

The superintendent's role in teacher professional development

by

Janet K. Neufeld

B.A., Bethel College, 1980  
M.Ed., Wichita State University, 1999  
Ed.S., Pittsburg State University, 2006

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2016

## **Abstract**

School superintendents have traditionally been removed from the systemic process of learning in a school district and instead have been considered more indirect supporters of student achievement. Now, in the face of changing leadership standards, they are being required to provide leadership that more directly enhances student learning by way of teacher professional development. This case study takes a deeper look into the process of the superintendent's role in district professional development. This will include a purposeful examination to clearly understand the superintendent's role in designing, implementing, and monitoring professional development in the school district. The study includes (a) the meaning of professional development; (b) examination of school leadership theories and roles; and (c) analysis of how professional development impacts the classroom design of a district instructional framework for professional development.

The superintendent's role in teacher professional development

by

Janet K. Neufeld

B.A., Bethel College, 1980  
M.A., Wichita State University, 1999  
Ed.S., Pittsburg State University, 2006

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership  
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

2016

Approved by:

Co-Major Professor  
Dr. Donna Augustine-Shaw

Approved by:

Co-Major Professor  
Dr. Jessica Holloway

## **Copyright**

© Janet K. Neufeld 2016.

## **Abstract**

School superintendents have traditionally been removed from the systemic process of learning in a school district and instead of been considered more indirect supporters of student achievement. Now, in the face of changing leadership standards, they are being required to provide leadership that more directly enhances student learning by way of teacher professional development. This case study takes a deeper look into the process of the superintendent's role in district professional development. This will include a purposeful examination to clearly understand the superintendent's role in designing, implementing, and monitoring professional development in the school district. The study includes (a) the meaning of professional development; (b) examination of school leadership theories and roles; and (c) analysis of how professional development impacts the classroom design of a district instructional framework for professional development.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	xi
Acknowledgements.....	xiii
Dedication.....	xv
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Teacher Professional Development .....	1
The Superintendent’s Role.....	5
Purpose of the Study.....	10
Overview of the Methods .....	11
Conceptual Framework.....	12
Research Questions.....	13
Limitations .....	14
Summary.....	15
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	16
Theories and Concepts Informing the Study .....	16
School Leadership Theories and Concepts .....	18
Education Change Theories and Concepts .....	24
Professional Development Theories and Concepts.....	28
Related Research.....	34
How Leadership Influences Learning.....	35
Synthesis of Existing Research Related to the Study .....	36
Need for Research Related to the Study .....	38
Summary.....	39
Chapter 3 - Methods.....	41
Case Study .....	42
History and Development of Navigating Change in Learning Land School District.....	43
Site Selection and Description.....	47
Participant Selection .....	50
Description of the Participants.....	52
Data Sources and Procedures.....	55

Interviews.....	56
Additional sources of information and procedures for collection.....	57
Organizing and Storing Data .....	58
Data Analysis.....	59
Coding.....	62
Validation.....	70
Researcher Positionality .....	72
Epistemology Statement .....	75
Summary.....	75
Chapter 4 - Data Analysis.....	77
Introduction.....	77
Findings .....	78
Demographic Data .....	78
Documents and Artifacts.....	79
Navigating Complex Change.....	80
District Goals .....	81
Learning Land School District Instructional Framework .....	82
Learning Land School District Multi-Year Action Plan.....	83
Learning Land School District Data Dashboard.....	84
Learning Land School District Professional Learning Days .....	85
Interviews.....	85
Data Presentation .....	86
Patterns and Themes from the Data.....	94
Patterns Related to Direction and Sector Engagement.....	94
Patterns Related to Capacity-Building with Focus on Results .....	98
Patterns Related to Supportive Infrastructure.....	104
Patterns Related to Managing the Distractors.....	106
Patterns Related to Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry.....	113
Patterns Related to Two-Way Communication .....	116
Themes Related to Direction and Sector Engagement .....	120
Themes Related to Direction and Sector Engagement .....	122

Board Expectations and District Goals .....	122
Educator Effectiveness.....	123
Resources .....	124
Vision and Leadership .....	125
Themes Related to Capacity Building with Focus on Results.....	127
Administrator Meetings .....	127
Modeling Facilitation.....	127
Central Office Collaboration.....	128
Data Dashboard.....	129
Student Achievement .....	130
Educator Effectiveness.....	130
Walkthroughs.....	130
Professional Learning .....	131
Culture and Climate .....	131
Differentiated Professional Learning.....	131
District Provided Resources.....	133
Focus on Teacher Learning and Leadership .....	134
Instructional Framework.....	135
Multi-Year Action Plan.....	137
Research Based .....	138
Themes Related to Supportive Infrastructure .....	139
Board of Education Support for Professional Learning.....	139
Fiscal Responsibility .....	140
Multi-Year Action Plan.....	141
Themes Related to Managing the Distractors.....	142
Agendas.....	142
Feel Valued .....	143
Laser Focus on District Goals and Action Plan .....	144
Professional Learning .....	145
Time .....	147
Themes Related to Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry .....	149



Accountability.....	149
Aligned System for Learning.....	150
Instructional Framework.....	151
Themes Related to Two-Way Communication .....	153
Professional Learning Survey .....	153
Superintendent Cares .....	154
Superintendent Communication.....	155
Intersection of Themes.....	157
Direction and Sector Engagement and Capacity-Building with Focus on Results.....	157
Capacity-Building with Focus on Results and Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry .....	157
Capacity-Building with Focus on Results.....	158
Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry .....	158
Overarching Themes.....	159
Summary of the Findings.....	160
Chapter 5 - Conclusions.....	162
Introduction.....	163
Main Research Question.....	163
Discussion of Research Sub Question One.....	164
Discussion of Research Sub Question Two .....	167
Discussion of Research Sub Question Three.....	170
Discussion of Research Sub Question Four.....	171
Discussion of Research Sub Question Five .....	173
Discussion of Research Sub Question Six.....	174
Discussion of Intersection of Themes.....	178
Discussion of Overarching Themes.....	178
Conclusions.....	179
Implications for Personal Practice .....	182
Recommendations for Future Studies.....	186
Recommendation One.....	186
Recommendation Two .....	187
Recommendation Three .....	188

Summary.....	189
References.....	191
Appendix A - Interview Guide: Superintendent.....	203
Appendix B - Interview Questions/Superintendent.....	205
Appendix C - Interview Guide: Central Office.....	207
Appendix D - Interview Questions/Central Office.....	209
Appendix E - Interview Guide: Principal.....	211
Appendix F - Interview Questions/Principal.....	213
Appendix G - Interview Guide: Teacher.....	215
Appendix H - Interview Questions/Teacher Leaders.....	217
Appendix I - Data Demographic Form.....	219
Appendix J - Data Inventory.....	221
Appendix K - Definition of Terms.....	224

## List of Tables

Table 3-1 Case Study Participants .....	55
Table 3-2 District Artifacts .....	58
Table 3-3 Main TASC Constructs .....	63
Table 4-1 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (DSE) .....	88
Table 4-2 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (CB).....	89
Table 4-3 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (SIL).....	90
Table 4-4 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (MD) .....	91
Table 4-5 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (CEI) .....	92
Table 4-6 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (TC).....	93
Table 4-7 Patterns Related to Board Expectations and District Goals .....	95
Table 4-8 Patterns Dealing with Educator Effectiveness .....	96
Table 4-9 Patterns Related to District Provided Resources .....	97
Table 4-10 Patterns Related to Vision and Leadership.....	97
Table 4-11 Patterns Related to Administrator Meetings.....	98
Table 4-12 Patterns Related to Central Office Collaboration.....	98
Table 4-13 Patterns Related to the Data Dashboard .....	99
Table 4-14 Patterns Related to Differentiated Professional Learning .....	100
Table 4-15 Patterns Related to District Provided Resources .....	100
Table 4-16 Patterns Related to Focus on Teacher Learning.....	101
Table 4-17 Patterns Related to the Learning Land Instructional Framework.....	102
Table 4-18 Patterns Related to the Learning Land’s Multi-Year Action Plan .....	103
Table 4-19 Patterns Related to Research .....	104
Table 4-20 Patterns Related to Board Support for Professional Learning Days .....	104
Table 4-21 Patterns Related to Fiscal Responsibility .....	105
Table 4-22 Patterns Related to Learning Land’s Multi-Year Action Plan .....	106
Table 4-23 Patterns Related to Feeling Valued .....	107
Table 4-24 Patterns Related to Laser Focus on the District Goals and Action Plan .....	108
Table 4-25 Patterns Related to Professional Learning.....	109
Table 4-26 Patterns Related to Time .....	112
Table 4-27 Patterns Related to Accountability .....	113

Table 4-28 Patterns Related to an Aligned System .....	114
Table 4-29 Patterns Related to Learning Land’s Instructional Framework.....	115
Table 4-30 Patterns Related to the Professional Learning Survey .....	116
Table 4-31 Patterns Related to the Superintendent Caring.....	117
Table 4-32 Patterns Related to how the Superintendent Communicates.....	119
Table 4-33 Themes Emerging from the Data .....	121
Table 4-34 Intersection of Themes .....	158
Table 4-35 Overarching Themes .....	160
Table J-1 Data Inventory from Case Study.....	221
Table J-2 Case Study Timeline.....	222

## Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the many people in my life and studies that have been a part of my culmination of experiences in completing my doctorate. I want to thank my sons for their continued spirit of support and sense of humor as we have tackled many life projects the past 15 years. I want to thank my parents for their support and words of wisdom.

My sister provided me many opportunities to self-reflect and constant encouragement. While she is no longer with us, I know, honor, and feel her spirit and sense of support and guidance through her children. These past several years, all of these individuals have provided many opportunities to continue to encourage me to work hard and stay on a path of perseverance and cheer.

I wish to thank my advisors, Dr. Teresa Miller, Dr. Trudy Salsberry, Dr. Donna Augustine-Shaw, and Dr. Jessica Holloway for their support and knowledge as I have worked on my degree. I have truly enjoyed getting to know a new faculty member, Dr. Jessica Holloway and her contributions in methodology and generous enthusiasm. I especially thank Dr. Augustine-Shaw for supporting me in the “last leg.” Her optimism and knowledge came at a pivotal time in my degree completion. I am honored that Dr. Donna Augustine-Shaw and Dr. Jessica Holloway served as co-chairs of my dissertation committee and were relentless in supporting my pursuit of the successful outcome of achieving my doctorate. I owe gratitude to the research and techniques of Dr. Karen Duling as she so willingly shared concepts and techniques of qualitative research methodology and coding. A special note of gratitude to Betsy Edwards from the Information Technology Services for her professional support and outstanding service to students.

There are many experiences, jobs, and courses that I have taken over the years that have prepared me in the journey of seeking a doctoral degree. I want to thank the many participants who were a part of these experiences. I think of the many memories and conversations that have assisted me in being successful in my career and educational endeavors. I especially think of my colleague Ken Tarrant, who over the many years, has always found me, counseled me, and encouraged me in the face of adversity.

## **Dedication**

Joseph, Heather, and William, we're all in this together. Thank you for being there for mom these past several years. We have certainly been through a lot. I appreciate the wonderful sons and family you are and all the conversations and tears we have shared as "mother" has worked on her many degrees. Mom and Dad, for giving me the gift of perseverance and grit. You are amazing and I love you all very much.

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

School leaders are under pressure to make significant changes in the instructional programs and academic achievements of their students (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Starratt, 2004) and many approaches have been taken. These approaches have primarily focused on a school-based leadership approach, giving direct supervision and guidance responsibilities to school principals and their school-based professional development programs, professional learning communities, and data teams. This study focuses on the district-directed approach, whereby the superintendent created a framework that is centered upon teacher professional development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

#### **Teacher Professional Development**

Teachers care about their students and desire to spend meaningful time focusing on learning in the classroom. They must be able to obtain the support they need to provide a positive educational experience for their students, and professional development, also referred to as professional learning, is one resource. However, in general, “teachers do not receive the type of professional learning opportunities that are likely to change their instruction and improve student achievement” (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005, p. 13). Teacher professional development can often be “fragmented and diverse with outcomes dependent on the particular circumstances in which it is undertaken” and teachers often express a high level of frustration with poorly planned professional development (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004, p. 6). District initiatives and top-down directives for providing good instruction, which are then often interpreted and delivered via building administrators, aren’t always clear, consistent, or applicable to the classroom. Those responsible for organizing professional development often



do so in ways that alienate rather than energize and assist educators. Educators want to spend their professional time in meaningful experiences that include deep collaboration with colleagues. Often times educators feel forced to participate in poorly planned professional development that does not differentiate to meet the needs of the participants or the challenges they deal with in their classrooms and schools. “They resent ‘one-size-fits-all’ professional development that targets large numbers of educators from very different schools and classrooms who have students with different needs” (Mizell, 2010, p. 20).

All teachers are in need of leaders who can make connections between professional development and its direct application in the classroom. Studies conclude that professional development positively influences educator practice. In the Fresno Long Beach Learning Partnership study, “superintendents found many commonalities in their approaches to improvement, including a shared belief that district leaders and practitioners have much to learn from their own practice and from one another” (Duffy, Brown, & O’Day, 2009, p. 3). The districts collaborated to create a model that included a focus on professional development and the creation of shared practices to improve teaching and learning. “When educators’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions change, they have a broader repertoire of effective strategies to adapt their practices to meet performance expectations and student learning needs. When educator practice improves, students have a greater likelihood of achieving results” (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 16). To achieve this, though, professional development needs to be planned with a deliberate and overall focus in mind. High quality professional development should be planned cooperatively by multiple district stakeholders, including central office administration (such as the superintendent), principals, and teachers. In the interest of ensuring that high quality professional development is available to teachers, this project seeks to address the role a school

superintendent can play in implementing effective professional development. There are studies that have shared practices developed in response to professional development interventions, but these practices have not necessarily impacted student learning. Professional development must provide new knowledge and skills for teachers that in turn lead to the improved learning performance of students (Sawchuk, 2010).

A study contracted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation called *Teachers Know Best: Teachers' Views on Professional Development* by the Boston Consulting Group in 2014 provided insights into professional development. They found that the “way in which schools and districts deliver professional development is highly fragmented and characterized by key disconnects between what decision-makers intend and the professional learning teachers actually experience” (Boston Consulting Group, 2014, p. 3). The study pointed out that teachers are often not fulfilled by the selection of professional development that is offered. Many teachers feel that professional development has not improved over time or is not helping them to improve practices in the classroom including the use of data to inform instruction. While there has been intent to create a community of learners, this is often not done in a systemic manner to improve the focus and long-term vision needed for changes in practice to occur over time (Boston Consulting Group, 2014). This leads to difficulty in improving the overall practices in a school district and across schools. Inequalities in learning create the lack of ability to strengthen the learning capacity in the district among educators.

This case study defines professional development according to the Standards for Professional Learning created by the research of Learning Forward (2011).

The term “professional development” is defined as a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement. Professional development is comprised of the following elements.

(A) Professional development fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and must be comprised of professional learning that:

- (1) is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards as well as related local educational agency and school improvement goals;
- (2) is conducted among educators at the school and facilitated by well-prepared school principals and/or school-based professional development coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other teacher leaders; and
- (3) primarily occurs several times per week among established teams of teachers, principals, and other instructional staff members where the teams of educators engage in a continuous cycle of improvement.

(B) The process outlined in (A) may be supported by activities such as courses, workshops, institutes, networks, and conferences. (p. 16)

Though the terms professional development and professional learning are often used interchangeably, a distinction between the two exists. Professional development refers more to the design, logistics, and materials needed for learning than the outcomes of the learning for the educators and their students (Killion, 2015). Professional learning signals the importance of educators taking an active role in their continuous development and places emphasis on their learning. Professional learning enrolls educators as active partners in determining the content of their learning, how to improve their learning outcomes, and how they assess its effectiveness (Hirsh, 2011).

