational structures and will assist current and future district leaders in

their decision making as they strive to create district organizations that serve the needs of all students and increase student achievement.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to provide a formal evaluation of a P-12 Washington state public school district's organizational structure change from a traditional hierarchical structure to a three-region model. This evaluation was based on the original goals set forth by the superintendent to increase collaboration, planning time, professional development, and student achievement. The mixed-methods approach provided data to answer the four research questions and the hypothesis. The online survey provided both quantitative and qualitative data, pertaining to the first three research questions, with the qualitative data subjected to the constant comparative data analysis method and descriptive statistics utilized for the quantitative data. Student achievement data, to answer research question 4 and the hypothesis, were collected from OSPI and subjected to independent two tailed *t*-tests. The findings from the data analysis will be presented in this chapter.

In this chapter overall survey participation will be presented followed by sections devoted to the first three individual research question findings. These sections, on the combined quantitative and qualitative data from research questions 1, 2, and 3, will allow for a more detailed look at individual subgroup responses and a joint summary display arraying themes found within the data. The last section will describe the findings for research question 4 and the hypothesis. The data collected through the online survey supplied possible answers for each of the following research questions and hypothesis:

1. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on collaboration among classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?
2. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on planning time for classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?
3. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on opportunities for professional development for classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?
4. Is there a relationship between the implementation of the regional model and student achievement as measured by the estimated on-time graduation rates and the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments (High School Proficiency Exam [HSPE], Washington Assessment of Student Learning [WASL], End of Course [EOC] exam)?

The nondirectional research hypothesis and its corresponding null hypothesis in the quantitative part of the study that helped answer research question number four were:

Research hypothesis: District student achievement data, measured by the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments (HSPE/WASL/EOC) and estimated on-time graduation rates, before the implementation of the three-region organizational structure model will differ from district student achievement data after the implementation of the three-region organizational structure model.

Null hypothesis (H1): There is no significant difference between the district's student achievement data, measured by the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments (HSPE/WASL/EOC) and estimated on-time graduation rates, before and after the implementation of the three-region organizational structure model.

### **Presentation of Findings**

#### **Overall Survey Participation**

Of the 1,214 potential recipients to receive the online survey, 204 responded and 13 opted out of the survey. Question 2 of the online survey asked the participant to identify which position they currently held within the district. 45 people (22.85%) responded that they held a classified position, 121 (61.43%) held a certificated position, 18 (9.14%) held a building administrator position, and 13 (6.6%) held a central office administrator position, as shown in Table 2. A comparison of the number of potential participants to the actual survey participants found the smallest percentage difference



between the certificated subgroup and certificated total potential group and the largest percentage difference between the classified subgroup and classified total potential group.

Table 2

*Number and Percentage of Subgroup Respondents and Potential Respondents (N=197)*

<u>Subgroup</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Total N</u>	<u>% Total</u>	<u>% Difference</u>
Classified	45	22.84	430	35.33	12.49
Certificated	121	61.42	730	60.00	1.42
Building administrator	18	9.14	34	2.79	6.35
Central office administrator	13	6.60	23	1.89	4.71

*Note.* The total number of eligible respondents was supplied by the human resource department of the district in this study and consisted of staff employed from August 2003 to August 2013. The total number of sent surveys to potential participants on the email list was 1,217 but the actual number of surveys sent was 1,214 because of three invalid email addresses.

**Survey design and analysis.** The survey contained three sets of questions on planning time, collaboration, and professional development to address the first three research questions. These questions were designed using a Likert scale and were coded so that 5 corresponded with strongly agree and 1 corresponded with strongly disagree since the questions were structured as positive questions. The student achievement question 26 was a multiple choice question that allowed for only one choice by the respondent. Answers provided by each subgroup were entered in an Excel spreadsheet and the mean and standard deviation were calculated for each subgroup for each category

and overall for each category for the entire population. Respondents were able to skip questions and opt out of the survey at any time so the number of responses per question varied throughout the survey and is reflected in the findings.

The constant comparative analysis method was utilized to compare, sort, and identify themes from a total of 176 open-ended responses for planning time, 142 open-ended responses for collaboration, and 108 open-ended responses for professional development. This qualitative data allowed for triangulation of the quantitative data collected on the first three research questions regarding collaboration, planning time, and professional development. Themes that were identified from the constant comparative analysis method are shown in Table 13 and included “increase,” “effectiveness,” “same,” “decrease,” “contract-related,” and “don’t know.”

### **Research Question 1: Collaboration**

Survey questions 11, 12, 13, and 14 asked each of the subgroups the following question: “Did the three-region model increase opportunities for collaboration for (subgroup)?” From the quantitative data collected the subgroups of classified ( $M=2.54$ ) and certificated ( $M=2.84$ ) staff tended to disagree that collaboration increased for all staff (see Table 3). Table 3 shows that building and central office administrators perceived an increase in overall staff collaboration since the implementation of the three-region district organizational model. The highest number of not applicable responses was seen in survey questions 11 and 14.

Table 3

*Overall Collaboration Increase Survey Frequencies, Mean Scores, and Standard Deviations*

Survey Item	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>nNA</i>	<i>nNR</i>
11. Classified staff	2.54(1.01)	58	23
12. Certificated staff	2.84(1.18)	17	13
13. Building administrators	3.46(1.01)	16	27
14. Central office administrators	3.37(0.86)	84	39

*Note.* Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1, *nNA* = Not Applicable, *nNR* = No Response.

Table 4 illustrates the differences in perceptions from each of the subgroups of classified, certificated, building administrators, and central office administrators regarding collaboration. For question 11 all of the subgroups tended to agree that collaboration did not increase for classified staff. Question 12 responses revealed a difference in perception with certificated staff responding as disagreeing that collaboration had increased for them ( $M=2.65$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ) while classified staff, building, and central office administrators agreed that certificated staff had seen an increase in collaboration since the implementation of the three-region district organizational structure. All subgroups agreed that collaboration had increased for building administrators with means ranging from 3.21 from the certificated subgroup to 3.82 from the classified subgroup.

There was also a positive perception that central office administrators collaborated more since the application of the three-region model. The strongest mean, 3.80, came from the building administrators' subgroup who perceived that central office administrators collaborated more. The weakest mean, 3.10, came from the central office administrator subgroup. The lowest number of not applicable responses is seen in question 12 and the highest number of not applicable responses is seen in question 14.

Table 4

*Subgroup Response Frequencies, Mean Scores, and Standard Deviations for  
Collaboration Survey Questions*

<u>Collaboration Question and Subgroup Response</u>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>NA(%)</i>	<i>NR(%)</i>
11. Classified				
Classified	35	2.46 (1.00)	5(14.29)	6(17.14)
Certificated	104	2.57 (1.05)	53(50.96)	16(15.38)
Building administrators	16	2.63 (0.70)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Central office administrators	11	2.50 (1.28)	0(0.00)	1(9.09)
12. Certificated				
Classified	35	3.29 (0.88)	13(37.14)	8(22.86)
Certificated	105	2.65 (1.20)	3(2.86)	4(3.81)
Building administrators	16	3.44 (0.86)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)

(continued)

<u>Collaboration Question and Subgroup Response</u>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>NA(%)</i>	<i>NR(%)</i>
Central office administrators	11	3.11 ( <i>1.29</i> )	1(9.09)	1(9.09)
13. Building administrators				
Classified	35	3.82 ( <i>0.72</i> )	14(40.0)	10(28.57)
Certificated	103	3.21 ( <i>1.02</i> )	53(51.46)	16(15.53)
Building administrators	16	3.75 ( <i>0.66</i> )	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Central office administrators	11	3.44 ( <i>1.42</i> )	1(9.09)	1(9.09)
14. Central office Administrators				
Classified	35	3.78 ( <i>0.42</i> )	16(45.71)	10(28.57)
Certificated	104	3.21 ( <i>0.69</i> )	63(60.58)	22(21.15)
Building administrators	16	3.80 ( <i>0.40</i> )	5(31.25)	6(37.50)
Central office administrators	11	3.10 ( <i>1.30</i> )	0(0.00)	1(9.09)

*Note.* Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1, *NA* = Not Applicable, *NR* = No Response.

Open-ended responses from the subgroups revealed the overarching theme of agreement that collaboration had not increased for classified staff. Respondents stated, “I do not notice any changes,” “saw no difference,” and “no extra time is provided for collaboration.”

Two strong themes of “increase” and “same,” identified by the highest number of like responses, emerged from the data regarding certificated staff collaboration.

Respondents stated that “it did increase opportunities” and “because we are working

within regionally focused groups, there has been a more concentrated effort to use professional learning opportunities to collaborate across buildings to ensure more equity and vertical alignment.” Building and central office administrator responses also indicated that certificated collaboration had increased but stated that “staff themselves probably would not” and that there “has been case by case, region, by building increase.” These two statements illustrate the “uneven increase” theme.

A second theme from certificated staff indicated that certificated collaboration had remained the same since the three-region organizational structure change. Contract restrictions on collaboration for staff emerged as another theme from certificated and building administrator respondents. “The certificated staff collaborates, but it’s not because the three-region model gives us more of an opportunity,” and “the three-region model has nothing to do with my contract and the time for collaboration,” were comments written by respondents.

Responses to question 13 on an increase in collaboration for building administrators revealed the increase theme with respondents stating, “I see administrators collaborating more this year than in years past,” “regional meetings allow great collaboration,” and “regional meetings has allowed for more intentional opportunities for vertical articulation and collaboration.” Central office administrator collaboration responses revealed a strong “don’t know” theme across classified, certificated and building administrator subgroups. Strong themes were identified through the highest number of responses identified as belonging to that particular theme. Certificated staff

responses did reveal an equally strong theme that they felt central office administrators had increased their collaboration. Certificated responses included “I have seen an increase” and “this model allows for frequent collaboration and reflection among the district.” Three central office administrators responded to this question with only one comment supporting the increase in collaboration theme seen in the other subgroup responses.

### **Research Question 2: Planning Time**

Data collected from the subgroups of classified, certificated, building administrators, and central office administrators were consolidated and are presented in Table 5 pertaining to an increase in planning time. Questions 6, 7, 8, and 9 asked “Did the three-region model increase planning time for (subgroup)?” Quantitative data collected on planning time revealed that building and central office administrators were the most neutral in their responses ( $M=2.99$ ,  $M=3.06$ ) with classified ( $M=2.49$ ) and certificated ( $M=2.42$ ) staff tending to disagree that planning time increased overall for all staff. The number of not applicable and no response survey answers in Table 5 was totaled for all four questions pertaining to planning time with the highest number of not applicable responses focused on the planning time for central office administrators.

Table 5

*Planning Time Increase*

<u>Survey Item</u>	<u>M (SD)</u>	<u>nNA</u>	<u>nNR</u>
6. Classified staff	2.49 (0.90)	67	27
7. Certificated staff	2.42 (0.98)	16	17
8. Building administrators	2.99 (1.07)	68	37
9. Central office administrators	3.06 (0.70)	81	47

*Note.* Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1, *nNA* = Not Applicable, *nNR* = No Response.

Table 6 provides a breakdown of the individual subgroup responses to questions 6, 7, 8, and 9 pertaining to planning time increase for the identified subgroups. Classified responses to an increase in planning time for classified staff (M=2.61, SD=1.21) indicated a disagreement that classified planning time had increased. Certificated (M=2.44, SD=0.84), building administrators (M=2.43, SD=0.49) and central office administrators (M=2.56, SD=0.68) also indicated a disagreement that classified planning time had increased. Certificated staff (48.25%) responses revealed that planning time was not applicable to classified staff.

Certificated responses to certificated planning time increase tended to disagree that planning time had increased (M=2.32, SD=0.96). Fifty-five certificated staff indicated that the question of increased planning time was not applicable. Classified responses to the certificated planning time increase question indicated a more neutral mean with a higher standard deviation (see Table 6). Both building and central office



administrators tended to disagree with low standard deviations (0.49 and 0.68 respectively) that planning time had increased for certificated staff.

Table 6

*Planning Time Survey Question Subgroup Response Frequencies, Mean Scores, and Standard Deviations*

<u>Planning Time Question and Subgroup Response</u>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>NA(%)</i>	<i>NR(%)</i>
6. Classified				
Classified	38	2.61 (1.21)	9 (23.68)	6 (15.79)
Certificated	114	2.44 (0.84)	55(48.25)	20(17.54)
Building administrator	16	2.43 (0.49)	2(12.50)	0(0.00)
Central office administrator	11	2.56 (0.68)	1(9.09)	1(9.09)
7. Certificated				
Classified	38	3.14 (1.25)	11(28.95)	13(34.21)
Certificated	112	2.32 (0.96)	5(4.46)	2(1.79)
Building administrator	16	2.44 (0.61)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Central office administrator	11	2.44 (0.68)	0(0.00)	2(18.18)
8. Building administrators				
Classified	38	3.38 (0.92)	13(34.21)	12(31.58)
Certificated	109	2.84 (1.11)	54(49.54)	24(22.02)

(continued)

<u>Planning Time Question and Subgroup Response</u>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>NA(%)</i>	<i>NR(%)</i>
Building administrator	16	3.00 (0.94)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
Central office administrator	11	2.89 (1.20)	1(9.09)	1(9.09)
9. Central office administrators				
Classified	38	3.09 (0.90)	16(42.11)	11(28.95)
Certificated	110	3.09 (0.42)	59(53.64)	29(26.36)
Building administrators	16	3.25 (0.43)	6(37.50)	6(37.50)
Central office administrators	11	2.90 (0.94)	0(0.00)	1(9.09)

*Note.* Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1, *NA* = Not Applicable, *NR* = No Response.

The overarching theme within the open-ended responses indicated that classified staff receive no planning time. Classified staff stated that “I am in the classified group and haven’t seen any evidence of any planning time” and that “there has never been any discussion of planning time for classified employees.” This theme was supported by responses from the other subgroups with comments including, “classified staff have no time to meet,” “the region model has not given extra planning time,” and “this is an organizational structure of management . . . this did not increase prep time during the day”.

Certificated planning time open-ended responses resulted in the “no increase” theme with comments including “I have not seen any increase in planning time for

certificated staff since the implementation of the three-region model,” “I have seen no change at all,” and the “regional model didn’t increase planning time.” This theme was predominant from the certificated and building administrator subgroups. Fourteen open-ended responses indicated a theme that planning time was “contract-related” and not linked to the three-region district organizational structure model. Classified, certificated staff and building administrators referred to the contract as the reason for either an increase or decrease of planning time for certificated staff.

Building administrator planning time open-ended responses from certificated and classified staff indicated an “out of building/more meetings” theme. Responses included “they are gone from the building weekly at least one day,” “they are ALWAYS away at meetings for the district,” and “it seems they are out of the building more.” Building administrators’ responses to increased planning time question pertaining to themselves revealed an “efficiency and effectiveness increase” theme in the planning time they did have. Comments included: “it certainly created more time and purpose for collaborating with administrators from other buildings within the region, did lead to improve efficiency and applicability of many meetings,” and “we have been able to collaborate more effectively as a regional team.” The central office administrator planning time theme was “I don’t know” from classified, certificated, and building administrators. There were only two conflicting responses from central office administrators for this question so no theme was established from that subgroup.

### Research Question 3: Professional Development

The increase of professional development opportunities was the focus of survey questions 16, 17, 18, and 19. Each question asked “Did the three-region model increase professional development opportunities for (subgroup)?” As seen in Table 7 classified and certificated staff tended to disagree that professional development opportunities had increased while building and central office administrators were more neutral in their responses. The number of not applicable responses was the lowest for certificated professional development opportunities.

Table 7

*Professional Development Survey Question Subgroup Response Frequencies, Mean Scores, and Standard Deviations*

<u>Professional Development Question and Subgroup Response</u>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>nNA</i>	<i>nNR</i>
16. Classified staff	2.55 (0.84)	53	13
17. Certificated staff	2.86 (0.96)	15	9
18. Building administrators	3.23 (0.84)	72	26
19. Central office administrators	3.18 (0.86)	80	34

*Note.* Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1, *nNA* = Not Applicable, *nNR* = No Response.

Professional development opportunities were not thought to increase for classified staff as seen in Table 8. Responses from certificated staff indicated that certificated staff felt that their professional development opportunities had not increased (M=2.75,

SD=0.96). Building and central office administrators were neutral in their response to an increase of professional development opportunities for certificated staff with means of 3.00. Professional development opportunities were thought to increase slightly for building administrators with means from three out of the four subgroups above 3.00. Professional development opportunities for central office administrators were thought to decrease slightly from the central office administrator perspective (M=2.8, SD=1.25).

Table 8

*Professional Development Survey Question Subgroup Response Frequencies, Mean Scores, and Standard Deviations*

<u>Professional Development Subgroup Response</u>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>NA(%)</i>	<i>NR(%)</i>
16. Classified				
Classified	30	2.46 (0.93)	3(10.0)	1(3.33)
Certificated	97	2.62 (0.77)	48(49.48)	10(10.31)
Building administrator	16	2.62 (0.74)	2(12.50)	1(6.25)
Central office administrator	11	2.40 (0.92)	0(0.00)	1(9.09)
17. Certificated				
Classified	30	3.50 (0.65)	11(36.67)	7(23.33)
Certificated	100	2.75 (0.96)	2(2.00)	1(1.00)
Building administrator	16	3.00 (0.73)	1(6.25)	0(0.00)
Central office administrator	11	3.00 (1.15)	1(9.09)	1(9.09)

(continued)

<u>Professional Development Subgroup Response</u>	<i>n</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>NA(%)</i>	<i>NR(%)</i>
18. Building administrator				
Classified	30	3.33(0.67)	13(43.33)	8(26.67)
Certificated	98	3.29(0.68)	57(58.16)	17(17.35)
Building administrator	16	3.20(0.83)	1(6.25)	0(0.00)
Central office administrator	11	3.00(1.25)	1(9.09)	1(9.09)
19. Central office administrator				
Classified	30	3.25 (0.83)	14(46.67)	8(26.67)
Certificated	97	3.32 (0.57)	60(61.86)	18(18.56)
Building administrator	16	3.33 (0.47)	6(37.50)	7(43.75)
Central office administrator	11	2.80 (1.25)	0(0.00)	1(9.09)

*Note.* Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1, *NA* = Not Applicable, *NR* = No Response.

Themes that emerged from the constant comparative data analysis method regarding increased opportunities for professional development included “same”, “increase”, “don’t know”, “effectiveness”, and “contract-related”. Classified staff responded that the professional development opportunities had remained the same for them with comments stating “I have not seen change in this area,” “there is no professional development provided during work hours for my position,” and “no change in professional development opportunities.” Certificated staff responses fell into the

“don’t know” theme regarding classified professional development with building and central office administrators reflecting the theme of “same”.