For the purposes of this case study, professional development will be used to describe the overall framework of a superintendent's role in effective implementation of district-wide professional development to support student learning in a school district. "People often use other names, including staff development, training, professional learning, or continuing education. Whatever the term, the purpose is the same — to improve learning for educators and students" (Mizell, 2010, p. 5).

### **The Superintendent's Role**

The stakes are high and superintendents are expected to drive change and improve practices among school leaders that lead to an increase in student performance and outcomes. "Contemporary school administrators play a daunting array of roles, ranging from educational visionaries and change agents to instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders" (Davis, Darling-Hammond, Lapointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. 2). Until recently, the superintendent and central office staff has been expected to assume indirect responsibility for student achievement in a school district. In the past, they relegated this responsibility to building principals and classroom teachers who were viewed as the key to improved student achievement (Farkas, Johnson, Duyffett, Folen, & Foley, 2001). Secretary of Education William Bennett once referred to superintendents and district office staff as "the blob." "The 'blob,' he argued, is made up of people in the education systems who work outside of classrooms, soaking up resources and resisting reform without contributing to student achievement" (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 8). Very often school administrators spend time with administrative duties versus a laser focus on instruction. Instructional related tasks are often delegated to those who serve under a principal such as an assistant principal, school counselor or teacher leader. Superintendents who do focus

on instructional activities are a small portion (Elmore, 2000). There has been a consistent lack of focus over time on the role of the superintendent and how the district leader directly impacts the learning growth in an organization. A team of researchers at The University of Washington concluded that in the past twenty years of education policy, standards and assessments, and the promotion of rigorous and high quality academic programs, we have not focused on the learning growth of educational leaders (Knapp, Copland, Plecki, & Portin, 2006).

However, an extended research focus has recently emerged regarding the superintendent's role in student learning. Two national organizations led the charge in 2014 to refresh the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards (CCSSO, 2008). The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) "led an effort to detail the leadership skills and knowledge effective school leaders need in order to influence teaching and student learning" (CCSSO, 2014, para. 2).

The former ISLLC Standards are now the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) 2015 (NPBEA, 2015) and have been adopted and are comprised of extensive research to broaden the view of school leadership and accountability for student achievement. The new standards now provide direction and language on the role of leadership in addressing instructional capacity. The standards increase the number of school leadership standards from six to ten and places heavier focus on student academic success, instruction and assessment, student learning and achievement, and the educational leadership responsibility to coordinate resources, time, and structures needed to build the instructional capacity of teachers.

This expansion of the elements of teaching and learning in leadership standards is intentional. The previous version of the ISLLC Standards for the most part addressed

instructional leadership in one section (CCSSO, 2008). The standards have been recast to further incorporate a larger body of research and best practices from the field. Components of the PSEL 2015 (NPBEA, 2015) have been given more recognition and expanded responsibilities than the 2008 version. This prioritization and clarification are most noticeable in the leadership standards that relate to the school's instructional programs, curriculum, instruction and assessment, and in the enrichment of the core dynamic of the standards.

Collectively, this prioritization can be characterized as leadership for learning. Leadership for learning requires “educational leaders to have new standards to guide their practice in directions that will be the most productive and beneficial to students” (NPBEA, 2015, p. 1). The PSEL 2015 reflect the expanding empirical base that connects specific actions effective leaders take to improve student growth and achievement (NPBEA, 2015). “School leadership is second in importance only to classroom instruction among school related influences on student achievement and its impact is greatest in schools with the greatest needs” (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 3). Leader effects on teachers and teaching practice are largely indirect and are enhanced by strengthening professional learning communities and the collective influence of all participants in adopting practices that increase student learning. As such, the new standards emphasize the overarching role of school and district leaders in shaping a comprehensive vision of student success and the importance of the schools' instructional program and culture. The standards are expanded to include specific language and definition of how to enhance instructional capacity and its convergence with the administrator's role in creating a responsive system of professional learning and high quality professional development.

It is challenging for superintendents to focus more attention on their expanding instructional leadership role, but the superintendent is the district's chief educational leader and should be the catalyst for the district framework of teaching and learning. Because deep change in systems can typically take three to five years, leaders committed to making a difference recognized they must take the long view and work through all the parts that must change in order to produce a new framework to sustain change (Fullan, 2007). Despite the perceived remoteness of the central office from the classroom, empirical evidence strongly suggests that given their position within the district organization, superintendents are in the best position to foster necessary organizational relationships and resources to support and facilitate organizational shifts (Grogan & Sherman, 2005; Petersen, 2002). "Sustaining high-quality leadership at the district level is essential to creating supportive conditions for reform," say Datnow and Castellano (2003, p. 188). Through the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel) and the findings published in *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement* came a meta-analysis of decades of research on the effect of superintendent leadership (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The findings suggest that successful leadership can play a significant and frequently underrated role in improving student learning. One of the basics of successful leadership is redesigning the organization to support the performance of administrators, teachers, and students, to "strengthen district and school cultures, to modify organizational structures, and to build collaborative processes" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 7). The superintendent is responsible for developing the organizational framework for teaching and learning that will lead to greater student success. Sustained district-wide improvement is not possible unless the whole system works collaboratively toward a common goal (Fullan, 2002).

Though the need for district leaders to be more involved in professional development is clear, *how* to do this presents a challenge. To become proactive instructional leaders, future superintendents must develop the knowledge and skills necessary to build and maintain instructional capacity in their systems. “Most superintendents (61%) and principals (66%) also say their own training is out-of-date and typical leadership programs in graduate schools of education are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today’s school district” (Johnson, Arumi, & Ott, 2006, p. 22).

While we know the superintendent role is critical to success, little research is available outlining how the superintendent should organize and plan for effective professional development in a school district. In particular, superintendents need to understand how instructional capacity is developed by principals and teachers at the school level and how the types of support systems that ensure instructional capacity spreads throughout the organization, especially to the school level (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). Superintendents maintain focus on managing district resources and are often limited in providing meaningful professional development experiences for educators that can be applied in the classroom. As a result, district leaders may jump from one initiative to the next, failing to clarify for teachers how the initiatives support instruction.

School leaders are responsible for establishing the framework for instruction in a school district. “Leaders create enabling conditions by securing and using the financial, political, technological, and human resources necessary to promote academic and social learning” (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2007, p. 11). It has been difficult to find specific practices and partnerships about what good superintendent leadership looks like in school districts across the nation. This includes designing learning systems and the systemic



professional development to support the increasing demands of instruction and pedagogy shifts. In addition, challenges arise in defining what professional development best supports educational leaders and teacher leaders. Throughout the transition from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) there are differences in opinions about how assessment and evaluation of school leaders and teachers should be done as well as in defining and documenting best practices and eliminating ineffective ones (DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond & Haycock, 2007).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main objective of this case study was to purposefully understand how the superintendent can develop, support, and provide for district-wide professional development experiences that promote a focus on and increase of effective educator and student learning outcomes. The case study focused on the professional development framework used in one district and investigated involved key stakeholders. The study also focused on how the superintendent leads this process with an emphasis on the concept of change.

District-wide professional development must be defined to clarify and elaborate what types of experiences incur the learning growth of the educator. “District-wide professional development experiences” are being defined by the researcher as experiences that foster collective responsibility for improved student performance” (Learning Forward, 2010, p. 16). “District-wide professional development experiences refer to formal or informal learning experiences undertaken by teachers and school leaders that improve their individual professional practice, and a school’s collective effectiveness, as measured by improved student learning, engagement

with learning and wellbeing” (Learning Forward, 2014, p. 5). District-wide professional development, when successfully implemented through a systemic design, means the new knowledge and skills are acquired into everyday practice (Learning Forward, 2014).

### **Overview of the Methods**

This case study is bounded by the focus on professional development for enhancing student learning but does not address all forms of professional development. The study is also limited by the selection of one site exhibiting the superintendent’s role in designing district-wide professional development that provides support for principal and teacher learning. The attributes of the site selected centers on capacity building and not a top down style of leadership. The shared culture in the identified site is embedded in practice and supported with a clearly defined model and allocated resources.

Data has been collected primarily through interviews of the participants in the study (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders). Additional sources of information used for describing the case, analysis, and interpretation of the data included a data demographic form and artifacts. The data collection and analysis are described in greater detail in chapter three.

The site selection for this case study was the Learning Land School District. (In this case study, the researcher used fictional names and focused purposefully on factual situations.) This school district is an affluent district that has a rich history of student achievement. The district had recently developed an instructional framework for an integrated approach to support professional development. The district documented their instructional framework and articulated specific components of district leadership and district directed professional development. The

comprehensive nature of the case study aligned with validation techniques, including thick rich description, peer debriefing, multiple sources of data, and clarifying the bias of the researcher.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This case study shared the leadership experiences of a superintendent in implementing a district-wide model for professional development in a Midwest school district. Guiding this study's focus on the role of district leadership in implementing effective professional development are the new PSEL 2015 which articulate what effective leadership looks like in a public education system (NPBEA, 2015). The CCSSO and NPBEA led the effort to update the standards for education leaders so leaders are better able to focus on student achievement and meet new, higher expectations. The standards reflect and expand upon research-based evidence since the last update of the leadership standards in 2008. The standards detail leadership practices and knowledge school leaders need to be able to influence teaching and student learning. "The profession has a better understanding of how and in what ways effective educational leaders contribute to student achievement" (NPBEA, 2015, p. 1).

The conceptual framework also included the Theory of Action for System Change (TASC) discussed by Fullan (2009) in the book *Change Wars*. According to the TASC, six components drive changes in the learning system. They are:

- 1) direction and sector engagement,
- 2) capacity-building linked to results,
- 3) development of leaders at all levels,
- 4) management of distractors,
- 5) continuous inquiry regarding results, and
- 6) two-way communication. (p. 277)

Each of the six constructs has several components that must be understood. The six constructs are all related and must be addressed at the same time. The TASC constructs are cyclical and serve to direct system change (Fullan, 2009). The six constructs of TASC will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Two.

### **Research Questions**

The guiding question for this study is: From the perspective of the participants (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders), how does a superintendent implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district?

To answer the research question, the following sub questions (driven by the TASC) will guide the investigation:

- 1) How does the superintendent manifest the overall vision and direction “from the top” in the provision of district-wide professional development for teacher leaders?
- 2) How does the superintendent develop district wide capacity in the areas of new knowledge, resources, and motivation with a focus on results?
- 3) How does the superintendent provide a supportive infrastructure, capacity and coordination, and leadership development for central office staff, administrators, and teacher leadership?
- 4) How does the superintendent manage the distractors who divert and sap energy to focus on goals?
- 5) What are effective leadership practices and how can these be replicated and modeled for school and district success?

- 6) How does the superintendent strengthen two-way communication across the school system?

### **Limitations**

The boundary for this case study was a single Midwest school district, referred to throughout the study as the Learning Land School District. “Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). The superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders are the key participants. The site may not be indicative of other sites in the state or the nation. In this case, time was limited to one semester for collecting data and supporting documents. The selection of all participants relied on voluntary participation and the use of criteria that yielded the most knowledgeable participants. Selection was not random and some perspectives are not included. The researcher relied on the participants to provide reflections of meaningful past events. In addition, the data are perceptions of events as interpreted by the participants. Furthermore, the use of the results of the study was limited by the degree to which participants are comfortable revealing perceptions and the accuracy of their recall. “In the entire qualitative research process, the researcher kept a focus on understanding the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researcher or writers from the literature brought to the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). The validation strategies of thick rich description, peer debriefing (coder consensus), multiple sources of data, and accounting for the researcher positionality were used to enhance the credibility of the study.

## **Summary**

An in-depth and focused study has been conducted regarding the role of the superintendent in creating, developing, and implementing a professional development framework. Superintendents have long sought to bring student achievement and success to their school districts. In this case study, how the superintendent leads the process of a district-wide professional development model is investigated. In Chapter Two, the literature review focuses on (a) theories and concepts informing the study; and (b) related research.

## **Chapter 2 - Literature Review**

The literature review is organized into two sections:

- 1) theories and concepts informing the study, and
- 2) related research and need for future research.

The first major section addresses the theories and concepts informing the study with these subsections: school leadership theories and concepts, education change theories and concepts, and professional development theories and concepts. The second section summarizes the research most related to the proposed study and then presented the needs for future research on the role of the superintendent supporting and providing professional development in a school district.

### **Theories and Concepts Informing the Study**

Theories and professional standards served to inform this study about the superintendent's role in systemic change that addressed professional development and instructional practices. There are three areas that are expanded in the literature review within theories and concepts informing the study. The first is school leadership theories. The focus on school leadership theories is the mainstay in the research of Waters and Marzano (2006) in *School District Leadership that Works*. In addition, the new PSEL 2015 redefine leadership standards and the emerging role of administrators as instructional leaders (NPBEA, 2015). The second area is education change theories and concepts. This includes the TASC theory and whole system improvement. The researcher explored how federal initiatives have provided a different focus on the superintendent role. The final area examines professional development theories and concepts. Research included in this focus are the professional learning standards that have been developed to aggrandize the definition of professional development.

School leadership theories have centered heavily on the building level administrator. The past several years of research have provided a transition to the role of the superintendent and central office to provide the framework and support for instructional leadership. This is evidenced in the research of Waters and Marzano (2006) and the Race to the Top-District (RTT-D) federal program created to focus specifically on the superintendent as the key leader for change. In more detail later, a specific example is shared about collaborative instructional work facilitated by two superintendents in a Fresno-Long Beach partnership.

Also included in this study are the new PSEL 2015, model leadership standards that have been recast and provide new focus on what education leaders should know and be able to do to ensure that instructional capacity, instruction, curriculum, and assessment are included in district and school leadership roles (NPBEA, 2015). The 2015 Standards have been recast with an expanded emphasis on students and student learning, outlining foundational principles of leadership that can help ensure that each child is well-educated and prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They heighten and expand on areas of educational leadership that were once not well understood or deemed less relevant but have since been shown to enhance student learning. “While the primary focus of the 2015 Standards is on leaders in administrative roles, the Standards also indicate that effective school leadership is not the sole province of those in such roles” (NPBEA, 2015 p. 4). Leadership for learning in effective schools need not be just the building leader, but many others related to teaching and learning in the schools such as teacher leaders, department heads and instructional divisions.

A notable education change theory is the TASC, which addresses whole system improvement in education (Fullan, 2009). The theory is composed of six interrelated constructs with each construct composed of elements that must be understood and utilized when applying



the theory. The overarching purpose is to use the theory as if the system is the district. This system is used to change school cultures and for determining how to link to the external infrastructure (Fullan, 2009).

To support understanding of professional development, the research of Learning Forward's recently revised *Standards for Professional Learning* was included to define the elements essential to educator learning that leads to improved practice and better results for students (Learning Forward, 2010). The seven standards guide the planning, facilitation, implementation, follow-up, and evaluation of professional learning. The standards are used collectively to increase educator effectiveness and results for all students.

### **School Leadership Theories and Concepts**

Over the last two decades, the term “instructional leadership” has been frequently used. The description of instructional leadership that has attained a high level of visibility over the years is by Wilma Smith and Richard Andrews (1989) in their book, *Instructional Leadership: How Principals make a Difference*. They identify four dimensions, or roles, of an instructional leader: resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence. In addition to instructional leadership, a more global term emerges, transformational leadership. According to Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999), “transformational leadership is an expansion of instructional leadership because it aspires, more generally, to increase members’ efforts on behalf of the organization, as well as develop more skilled practice” (p. 20).

Another leadership theorist, Warren Bennis (2003) in his book, *On Becoming a Leader*, identifies four critical characteristics of effective leadership.

First, leaders must be able to engage others by creating a shared meaning. Second, all authentic leaders have a distinctive voice. Leaders must have a clear voice that is

distinctive to constituents. Third, a quality all true leaders must have is integrity.