A strong theme emerged from 27 certificated staff responses stating that professional development opportunities had remained the same. “The 3 region model has not increased any of my professional development opportunities” and “I have not noticed a change” are comments reflective of the “same” theme. There was some variation in the “same” theme as 12 respondents spoke to the effectiveness of the professional development even though they felt that the professional development opportunities had not increased with comments including “not the professional development I feel I need,” “again, some vertical alignment attempted but not sure of its effectiveness,” “it definitely created more camaraderie between neighboring schools,” and “they are certainly more focused and meaningful.” Contract-related responses became another theme among the certificated staff responses with references to the structure of the school day and professional development days included in the contract.

Classified staff, building, and central office administrators responded that they perceived certificated staff as having an increase in professional development opportunities. One respondent, reflective of other statements wrote “increased opportunities, yes—meaningful opportunities, no,” speaking to the effectiveness of the increased opportunities for professional development. A strong contingency of the building administrators responded that they saw certificated professional development remaining the same as before the three-region organizational structure change.

Out of the 19 responses to question 18 regarding building administrator professional development opportunities, 14 responses from all four subgroups indicated that they felt that the opportunities had increased for building administrators. “My principal often works with other principals in our region to plan staff development,” “regional principals are meeting together,” and “decreased meeting times and a focus lately has been more PD related” responses supported the theme of an increase in professional development for building administrators. Two out of the seven building level administrators who responded to the open-ended question did not feel that opportunities for professional development had increased, and one stated, “Again, I don’t think the regional model was the reason for the increase in prodev opportunities.”

Central office administrator professional development increase responses fell under the theme of “don’t know” and “no increase”. One central office administrator responded, “I would say no, because we were usually leading the PD for our regions.”

### **Subgroup Responses to Research Questions 1, 2, and 3**

Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12 highlight the responses each subgroup made about their own experiences regarding collaboration, planning time, and professional development. The classified and certificated subgroups tended to disagree that there was any increase in collaboration, planning time, or professional development opportunities for themselves. Building administrators were neutral in their responses regarding an increase in planning and professional development opportunities but were tending to agree that collaboration had increased for their subgroup. Central office administrators did not see professional



development and planning time as increasing since the three-region model but were more neutral regarding an increase in collaboration among central office administrators.

Table 9

*Classified Staff Responses for Classified Collaboration, Planning Time, and Professional Development Survey Questions*

Survey Item	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>NA(%)</i>	<i>NR(%)</i>
11. Collaboration	2.46 (1.00)	5(14.29)	6(17.14)
6. Planning Time	2.61 (1.21)	9 (23.68)	6 (15.79)
16. Professional Development	2.46 (0.93)	3(10.00)	1(3.33)

*Note.* Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1, *NA* = Not Applicable, *NR* = No Response.

Table 10

*Certificated Staff Responses for Certificated Collaboration, Planning Time, and Professional Development Survey Questions*

Survey Item	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>NA(%)</i>	<i>NR(%)</i>
12. Collaboration	2.65 (1.20)	3(2.86)	4(3.81)
7. Planning Time	2.32 (0.96)	5(4.46)	2(1.79)
17. Professional Development	2.75 (0.96)	2(2.00)	1(1.00)

*Note.* Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1, *NA* = Not Applicable, *NR* = No Response.

Table 11

*Building Administrator Responses for Building Administrator Collaboration, Planning Time, and Professional Development Survey Questions*

Survey Item	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>NA(%)</i>	<i>NR(%)</i>
13. Collaboration	3.75 (0.66)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
8. Planning Time	3.00 (0.94)	0(0.00)	0(0.00)
18. Professional Development	3.20 (0.83)	1(6.25)	0(0.00)

*Note.* Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1, *NA* = Not Applicable, *NR* = No Response.

Table 12

*Central Office Administrator Responses for Central Office Administrator Collaboration, Planning Time, and Professional Development Survey Questions*

Survey Item	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>NA(%)</i>	<i>NR(%)</i>
14. Collaboration	3.10 (1.30)	0(0.00)	1(9.09)
9. Planning Time	2.90 (0.94)	0(0.00)	1(9.09)
19. Professional Development	2.80 (1.25)	0(0.00)	1(9.09)

*Note.* Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1, *NA* = Not Applicable, *NR* = No Response.

Figure 1 illustrates the higher means seen from building administrators overall in answers to the three research questions on increased collaboration, planning time, and opportunities for professional development for their subgroup. The lowest means are seen from certificated staff on planning time and from classified staff on professional development. Through their responses, classified and certificated staff did not see an

impact on collaboration, planning time, and professional development after the implementation of the three-region district organizational structure.

Figure 1

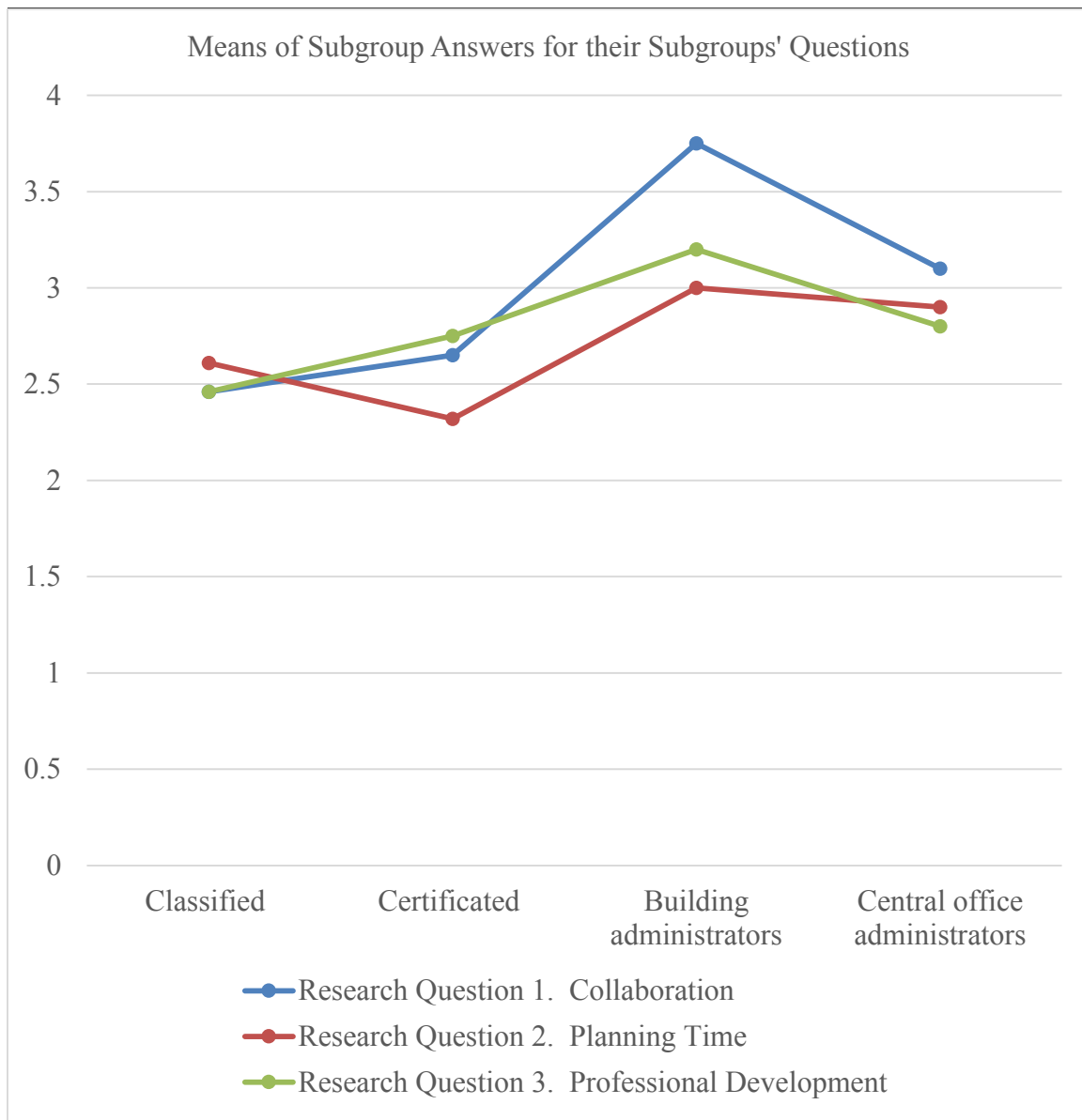


Figure 1. Scoring scale: *Strongly Agree* = 5, *Agree* = 4, *Neutral* = 3, *Disagree* = 2, *Strongly Disagree* = 1.

**Convergent Parallel Display**

Table 13 presents how the themes that emerged from the constant comparative analysis method are reflected in the Likert scale survey question findings through the use of a joint summary display.

Table 13

*Comparison of Information from Open-ended and Likert Scale Survey Questions**Delineated Per Subgroup*

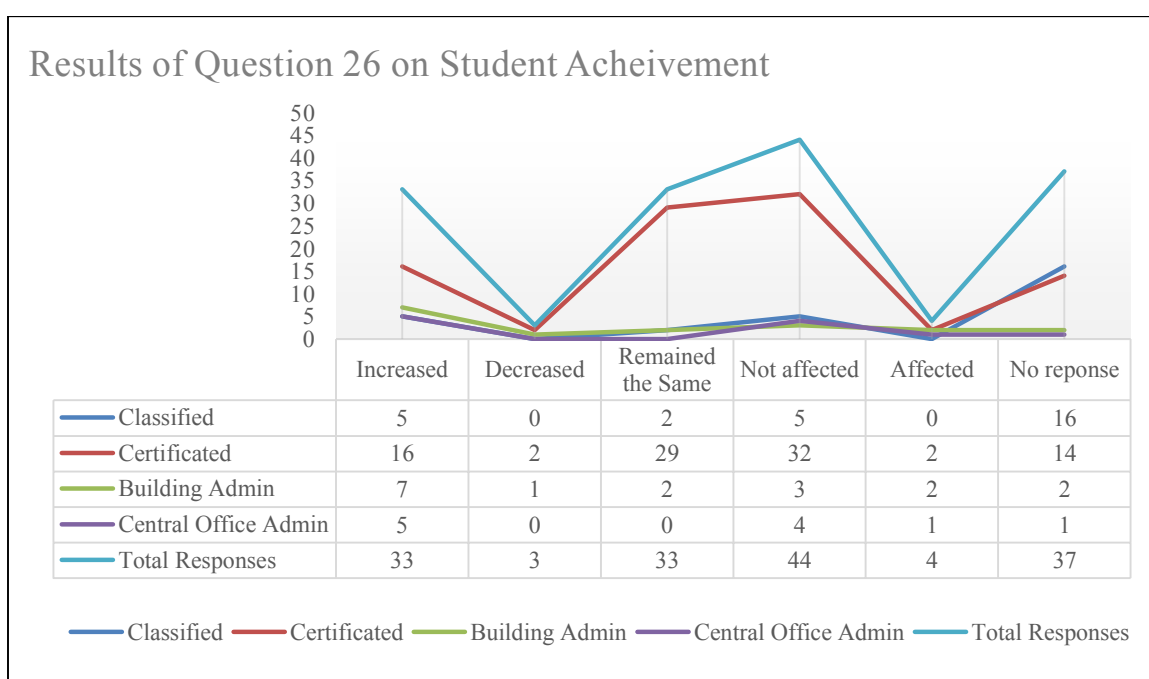
Organizational Theme	Open-ended Survey Question Themes	Likert Scale Survey Question % Findings
Collaboration (Research Question 1)	Classified – same, don't know	11. 8.44 SA, A; 25.90 D, SD; 34.94 NA
	Certificated – increased, same, contract	12. 29.94 SA, A; 32.33 D, SD; 10.18 NA
	Building administrators – increased, don't know	13. 20.24 SA, A; 6.06 D, SD; 41.21 NA
	Central office administrators – don't know, increased	14. 12.65 SA, A; 3.01 D, SD; 50.6 NA
Planning Time (Research Question 2)	Classified – same, no planning, don't know	6. 5.03 SA, A; 22.64 D, SD; 37.43 NA
	Certificated – no increase/no change, contract-related	7. 10.73 SA, A; 44.63 D, SD; 9.04 NA
	Building administrators – out of building/more meetings, efficiency and effectiveness increase	8. 13.21 SA, A; 9.77 D, SD; 39.08 NA
	Central office administrators – don't know	9. 6.29 SA, A; 3.43 D, SD; 46.29 NA
Professional Development (Research Question 3)	Classified – same, don't know	16. 5.19 SA, A; 23.37 D, SD; 34.42 NA
	Certificated – same, effectiveness, contract, increased	17. 23.57 SA, A; 26.75 D, SD; 9.55 NA
	Building administrator –increased	18. 16.77 SA, A; 7.1 D, SD; 46.45 NA
	Central office administrator – no themes	19. 8.44 SA, A; 3.90 D, SD; 51.95 NA

*Note.* SA= Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree; NA = Not Applicable. Questions 6, 11, and 16 ask if there was an increase for the classified subgroup. Questions 7, 12, and 17 ask if there was an increase for the certificated subgroup. Questions 8, 13, and 18 ask if there was an increase for the building administrators' subgroup. Questions 9, 14, and 19 ask if there was an increase for the central office administrators' subgroup.

### Research Question 4 and Hypothesis 1: Student Achievement

Research question 4 assessed the goal of the superintendent to increase student achievement by changing to a three-region district organizational structure. Question 26 in the online survey asked respondents to choose a statement that they best felt fit their perception of student achievement in the district (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



Overall perceptions regarding student achievement revealed an equal percentage of respondents (22.00%) who felt that student achievement had increased and that student achievement had remained the same since the change to the three-region model. Almost one-third of the respondents (29.33%) selected the response that student achievement has not been affected because of the three-region model. There is a difference in perception between respondents who selected “no change” and respondents who selected “not

affected” in the survey. Respondents who selected “not affected” were agreeing to the statement that “student achievement had not been affected because of the three-region model” and respondents to “no change” believed that “student achievement has remained the same since the change to the three-region model” but not “because of” the three-region model. 2.67% of respondents felt that student achievement was affected and 2.00% stated that student achievement had decreased. The percentage of no responses was 22.00%.

The data presented in Figure 2 when recalculated to remove the number of no responses yielded the percentages of 28.21 for respondents believing that student achievement had increased and the same percentage, 28.21, for respondents believing that student achievement had remained the same. 2.56% of the respondents perceived that student achievement had decreased since the implementation of the three-region model and 37.61% felt that student achievement had not been affected by the change in the district’s structure. Three point four two percent indicated that they believed student achievement had been affected by the three-region model.

Research question 4 and hypothesis 1 were also addressed through quantitative data collected from OSPI. The student achievement data sets included the percent of students passing the 10th-grade reading WASL/HSPE, 10th-grade writing WASL/HSPE, the 10th-grade math WASL/HSPE/EOC, and the estimated on-time graduation rates. Table 14 displays the points of central tendency (mean and standard deviation) calculated for the student achievement data set collected on the five school years before the change

in district structure and then calculated for the student achievement data set for the five school years after the district structure change.

Each data set was subjected to a *t*-test. The means of the two groups (i.e., the 10th-grade writing HSPE/WASL scores) was calculated and used to find the standard error of the difference between the two means. The value of *t* was then determined along with the critical value of *t* so that a decision to reject or accept the null hypothesis, H<sub>1</sub>, could be made. Results of the independent *t*-test, two tailed, was an acceptance of the null hypothesis, H<sub>1</sub>, with  $p > .05$  for all four student achievement categories as seen in Table 14.



Table 14

*t-Test Findings for District Student Achievement Categories*

	<u>M (SD)</u>	<u>t-Test Result</u>
<u>10th Reading</u>		
2003-04 to 2007-08	81.78 (7.15)	
2008-09 to 2012-13	87.78 (2.34)	
		$t_8 = -.40, p > .05$
<u>10th Writing</u>		
2003-04 to 2007-08	82.68 (10.92)	
2008-09 to 2012-13	92.92 (2.10)	
		$t_8 = -2.06, p > .05$
<u>10th Math</u>		
2003-04 to 2007-08	50.5 (3.91)	
2008-09 to 2012-13	59.71 (10.44)	
		$t_8 = -1.85, p > .05$
<u>On-time Graduation Rate</u>		
2003-04 to 2007-08	75.12 (3.02)	
2008-09 to 2012-13	77.76 (4.90)	
		$t_8 = -.40, p > .05$

*Note.*  $df = 8, p > .05$ , two tailed independent *t*-test. Data collected from: Office of the Superintendent of Instruction. (2013). *District report card*. Retrieved from <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?year=2012-13>.

### Summary

The findings revealed that the overall survey participation from the subgroups was closely representative of the entire population that qualified to participate in this study. Table 2 provided descriptive statistics of subgroup participation with the largest

percentage difference in the classified subgroup at 12.49% and the lowest percentage difference in the certificated subgroup at 1.42%. Nonprobability convenience sampling was used so a calculation of the error of estimation could not be conducted. The results for research questions 1, 2, and 3 were presented through the use of both qualitative and quantitative analysis and included a convergent parallel joint display. The closer look at the individual subgroup responses through the tables and the identification of emergent themes (i.e., no change, don't know, contract, and increase) within the open-ended responses from the different subgroups provided a more complete picture in searching for answers to research questions 1, 2, and 3. Research question 4 and H1 findings were presented through descriptive statistics and the final results of independent two tailed *t*-tests. Findings for research question 4 revealed that 65.82% of participants believed that student achievement had not changed since or been affected by the three-region model. Findings for H1 required an acceptance of the null hypothesis that student achievement had not been affected by the implementation of the three-region district organizational structure. The data analyzed for the research questions were gathered through an online survey and through the OSPI website.

A presentation of the analysis of the findings and conclusions drawn from the data for each of the four research questions and the hypothesis will be presented in the following chapter. Implications for the application of the study findings and conclusions to leadership practices will be discussed along with recommendations for action. Suggestions for further research in the focus area of public school district P-12

organizational structures will be offered for the reader's consideration in Chapter 5 followed by concluding statements for this research study.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

This study provided an evaluation of a P-12 public school district's organizational structure change based on the four goals set forth by the superintendent to increase collaboration, planning time, professional development, and student achievement. The literature review focused on organizational structures in public education, organizational structures in business and other non-educational organizations, leadership, and professional learning communities and collaboration. This review of the literature revealed that there was a paucity of research on the focus of this study. A mixed-methods approach was utilized to address the leadership problem that no formal evaluation of a P-12 public school district's organizational structure change had been found in the literature. An online survey and aggregated data from the OSPI website provided the qualitative and quantitative data to answer the four research questions and the hypothesis.

This chapter will provide a discussion of the findings and conclusions for each of the four research questions. A closer look at how the findings and conclusions apply to the problem statement and to leadership will be presented. Recommendations for action and further research suggestions will be offered for the reader's consideration.

### **Discussion of Findings and Conclusions**

**Research Question 1: Collaboration**

1. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on collaboration among classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?