Finally, a key competency of leadership is adaptive capacity. Adaptive capacity is what allows leaders to respond quickly and intelligently to relentless change. (Bennis, 2003, p. XXV)

All of these concepts speak to the “larger picture” of shared and vision orientated leadership by multiple stakeholders that include the superintendent, central office administrators/staff, principal, and teachers. The leadership theories more clearly articulate a deeper understanding of collaborative leadership processes and how this affects whole systems change. This includes defining the importance and relevance of the connections between district office, building leadership, and the resources needed to guide instructional practice and improve student learning. It is not leadership done by one, but by all. A focus on leadership dispositions that prioritizes instruction and effective change has provided a foundation for the district selected for this research study. The superintendent’s leadership has allowed the Learning Land School District to spread the leadership base and vision and build a “strengths-based” organization (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

In the research of Waters and Marzano (2006) presented in *School District Leadership that Works*, two findings are identified that directly support the research in this case study. The first is “district-level leadership matters, and the second effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-orientated districts” (p. 3). This research identifies the literature that specializes in and highlights the role of the superintendent in providing district-wide professional development to support student learning in a school district.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) findings were used as the foundation for the Learning Land School District in building the framework for the district initiative, *Navigating Complex Change, Organizing for Success* (2013). In the study, two specific findings emerged:

Finding 1: District-level leadership matters. The McREL research team, led by President and CEO Tim Waters and Senior Fellow Robert J. Marzano found a statistically significant relationship between district leadership and student achievement.

Finding 2: Effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts. McREL researchers also identified five district-level leadership responsibilities that have a statistically significant correlation with average student academic achievement. All five of these responsibilities relate to setting and keeping districts focused on teaching and learning goals. (p. 3)

In the first of these responsibilities, collaborative goal-setting, researchers found that "effective superintendents include all relevant stakeholders, including central office staff, building-level administrators, and board members, in establishing non-negotiable goals for their districts" (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 3). In the second responsibility, non-negotiable goals for schools, researchers found that effective superintendents ensure that targets are identified and goals are achieved in the areas of student achievement and classroom instruction. These goals are supported by the use of research-based practices. The third responsibility includes the leadership and support of goals set by the board of education. These goals must also be in alignment with district goals for achievement and instruction. The board of education must be consistent in keeping these goals at the forefront of the district's instructional work and not detract from achieving the goals (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The fourth responsibility oversees monitoring goals for student achievement and instruction. Effective superintendents consistently monitor

the achievement of instructional goals and make sure these goals stay front and center to guide the learning work in schools. The superintendent must constantly monitor the achievement of instructional goals and make sure they serve as a constant source of guidance to the focus and actions of the district's work (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The final responsibility includes the use of resources to support achievement and instructional goals. "Effective superintendents ensure that necessary resources including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish the district's goals. This can mean cutting back on or dropping initiatives that are not aligned with district goals for achievement and instruction" (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 4).

Preceding this research is the research published in the book *School Leadership that Works*. This research takes a systemic approach to school leadership work. In order to build a strong school leadership team there must be a natural outgrowth of a purposeful community.

This includes the following four concepts:

- collective efficacy
- development and use of all available assets
- accomplishment of goals that matter to all community members, and
- agreed-upon processes (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, pp. 99-100).

Through the relentless focus on research and best practices, leadership and learning become intertwined and a foundation for the culture of learning is established in a school district. Job-embedded professional development pertinent to teacher practice strengthens peer to peer learning and a sense of ownership of the collective learning of the group. Superintendents must make sure these types of learning experiences are embedded in the culture unlike one-time experiences that are often seen as extra activities (Belchetz & Witherow, 2014). The district

wants teachers and school leaders to see that learning is the major work in schools (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009).

The role of superintendents in American school systems is changing. Recent research and articles by education experts describe superintendents taking a more active role in improving the instruction in their districts. In a 2005 Education Week survey, district leaders across the country reported that their role has been evolving and growing. Superintendents report not only taking a more active role in instructional leadership, but they are part of improving the quality of instruction in their school districts. The report shares superintendent feedback that leaders need to increase their time and efforts in leading instruction. In addition, they share that there has been a shift from school based decision-making to district level instructional decision-making (Belden, Russonello, & Steward, 2005). Past practices have included the leadership focus for changes and improvements at the building level. The research provided illustrates the importance of transitioning to systemic district reform.

Another significant federal initiative focused on systems change provided The Learning Land School District an aligned model to investigate. The RTT-D was a federal program created to focus specifically on the district wide infrastructure, development, and capacity to create a systemic model for the support of teaching and learning and the superintendent as the key leader for change. The RTT-D grant competition was specific to the process of calling for school districts to develop the infrastructure to build research-based instructional frameworks that centered on the use of implementing new practices and to develop and differentiate an improved model of systemic district-wide improvement. Many districts already had resources, leadership, and teams to focus on the growth and achievement of student learning, but needed the incentive and guidance of the RTT-D process to develop models that were instruction and research based,

as well as advisement on expanded and defined data driven processes to support the model and include technology based pedagogy for personalizing student learning (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2012).

In light of the “theory of action” of whole system reform, an early Obama administration predicted that we would see a great expansion and deepening of large-scale, whole system policies and strategies in the immediate future, not only in the U.S. but across the world (Fullan, 2009, p. 101). RTT-D became a major federal focus and shift from school and principal improvement to the recognition of the importance of innovation in systems change and organization. By aligning with the RTT-D concepts, the superintendent’s role assured an emphasis on student learning and accountability.

A school leadership theory based on the concept of distributed leadership overlaps substantially with shared, collaborative, democratic, and participative leadership concepts outlined in the RTT-D federal initiative. Distributed leadership assumes a set of practices that "are enacted by people at all levels rather than a set of personal characteristics and attributes located in people at the ‘top’" (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003, p. 22). Distributed leadership becomes related to capacity building in that they share key processes. These leadership processes intersect and both can happen at all levels, including central office, principal leadership, and teacher leadership. These key leadership elements strengthen all members of the organization.

An overarching premise and theme of superintendent leadership is capacity building. Capacity building itself is promoted directly from the center with respect to training and curriculum, with its most powerful form as indirect influence. Indirect means deliberate strategies designed to help peers learn from each other – within schools, across schools, and across districts. This is called “lateral capacity building and it is most powerful because

educators are learning from their colleagues” (Fullan, 2009, p. 283). Key constituents of a school district have an important and strategic role to plan and support leadership and instructional events. The key is to “seek best ideas wherever they can be found and use the wisdom of the crowd to spread and assess their worth and impact” (Fullan, 2009, p. 283). Capacity building serves to expand the strength and power of the learning practices in a school district to create in-house experts. “As experts, they become more critical of ill-conceived external ideas. Empowered, competent people also talk back when the situation calls for it” (Fullan, 2009, p. 284). The strength of an organization expands when individuals govern their respective roles. The heart of capacity building is the unspoken language of developing thinkers and learners and translating those actions to practice (Fullan, 2009). The superintendent is responsible for growing these indirect influences to expand and enhance the applied professional development practices and improve upon the culture of teaching and learning in the school district.

### **Education Change Theories and Concepts**

The TASC is valuable theory for practitioners. The theory can be used to frame the district as the system and create a district-wide model of improvement. The six TASC constructs may in turn be applied to school models that in exchange link to the district framework. The six TASC components include, “1) direction and sector engagement; 2) capacity-building with a focus on results; 3) supportive infrastructure and leadership; 4) managing the distractors; 5) continuous evaluation and inquiry; and 6) two-way communication” (Fullan, 2009, p. 277).

The foundation of the six components outlined in the TASC is that they are all interrelated and are directed towards the philosophical stance of whole system reform. All six components are related and they are all addressed simultaneously. Part of the premise of the six

components is the distinction between a theory of action and a strategic plan. The theory of action has been created specifically to be applicable to other challenges and problems. Michael Fullan (2009) in creating this theory extends his belief that “there is too much reliance on models, technologies, and strategic plans. It is learning by doing, but it is really learning by thinking in relation to doing” (p. 276).

An explanation of the theory’s six components applied to school district systems enlightens the theory’s relevancy to this study. In a district developed framework, the superintendent must decide who the organization’s key stakeholders are. This may occur by identifying the district vision, departments and resources, and/or district key leaders and managers. “The leadership at the center has to ‘get it right’—that is, create a vision that attracts stakeholders to the articulated reform” (Fullan, 2009, p. 279). In the next component, by identifying key strategies and actions, capacity building occurs within the organization both directly and indirectly. Capacity building is promoted directly from the center of the reform with respect to providing training, curriculum resources, and the like, but its most powerful form is indirect. Thirdly, support is established by clear communication from the superintendent and allocation of proper district resources.

Another characteristic evident in district systems is the superintendent’s responsibility for guarding the focus, work, and direction of the district actions and framework. To minimize distractors, it helps to build up the positive side of the reform—a relentless focus on capacity building. The superintendent has to be equally explicit and aware of addressing distractors by preempting some and dealing with others as they come in a way that does not divert and sap energy. Next, the district framework defines and models effective practices. The practices are replicated and modeled in the district principal and teacher leadership academies. In turn, these



practices are shared and replicated in school buildings during professional development meetings and by improved instructional practices in the classroom. Finally, the theory offers two-way communication strengthened through careful planning, resolve, application of transparency, and district communications. These would include professional learning experiences, the district website, board meetings, and building based communication. “Communication is an opportunity to disseminate and receive feedback, especially when communication is about vision and strategy” (Fullan, 2009, p. 291). The heart of TASC is strengthening the internal learning power of the school district by building a framework for improvement that focuses on the district’s resources, provides support and incentive for improved practices, supports professional development and is focused on collaboration (Fullan, 2009).

An additional educational report supporting systemic change and its impact on strengthening internal capacity was sponsored by the Learning First Alliance (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). This report, called *Beyond Islands of Excellence: What Districts Can Do to Improve Instruction and Achievement in All Schools* focused on student achievement in high-poverty districts (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The authors called for policymakers, practitioners, and the public to accept the challenge of improving student achievement in school districts. The report showcased the importance of organizational beliefs in documenting substantial gains through district-wide solutions focused on student achievement, commitment of political will, and allocation of resources.

As a result of the research, the authors found that several factors emerged as essential to improvement in student achievement. These factors included:

Districts now have the courage to acknowledge poor performance and the will to seek solutions, they put in place a system-wide approach to improving instruction, instill

vision that is focused on student learning and guided instructional improvement, make decisions based on data, not instinct, adopt new approaches to professional development, and commit to sustaining reform over the long haul. (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, pp. 4-5)

By addressing these factors, improvements may be made in the functioning of leadership and learning services and practices of the district and schools. In addition, districts are able to sustain transformation over time and change the culture of teaching and learning in a school district (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). This study became important in recognizing an increase in student achievement is related to comprehensive changes across a system.

One model that has emerged is a district partnership between the Fresno and Long Beach school districts in California. The initiative was implemented as the result of the collegial relationship between the two districts' superintendents. The superintendents shared the belief that district leaders and practitioners can learn from their own practices and one another.

This model was studied and introduced through a dedicated partnership to address the learning needs of the school district and the gaps in learning between subgroups of students. As urban districts with significant challenges, the joint effort to focus intentionally on the learning capacity within their districts centered on system improvement changes (Duffy et al., 2009). The partnership continues to evolve. "The initiative's development suggests that there is an 'organic' reform process in place that is complex but that may have an important advantage over existing intervention processes" (Duffy et al., 2009, p. 1).

Research suggests that distributed leadership can create conditions for sustainable change to take hold (Spillane, 2006). This model specifically focused on the transition from relying on external technical assistance and expertise outside the system to organizational learning that occurs through the development of shared practices across systems. By concentrating attention

and resources on a clearly defined goal, the model creates coherence in each system and increases the likelihood that various parts of the system will operate together. This reduces organizational barriers that inhibit organizational improvement. The model is producing positives outcomes and data dashboards have been constructed to share student learning outcomes. District work collaboration appears to have built the commitments and systems that provide the foundation for ongoing adult learning to sustain their improvement efforts. The Fresno-Long Beach partnership may provide a promising strategy for districts and schools to share resources and build environments where improvement efforts are deepened and sustained (Duffy et al., 2009).

### **Professional Development Theories and Concepts**

It is not uncommon for professional development planning and implementation to be under the leadership supervision of someone other than the superintendent. Too frequently, the role and design of district professional development is not seen or explicitly designed in a school district by the superintendent. “Overall, the research suggests that deep changes in teacher instruction, like those required by reformers, take considerable time” (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005, p. 6). Rigorous research suggests that sustained and intensive professional learning for teachers is related to student-achievement gains (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andre, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Changes in teacher instruction and an increase in student learning outcomes both support the intentional planning of strategically designed professional development at the district level and supports all district stakeholders.

In the above-mentioned report, *Beyond Islands of Excellence: What Districts can do to Improve Instruction and Achievement in All Schools*, districts conceived new ideas about the delivery of professional development. The one-day workshop options and one time learning

events, sometimes referred to as “sit and get” are becoming obsolete. Districts are striving to build deeply engrained learning experiences using administrators, teacher leaders, and instructional coaches in developing and focusing on best practices, modeling, data mining, and supports and mentoring for new teachers (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Through strategic allocation of financial resources and encouragement and assistance in using data, observable improvement in instruction can occur. By developing principles for professional development, districts are able to use research-based criteria to guide their work. This can be the intentional connection of principal and teacher professional development to district goals and student needs, basing the content of professional development on needs that emerged from data, and implementing multiple strategies to foster continuous learning and the development of instructional experts. Districts are learning how to harness the capacity of cadres of instructional leadership. This may include principal led teams of teacher leaders, data teams, or instructional coaches. There is an increased expectation to remove the barriers and isolation in paving the way for improved school based leadership. “By creating networks of instructional experts, including instructionally proficient principals and teacher leaders (e.g., content specialists, mentor teachers), the districts increased their leadership capacity to assist teachers in improving practice” (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, pp. 6-7). Districts have been implementing multiple strategies to assist and build support systems for beginning teachers. In most districts, mentoring programs provided the main support, but many also included a series of seminars and other types of assistance.

Districts marked additional improvements in the design of professional development through strategic allocation of financial resources to invest financially in their goals of improving instruction and achievement. There is greater scrutiny around the allocation of all district

resources. District leadership stakeholders examine closely how to use the district resources of money, time, calendar planning, personnel, and tools to create timely and relevant data systems. All district resources become poised to encourage and support instructional improvement and practices (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The achievement outlined in specific district action steps to transform professional development and hence, impact student learning in *Beyond Islands of Excellence* are purposefully planned to incorporate best practices and correlate heavily to the six components of the TASC theory.

In their work, *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad*, Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) provided data for policymakers, researchers, and school leaders with a teacher-development database on powerful attributes of professional development. This database study linked instructional improvement and student learning with basic principles for designing professional development for school and district leaders and policymakers. The study summarized key findings related to effective professional development. Among the findings were professional development must be intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice. In addition, a focus on student learning and alignment with school improvement priorities and goals must occur along with fostering strong peer to peer interactions among teachers (Darling-Hammond et al. 2009). The over-arching analysis in this report establishes a focus on building the capacity of all stakeholders as well as offering relevant professional development that supports high quality instruction. Furthermore, explicitly defining what comprehensive professional development encompasses and looks like in an organization and how it provides a clear link to organizational, adult, and student learning is imperative.

The national organization for professional learning, Learning Forward, houses excellent resources and data on professional learning standards, tools for educators, and concepts important in designing effective professional learning for sustained improvement in organizations. Learning Forward (2014) identifies several components of professional development that are recognizable in good practice. In 2011, Learning Forward unveiled their research and publication of *The Standards for Professional Learning*. The standards make explicit that the priority of professional learning is for educators to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions they need to help students function at higher levels. The standards are not a prescription for how education leaders and state and national officials should address all the challenges related to improving the performance of educators and their students. “Instead, the standards focus on one critical issue - professional learning” (Learning Forward, 2011, p.12).