Findings from the online survey indicated in summary data that the respondents felt that collaboration had not increased for classified and certificated staff. Respondents, however, did perceive that collaboration had increased for building administrators ( $M=3.46$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ) and central office administrators ( $M=3.37$ ,  $SD=0.86$ ). This summary of overall perceptions hid an anomaly that was discovered in the subgroups' response data. When the subgroups' response data was analyzed it was noted that certificated staff felt that they did not have an increase in collaboration for themselves unlike classified staff, building administrators, and central office administrators who indicated that they felt that collaboration had increased for certificated staff. Data from the open-ended responses to increased collaboration for certificated staff revealed two strong themes where one theme was "increase" and the other strong theme was "stayed the same." The "increase" theme in the certificated qualitative responses does not support the certificated subgroup quantitative response that collaboration had not increased for their subgroup.

The number of not applicable responses regarding collaboration was highest for the classified staff and central office administrators. From these results it can be

concluded that there is an overall perception that collaboration was not a focus for the classified staff or for the central office administrators. Collaboration was perceived by the respondents to pertain to certificated staff and building administrators. The conclusions that can be drawn for research question 1 are that collaboration did not increase for classified staff, there is a disconnect among the certificated staff as to whether or not collaboration increased for their own subgroup, and there is a perception that building and central office administrators have increased their collaboration.

Based on the findings in the literature review on collaboration and professional learning communities the structures of schools must support professional learning communities (PLCs) by creating a culture of collaboration and a structure for PLCs (Dufour et al., 2004; Dufour, 2012; Leathwood & Jantzi, 2008). The three-region model did provide an emphasis on vertical alignment and collaboration based on the themes that emerged from the quantitative data with one respondent, reflective of other responses, specifically stating that “regional meetings has allowed for more intentional opportunities for vertical articulation and collaboration.” The preponderance of data demonstrated that collaboration increased within feeder patterns for building administrators but not for any of the other subgroups.

### **Research Question 2: Planning Time**

2. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on planning time for classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators,

and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?

The high number of not applicable responses (232 not applicable responses) indicated that respondents perceived that planning time was meant for certificated staff only. Central office administrators and classified staff received the highest numbers of not applicable responses. The overall responses to the three-region model increasing planning time for classified and certificated staff was a disagree response. Responses from building administrators and central office administrators regarding increase in planning time were overall neutral with qualitative themes supporting no increase. The conclusion, based on the data, is that none of the subgroups perceived an increase in planning time since the change in the organizational structure of the district to a three-region model.

This conclusion is supported by the qualitative responses collected through the online survey. “I am in the classified group and haven’t seen any evidence of any planning time” and “there has never been any discussion of planning time for classified staff” supported the quantitative data collected that revealed that planning time had not increased for classified staff. Responses to the question of whether planning time had increased for certificated staff included “no change at all,” and the “regional model didn’t increase planning time.” Fourteen contract-themed comments emphasized that certificated staff planning time was not related to the three-region model but rather to the contract between the district and the union.

Classified staff felt that planning time for building administrators had increased with a mean of 3.38 (SD= 0.90) and open-ended responses from both classified and certificated staff indicated that they perceived that building administrators had increased planning time. However, the overall quantitative data collected revealed perceptions that planning time did not increase for any of the subgroups. Building administrators' open-ended responses resulted in an "efficiency and effectiveness increase" theme with comments including, "it certainly created more time and purpose for collaborating with administrators from other buildings within the region," "did lead to improved efficiency and applicability of many meetings," and "we have been able to collaborate more effectively as a regional team." The focus of the planning time, from the respondents, was on the vertical alignment, but an actual increase in the overall amount of planning time was not noted in either the quantitative or the qualitative data collected.

Therefore, it can be concluded none of the subgroups reported an increase in planning time that planning time did not increase for any of the subgroups of classified, certificated, building administrators, and central office administrators as denoted by the data analysis. A shift in focus at the building administrative level and at the certificated level to topics related to vertical alignment was noted in the data. The strong theme of "contract-related" regarding planning time was prevalent in the qualitative statements provided by respondents from all subgroups.

The topic of planning time related to public school district organizational structures was not found in the review of the literature. Hoyle et al. (2005) indicated that



the organizational structures of school districts should support increased student achievement but did not indicate how the organization should be structured and whether or not planning time was part of the structure. Research does suggest that professional learning communities, where a discussion of student data takes place, provides a venue in which teachers can plan their next steps based on the data they are sharing with each other (Dufour, 2012; Dufour et al., 2004; Glaze, 2013).

The topic of planning time was not found in the literature reviewed on organizational structures in business and other non-educational organizations. Kirkman et al. (2011) emphasized that the interaction of employees sharing information and skills was essential for an organization's success. The research found in the literature review did not discuss the merits or drawbacks of individual planning time in the success of an organization.

The definition of planning time in this study was time set aside during the work day for individuals to plan their work. A connection between increased planning time for all subgroups and the implementation of the three-region model could not be drawn from the results of this study. Based on the literature review and the results of this study, it is suggested that a focus on increased planning time as a goal for a change in the organizational structure of a public school district may not be the best choice for school leaders. A better choice for school district leaders, according to researchers Dufour (2012), Dufour et al. (2004), Jackson and Lunenburg (2010), and Leathwood and Jantzi

(2008) is a focus on increased collaboration through professional learning communities that will result in increased student achievement and organizational success.

### **Research Question 3: Professional Development**

3. What was the impact of the implementation of a regional model of a district organizational structure of a P-12 Washington state public school district on opportunities for professional development for classified staff, certificated staff, building administrators, and central office administrators as measured by data collected through an online survey?

Professional development opportunities did not increase for classified ( $M=2.55$ ,  $SD=0.84$ ) and certificated ( $M=2.86$ ,  $SD=0.84$ ) staff, according to the overall responses compiled from all four subgroups. Qualitative data reinforced the quantitative data with themes emerging of “same” and “contract-related” for classified and certificated staff. Respondents wrote that “the 3 region model has not increased any of my professional development opportunities,” and “again, some vertical alignment attempted but not sure of its effectiveness.” References were made by respondents to the structure of the school day and professional development days included in the contract.

Overall neutral responses indicated no significant increase in professional development opportunities for building and central office administrators (see Table 7 and Table 8). However, quantitative data on professional development opportunities for building administrators from the classified, certificated, and building administrative subgroups indicated a slight increase. This theme was also seen from the same subgroups

for central office administrators even though the central office administrators indicated that their own professional development opportunities had not increased with one central office respondent writing, “I would say no, because we were usually leading the PD for our regions.” From the data analysis it is suggested that professional development opportunities did not increase for classified, certificated, and central office administrators. Building administrative data revealed that there was a slight increase in their professional development since the three-region model implementation. However, the overall higher mean, 3.23, for the building administrator’s subgroup professional development is negated by the 72 not applicable responses.

Professional development opportunities were not found to be linked to the literature reviewed on organizational structures other than the professional growth that occurs inside highly functional professional learning communities. English (2008) and Jackson and Lunenburg (2010) indicated that structures needed to be put in place for teachers to participate in collaboration and increase their instructional skill. The definition of professional development used in this study was the acquisition of skills and knowledge through trainings and classes to increase an employee’s professional abilities. Based on the results of this study, professional development opportunities cannot be said to have significantly increased for any of the subgroups.

### **Subgroup Findings and Conclusions to Research Questions 1, 2, and 3**

It is important to note how the different subgroups viewed their own subgroup’s experiences since the implementation of the three-region model. Classified staff

disagreed that there was any increase in collaboration, planning time and professional development for their subgroup. Certificated staff felt the same with their highest disagreement regarding an increase in planning time. Building administrators held the highest mean of 3.75 (SD=0.66) pertaining to an increase in collaboration and were more neutral to agree in their responses that planning time and professional development had increased for their own subgroup. The central office administrators' subgroup gave a slight positive indication in their data regarding an increase in collaboration but they definitely did not see any increase in planning time and professional development for their own subgroup.

The literature review revealed that stakeholder perspectives are valuable for leaders of organizational change to know and understand. Seminal research by Beer and Walton (1990) provided guidance to organizational leaders of traditionally hierarchical structures to involve all of their stakeholders in any reorganization. Howard et al. (2010) also cautioned leaders to keep in mind the different perspectives of their stakeholders when considering a change in their organizational structure.

From the data provided by the individual subgroups on their own experiences it is suggested that only building administrators benefited with an increase in collaboration within their region and that the remaining subgroups did not perceive any benefits in the goal areas of increased collaboration, planning time, and professional development for themselves.

School leaders may want to look at increasing stakeholder involvement in a proposed organizational change. In this study the committee that led the organizational change was not representative of the different subgroups and the perceived accomplishment of the goals for the change were marginally seen by only the building administrators' subgroup.

#### **Research Question 4 and Hypothesis 1: Student Achievement**

4. Is there a relationship between the implementation of the regional model and student achievement as measured by the estimated on-time graduation rates and the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments (High School Proficiency Exam [HSPE], Washington Assessment of Student Learning [WASL], End of Course [EOC] exam)?

H1: There is no significant difference between the district's student achievement data, measured by the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments (HSPE/WASL/EOC), and estimated on-time graduation rates, before and after the implementation of the three-region organizational structure model.

The null hypothesis, H1, must be accepted, according to the results of the independent two tailed *t*-test conducted with on-time graduation rates and the 10th-grade reading, writing, and math state assessments. There was no significant difference ( $p > .05$ ) in the student achievement data from the five years before the organizational structure change to the five years after the organizational change in all four independent, two tailed, *t*-tests conducted.