Professional learning is a relatively young field. Learning Forward’s foundational belief is that reaching expanded levels of student learning requires a higher level of educator learning. The 2011 *Standards for Professional Learning* are drawn from research and evidence-based practice and describe a set of expectations for effective professional learning to ensure equity and excellence in educator learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Collective responsibility for student learning is evidenced through grounded research in effective practices and clear alignment with local and state goals and standards and indicators. Another component recognized in good practice is job-embedded learning opportunities conducted/facilitated at the district or school level by well-prepared educators. Content of professional learning activities is determined by data from a continuous district and/or school improvement process reflecting educator and student learning needs. Learning Forward promulgates regular assessment of individual and

group effectiveness through use of data and recommends not less than 40 hours of student learning-focused professional learning each year during student contact time or within educators' work days. Learning opportunities could include time for teacher collaboration, practice, peer coaching, feedback, and evaluation conferencing (Learning Forward, 2011).

These specific characteristics of high quality professional development become critical to a superintendent's vision for planning and guiding system change and a vision that requires instructional improvement. As superintendents expand the role and expectations of instructional leadership, a clear definition of expectations and steps included in effective professional development are needed to link professional development, educator learning, and the impact on student learning.

Snow-Renner and Lauer (2005) outlined professional development attributes most likely to positively affect teacher instruction. "These characteristics included professional development that is of considerable duration, focused on specific content and/or instructional strategies, characterized by collective participation of educator teams, and infused with active learning, rather than a stand-and-deliver approach" (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005, p. 6). The work of Learning Forward (2014) and Snow-Renner and Lauer (2005) shares the belief that professional development is successful when it becomes part of an established learning culture in a district and in schools. Expanded research on effective professional development models for teachers "provides support for a new paradigm of teacher professional learning, one based on evidence about the kinds of experiences that appear to build teacher capacity and catalyze transformations in teaching practice resulting in improved student outcomes" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009. p. 27).

Superintendents are expected to play a larger role in the support of new paradigms and the transformation of professional development in their local district and as members of professional and state affiliated organizations. Superintendents need learning resources, professional guidance and standards to assist with their role as the learning leader in a school district and to support the development of formal instructional frameworks.

One effort that supported these findings grew out of a partnership between Learning Forward and the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE). This national-state level partnership reached new levels when the Kansas State Board of Education adopted Learning Forward's *Standards for Professional Learning* at its April 2012 state board of education meeting, making Kansas the only state with explicit policy language requiring professional development linked with standards. "Other states display miscellaneous efforts around linking professional development with standards, but in many sites, these are pro forma, consisting of reporting professional development days in accountability reports" (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005, p.15). Importantly, no state in the Central Region has adopted policy for evaluating professional development programs (Education Commission of the States, 2005). In Kansas, districts may use the Learning Forward *Standards for Professional Development*, which "addresses the quality of a district's staff development related to context, process, and content" (Snow-Renner & Lauer 2005, p. 20).

Kansas' adoption of professional learning standards is further supported by the KSDE new accreditation model. Within this model is the "rigor" domain which includes professional learning. In this domain, the components related to effective professional learning in a school district can be further described in the district professional learning plan, school calendar allocating time, and professional development days for the academic year. This link between



high quality standards for professional learning, concrete examples of district planning committed to allocation of time and resources, and the state's accreditation process provides a strong model for other states to follow.

### **Related Research**

Superintendents are interested in supporting stronger instructional practices and often become divided in how they are able to invest their time. Research shows that although much has been written about the superintendency, the literature primarily focuses on the areas of fiscal management, diversity, and governance (Castanola, 2005).

Historically, the key stakeholders in a school district, the superintendent, the school board, administration, and teachers often do not have the leadership and skill base to perform their instructional duties. We must understand in detail “how leaders and leadership teams bring effective influence to bear on teaching and learning issues while developing coherent conditions of support for leadership practice that takes improvement of learning as its central goal” (Knapp et al, 2006, p. 12). While much is being studied and learned about the structure and design of systemic learning and the link to quality professional development and instruction, often these practices are developed in islands of excellence. Frequently the efforts do not occur across the district in instructional uniformity or lack alignment to each other or to instructional directives as defined by central office. Current research is finding that across the nation, states and districts are adopting practices that provide greater support for leaders. “But often these efforts do not work in concert with each other nor do they emphasize learning as the central responsibility of educational leaders and superintendent” (Knapp et al, 2006, p. 12). Changes are imminent and practices have been improved across our nation's school districts. There remain challenges to

districts, depending often on the size, to build the capacity of the quality of professional development and related improvements in practice.

### **How Leadership Influences Learning**

There continues to be updated research that specifically identifies how leadership practices influence teacher professional development. This parallels strongly to the instructional framework model adopted by the Learning Land School District and the TASC Model. In addition, there are three sets of practices in *How Leadership Influences Student Learning* (Leithwood et al., 2004) that comprise a common core of basic leadership skills: “setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization” (pp. 6-7). The first practice, setting directions, accounts for the largest proportion of a leader’s impact. This happens as a result of developing a shared vision that serves as the framework for the mission and goals and using goals to motivate people and help them make sense of their work. Setting direction also involves monitoring organizational performance and promoting effective communication. The second practice includes developing people by providing support for individual needs and examples of best practices crucial to a well-performing organization. In redesigning the organization, the performance of administrators, teachers, and students is supported. The final practice strengthens district and school cultures by modifying organizational structures and building collaborative processes (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Another important contribution to emphasizing leadership accountability for student achievement are the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015. The 2015 Standards are organized around the domains, qualities and values of leadership work that research and practice suggest contribute to students’ academic success and well-being. “More specifically, the 2015 Standards can be a guiding force to States as they identify and develop the specific

knowledge, skills, dispositions, and other characteristics required of educational leaders to achieve real student success in school” (NPBEA, 2015, p. 5). According to a review of the document, “transformational leaders should set their vision on growing leadership and be collaborative, innovative, analytical, ethical, perseverant, reflective, and equity-minded” (Superville, 2015, para. 17).

This new emphasis on student learning and continuous school improvement demonstrates the need for the superintendent to be tied to the center and heart of the work of learning in establishing a district climate focused on building knowledge and skills. The superintendent serves as the architect and contractor to lead district teaching and learning and support the instructional practices that guide student learning outcomes. “We need leaders whose expertise is more invested in helping a group create the shared knowledge necessary for sustained improvement than in serving as the source for answers and solutions” (Wagner & Kegan, 2006, p. 209). The superintendent shapes the parameters of how leadership influences learning, why organizational learning is important, and how both impact teacher learning and student learning outcomes within the district system.

### **Synthesis of Existing Research Related to the Study**

As stated before, one of the strongest and most relevant study of the superintendent leadership role in supporting instruction and achievement is depicted in *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement* (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The related research shows learning leadership and building the instructional framework for the deployment and support for learning is clearly a superintendent role that is only emerging in the research and being defined in practice. While focus is changing at the district level, school district leadership is relatively unstudied when compared to building-

level leadership (Crowson, 1992). In simple terms, “not much attention has been paid to the superintendent’s influence on outcomes” (Grogan & Sherman, 2005, p. 120).

With a combined focus on leadership standards and research on internal capacity building of a school district, superintendents are becoming more informed and intentional about addressing whole system reform. The walls of isolation in the superintendency are being redesigned and re-envisioned to share the collective responsibility for adult and student learning. The superintendent led instructional leadership research has been expanded by recast standards, stronger leadership preparation programs, and teacher leader training. The research is expanding to provide more depth of how to support adult learning with high quality professional development, coordination of district-wide curriculum, multi-measure accountability systems, and increased instructional expertise and leadership in a school district.

A challenge in authenticating proven practices and research that support the superintendent as the CEO of district learning is articulating the indirect practices and capacity building that define successful leaders and separate the good from the great. “These may be seen as ‘soft, unspoken’ skills or described as ‘indirect’ but are highly effective traits of successful leaders” (Fullan, 2009, p. 283). Capacity building is an intentional process that takes a reflective and planned commitment. It involves rebuilding the infrastructure for teaching, learning and leading, and data based evidence and proven results. This is a group effort and calls for relentless attention to the work in schools (Fullan, 2009). There is a need to examine related research pertaining to indirect leadership practices and capacity building that improves and increases teacher and student learning.

The changing role of the superintendent as an educational leader is an important factor related to school improvement and reform. Comprehensive school improvement and reform was

succinctly defined in *Beyond Islands of Excellence: What Districts can do to Improve Instruction and Achievement in All Schools* (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Superintendents use central office policies, structures, and human resources to guide instructional improvement. No longer are buildings and principals expected to lead on their own. The superintendent is a district designer and collaborator in creating the structure for highly effective, focused, and strategic professional development.

### **Need for Research Related to the Study**

Good leaders, in fact, will raise the level of organizational conversation. Even more important, good leaders describe their work as the building of leadership teams and by instilling a value around effective leadership that establishes a climate of trust by sharing information and power. There are many examples of superb districts that are meeting mandated numbers but whose effective leaders do so by empowering others, promoting genuine collaboration, and focusing on the unique strengths of their professional staffs. “The leadership teams of our school districts need as much autonomy as possible to pursue excellence, to innovate, and to build a culture that passionately pursues the best that the district can be” (Abbate, 2010, p. 37).

Clearly if learning is the business of school districts, professional development must be defined, focused, and structured from the top. Superintendents report that planning for instruction and professional development is one of the areas of their busy day that receives the least time, attention, and planning. There are many districts that have professional development divisions and administrators that work under the auspices and evaluation of the superintendent. There is a need to investigate how a superintendent develops a strategic professional development framework that centers all district divisions and resources on learning and defines and shares the action plan for the superintendent as the learning leader. This case study will

focus on one superintendent's attempt to create a district instructional framework model that supports deep and meaningful professional development throughout the district system.

### **Summary**

There is clear research about the relationship between leadership and student achievement. Research and leadership standards share what the role of superintendents and principals are responsible for in the work of schools. In today's quest for accountability, the superintendent is called upon to take a much larger, knowledge-based systems leadership role for learning in a school district.

The "sit and get" "one and done" type of professional development days are over. High quality professional development becomes an embedded practice in the school district that directly relates to the impact in student learning outcomes and involves "voice and choice" for teachers. The intentional design of "voice and choice" professional development means all principals, teachers, and students are learning every day as a result of their direct involvement in collaboratively designing and participating in learning experiences in a school district. As a result, there is a clear need for accountability placed on intentional learning designs and planned professional development delivered on a district wide basis.

The TASC theory emerges as a woven and integrated theory to address all aspects of whole system reform. This includes multiple stakeholders, the superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teachers. The TASC theory identifies six components of whole system change. The theory further breaks down what each component represents. An underlying and subtle distinction emerging in this research and case study is the study of the superintendent as the learning leader and initiator of an impactful professional development design focused on student learning.

Chapter Three will discuss the methods used to collect and analyze the case study data from the superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders in the Learning Land School District. The methods will include the validation strategies of thick rich description, peer debriefing (coder consensus), multiple sources of data, and accounting for researcher positionality. Chapter Three will conclude with an analysis of the methods used.

### Chapter 3 - Methods

This case study examined the superintendent's role in providing professional development. The case study isolated the role of the superintendent in providing a system-wide framework to support professional development. The following research question (and sub questions) will serve as a guide for data collection, analysis, and reporting.

From the perspective of the participants (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders), how does a superintendent implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district?

The following sub questions (based on TASC) will provide the framework for answering the main research question.

- 1) How does the superintendent manifest the overall vision and direction “from the top” in the provision of district-wide professional development for teacher leaders?
- 2) How does the superintendent develop district-wide capacity in the areas of new knowledge, resources, and motivation with a focus on results?
- 3) How does the superintendent provide a supportive infrastructure, capacity and coordination, and leadership development for central office staff, administrators, and teacher leadership?
- 4) How does the superintendent manage the distractors (avoid diverting and sapping energy) to focus on goals?
- 5) What are effective practices and how can these be replicated and modeled for school and district success?
- 6) How does the superintendent strengthen two-way communication across the school system?



This chapter provides an overview of the case study approach, the site selection and description, participant selection and description, data collection strategies, and data analysis; it also discusses validation techniques, thick rich description, and multiple data sources.

### **Case Study**

Case studies focus on a person, group or situation that has been observed and studied over time. “The intent of qualitative research is to examine a social situation or interaction by allowing the researcher to enter the world of others and attempt to achieve a holistic understanding” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 41). Qualitative research is described by Creswell (2008) as,

A type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the use participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words or text from participants, describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner. (p. 46)

Case study research uses analytical tools that include field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). Qualitative research begins with the assumption that the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks informs the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or a human problem (Creswell, 2013). Case study research is often conducted in real life settings. “The data collected will come from a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis will be both inductive and deductive and establish patterns or themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 44).

A case study is a definition and deep analysis of a bounded system. “Case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 1981, p. 59). "Case study is defined by individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used" (Stake, 1994, p. 236). In a case study there are three steps—gathering data about the organizations and their participants, organizing and editing the data into manageable files, and writing a narrative that tells a story about the organizations (Patton, 2002). The intent in this study is not to speculate on the elements involved in a superintendent's leadership role or style but to study how the superintendent implements professional development for central office support staff, principals, and teachers in a specific school district. The case study focuses on a bounded system of one school district.

### **History and Development of Navigating Change in Learning Land School District**

Two years ago the Learning Land School District began the process of leadership change. The school district hired a new superintendent who began to assess the district's organizational learning system. In his initial overview of the district, he identified the continuous improvement needed to address current practice, how to create plans for the future, and how to design the supports to increase the instructional capacity of the district.

The superintendent acknowledged that managing complex change involves the following: vision, skills, incentives, resources, and an action plan. The superintendent also acknowledged that managing complex change can be a difficult process but the overarching goal is a systems approach that transforms the learning in the district. The superintendent and assistant superintendent created Navigating Complex Change as a roadmap for building an instructional plan in their district.

The first steps were to identify a vision, goals, and action plan for the district. The following goals were created and documented in their district action plan, Learning Land District Goals and Action Plan (2013): student achievement, educator effectiveness, culture and climate, fiscal responsibility, and communications. The plan was developed collaboratively with district office administrators and principals within the district. Input was also gathered from teacher leaders. The Board of Education approved the district goals and action plan. Implementation of the plan began in the fall of 2013. Each action plan item had a timeline for implementation that was clearly articulated in a monthly calendar. The district office administrators and principals monitored the implementation of action plan items on a monthly basis and made adjustments based on feedback.

As a result of creating the action plan together, administrators and principals have increased the ownership and capacity of instruction and professional development within the district. The district goals of Student Achievement and Educator Effectiveness align with specific evidence to determine success and are included on the Learning Land Data Dashboard. The dashboard included assessments results, building principal walkthroughs, and professional development data. The results are collected and monitored in the fall, winter, and spring and are included on the Learning Land Data Dashboard and on each building's school improvement plan. The dashboard results are shared with administrators, school leadership teams, site councils, and the Board of Education. The implementation of the action plan, data dashboard, and school improvement plans has influenced teacher behavior. Principals share the results with teachers who reflect on ways to improve their instructional practice in order for student achievement to increase. The professional development data is collected at each professional event to measure the impact of the learning in the district professional development management

software. The data is used by the superintendent, central office, principals, and teacher leaders for reflection and the design and development of future learning opportunities for adults.

The overarching goals of the Learning Land School District are to transform professional development to impact student learning outcomes, to articulate an instructional framework, and to correspondingly design the professional development to make this happen. This involved developing the leadership of principals and creating a cadre of teacher leaders to address the following objectives:

- support effective district collaboration
- implement effective instructional strategies to raise rigor and relevance
- analyze and apply Kansas College and Career Ready Standards
- create effective communication across the district (horizontally and vertically)
- contribute to establishing systems and structures for effective professional development
- develop capacity for leadership and designing effective professional development
- articulate the link between student learning and professional development
- help facilitate curriculum alignment, assessment selection, and alignment of materials, and
- align curriculum across the district. (Learning Land, 2013)

This district has developed the seedbed for navigating complex change and a district organization focused on instruction.