Quantitative data collected from the online survey supports the results of the independent two tailed *t*-test conducted on the selected district student achievement indicators identified by OSPI. More than 28% of the survey respondents felt that student achievement had increased, but the same percentage of respondents felt that there had been no increase in student achievement since the three-region model implementation. By looking at the 37.61% of respondents who did not feel that student achievement had been affected by the three-region model plus the 28.21% who believed that student achievement had not increased since the three-region model implementation, it can be concluded that there is no statistically supported correlation and the common perception is there was no impact between the three-region model and student achievement.

There is an absence of literature regarding public school district organizational structures and a relationship to increased student achievement. However, the literature review revealed a correlation between leadership and student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2007), and Dufour (2012), Dufour et al. (2004), and Glaze (2013) concluded that professional learning communities also have a positive impact on student achievement. Hoyle et al. (2005) stated that the organizational structures of school districts should support increased student achievement but the actual form of the public school district's organizational structure was not discussed.

Strong instructional leadership has been linked to higher student achievement in the research (Dufour, 2012; Dufour et al., 2004; Murphy et al., 1985; Robinson et al., 2005). Research by Robinson (2010) suggested that district leadership may need to

reorganize and put structures in place to support instructional leadership at the principal level in order to better affect student achievement. Leadership styles of district superintendents was another area that was shown in the research to affect student achievement (Waters & Marzano, 2007), but the structures of the districts in their study were not discussed. A documented link between student achievement and a public school district's organizational structure was not found in the literature and was not supported in the findings and conclusions for research question 4 and H1. In conclusion, increased student achievement was not related to the change in the district's organizational structure to a three-region model.

#### **Application of Findings and Conclusions to the Problem Statement**

The findings and conclusions from the four research questions and the hypothesis address the problem statement that no formal evaluation had been conducted and that there was an absence of research available on a Washington state's P-12 public school district's change from a traditional organizational structure to a three-region model. The goals set forth by the superintendent to increase planning time, collaboration, professional learning opportunities, and student achievement were formally evaluated through this mixed-methods study. The convergent parallel joint display for research questions 1, 2, and 3 (see Table 13) captured the quantitative and qualitative data and provided validity to the conclusions discussed earlier in this chapter. The overall conclusion to the problem statement is that the formal evaluation revealed that no significant increase occurred regarding planning time, professional development, and

student achievement. However, based on the data analysis it can be concluded that there was an increase in collaboration among the building administrators' subgroup since the implementation of the three-region model.

This mixed-method study of a change in an organizational structure of a school district allowed the opportunity for a contribution to a generation of a theory (Punch, 2006) involving changes in public school district structures and their possible impact on student achievement, collaboration, planning time, and professional development. The theory that can be generated from this study pertains only to the perceptions of the participants regarding an increase in collaboration among building administrators. The original traditional hierarchical district organizational structure supported horizontal focused meetings and collaboration between high school principals, junior high principals, and elementary principals, respectively. The implementation of the three-region district organizational structure created a new meeting structure where building administrators were expected to collaborate within their high school feeder patterns on a wide variety of topics and issues instead of with their grade span colleagues. The theory supported by the findings on building administrator collaboration is that the structure of an organization can impact the focus of the collaboration because the emphasis of the organization shifted from a horizontal focus to a vertical focus. More supportive structures and processes needed to be put into place to increase collaboration for all of the subgroups, but the three-region model did show promise for increased collaboration,



particularly with building administrators, and a slight indication in the data for certificated staff.

The possibility of a theory being generated from the results of this study was realized only within the parameters of the study. The results of this study are specific to this district only and the four goals of the change that were evaluated. Based on the data analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data, the change in the district's organizational structure does not impact planning time, professional development, or student achievement. Collaboration for one subgroup, building administrators, increased since the implementation of the three-region model.

Only one school district's change from a traditional hierarchical organizational model to a three-region model was evaluated. Therefore, conclusions reached in this study only directly apply to this district. The data revealed that the single change of structure did not accomplish the goals set forth and that further structural and cultural changes need to occur along with the organizational structure to make a possible impact on student achievement and the other goals set forth for the change by the superintendent.

### **Application to Leadership**

The findings of this study can be applied to leadership practices, particularly in the public education field. Leadership is the interaction of the leader, the follower, and the situation (Hughes et al., 2012), so careful attention by school district leaders needs to be paid to the relationships between these three components. The study of successful organizations has led to leaders creating formal and informal structures for their

employees to establish relationships, share knowledge and information, and problem solve together (Peirson et al., 2012). Denning (2010) and Hagel et al. (2010) discussed the need for collaboration and communication across various lines within the organization and outside of the organization. Setting structures in place to share knowledge within the organization is essential for organizational success (Denning, 2010; Kirkman et al., 2011) and is an action that leaders need to implement when instituting organizational change.

Perison et al. (2012) highlighted the need for leaders to communicate their vision and provide details to stakeholders so that the organizational change can be successful. The number of no response and not applicable responses throughout the online survey suggests a lack of understanding or a lack of communication of the goals the superintendent had set forth for the three-region model implementation. Howard et al. (2010) recommended that stakeholders' perspectives are valuable information for a school leader to solicit when seeking to change their organization. Recognizing and selecting appropriate strategies to address stakeholder concerns is a valuable tool school leaders can utilize in their leadership practice. In this study the involvement of stakeholders at the beginning of the three-region model implementation was limited and did not incorporate all stakeholders.

The leadership problem that was addressed through this study was the lack of literature regarding the effectiveness of a P-12 public school district's organizational structure that local and national school leaders could refer to as part of their decision-

making process when considering a change in their own district structure and the absence of a formal evaluation of a P-12 public school district's organizational structure change to a three-region model. This study has addressed the leadership problem and has contributed to the literature on a P-12 public school district's organizational change by providing an evaluation of the change based on the original goals set forth by the superintendent. School leaders will now have research to refer to when considering whether or not to spend time, money, and effort on an organizational structure change in their own district.

### **Recommendations for Action**

This evaluation of a school district's change from a traditional hierarchical organizational model to a three-region model revealed that there were no significant increases in planning time, professional development, and student achievement. However, a small perceived increase in collaboration was noted in the data for building administrators. From the results of this study it is recommended that school district leaders, when considering a change in their own district's structure, should set in place specific measurable goals and other supporting structures for the changes they wish to make.

The attempt to change the structure of a traditional hierarchical school district organizational structure to achieve the goals of increased professional development, collaboration, planning time, and student achievement was a decision made by the superintendent to change the status quo of the district. If districts continue to do what

they have always done, they are likely to achieve the same results. Research by Hoyle et al. (2005) stated that the organizational structures of school districts should be specifically constructed to support increased student achievement. If an organization's leadership is willing to change its structures and processes to meet the needs of its consumers in an ever-changing world they will likely see success (Denny, 2010; Kenny, 2006). The creation of specific and measurable goals would benefit a district leadership when seeking to change the organization's structure. The implementation of substructures to further support the change along with a strong guiding coalition comprised of key stakeholders will contribute to the sustainability of the change.

There may be ways to further structure the organization within a three-region or like organizational structure to better support planning time, professional development, collaboration, and student achievement. A closer look at the school-within-a-school model (Deweese, 2007) may provide district leaders with ideas of how to create the support structures that were found lacking in this study for a more successful district regional organizational model. The school-within-a-school model has been shown to increase student achievement and provides structures for increased collaboration (Deweese, 2007). The goal of increased student achievement has also been tied to successfully implemented professional learning communities (Dufour, 2012; Dufour et al., 2004). Changing the traditional school district structure is a viable tool for school district leaders to use to improve student performance (Glaze, 2013; Honig, 2008; Senge, 1990).

Another action school leaders can take is to look closely at the building level leadership and where principals are spending their time. The theme of principals being out of the building too much was identified in the data collected in this study. Horng and Loeb (2010) and Robinson (2010) noted that effective instructional leaders can increase student achievement but that the responsibilities of the principal need to be restructured to allow them to focus on instructional leadership. This restructuring could include a shifting of the traditional supervision and managerial aspects of a principal's role to other support staff and the creation of direct links to district administrator support suggested by Honig (2008). Glaze (2013), Honig (2008), Howard et al. (2010), and Jackson and Lunenburg (2010) stated that if an organization wished to become a learning organization and foster success for its stakeholders the organization must move away from its traditional hierarchical structure and functions and create flexible structures in which collaboration and innovation are valued and fostered.

As public education leaders at the district and state levels seek to find new ways to increase student achievement and more efficiently manage or support their districts they may continue to look at restructuring their organizations. This study, on a particular school district's organizational structure change, has contributed to the literature and has provided insight into the effectiveness of the change. The results imply very limited success pertaining to the four main goals set by the superintendent for the change but also provide ideas and strategies that educational leaders can utilize to build on when considering their own organizational structure change.

Results of this study will be disseminated at a minimum of two professional educational conferences in Washington State, presented to central office administrators at the district in this study, and made available through publication in ProQuest with availability to anyone in the world with access to ProQuest.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

To increase an understanding of how P-12 public school district organizational structures impact the organization and the intended outcome of higher student achievement, the following recommendations are made for further research:

1. The decision to change a public school district's structure has an impact on the district and its learning community. Howard et al. (2010) suggested that stakeholders' perspectives on the reorganization of a district could provide valuable information on how to implement structural change within a district. Even though the focus of this particular study was not on the process, how the change was actually implemented and how stakeholders were empowered and included, further research in this area would enhance an understanding of how stakeholders view the district's organizational change and provide insights into what strategies should be used with the different subgroups to promote a positive outcome.
2. Berger's (2002) study of higher-level educational institutions utilized the organizational frames created by Bolman and Deal to reveal how student outcomes are influenced by the four frames of human resources, political,

symbolic, and structure. These organizational frames could be used to evaluate P-12 public school districts with different organizational structures to provide understanding as to how the different frames within the district's organizational structure influence student outcomes.