The superintendent began by centering on the research by Waters and Marzano (2006) in *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student*

*Achievement.* Waters and Marzano identified the following questions to guide the work of districts:

- 1) What is the strength of relationship between leaders at the district level and average student academic achievement in the district?
- 2) What specific district-level leadership responsibilities are related to student academic achievement?
- 3) What specific leadership practices are used to fulfill these responsibilities?
- 4) Do behaviors associated with strong leadership always have a positive effect on student achievement? (p. 7)

Waters and Marzano's (2006) findings indicated that when district leaders effectively address specific responsibilities, they can have a profound, positive impact on student achievement in their districts.

Once the goals were articulated in the *Learning Land District Goals and Action Plan*, a four-year action plan was created. The *Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan* was developed to expand on each district goal and includes the following tenets:

- 5) Student Achievement: Increase student learning through the implementation of Kansas College and Career Ready Standards
- 6) Culture and Climate: Provide a positive and safe environment to optimize student and staff success
- 7) Educator Effectiveness: Ensure high quality instruction in every classroom by fostering professional effectiveness
- 8) Fiscal Responsibility: Demonstrate fiscal responsibility and effectively utilize facilities, and

9) Communications: Provide communication that is purposeful and timely (Learning Land School District, 2014).

As an extension of the action plan, the superintendent supported the development of the Learning Land Instructional Framework. The Learning Land School District's Instructional Framework integrates the following components: rigor and relevance, effective instruction and research, assessments, walkthroughs, evaluation, and the use of the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards. The organizational structures in the Learning Land Instructional Framework included (a) district collaboration team leaders; (b) professional development council; (c) mentoring program; (d) leadership teams; and (e) professional learning communities. The vision of the superintendent of the Learning Land School District includes the need to move from a compliance orientation of directives to a service orientation in support of students, teachers, and administrators (Honig & Copland, 2008).

### **Site Selection and Description**

The Learning Land School District is a high achieving Midwest district and heavily supports professional development. The Learning Land School District spans 47 square miles. The city composing the Learning Land School District is home to approximately 10,000 people. More than 5,300 students attend the district's six elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, and one online school. The district student population is 82.49% white with 16.58% of those student economically disadvantaged. The Learning Land School District has high expectations for students and staff. The Learning Land schools take pride in their academic excellence and progress to exceed local, state, and federal targets and goals. The tradition of excellence is evident in the district's many National Merit Finalists and Semi-Finalists, state Standard of Excellence awards, state championships in athletics and activities, and regional and

national recognitions awarded to programs and staff. The 2013-2014 school year saw Learning Land teachers win recognitions as Kansas Teacher of the Year, Kansas Master Teacher, and Kansas History Teacher of the Year. Learning Land is a progressive district focused on helping students succeed.

The Learning Land School District's tradition of excellence is also evident in its high achieving student population. The school district has a history of high graduation rates and student achievement. The district students' ACT scores average 23.4% against the state average of 21.8%. The district graduation rate is 94.4%. In the latest district data collected in 2013, 95.9% of the students scored proficient and above in reading, and 90.3% are proficient and above in math. The district has also created a highly successful virtual school. The district has a long-standing history of academic success and has been recognized nationally as a high achieving school district. Of the Kansas schools in the 2014 U.S. News Best High Schools rankings, a Learning Land high school was among the 30 that received bronze medals.

The Learning Land School District is a member of the Learning Forward organization, whose core principles surround the practice of professional development. The Learning Land School District supports the Learning Forward organization's statement that the primary purpose of professional development is to improve the learning of educators and student results. Continuous improvement of individuals, schools, and school systems depends on high-quality professional learning. Professional learning is the primary vehicle available to school and school systems to strengthen the performance of the education work force, and the success of educators' daily work depends on it (Learning Forward, 2011).

This site was selected for this research because of the investment in the systemic design of professional development as a focus of the superintendent. The superintendent created a

district instructional framework in support of professional development and articulated this framework to all district stakeholders. This work is purposeful as a formal design to guide the instructional practices and professional development activities of the district. They named the district framework Learning Land Instructional Framework (2013). In this framework, managing complex change includes creating a vision, defining skills and incentives, identifying resources needed, and creating the action plan for success. The superintendent acknowledges that the change process includes many stages of concern, which could include confusion, anxiety, multiple changes, frustration, and implementation challenges.

Higher performing districts tend to be led by district staff who communicate a strong belief in the capacity of teachers and principals to improve the quality of teaching and learning and in the district's capacity to develop the organizational conditions needed for that to happen (high collective efficacy) (Leithwood, Louis & Anderson, 2012, p. 181).

In the Learning Land School District, the superintendent led efforts to develop the Learning Land District Goals and Action Plan (2013), composed of five areas: student achievement, culture and climate, educator effectiveness, fiscal responsibility, and communications. Each area contains a goal and evidence of success. The action plan is complete with a mission statement. The action plan is a four-year plan and is updated every year.

The action plan created the "steps" for navigating complex change. This action plan enables the district to build consensus about core expectations for professional practice, (curriculum, teaching, leadership), sets clear expectations for school leadership, and establishes leadership development to select, train, and assist principals and teacher leaders consistent with the mission and goals of the district. In addition, the action plan sets forth organized opportunities for teachers and principals to engage in school-to-school communication focusing



on the challenges of improving student learning and instructional practices. Leadership learning teams develop and model strategies and norms to develop habits of inquiry into challenges related to student learning and program implementation. The superintendent:

coordinates and carries out district support for school improvement across organizational units (e.g., supervision, curriculum and instruction, staff development, human resources) in relation to district priorities, expectations for professional practice, and a shared understanding of the goals and needs of specific schools. (Leithwood et al., 2012, p. 182)

This district was selected for its specific development and implementation of a defined instructional framework. District documents and practices have been developed to clearly show how the instructional framework guides the district's teaching and learning. The superintendent and central office have outlined and articulated specific goals and outcomes of the instructional framework. In addition, the district has developed an evaluation tool in their professional development management software to monitor and collect data to determine the effectiveness of the district instructional framework.

### **Participant Selection**

The participants in this case study were the superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders. The teacher leaders were appointed to leadership teams by the superintendent of the school district. The criteria for the teacher leader participant selection was knowledge and training; those who were most knowledgeable and have been trained to lead in the district instructional framework were selected. Creswell (2003) states, "The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p. 185).

All participants selected for interviews were chosen based on their leadership position within the instructional framework in the Learning Land School District. The superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Academic Affairs selected principal participants based on their involvement in professional learning leadership within the district. The principals were involved in the development of the district action plan and have facilitated the professional learning needed for sustainable change within their buildings. The principals represented elementary, middle and high school levels. The Assistant Principal was specifically selected because of her expertise and experience with professional learning within and outside the district.

The Assistant Superintendent for Academic Affairs identified teacher leader participants based on their involvement in professional learning leadership within the district. The teacher leaders work closely with professional learning within the district. The teacher leaders represented elementary, middle and high school levels. The names were supported by the superintendent as well. These teacher leaders had received specialized training to serve and receive a stipend associated with this role in the district. Three teacher leaders were invited to participate in this study and all three accepted. There were no teacher leaders who declined the invitation. The researcher acknowledges that the selection of these participants did not affect the results of the study. This was determined by the fact that no participants knew the topic of the study or questions prior to their interview. Neither the superintendent or assistant superintendent knew or saw questions related to the interview prior to being interviewed themselves or prior to selecting the teacher leader participants for the study. The board of education or community members were not included as participants in the study. This was due to the strategic focus of the study on the superintendent's role in providing professional development in a school district and the design of the instructional framework.

The participants have participated in specific professional development events that have prepared them for leadership roles within the Learning Land School District. The purposeful selection has benefited the study while collecting information that best describes the Learning Land School District instructional framework and corresponding professional development sessions. All interviewees were asked if they would be interested in volunteering and participating in the case study interviews. All participants agreed and participation and informed consent forms were signed.

### **Description of the Participants**

The superintendent of the Learning Land School District was selected by the board of education for his leadership and vision. In the first year of his tenure, he began to formulate the action plan to develop the district framework for navigating complex change. His vision included the acknowledgement of the Learning Land School District as an already high achieving district. His vision also included the vertical move from good to great. In this articulation, he identified that the central office division and principal and teacher leaders would be the key stakeholders in the new framework. Higher performing school districts make greater efforts than others to promote high level communication and coordination among the many central office units as they develop programs with teachers and principals (Louis, 2010).

The superintendent purposefully selected the foundational research of Timothy Waters and Robert Marzano (2006), *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement*. The superintendent has articulated clearly and transparently the role of the superintendent as the educational leader and the role of professional development to develop and guide district instructional practices. The superintendent sought to bear the responsibility of the development of the district instructional

framework as the overall architect and alignment facilitator for central office staff, principals, and teachers, and as aligned to district board goals.

The central office participants included the individuals that are responsible for planning and implementing the instructional and technology affairs of the district. The assistant superintendent has extensive background in teaching and learning, assessment and planning, instructional resources, and working as a member of the district administrative team. This central office administrator has a vital role in identifying instructional best practices, professional development tied to data driven dialogue, and formative and summative assessments.

The other central office participant is the district technology coordinator. The technology coordinator has a background in educational technology and integration. The technology coordinator is a key stakeholder in identifying the instructional practices that crosswalk with educational technology applications. The technology integration role includes not only selecting devices, but also laying the groundwork for the professional development needed for deeper levels of complex digital literacy and research skills and tying technology acquisitions to the instructional framework.

The researcher and central office administrator worked together for several years in a school district, but not in the last five years. While they remain professional colleagues and personal friends, they do not work together and do not associate in the same professional organizations and circuits. The researcher and central office participant kept research conversations clinical to avoid bias or avoid research complications and/or contradictions.

The administrator participants included selected building administrators at the elementary, middle, and high school level. As a leadership team, they are engaged in district professional development experiences. The focus of the learning is centered on the change

process and creating systems for rigorous and relevant instruction. The administrative team contains multiple new administrators to the district. Therefore, they are working to also build a sense of team as a collective group. The superintendent is expected to articulate high expectations for administrators in creating learning environments within their buildings. The district is moving from a place of building autonomy to creating an aligned system focused on district goals and action plans. The expectation for administrators is that they are instructional leaders. Administrators are responsible for facilitating professional development within their building as well as nurturing the development of teacher leaders. In order to bring organization to this structure, the superintendent developed the instructional framework which includes the following components: *Navigating Complex Change*, *Organizing for Success*, *the Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan*, and the *Learning Land Instructional Framework*. There are 22 principals in the school district, and one participant from each level, (high school, middle school, and elementary school) were selected to interview in this case study.

The teacher leaders were selected through a district application process. Teachers apply to become "Team Leaders" through the office of the Assistant Superintendent of Academic Affairs. The application clearly articulates the roles and responsibilities of the teacher leaders. Applications are reviewed by the Assistant Superintendent and Professional Learning Coordinator. These teacher leaders are professional learning community (PLC) team leaders and specific professional development has been created for them. Teacher leaders receive support in facilitating the learning of their colleagues. The professional development includes increasing their understanding of the change process and the implementation of effective facilitation skills. Teacher leaders are responsible for leading their PLC teams in applying the district's instructional framework. Teacher leaders meet with district level administrators and

instructional coaches approximately once a month to receive professional development and plan the PLC team sessions. The teacher leaders are selected for their leadership capabilities and skills. The district believes in building the capacity within the district and empowering teacher leaders to facilitate learning. The district is purposeful in supporting a partnership between teacher leaders and administrators by conducting joint professional development sessions for the instructional framework in which both groups learn together. There are 28 teacher leaders in the district and four were selected for participant interviews. The teachers selected serve as teacher leaders in the instructional framework professional development sessions at the elementary, middle, and high school level; the participants also included teachers who represent K-12 music, PE, art, and library teachers.

**Table 3-1 Case Study Participants**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>Description</b>
Superintendent	1	
Central Office Administration	1	Assistant Superintendent
	1	Chief Technology Officer
Principals	1	Learning Land High School
	1	Learning Land Middle School
	1	Learning Land Elementary School
Teacher Leaders	1	Learning Land High School
	1	Learning Land Middle School
	1	Learning Land Elementary School

### **Data Sources and Procedures**

The data collection for this case study was extensive and includes multiple strategies consistent with qualitative studies: interviews, artifacts, and the instructional framework and action plans for context and interpretation. The data collection occurred over approximately one semester. The primary data source (to be used for systematic analysis) was the participant

interviews. Additional sources of information to assist with analysis, interpretation, and case description came from field notes, district artifacts, and audiovisual materials.

A hallmark of case study research is the use of several data sources, a strategy that also enhances data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). Potential data sources include, but are not limited to, interviews and the district-created artifacts. In case study, data from multiple sources are then merged in the analysis process rather than handled individually.

Each data source is one piece of the “puzzle,” with each piece contributing to the researcher’s understanding of the whole phenomenon. This convergence adds strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case. (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 554).

## **Interviews**

The interviews were open-ended and structured in a way that the participant was able to share information for the researcher to gain in-depth data on perceptions and beliefs regarding the topic. Interviews serve as a “conversation with a purpose” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The conversations allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants’ attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs on the topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Patton, 2002). The conversation was allowed to proceed per the participants’ responses. The interview guides for each participant group are included in the appendix. A prescribed set of questions was used in the interview process with the superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders. The superintendent has been selected and identified as the designer of the district professional development and instructional framework. The interview questions were developed based on the review of the literature with particular alignment to the TASC sub questions. “Analyzed data of interviews along with the literature was used to integrate and for the development of conceptual

thinking and theory building” (Khan, 2014, p. 229). Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. There were 90 pages of interview transcripts.

The interview questions for the superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders are included in the appendix. The superintendent interview protocol and questions are included in Appendix A. The central office administrators protocol and questions are provided in Appendix B. Appendix C lists the principal protocol and questions and the teacher leader protocol and questions are included in Appendix D. The design of the interview questions were suited for relevancy to each participant group.

### **Additional sources of information and procedures for collection**

A data demographic form was utilized to assist in the documentation of this case study. The form included brief descriptive language from interviews. The data demographic forms are stored electronically and included as part of the appendices.

The researcher also collected artifacts that have been shared by the district leadership with permission. The artifacts collected include the district framework as chronicled in the district publications *Navigating Complex Change: Organizing for Success, Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan*, and the *Learning Land Instructional Framework*. These publications outline the vision, skills, incentives, resources, and action plan for creating systemic change and designing professional development. The researcher also collected artifacts prepared for professional development sessions, such as materials that describe school and district professional development activities as well as key communication documents used with stakeholders.

Other artifacts collected were the presentation materials the district leadership has created to document and describe their professional development framework to district stakeholders.



These stakeholders included principals, teacher leaders, teachers, and the board of education. Resources were collected that have been shared via electronic means and district communications including web site resources and videos. The artifacts collected support the data collected in the participant interviews. In addition, the artifacts assist in determining themes, patterns, and commonalities and to support the background knowledge used for the case descriptions in Chapter Four.

**Table 3-2 District Artifacts**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>
Learning Land Instructional Framework	Comprehensive framework of instruction for the Learning Land School District
Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan	Five-year action plan to guide district professional development
Learning Land Data Dashboard	Data report issued three times during the school year to report student achievement, educator effectiveness, walkthroughs, professional learning survey results, and student culture and climate data
District website	Documents and instructional videos posted on the Learning Land website

### **Organizing and Storing Data**

The data was organized and grouped by commonalities and consensus of meaning. This included initial coding and determining themes and patterns that emerged. The researcher developed a data matrix to identify and locate information (Creswell, 2013). The data is backed-up, stored, and protected electronically. In the process of interviewing, high quality audio recording devices were used. All data, recordings, and files are locked in a secure location. In the process of collecting and storing data, a master list of information and data was developed. All participants' names are confidential and anonymous.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in this study was conducted through an extensive process of preparing and organizing the data collected. “Data analysis involves collecting open-ended data, based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by the participants” (Creswell, 2003, p.184). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992):

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. (p. 153)

The data analysis stage is a time-honored process. To be successful in interpreting data, time must be taken to review, reread, and constantly critique the data. “It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data and making interpretations of the larger meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2007, p. 183).

The researcher reported the results of the data analysis through narrative text and thick rich description. To accomplish “thick, rich description” (Creswell, 2013), the researcher provided abundant, interconnected details (Stake, 2010). The researcher used thick, rich descriptions about the instructional framework, district action plan, professional development sessions, and professional development evaluation process.

The researcher compared the data to determine similarities and differences among the responses of the four groups of participants. Coding begins the process of unraveling and telling

the story of the data. “This was done by the process of coding and involved aggregating the text into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in the study, and then assigning a label to the code” (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). During this process, the researcher read and highlighted key phrases in the interview transcripts. This process began the initial coding stage. The highlighted data was transferred to Excel documents created for each group, superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders. On the Excel documents, the data from each group and by each question was separated by TASC sub-codes. To initially sort the data, the TASC sub-code Excel document was composed of three columns. The first column was key phrases (raw data) as directly highlighted and transferred from the original participant interview transcript. In the second column, the data was winnowed to create preliminary codes. The process of working to reduce the number of codes is helpful in writing the narrative (Cresswell, 2013). A third column was created to list the final codes. In this process of transferring and creating codes, the researcher had to revisit the interview transcripts and reread information to make sure accurate information was transferred and the proper codes were created. This in effect was organizing the data and creating the codes.

In the second stage of the process, the researcher color-coded the data of the superintendent, central office staff, principals and teachers identifying each group with a different color. The researcher began the process to identify patterns by cross-walking color-coded data across each group. To explain in further detail, the superintendent color-coded data was cross-walked against the central office group color-coded data, the central office group was cross-walked against the principal group, and the principal group was cross-walked across the teacher color-coded data. This process was further refined by continuous review of the colored codes between each of the four groups to discover the patterns and extract themes.

To ensure that no data, codes or potential themes were excluded, using another clean set of complete transcripts, the researcher returned to the transcripts to color-code every piece of data in the interview transcripts using six different highlighter colors. This process was initiated to employ a “fresh set of eyes” to unpack, explain, or look for contradictions in the data. Each of the TASC constructs was identified with a specific highlighter color. As the researcher went back multiple times to review the transcripts, it became easier to identify data by the number of the interview question and the specific color of the coded TASC component. This allowed for a smoother cross check of the data, ease in which to review and read the data, and to establish a stronger relationship and identification with the data as it was reviewed over and over again. The researcher also looked across the transcripts for commonalities and contradictions. As a result of this process, every word in the participant interview transcript was color-coded. Some themes needed further clarification and some new themes emerged from the draft of themes that had initially been created. Special consideration was taken for how to best organize data under the TASC theory constructs.

In this data analysis process, the researcher used categorical aggregation to establish patterns (and subsequently themes). In the process of interpreting the data, the researcher used direct interpretation techniques and developed generalities of what was “learned” (Creswell, 2013). Ultimately the interview data were reduced into themes through the process of coding, condensing, synthesizing, and interpreting. In this study hereafter, generalizations will be synonymous with the overarching themes that emerged from the patterns. In this process, the researcher used field notes to assist in reviewing, coding, and cataloging the data. In the concluding process of writing and sharing the findings in Chapter Four, the themes, corresponding patterns, and participant example text were revisited repeatedly by reviewing the

coding sheets and by constantly referring to and rereading the participant interview transcripts. This was to ensure accuracy in transferring coded data and interview text in the final data analysis. All interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder or web based application. The findings are shared in Chapter Four with narrative text and tables.

### **Coding**

This section will share the first data analytic process, including the initial coding of the data. According to Saldana (2009):

A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of the language-based or visual data...It is important to note the core concept of coding is to capture a datum's primary content and essence. Awareness of coding is important because codes can sometime summarize or condense data, not simply reduce it (p. 3-4).

Creswell (2007) stated that the steps of qualitative data analysis are "reducing the data into meaningful segments, assigning names for the segments, combining the data into broader categories or themes, and displaying and making comparisons into broader categories and themes" (p. 148). These steps are all an important part of the process of coding. The coding process in this case study will be examined and the steps will be shown to how First Cycle coding and Second Cycle coding were used in the data analysis of the participant interview transcripts.

In order to understand and identify the process of coding, the constructs to be coded have been identified. The following table contains the main constructs from the TASC theory used by the researcher to formulate the research sub questions to guide the investigation.

**Table 3-3 Main TASC Constructs**

---

<b>Main Construct Categories</b>
Direction and sector engagement (DSE)
Capacity-building with a focus on results (CB)
Supportive infrastructure and leadership (SIL)
Managing the distractors (MD)
Continuous evaluation and inquiry (CEI)
Two-way communication (TC)

---

After all transcripts were read, the researcher began the process of rereading them one by one and highlighting the units of data. Units of data may have included a word, phrase, sentence or paragraph that stood out as an important response to the question asked. The highlighted units of data were assigned to one of the six main coding categories of TASC that represented the interview questions that were posed to the participants. This was the first stage of reading and identifying data before a deeper analysis of this process, which will be explained in detail later in this section.

The researcher created tables with the six main constructs of the TASC theory. The first column contains the TASC component. The second column states the definition of the TASC component as derived from the research theory in the Chapter Two literature review from the work of Michael Fullan (2009) in *Change Wars, Have Theory, Will Travel: A Theory of Action for System Change*, Chapter 13. The third column shares a data example that has been lifted from the transcripts in the exact words of the participant. The researcher chose to share a data example in the third column as an explicit example of a response to an interview question for each TASC construct by a participant in every group: the superintendent, (S); central office staff one or two (CO1 or CO2); principal one, two, or three, (P1, P2 or P3); and teacher leader one, two, or three (T1, T2 or T3). The purpose was to define how the researcher shared each TASC

construct's definition and how it was succinctly related to a participant response. These examples preface patterns and themes that were identified and presented later in the data analysis. These examples serve as a descriptive process and not as an analytical process.

The researcher used more than one first cycle coding method. For the first stage of data analysis, the researcher reviewed the transcripts and single color highlighted the raw data. This included important words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs as stated by the participant groups, superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders. In order to determine what highlighted units of data seemed important, Structural Coding was employed. "Structural Coding generally results in the identification of large segments of text on broad topics; these segments can then form the basis for an in-depth analysis within or across topics" (MacQueen, McLellan-Lemal, Bartholow & Milstein, 2008, p. 125). During this process, "the coding method was kept at a basic level by applying it as a categorization technique for further qualitative data analysis" (Saldana, 2009 p. 68).

Excel documents were then created for each participant group (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders). Each document contained a sheet for each of the six TASC components and the interview questions related to each construct. Only highlighted units of data from the transcripts, words, sentences, and paragraphs were listed on this document in a single column. The second column on the Excel document was to identify the participant. To further explain how the raw data was formatted in the excel documents, the first spreadsheet document was for the superintendent. The second spreadsheet document was for the central office participants, identified as CO1 and CO2. The third spreadsheet document was for the principal participants, P1, P2, and P3). The final spreadsheet document was for the teacher

leader participants, T1, T2, and T3. This was the first data lift from the original participant transcripts.

The second stage of organizing the data began by taking the units of data from the Excel documents from the single column of data for each participant group to begin an organized sort on new spreadsheets. The researcher created an excel coding document composed of three columns, one for raw data, a second column to list preliminary codes, and a third column to list final codes. The documents were again representative of the four participant groups.

Liamputtong & Essy (2005) recommend,

Formatting pages of data into three columns rather than two. The first and widest column contains the data themselves-interview transcripts, field notes, etc. The second column contains space for preliminary code notes and jottings, while the third column lists the final codes. The second column's ruminations or first impressions may help provide a transitional link between the raw data and codes (pp. 270-3).

It was during this formatting process that the transitional link began between the raw data and the codes used in the inductive-deductive logic process.

Qualitative researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the "bottom up," by organizing the data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information. This inductive process involves a researcher working back and forth between the themes and the database until they establish a comprehensive set of themes. The researcher may also use deductive thinking in that they build themes that are constantly being checked against the data. The inductive-deductive logic process means that the qualitative researcher uses complex reasoning skills throughout the process of research. (Creswell, 2013, p. 45)



The overarching TASC components used from the TASC theory served as umbrella categories to the codes that emerged through the interview questions, coding the raw data, and the collections of quotations. “Organizing quotations related to the same topic can help the researcher to recognize patterns found in the data” (Kawulich, 2004, p. 4). As the researcher continued to create the three-column code sheets for each TASC component, for each group, (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders), patterns emerged. As Saldana (2009) states, “There is something about manipulating qualitative data on paper and writing codes in pencil that give you more control over and ownership of the work” (p. 22). And as reiterated by Graue and Walsh (1998), “Touch the data...Handling the data gets additional data out of memory and into the record. It runs abstract information into concrete data” (p. 45).

Coding is a process that evolves over time as the researcher continues to work with the data. Coding is a cyclical process that requires you to recode not just once but twice (and sometimes more). Virtually no one gets it right the first time. (Saldana, 2009, p. 29)

Another series of Excel coding documents was created. On these documents, each of the codes was transferred from the third column of each participant interview and was listed in an individual column with a header identified as superintendent, central office, principal, or teacher leader. Across these columns, common patterns were color coded using the same color. In this process, the superintendent column was color coded and compared to the central office group. The same colors were used in the superintendent and central office column to highlight and identify similar patterns that emerged. The central office column was color coded and compared to the principal group. The same colors were used in the central office and principal column to highlight and identify similar patterns that emerged. The principal group column was color coded and compared to the teacher leader group. The same colors were used in the principal and

teacher leader column to highlight and identify similar patterns that emerged. As a result of this process, the researcher was able to look across the participant columns to observe individual colors in each column. An individual color across columns indicated a pattern across a certain participant group or all of the participant groups. It was in this analytical process that the researcher was able to see patterns and themes emerge across participant groups and TASC components. “Experiencing flashes of insight, developing hunches, leaping to conclusions, and amassing documentation to support the argument characterize all scholarly research endeavors” (Dewalt, 2002, p. 180). “Coding is not just labeling, it is linking” (Saldana, 2009 p. 8). “It leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea” (Richards & Morse, p. 137).

A master coding sheet was created and served as a reference list to document and refer back to the color coded Excel sheets and the unit of data from which the theme emerged. “The process of coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code” (Cresswell, 2013, p. 184). The number of codes may increase rapidly, so it is important to develop processes that assist in managing the codes.

Since the number of codes can accumulate quite quickly and change as analysis progresses, keep a record of your emergent codes in a separate file as a codebook—a compilation of the codes, their content descriptions, and a brief data example for reference. (Saldana, 2009, p. 21)

The researcher’s next process was to copy a clean set of transcripts. The researcher reread the transcripts and used six different-colored highlighters to code each word of the participant interview transcripts, each color representing one of the six TASC constructs. The

participant transcripts were read multiple times to extract important phrases and patterns as they emerged through the six colors. Since each TASC component contained multiple interview questions, the multiple questions served to further break down the TASC component to extract more data from the participants and ultimately additional codes. The researcher reread the transcripts and added handwritten notes related to the data. This process of using six different colors allowed for an internal cross walking of the TASC constructs among all interview questions and to ensure through the coding process that no patterns or themes were omitted and to identify similar, or duplicate patterns and themes that may have shown up under different TASC constructs. During this process, new codes were discovered, some codes were renamed, some codes were eliminated under one TASC construct and moved to another TASC construct, and some codes were prominent under more than one TASC construct. This will be further explained in the section on intersection of themes and overarching themes.

This was the process of reading the transcripts using the First Cycle coding method. First Cycle coding is simple and direct and involved the process of listing each TASC component along with the interview questions and was the first pass at recording large chunks of data phrases. Sipe & Ghiso (2004) note, “All coding is a judgment call” since we bring “our subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, [and] our quirks to the process (pp. 482-483). According to Kawulich (2004):

Using a content analysis approach to data analysis involves reading and re-reading transcripts, looking for similarities and differences that enable the researcher to develop themes and categories. Ways to mark the text include coding paragraphs or other units of analysis; highlighting units of analysis with different colored ink, arranging the data into themes; cutting up transcripts and putting them in thematic folders; using a card index

system, noting line numbers for easier cross-referencing; and using computer software to assist in data management activities, like sorting. (p. 8)

In the Second Cycle coding method, analytic skills were added to classify, prioritize, and synthesize the codes (Saldana, 2009). Charmaz (2006) states:

Focused Coding follows Initial Coding, a First Cycle coding method. Focused Coding searches for the most frequent or significant Initial Codes to develop “the most salient categories” in the data corpus and “requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense.” (pp. 46, 57)

The researcher returned many times to the color coded, four-column document to further refine the codes, adding some, eliminating some or perhaps assigning a code to another TASC construct. When this process was completed, the researcher Xeroxed another copy of the four-column document and hung this on a wall. The researcher meticulously moved from one column to the next on each TASC construct, carefully and thoughtfully identifying patterns. A primary use of coding is to identify patterns. Hatch (2002) found a pattern can be characterized by:

- similarity (things happen the same way)
- difference (they happen in predictably different ways)
- frequency (they happen often or seldom)
- sequence (they happen in a certain order)
- correspondence (they happen in relation to other activities or events)
- causation (one appears to cause another). (p. 155)

After the completion of this process, the researcher returned to the first master code list and made adjustments to codes that were added, renamed, deleted or transferred to another TASC construct. “As you code and recode, expect – or rather, strive for – your codes and

categories to become more refined. Some of your First Cycle codes may be later subsumed by other codes, relabeled, or dropped all together” (Saldana, 2009, p. 10). This data analysis process created the terminal, master code list that served as the template for reporting the themes as a result of this stage of the data analysis.

In the peer review process, the data were analyzed by another researcher to bring about observation and consensus of the coding. The peer reviewer had no vested interest in the study and had no prior relationship with the researcher. The peer reviewer shared their analysis with the researcher.

### **Validation**

The researcher implemented three validation techniques: thick rich description, peer debriefing, and multiple data sources. Thick, rich description is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Creswell and Plano (2007) as a way of achieving a type of external validity. By describing an experience in sufficient detail, one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions are conveyable to other times, settings, situations, and people. The researcher’s thick, rich description – such as detailed descriptions of the setting and multiple perspectives about a theme, for example – “may transport the readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 192). In addition to describing the interview settings and providing multiple perspectives on themes, the researcher included thick, rich description of the instructional framework’s activities, functions, learning events, and planning meetings. This assists in defining the unique characteristics of the instructional framework and supports the results in becoming more realistic and richer (Creswell, 2007).

The researcher also used the validation strategy of peer debriefing, coding processes that include peer consensus on the coding. “The process of coding involves aggregating the text or

visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code” (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). Peer debriefing is a process that promotes the involvement of a research colleague in the overview process while collecting data. Peer debriefing has been described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) “as a useful technique for establishing the credibility of a study” (p. 308). In the process of peer debriefing the researcher “exposes oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Peer debriefing assists in the process of including a research colleague who has an impartial view of the study. It assists the researcher in staying “honest.” Feedback is provided that assists the researcher in establishing credibility and ensures validity. Peer debriefing allows the opportunity for the researcher to gain feedback on the methodological design. And finally, the process allows for the researcher to develop awareness of her own views regarding the data. This can be seen as a sort of catharsis and release during the intense stages of qualitative research.