3. This study focused on the overarching goals of the implementation of the three-region model. Further study of substructures within the three-region model that support the overarching goals of the three-region implementation would contribute to a greater understanding and unveil possible strategies for leaders to utilize when changing their district's organizational structure. Peirson et al. (2012) cited research that an overall structure of an organization to promote collaboration must be supported by other structures within the organization that allow staff to have open access to knowledge and information so that they can make better informed decisions that will improve student achievement.
4. A study of the cultures of different school districts that changed to a regional model would contribute to the literature on school district organizational structures. Beer and Walton (1990) and Hartnell et al. (2011) warned that the culture of the organization must be strongly considered by leaders before they institute structural changes they wish to sustain.
5. As found in the literature review, Leathwood and Jantzi (2008) stated that leader efficacy was closely associated with their efforts at organizational

redesign (e.g., building collaborative cultures and the structures that encourage collaboration). A study of why some superintendents decide to change a district's organizational structure is suggested as another potential area of research and may generate new issues in improving leadership practices.

6. A study on the overall organizational patterns of Washington state P-12 public school districts serving different numbers of students would contribute to the literature on public school district organizational structures. By comparing the organizational structures of like school districts, patterns may be identified that correlate to higher student achievement.
7. This study concentrated on the four main goals set forth by the superintendent to evaluate the three-region organizational structure change. Another goal listed by the superintendent was an increase in efficiency and cost effectiveness. This study focused on the evaluation of the four main goals of the change in the organizational structure, but a closer look at the subgoals and other outcomes the superintendent was seeking could provide more evidence for a more thorough evaluation of the change to a three-region model.
8. A closer examination of the different types of leadership frameworks in a future study may reveal a correlation to specific types of organizational structures found in public school districts. The type of leadership framework



utilized in the participating district in this study may have had some influence on its outcome.

9. Due to time constraints only an online survey was conducted. However, a qualitative study with in-depth interviews may provide a deeper understanding regarding the three-region model and its unintended and intended consequences.

### **Concluding Statement**

This study of an evaluation of a P-12 public school district's organizational structure change from a traditional hierarchical structure to a three-region model based on the feeder patterns of the district has provided the first evaluation of its kind for current and future school district leaders to refer to when considering a change in their own district's organizational structure. The evaluation was based on the four main goals set forth by the superintendent to increase collaboration, planning time, professional development opportunities, and student achievement. Results of the study showed no significant change in student achievement that could be correlated to the district's organizational structure change. Planning time and professional development was shown not to have increased since the change to the three-region model in the quantitative data and the qualitative data revealed a strong contract-related theme with no connection to the actual organizational structure of the district. Results from the data collected on collaboration did indicate an increase in collaboration for building administrators, as the meetings they attended were in their region's feeder pattern and encompassed

elementary, junior high, and high school administrators. There may be other consequences of the district's organizational structure change that this study did not explore. These consequences could include organizational cultural shifts, efficiency, stakeholder support, and costs. These aspects of this district's organizational change, or another district's organizational change, will need to be further explored in a future study so that a better understanding of the intended or unintended consequences of a change to a district's organizational structure can be referenced by future school district leaders.

In conclusion, the results of this study clearly show that the goals set forth by the superintendent for the change in the district's organizational structure from a traditional hierarchical model to a three-region model were not accomplished. However, the results did reveal that collaboration focused on vertical alignment and support had increased for building administrators. Current and future superintendents and other school district leaders should find this research beneficial for their decision making regarding their own district's organizational structure.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Survey Questions**

Online Survey administered through a SurveyMonkey link

Please mark one of the following:

- I have read the informed consent form and agree to participate in this online survey.
- I decline to participate in this survey.

Definitions of Terms:

*Classified staff:* para-educators, secretaries, office managers, administrative assistants, custodians, security, bus drivers, and food service personnel.

*Certificated staff:* staff belonging to the local affiliate of the Washington Education Association within the district and are comprised of teachers, counselors, district improvement specialists, school psychologists, librarians, on-time graduation specialists, and other related positions that work directly with students and require a four year degree at minimum.

*Building administrators:* principals and assistant principals.

*Central office administrators:* personnel who hold the titles of assistant directors, directors, executive directors, chief academic officers, assistant superintendents, and superintendent.

*Collaboration:* opportunities where conversations occur around the work. Collaboration may occur in formal or informal settings.

*Planning time:* time set aside during the work day for individuals to plan their work.

*Professional development:* the acquisition of skills and knowledge through trainings and classes to increase an employee's professional abilities.

**Demographics**

1. Position currently held within the district:
  - Classified
  - Certificated
  - Building administrator
  - Central office administrator
  - No response

2. Gender
  - Male
  - Female
  - No response
  
3. Grade level band currently working in (mark all that apply):
  - Elementary
  - Junior high
  - High school
  - Other
  - Does not apply
  - No response

**Planning Time**

4. Did the three-region model increase planning time for classified staff?
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  - f. Not applicable
  - g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

5. Did the three-region model increase planning time for certificated staff?
  - a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  - f. Not applicable
  - g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

6. Did the three-region model increase planning time for building administrators?
  - a. Strongly agree

- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

7. Did the three-region model increase planning time for central office administrators?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  - f. Not applicable
  - g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Collaboration**

8. Did the three-region model increase opportunities for collaboration for classified staff?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  - f. Not applicable
  - g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

9. Did the three-region model increase opportunities for collaboration for certificated staff?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree



- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

10. Did the three-region model increase opportunities for collaboration for building administrators?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

11. Did the three-region model increase opportunities for collaboration for central office administrators?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Professional Development**

12. Did the three-region model increase professional development opportunities for classified staff?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral

- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

13. Did the three-region model increase professional development opportunities for certificated staff?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

14. Did the three-region model increase professional development opportunities for building administrators?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

15. Did the three-region model increase professional development opportunities for central office administrators?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Efficiency**

16. Did the three-region model increase efficiency for classified staff?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

17. Did the three-region model increase efficiency for certificated staff?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

18. Did the three-region model increase efficiency for building administrators?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

19. Did the three-region model increase efficiency for central office administrators?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Student Achievement**

20. Choose the statement that best reflects your opinion regarding student achievement since the implementation of the three-region model in 2008.

- a. Student achievement has increased since the change to the three-region model.
- b. Student achievement has decreased since the change to the three-region model.
- c. Student achievement has remained the same since the change to the three-region model.
- d. Student achievement has not been affected because of the three-region model.
- e. Student achievement has been affected by the three-region model.
- f. No response

**Process**

21. How were you informed of the change in the organizational structure of the district to a three-region model in 2008? (choose one)

- a. Newsletter/Newspaper
- b. Email
- c. Conversation with colleague
- d. Direct supervisor
- e. District office administrator
- f. Other (please specify)
- g. Do not remember
- h. No response

22. Were you part of the process of the change to the three-region model?
- Yes
  - No
  - No response
23. If you answered yes to question 18, please describe what part you played in the process. (participants may leave this blank for no response)
24. What are your thoughts regarding the process of the change to the three-region model? (participants may leave this blank for no response)

**Costs and Resources**

25. Choose the statements that best reflect your opinion regarding costs and resources since the implementation of the three-region model.
- The three-region model has increased costs in the district.
  - The three-region model has made better use of district resources.
  - The three-region model has decreased costs in the district.
  - The three-region model has decreased resources in the district.
  - The three-region model has not affected costs in the district.
  - The three-region model has not affected resources in the district.
  - Other
  - No response.

**Overall**

26. What do you believe are some of the advantages of the three-region model? (participants may leave this blank for no response)
27. What do you believe are some of the disadvantages of the three-region model? (participants may leave this blank for no response)
28. What do you believe were some of the unintended consequences of the change to the three-region model? (Consequences can be both positive and negative.) (participants may leave this blank for no response)
29. Other comments: (participants may leave this blank for no response)

**APPENDIX B**

**Emails to Potential Survey Participants**

***First Email***

Dear Puyallup School District Employee,

I am a doctoral student at City University of Seattle and I am conducting research on the Puyallup School District's organizational structure change from a traditional structure to a three-region model as part of the requirements for my degree. The Puyallup School District has agreed to allow me to conduct an electronic anonymous survey. The survey should take you approximately 20 minutes.

Your participation will be very much appreciated and your responses are strictly confidential. I have attached a copy of the informed consent form for your review. Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the survey at any time without any negative consequences.

If you are willing to participate please click on the link to the survey. The first survey question will allow you to identify that you have read the informed consent form and agree to participate. Again, your participation in this anonymous survey is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Christine Moloney  
Doctoral Student

***Follow Up Email***

A SurveyMonkey feature allowed the researcher to send an email to respondents without the researcher knowing which potential participants did not respond to the first request. The follow up email contained the same information as the first email but began with the following sentence: As you may have missed my previous email I am asking if you would consider participating in a quick online survey.

**APPENDIX C**

Survey Questions to be Reviewed by Expert Panel



Online Survey Begins (administered through a SurveyMonkey link)

Please mark one of the following:

- I have read the informed consent form and agree to participate in this online survey.
- I decline to participate in this survey.