A third validation technique the researcher used is multiple data sources. By using multiple sources of data and multiple strategies, the researcher is not limited to a single source of evidence. In the process of using multiple sources of data, a convergence of evidence may occur that identifies emerging themes and patterns. This will result in letting the data and findings become focused and identifiable. And as Yin (1984) stated, that data analysis consists of “examining, categorizing, tabulating, and otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of the study” (p. 105). The process of using multiple sources of data supported the strength of the researcher in collecting data and presenting the findings. The

multiple sources in this study include interviews and artifacts from the Learning Land School District.

### **Researcher Positionality**

As a school superintendent in a small, rural district, the researcher had an opportunity to uniquely structure and provide professional development. The development of this case study, relies heavily on the theory and research of John Creswell (2013). Key characteristics that are important to note about qualitative research are that it:

- Is conducted in a natural setting (the field), a source of data for close interaction
- Relies on the researcher as key instrument in data collection
- Involves using multiple methods
- Involves complex reasoning going between inductive and deductive
- Focuses on participants' perspectives, their meanings, their multiple subjective views
- Is situated within the context or setting of participants/sites (social/political/historical)
- Involves an emergent and evolving design rather than tightly prefigured design
- Is reflective and interpretive (i.e., sensitive to researcher's biographies/social identities)
- Presents a holistic, complex picture. (Creswell, 2013, p. 46)

In case study research, it is important to clarify the positionality the researcher brings to the study. This self-reflection creates an open and revealing narrative that will bring about transparency when shared with readers. Reflexivity has been mentioned as a core characteristic of qualitative research. "Good qualitative research contains comments by the researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background, such as their gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin" (Creswell, 2007, p. 192).

The researcher for this study is a doctoral student in the education leadership program and employed as a Midwestern school district superintendent. Her previous history as an educator has been as a classroom teacher, guidance counselor, high school principal, assistant superintendent of instructional services, and academic manager. Based on her background as a learning leader, the researcher brings many years of specialized district professional development experiences to the study. Her educational background includes deep instructional experiences in the classroom, assisting teachers, counseling students, and administrating at-risk students and adult high school credit and diploma programs. In addition, her building administrator experiences were helpful in leading professional development sessions and her district administrator experiences were important to gaining experiences in guiding instructional, state, and federal programs.

The researcher began her career as a classroom teacher. It was during formative high school and college years the researcher spent in forensics and debate that her passion for research, evaluation, and findings on topics and tying them to hypotheses and solutions became a professional passion. The real shift for the researcher began in 1999 when she began an official role as the district's school improvement liaison and officer. It was during this time the researcher began the certification program for building and district administration in hopes of pursuing a job as a curriculum director. The researcher already had a strong background in research, statistics, and psychometrics as acquired through her school counseling master's degree program. The researcher became interested in the more systemic nature of teaching and learning with a prominent focus on educator learning and professional development. The researcher determined that educator learning practices that grew stronger made classroom learning and student success and achievement higher. This was evidenced by student achievement, teacher



recognition and awards, and district systemic learning awards in school districts where the researcher practiced. Eventually, during her role as an assistant superintendent of instructional services, the researcher decided to pursue and finish a doctoral degree with an emphasis in professional development.

The researcher then began her career pursuit for a position as a superintendent of schools. This position was obtained in a Midwestern, small, rural school district. In her role as a superintendent, the researcher has discovered opportunities to outline, implement, and direct a teaching and learning framework and practices poised and focused on teacher learning. The researcher places priority on professional development in her school district and identifies stakeholder contributions and support.

In a prior role as a guidance counselor, the researcher spent many days and class sessions helping teachers and students understand their multiple intelligences. She strives to ensure that teachers and students are learning in the modality that best extracts their thinking and lays the foundation and replication for learning in the classroom. When the teacher is an active learner, active learning has the best potential to be replicated and modeled in the classroom for students.

The researcher's experience in professional development affected the focus of the study and the understanding of the educational leader as the chief organizer of learning. In this study, the researcher worked very hard to let the findings surface as a result of the data collected from the participants. Care was taken to report the findings without bias.

Through these strategies, the researcher validated descriptions and interpretations of the data. Interpretation involves making sense of the data (Creswell, 2013). Interpretation in qualitative research involves abstracting beyond the codes and themes to a more explicit understanding of the data (Creswell, 2013). Ultimately, the narrative text explains the findings

of the research. The researcher brings a fabrication of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. "The final product of this type of study is yet another interpretation by the researcher of others' views filtered through his or her own" (Merriam, 1998, p. 22).

### **Epistemology Statement**

As a researcher, I hold the belief that a human being is born into bias. An individual is born to individuals who are committed to engraining their truths and philosophies into their "mini-me." Our experiences are founded as a result of parenting styles, religious preferences, birth order, and socio-economic status. An underlying set of genes and personality traits are a part of our birth imprint. Traits such as perseverance and grit are determined not only in an individual's genetic imprint, but in the traditions and discipline that are a part of his or her familial upbringing. Individual truths garnered in the field of education are derived from a lifetime of growing and learning from various individuals. This becomes relevant to the researcher as the knowledge and experience of the researcher's field of study contains a background in prior life experiences and educational practice. The relationship between the researcher, setting and participants, and the research process should be grounded in theory and the protocol of the theory. We use theory to pursue research and develop findings. This in turn creates a credible study with underlying fidelity to the data collection process and reporting the outcomes. As with all pursuits, we must understand how prior experiences may be used to benefit the researcher and to conduct robust research.

### **Summary**

Chapter Three presented the methods used in this case study. This includes the rationale for site selection, participant selection and description, data collection strategies, data sources

and procedures, interviews, additional sources of information and procedures for collection, data analysis, validation, and the protection of human subjects. The methods provided the tools for ascertaining how a superintendent provides district-wide professional development to support student learning in the school district. Chapter Four will present the findings of the data.

## Chapter 4 - Data Analysis

### Introduction

This chapter shares the analysis of the data collected relating to the following research question: From the perspective of the participants (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) how does a superintendent implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district?

To answer the research question, the following sub questions (driven by the TASC) guided the investigation:

- 1) How does the superintendent manifest the overall vision and direction “from the top” in the provision of districtwide professional development for teacher leaders?
- 2) How does the superintendent develop district-wide capacity in the areas of new knowledge, resources, and motivation with a focus on results?
- 3) How does the superintendent provide a supportive infrastructure, capacity and coordination, and leadership development for central office staff, administrators, and teacher leadership?
- 4) How does the superintendent manage the distractors who divert and sap energy to focus on goals?
- 5) What are effective leadership practices and how can this be replicated and modeled for school and district success?
- 6) How does the superintendent strengthen two-way communication across the school system?

The chapter begins with a description of the process for analyzing the data. Patterns and themes emerged from the analysis of the six TASC components for each of the four sectors 1)

the superintendent, 2) central office administration, 3) principals, and 4) teacher leaders. These patterns and themes are presented in tables and narrative. The results of the patterns from each of the sectors are examined and cross-walked to determine the overarching themes across the sectors that explain the significant and established priorities of the Learning Land Instructional Framework.

To ensure the protection of human subjects, the Institutional Review Board of Kansas State University approved the study. The consent form included specific elements such as the right of participants to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time, confidentiality, risks associated with the study, and benefits to the participants in the study. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, a fictional school district name has been used. A copy of the consent form is included in the appendix.

## **Findings**

The data for this case study was derived almost entirely from interviews. Field notes, district artifacts, and documents were also collected as a part of the case study process. These data were used to proceed in the data analysis stage and to substantiate and present the findings. The details of the data analysis are provided in the following sections.

### **Demographic Data**

A demographic data form was used for each participant interview. In the forms, the researcher identified each participant by anonymous label and recorded information about the interview time of day and location. The form also included the participant's name, current position, and years of experience in the Learning Land School District. The researcher used the form only sporadically in the interview in order to maintain focus on the participant responses.

## **Documents and Artifacts**

The documents and artifacts used in this case study are examined in detail in the following section. The purpose of the content analysis is to describe each document or artifact and identify the TASC constructs as they align to the documents and artifacts. The documents used in this case study include the following: *Navigating Complex Change*, the vision and overview of the *Learning Land Instructional Framework*, the district goals, the *Learning Land School District Instructional Framework*, the *Learning Land School District Multi-Year Action Plan*, the *Learning Land School District Data Dashboard*, and the *Learning Land School District Professional Learning Days*.

*Navigating Complex Change*, the vision and overview of the *Learning Land Instructional Framework*, the district goals, and the *Learning Land School District Instructional Framework* all align with the TASC construct “Direction and Sector Engagement.” These documents outline as well as “state the inspirational vision identifying the clear overall picture of the purpose, nature, and rationale” of the Learning Land School District reform (Fullan, 2009, p. 278). The *Learning Land School District Multi-Year Action Plan*, the *Learning Land School District Data Dashboard*, and the *Learning Land School District Professional Learning Days* align with the TASC construct, Capacity Building with a Focus on Results. As this TASC construct is considered at the heart of Fullan’s (2009) theory, these documents “provide the strategies and actions that mobilize capacity defined as 1) new knowledge, skills and competencies, 2) additional resources (time, ideas, money, expertise), and 3) new motivation on the part of all to put in the effort to get results” (p. 282). These documents serve as the road map to systemic change. As highlighted in Chapter Three in the literature review,

Capacity-building itself is promoted directly from the center of the reform with respect to providing training, curriculum, and resources. The most powerful form is indirect.

Indirect capacity-building means the use of deliberate strategies designed to help peers learn from each other, within schools, across schools, and across the district. The central leaders have a proactive role in funding and coordinating these activities. (Fullan, 2009, p. 283)

### ***Navigating Complex Change***

The superintendent and assistant superintendent created the instructional vision and overview for the Learning Land School District as laid out in the document *Navigating Complex Change*. The instructional overview provided background and understanding of the district proposed goals, processes used to arrive at the goals, and the processes to use the goals to transform learning in the Learning Land School District. *Navigating Complex Change* is the district vision that gives the picture of the purpose, nature and rationale of the reform, or district learning work. This aligns to the TASC component “Direction and Sector Engagement,” which is composed of the following aspects “an inspirational, overall vision, a small number of ambitious goals publicly stated, a guiding coalition, investment of resources, and a sense of flexibility and partnership with the field” (Fullan, 2009, p. 278). In the process and direction of navigating change, the Learning Land School District began by identifying key components of complex change, vision, skills, incentives, resources and an action plan. In the overall vision of the school district and to transform learning, the focus centered on student achievement, educator effectiveness, culture and climate, fiscal responsibility, and communications. The Fullan (2009) theory supports the underlying thinking:

The assumption is that systems will not improve without system leadership of a certain kind, leadership that realizes that top-down reform does not work, nor do decentralized bottom-up strategies. Rather, system leaders strive for a blended model of simultaneous top-down/bottom-up forces: top-down direction and investment coupled with bottom-up capacity-building. System leaders direct but do not try to micromanage the change.

They trust the process and their theory of action embedded across the elements of the TASC theory. (p. 282)

The goal of district leaders and the goal of sector engagement is to foster a “we-we” sense of identity (Fullan, 2009). The key components of change developed for the Learning Land School District serve as a nucleus to empower all members of the organization to benefit student achievement.

### ***District Goals***

District goals are articulated in the following areas for the Learning Land School District: student achievement, fiscal responsibility, educator effectiveness, culture and climate, and communications. The TASC component “Direction and Sector Engagement” emphasizes the importance of having a small number of goals. In working through this component, “it is important to drill down on these goals while not conceiving them narrowly. They can and must be conceived as higher order learning goals, and linked to other parts of the curriculum” (Fullan, 2009, p. 281).

The TASC component “Managing the Distractors” supports the theme of the laser focus on the district goals and action plan. The district goals are explicit in defining the focus of the learning work in the Learning Land School District.



The difference in the TASC framework is the concept of distractors becomes an item for analysis and proactive action. Every hour defined, saved and prioritized for teacher learning, as supported by the superintendent, is an hour gained for improvement work. Since time and energy are of the essence in school improvement, if these resources are harnessed effectively the benefits are substantial. By creating district goals, the superintendent is able to address distractors, preempting some, and dealing with others as they come in a way that does not divert and sap energy. (Fullan, 2009, p. 287)

The district goals document makes public the achievable outcomes for the district.

### ***Learning Land School District Instructional Framework***

The instructional framework is designed to create learning opportunities for students in the following areas: transformation of teaching and learning, high quality instruction, and student engagement. The instructional framework was created to focus on and ensure an aligned system to support instruction and the underlying professional development that accompanies teaching and learning capacity building. As capacity building is the heart of TASC, the *Learning Land School District Instructional Framework* is the heart of the work of the Learning Land School District.

The *Learning Land School District Instructional Framework* is based on key tools and research which include Charlotte Danielson's (2014) model of professional evaluation, the *Learning Land School District Walkthrough Tool*, the work of Timothy Waters and Robert Marzano (2006), *Designing and Teaching Learning Goals and Objectives*, the *Intel Education Designing Effective Projects*, and Willard Daggett's (2004), *Rigor and Relevance Framework*. The *Learning Land Instructional Framework* aligns to the TASC component "Capacity Building" and includes and encompasses knowledge, resources and motivation, instructional and

management of change expertise, assessment for all as well as learning, direct and indirect capacity building, a linkage between capacity and results, and early and continuous intervention in case of need (Fullan, 2009).

The TASC component “Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry” also addresses the *Learning Land School District Instructional Framework*. First, leaders are expected to have to ask questions about improving system and schoolwide practices. The process of reflecting on practices and documenting what is working and what is not working is paramount to the process of change. Second, best practices within the district must be evaluated to determine if they may be strengthened from the expertise within the district or by going outside the district. Third, best practices within the district must be constantly reviewed to determine if they are making a difference and where improvements may be needed. Fourth, to review and evaluate theories of change and how they impact the system, often outside evaluators may be included to provide critical and timely feedback. Fifth, systems need to examine their findings, and share the results with others for critical feedback and review (Fullan, 2009). The overall concept establishes the mindset, “you have to practice what you preach.” In the Learning Land School District, modeling ongoing inquiry gives a powerful message in its own right and provides insight into the essentials of improvement (Fullan, 2009).

### ***Learning Land School District Multi-Year Action Plan***

The *Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan* is a four-year plan created to expand on each district goal and includes the following components directly stated from the plan:

- 1) Student Achievement: Increase student learning through the implementation of Kansas College and Career Ready Standards

- 2) Culture and Climate: Provide a positive and safe environment to optimize student and staff success
- 3) Educator Effectiveness: Ensure high quality instruction in every classroom by fostering professional effectiveness
- 4) Fiscal Responsibility: Demonstrate fiscal responsibility and effectively utilize facilities, and
- 5) Communications: Provide communication that is purposeful and timely. (Learning Land School District, 2014)

The *Multi-Year Action Plan* is driven by the *Action Plan Monthly Timeline*. The timeline delineates the working duties and actions for the action plan components: student achievement, culture and climate, educator effectiveness, fiscal responsibility, and communications. Central office staff are assigned as leaders in each area and are responsible for evaluation of the monthly timeline actions. The action plan is explicit about the timeline, tasks, and ownership of teaching and learning in the Learning Land School District. In addition, the action plan, as aligned to the TASC theory construct “Capacity Building with Focus on Results,” addresses the notion that capacity building increases the ownership of learning. “When people become excellent at something they become experts. They become more critical of ill-conceived external ideas. Other potentially good, but insufficiently developed ideas that might have been started from the center, become tempered by the expertise of skilled practitioners” (Fullan, 2009, pp. 284-285).

### ***Learning Land School District Data Dashboard***

Within the TASC component of capacity building, one of the highest competencies relates to the deep and frequent use of data. This means the daily practice of “assessment for learning” in which curriculum, instruction, and assessment in relation to individual students’

learning is synergized. Instruction and assessment become seamless (Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006). The *Learning Land School District Data Dashboard* consists of data from the following: student achievement, educator effectiveness, and culture and climate. This data for these three areas is collected three times a year, Fall, Winter, and Spring.