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

Definitions of Terms:

*Classified staff:* para-educators, secretaries, office managers, administrative assistants, custodians, and food service personnel.

*Certificated staff:* staff belonging to the local affiliate of the Washington Education Association within the district and are comprised of teachers, counselors, district improvement specialists, school psychologists, librarians, on-time graduation specialists, and other related positions that work directly with students and require a four year degree at minimum.

*Building administrators:* principals and assistant principals.

*Central office administrators:* personnel who hold the titles of assistant directors, directors, executive directors, chief academic officers, assistant superintendents, and superintendent.

*Collaboration:* opportunities where conversations occur around the work. Collaboration may occur in formal or informal settings.

*Planning time:* time set aside during the work day for individuals to plan their work.

Survey Questions:

1. Position currently held within the district:
  - Classified
  - Certificated
  - Building administrator
  - Central office administrator
  - No response

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

## 2. Gender

- Male
- Female
- No response

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

## 3. Grade level band currently working in (mark all that apply):

- Elementary
- Junior high
- High school
- Other
- Does not apply
- No response

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

**Planning Time**

## 4. Did the three-region model prioritize increased planning time for classified staff?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

## 5. Did the three-region model prioritize increased planning time for certificated staff?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree

- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

6. Did the three-region model prioritize increased planning time for building administrators?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  - f. Not applicable
  - g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

7. Did the three-region model prioritize increased planning time for central office administrators?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  - f. Not applicable
  - g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

### Collaboration

8. Did the three-region model increase opportunities for collaboration for classified staff?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Not applicable
  - No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

9. Did the three-region model increase opportunities for collaboration for certificated staff?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Not applicable
  - No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

10. Did the three-region model increase opportunities for collaboration for building administrators?
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Neutral
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  - Not applicable
  - No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**      **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**        **yes**    **no**      **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

11. Did the three-region model increase opportunities for collaboration for central office administrators?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  - f. Not applicable
  - g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**      **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**        **yes**    **no**      **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

**Professional Development**

12. Did the three-region model increase professional development opportunities for classified staff?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Disagree
  - e. Strongly disagree
  - f. Not applicable
  - g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**      **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**        **yes**    **no**      **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

13. Did the three-region model increase professional development for certificated staff?
- a. Strongly agree
  - b. Agree

- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

14. Did the three-region model increase professional development opportunities for building administrators?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

15. Did the three-region model increase professional development opportunities for central office administrators?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

**Efficiency**

16. Did the three-region model increase efficiency for classified staff?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

17. Did the three-region model increase efficiency for certificated staff?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

18. Did the three-region model increase efficiency for building administrators?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**

**Clarity:**            **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

19. Did the three-region model increase efficiency for central office administrators?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree
- f. Not applicable
- g. No response

Please provide an example or evidence to support your response:

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**            **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

**Student Achievement**

20. Choose the statement that best reflects your opinion regarding student achievement since the implementation of the three-region model in 2008.

- a. Student achievement has increased since the change to the three-region model.
- b. Student achievement had decreased since the change to the three-region model.
- c. Student achievement has remained the same since the change to the three-region model.
- d. Student achievement has not been affected because of the three-region model.
- e. Student achievement has been affected by the three-region model.
- f. No response

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**            **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

**Process**

21. How were you informed of the change in the organizational structure of the district to a three-region model in 2008? (choose one)

- a. Newsletter/Newspaper
- b. Email
- c. Conversation with colleague



- d. Direct Supervisor
- e. District office administrator
- f. Other (please specify)
- g. Do not remember
- h. No response

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

22. Were you part of the process of the change to the three-region model?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No response

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

23. If you answered yes to question 18, please describe what part you played in the process. (participants may leave this blank for no response)

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

24. What are your thoughts regarding the process of the change to the three-region model? (participants may leave this blank for no response)

**Relevancy:**        **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**         **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

### **Costs and Resources**

25. Choose the statements that best reflect your opinion regarding costs and resources since the implementation of the three-region model.

- a. The three-region model has increased costs in the district.
- b. The three-region model has made better use of district resources.
- c. The three-region model has decreased costs in the district.
- d. The three-region model has decreased resources in the district.
- e. The three-region model has not affected costs in the district.
- f. The three-region model has not affected resources in the district.
- g. Other
- h. No response.

**Relevancy:**      **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**        **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

**Overall**

26. What do you believe are some of the advantages of the three-region model?  
(participants may leave this blank for no response)

**Relevancy:**      **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**        **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

27. What do you believe are some of the disadvantages of the three-region model?  
(participants may leave this blank for no response)

**Relevancy:**      **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**        **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

28. What do you believe were some of the unintended consequences of the change to  
the three-region model? (Consequences can be both positive and negative.)  
(participants may leave this blank for no response)

**Relevancy:**      **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**        **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

29. Other comments: (participants may leave this blank for no response)

**Relevancy:**      **yes**    **no**  
**Clarity:**        **yes**    **no**    **If no, suggestion for improvement:**

**APPENDIX D**

**Email to Potential Expert Panel Members**

Dear potential expert panel member,

I am a doctoral student at City University of Seattle conducting a mixed-method research study. My proposed study is titled *Evaluation of the Effectiveness of a P-12 Public School District Organizational Structure*. The evaluation is based on the original goals set forth by a previous superintendent for the change from a traditional horizontal model based on grade level bands to a three-region model based on feeder patterns and close geographic location of the schools.

I am asking for your help as part of an expert panel to review the proposed online survey questions for relevance and clarity before I use the questions with the actual participants in the study. Potential participants in the survey will be current employees of the district who were employees five years before the district's change to the three-region model.

To increase the content validity of the questions I respectfully ask that you include all members of the expert panel on your email response(s). Any ensuing discussions regarding the questions among the expert panel members will be captured on the email thread and provide for a stronger content validity for the final survey and interview questions. It is important that I receive your individual yes or no responses to each of the questions so I can calculate content validity. With discussions you may choose to change your mind on a question so please mark your final version with the words final at the top of the document with your name.

As a professional in the education field your input and feedback is very important to me. Please mark each question for relevancy and clarity and provide any suggestions for improvement or removal of the question.

*Relevancy:* do you believe the question is relevant to the research? Please mark yes or no.

*Clarity:* is the question clearly stated? Please mark yes or no. If the question is not clearly stated please make suggestions for improvement.

If you are unable to participate or would like to decline this opportunity as a member of the expert panel please respond to my email as soon as possible so I can solicit another expert for the panel. Please complete your individual feedback and discussion thread by January 10, 2014. I am anxious to begin and I am planning to graduate in June of 2014.

Thank you very much for your time and for your advice.

Sincerely,  
Christine Moloney  
Doctoral Student at City University of Seattle

253-670-3787  
molonecn@cityu.edu

**APPENDIX E**

**Informed Consent Form for Survey**



• Rectangular CITYU RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT  
FOR ON-LINE SURVEYS AND INTERNET DATA COLLECTION

**Title of Project:**

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of a P-12 Public School District Organizational Structure

**Name and Title of Researcher(s):**

Christine N. Moloney, Doctoral Student

*For Faculty Researcher(s):*

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Immediate Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

*For Student Researcher(s):*

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Margaret Chow

Department: Professor and Director for Educational Administrator Preparation, Master of Education, and Ed. D. Educational Leadership Concentration

Telephone: 206-239-4833

E-mail: mchow@cityu.edu

You are being invited to participate in an on-line survey that is part of a research study that has been approved by City University of Seattle Institutional Review Board.

**Purpose of Study:**

The purpose of this study is to provide an evaluation of a school district organizational structure change from a traditional horizontal structure based on grade level bands to a regional model.

**Research Participation:**

The survey consists of 30 questions and is expected to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You may choose to answer as many questions as you decide and each question will have a "no response" choice.

Your involvement is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without negative consequences, by refusing to answer any further questions or exiting from the survey entirely. You may request a copy of the final research study report. Should you request a copy, you may be asked to pay the costs of photocopying and mailing.

**Confidentiality**

Participation is confidential to the limits of applicable privacy laws. No one except the faculty researcher or student researcher, his/her supervisor and Program Coordinator (or Program Director) will be allowed to view any information or data collected whether by questionnaire, interview and/or other means. If a student-teacher researcher's cooperating classroom teacher will also have access to raw data, the following box will be checked.  All data from the survey, computer discs, any backup of computer discs and any other storage devices are kept locked and password protected by the researcher. The research data will be stored for 5 years (5 years or more if required by local regulations). At the end of that time all data of whatever nature will be permanently destroyed. The published results of the study will contain data from which no individual participant can be identified.

You are advised that the company hosting this survey is located in the United States and as such is subject to U.S. laws, including the US Patriot Act which allows authorities access to the records of internet service providers. Therefore, anonymity and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. If you choose to participate in this survey, you understand that your responses to the survey questions will be stored and may be accessed in the USA.

If you have any questions about this research contact the researcher and/or his/her supervisor, as listed on page one of this consent form.

Should you have any concerns about the way you have been treated as a research participant contact the following individual(s):

Dr. Kelley Flores, Program Coordinator (and/or Program Director), City University of Seattle, at 521 Wall Street, Suite 100, Seattle, Washington 98121, 206-239-4769, kflores@cityu.edu (address, direct phone line and CityU email address).

**ELECTRONIC CONSENT:** Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

- you have read and understand all of the above information, and
- you voluntarily agree to participate, and
- you are at least 18 years of age.

If you **do not wish to participate** in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

- Agree
- Disagree

Thank you,

Christine N. Moloney  
Name of Researcher