### ***Learning Land School District Professional Learning Days***

The number of Learning Land School District professional learning days are ultimately approved by the Board of Education in the adoption of the calendar. The days are strategically planned by the consensus of district administrators. The days are identified as district, building, or district PLC teams, or as elementary, middle, and high school. The days allocated for professional learning tie into the TASC component “Managing the Distractors”. Time to devote to the practice of support for teacher learning is increasingly valuable. With the professional learning days, it is clear that effective schools and effective districts are getting better at addressing distractors and at maintaining focus, and work must be done to spread those habits. Leaders at all levels train themselves to make teaching and learning the core preoccupation and find ways to reduce the debilitating impact of distractors (Fullan, 2009).

### **Interviews**

The interview process was uniform among all participants. As a part of the interview protocol, all interviews were held in an agreed upon setting as established by the participant. “Interviews provide a unique opportunity to uncover rich and complex information from an individual” (Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran, 2001, p. 138). The researcher used a digital voice recorder application as well as a back-up device with the same application. “The interviews can be audiotaped with permission from the participant to ascertain an accurate account of the interview which can be replayed for analytic purposes and anonymity should be assured during

the course of the recording” (Khan, 2014, p. 230). Once the digital recordings were concluded, each recording was downloaded to a flash drive. All interviews were transcribed. “Another important process to the interview is that face-to-face interviews allow the researcher to deeply observe the participant for any non-verbal communication but also allow both the interviewer and the interviewee (participant) to clarify the ambiguities and necessary points” (Khan, 2014, p. 230). The data were analyzed for the six components of the TASC theory and the related sub-questions. All individual participant transcripts were read and then analyzed. This process included single color highlighting of important units of data in the transcripts. The highlighted data was transferred and entered into excel documents prepared for the raw data by each participant group. The process of breaking down the units of data by phrase, sentences, or key words was employed. The process of coding is explained in greater detail in the next section.

### **Data Presentation**

Each TASC construct was presented in a table with narrative text. Each table contained the definition of the TASC construct and an example from the participant interviewer of each group (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders). The data contained exact quotes from the participant interviews. The quotes allowed for representation of definitions and clarity as patterns were established and presented. The patterns appeared as a result of the consistent and frequent mention of key concepts in the data.

As defined in Chapter Three, the process of coding was used to determine the patterns and themes from the data. “Focused Coding enables you to compare newly constructed codes during this cycle across other participants’ data to assess comparability and transferability” (Saldana, 2009, p. 158). During this process it is crucial to remain open to the review of the data

and the potential findings. “Data should not be forced or selected to fit pre-conceived or pre-existent categories or discarded in favor of keeping an extant theory intact” (Glaser, 1978, p.4).

Tables One through Seven are not intended to be analytical, but only to provide a description and definition of the construct and an accompanying data example. The researcher chose each data example response based on the concise nature of the participant response that aligned strongly to the definition. These examples bore a tight fit with the definition and provided an explanation that aligned with the TASC construct.

**Table 4-1 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (DSE)**

<b>Code</b>	<b>TASC construct</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data Example from Transcript</b>
DSE	Direction and Sector Engagement	Direction from the “top” inspirational overall vision, small number of ambitious goals publicly stated, a guiding coalition, investment of resources, a sense of flexibility and partnership with the field	<p>“The superintendent's role is much more about setting the course of where and clarifying the expectations, but then also to help align the system so that we're all focusing on the same types of things.” (S)</p> <p>“I think our district has adopted the idea that our teachers are the path to student success. We know that without growing our teachers and providing them with professional learning, our student achievement isn't going to increase.” (CO2)</p> <p>“I think a principal's role in developing teachers is more about being able to provide opportunities to do that.” (P3)</p> <p>“I think it's to be attuned to new developments in educational trends, but also balancing that with the specific needs of one's community, and the resources available for buildings, as well as community wants, what they envision and of course at the end of the day, the financial capabilities of implementing that vision.” (T3)</p>

**Table 4-2 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (CB)**

Code	TASC construct	Definition	Data Example from Transcript
CB	Capacity Building	New knowledge, additional resources (time, ideas, money, expertise), and new motivation on the part of all to put in the effort to get results	<p>“Help them to build a system that's going to support professional learning so it's not just a shotgun approach to the ‘flavor of the day’ kind of thing.” (S)</p> <p>“The Superintendent and the Superintendent Administrative team, who are the planners and work collaboratively with the principals and teachers to build where our future is, setting the vision and the goals for the school district.” (CO1)</p> <p>“Our superintendent has been very involved in helping design a vision for our district when it comes to professional learning and the other goals as well, but primarily with professional learning.” (P1)</p> <p>“Basically we've had a program put before us over the course, gradually over the course of the past three years about skills and strategies they want to implement from the K-12 level.” (T3)</p>



**Table 4-3 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (SIL)**

Code	TASC construct	Definition	Data Example from Transcript
SIL	Supportive infrastructure and leadership	Capacity development, a. degree of coordination and rapport, b. leadership development for the change agents working in the infrastructure	<p data-bbox="1044 312 1414 533">“I think it's working with the board as much as anything. They understand our instructional priorities. They understand how important professional learning is.” (S)</p> <p data-bbox="1044 569 1451 789">“Time for professional learning. He is very supportive to the board about continuing with ten professional learning days, so there's a commitment to time.” (CO1)</p> <p data-bbox="1044 825 1442 1192">“The superintendent is always very supportive of the curriculum resources and professional development that are being provided to the district and we do have a cycle set up, as it pertains to what new resources do we need to strengthen how we're teaching that particular content.” (P1)</p> <p data-bbox="1044 1192 1430 1556">“I guess there is a sense of flexibility in terms of, since our instructional framework can be so varied for what it's trying to accomplish, that it gives teachers a choice, in terms of what they want to work on as professional and a lot of it is owned by the faculty.” (T3)</p>

**Table 4-4 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (MD)**

<b>Code</b>	<b>TASC construct</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data Example from Transcript</b>
MD	Managing the distractors	Relentless focus on capacity building, address distractors to avoid diverting and sapping energy, preempting some, and dealing with others	<p>“So, I think it's just the consistency in talking about the same things, keeping as focused on the same things, making sure that the focus is not only private but public, so that everybody knows we're focusing on those things and that we're very clear that the board sees that, the community sees that, the teachers see that.” (S)</p> <p>“One would be our walk-through tool that is part of the process of developing our district goals and how we are going to measure.” (CO1)</p> <p>“Our meetings with our superintendent have been very focused on professional development and our goal areas.” (P2)</p> <p>“We aren't being undervalued. He really takes in a lot of information and he only gives us what we need versus giving us all the things. He really focuses on what we need to know and I appreciate that and I think it helps.” (T1)</p>

**Table 4-5 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (CEI)**

<b>Code</b>	<b>TASC construct</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Data Example from Transcript</b>
CEI	Continuous evaluation and inquiry	Defines and models effective practices, b. practices replicated and modeled, c. assessment of implementation, d. third party evaluators	<p>“I think our district goals and the things we're monitoring on our district dashboard are the same things that are on the building goals among building dashboards.” (S)</p> <p>“Everything is aligned. Our district goals align to our action plan, align to our evaluation, align to our monthly conversations that we have with him.” (C1)</p> <p>“I think that when the superintendent sets the plan and the vision for the district, then he has to rely on the building leaders to align our professional development to that vision and give us the autonomy to focus on what our teachers need to strengthen their weaknesses in that vision.” (P3)</p> <p>“I think it's excellent so far. Our district's plan is to increase the awareness in the application of our new framework and so really the only way to do that is to give us time, and we are getting that.” (T2)</p>

**Table 4-6 TASC Construct with Definitions and Examples from Text (TC)**

Code	TASC construct	Definition	Data Example from Transcript
TC	Two-way communication	Strengthened by careful planning, resolve, application of transparency and district, communications, being open about problems, opportunity to disseminate and receive feedback (especially when about vision and strategy).	<p data-bbox="1062 317 1451 604">“The professional learning feedback that we get, I look at that with the principals every month. We talk about what teachers need. I think the communication with district administrators and building principals.” (S)</p> <p data-bbox="1062 646 1471 1003">“He communicates out expectations and definitely gets input through all of us on what the professional learning is going to be, and then based on our feedback that we get from those professional learning surveys, that then helps drive our future professional development.” (CO2)</p> <p data-bbox="1062 1010 1451 1188">“He sends out emails a lot to the staff that not only in newsletter form, highlighting successes that we're having in the district.” (P3)</p> <p data-bbox="1062 1230 1471 1556">“We get email once a month directly from him. He usually even gives a little "shout-out" to events that have occurred and, you know, performances our students have given and not only says ‘Great job kids,’ but he's like, ‘hey, good job teachers!’” (T1)</p>

### **Patterns and Themes from the Data**

The purpose of coding data is to discover patterns and themes. “A theme is an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent (patterned) experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole” (DeSantis & Ugarriza 2000, p. 362).

These themes are discerned during data collection and initial analysis, and then examined further as interviews continue. The analytic goals are to winnow down the number of themes to explore in a report, and to develop an “overarching theme” from the data corpus, or an “integrative theme” that weaves various themes together into a coherent narrative. (Saldana, 2009, pp. 139-40)

Themes become the ultimate analysis. “Themes should be stated as simply as possible during the first cycle of analysis for ‘meaning condensation,’ then woven together for ‘meaning interpretation’ to ‘explain why something happened or what something means’” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 57). In an effort to discover themes, patterns must first be identified. The first cycle of coding included structural coding which identifies patterns. In second cycle coding, the analytical process unfolds to examine the patterns and identify and extract themes. The following patterns emerged under the six TASC components.

#### **Patterns Related to Direction and Sector Engagement**

The researcher determined that four patterns emerged from the data under Direction and Sector Engagement across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with board expectations.

**Table 4-7 Patterns Related to Board Expectations and District Goals**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The district office sets goals and expectations	“The district office sets the goals and expectations for how we’ll evidence whether we’ve reached goals.” (CO1)
2. There is a direct line between goals and professional learning	“There is a real direct line between what the district goals are and what is happening every day in professional learning.” (S)
3. There are expectations for learning in the district	“Principals must maintain expectations for learning.” (P3)
4. District office provides vision and leadership	“District office provides the vision and leadership.” (CO1)

The researcher determined that eight patterns emerged from the data under Direction and Sector Engagement across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with educator effectiveness.

**Table 4-8 Patterns Dealing with Educator Effectiveness**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. Veteran principals and teacher lead the Learning Land Instructional Framework	“I am a twenty-one-year principal in the district.” (P1) “I am a ten-year teacher in the district.” (T1)
2. There is support for professional learning for teachers to support student learning	“Without providing our teachers with professional learning, our student achievement isn’t going to increase.” (CO2)
3. There are expectations for learning	“Principals must maintain expectations for learning.” (P3)
4. Build the capacity of all educators	“Everything we do we work towards building the capacity within our teachers.” (CO2)
5. There is ownership at the building level for learning	“The superintendent’s role is aligning things in a way that there is still ownership at the building level.” (S)
6. Without growing teachers and providing professional learning, student achievement will not increase	“We know that without growing our teachers and providing them with professional learning, our student achievement isn’t going to increase.” (CO2)
7. There is collaboration with other teachers	“We collaborate a lot with other teachers.” (T2)
8. The teacher goals are to implement the instructional framework	“The goal has really been to come up with implementing our plan, our instructional framework.” (T2)

The researcher determined that three patterns emerged from the data under Direction and Sector Engagement across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with district provided resources.

**Table 4-9 Patterns Related to District Provided Resources**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. Principals provide resources	“I guess as a principal, it’s my job to provide the resources.” (P2)
2. Principals provide time	“The principal provides opportunities such as direct instruction, resources, time, to do the learning.” (P3)
3. There is opportunity for teacher leaders for training, reflecting and coaching	“The principal provides ample opportunities for teacher leaders for training, reflection and coaching.” (P1)

The researcher determined that three patterns emerged from the data under Direction and Sector Engagement across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with vision and leadership.

**Table 4-10 Patterns Related to Vision and Leadership**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. Principal’s priority to support professional learning	“It is the principal’s role to support professional learning.” (P2)
2. The principal is the instructional leader	“The principal is the instructional leader of the school.” (P2)
3. The role of the district is to grow leaders	“The principal’s role is growing leaders within the school setting.” (P1)



### **Patterns Related to Capacity-Building with Focus on Results**

The researcher determined that three patterns emerged from the data under Capacity-Building with Focus on Results across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with administrator meetings.

**Table 4-11 Patterns Related to Administrator Meetings**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. There are regularly scheduled district leadership meetings	“We have monthly district administrator meeting focused on district goals.” (P2)
2. There are regularly scheduled administrator meetings with the superintendent	“Principals have monthly meetings with the superintendent.” (P2)
3. Building administrators give input and feedback	“The superintendent does a great job of getting our input and feedback.” (P3)

The researcher determined that three patterns emerged from the data under Capacity-Building with Focus on Results across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with central office collaboration.

**Table 4-12 Patterns Related to Central Office Collaboration**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. Central Office works collaboratively with principals and teachers	“The Superintendent’s Advisory Team work collaboratively with the principals and teachers to build where our future is.” (CO1)
2. Principals get teacher leaders involved	“The superintendent is very good about allowing the principals and teacher leaders to develop the system.” (P3)
3. Teacher leaders give input	“The superintendent is walking around, asking the teachers what needs to change, or what do you feel like you need.” (T1)

The researcher determined that four patterns emerged from the data under Capacity-Building with Focus on Results across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with the district’s data dashboard.

**Table 4-13 Patterns Related to the Data Dashboard**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The data dashboard collects walk through data	“We have a walkthrough tool for administrators.” (P1)
2. The data dashboard collects professional learning data	“We collect professional learning data and feedback.” (P1)  “We have goals for our professional learning that we’re monitoring in our district’s data dashboard.” (CO2)
3. The data dashboard collects student assessment data	“We look at what kind of impact student achievement data is having.” (P2)
4. The data dashboard collects student engagement data	“We collect data on what students do.” (P1)

The researcher determined that three patterns emerged from the data under Capacity-Building with Focus on Results across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with differentiated professional learning.

**Table 4-14 Patterns Related to Differentiated Professional Learning**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. There are skills and strategies developed Kindergarten through 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	“We’ve had a program put before us over the course of the past three years about skills and strategies they want to implement from the K-12 level.” (T3)
2. There is a model for differentiated professional learning	<p>“Differentiating our professional learning based on what the teams need, it’s not ‘one size fits all.’” (CO1)</p> <p>“We have a differentiated professional learning approach because we don’t do ‘one size fits all.’” (P2)</p>
3. The superintendent talks about professional learning experiences, what’s going well and what is not	“We talk about professional learning experiences, what’s going well and what’s not going well.” (S)

The researcher determined that four patterns emerged from the data under Capacity-Building with Focus on Results across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with district provided resources.

**Table 4-15 Patterns Related to District Provided Resources**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The superintendent provides time for professional development	“Time has really helped us align what we need for resources.” (T2)
2. The superintendent provides resources	“The superintendent provides time, opportunities and resources.” (P2)
3. The superintendent provides opportunities to learn	“The superintendent has done a good job of finding people who are willing to share things and not just keep it to themselves.” (T1)
4. The superintendent provides a district professional learning coordinator	“We have one-on-one meetings with the professional learning coordinator.” (T1)

The researcher determined that six patterns emerged from the data under Capacity-Building with Focus on Results across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with the focus on teacher learning.

**Table 4-16 Patterns Related to Focus on Teacher Learning**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The superintendent sets expectations for adult learning	“It’s about setting expectation that your learning is just as important as the kid’s learning.” (S)
2. Teacher leaders work with the assistant superintendent	“The assistant superintendent gives us guidelines and surveys so know exactly how to target our professional learning.” (T1)
3. Teacher leaders receive training	“There will be in-services in which building administration will facilitate and lead meeting for the district strategy.” (T3)
4. The superintendent empowers teachers	“So empowering teachers, making sure they understand what it is we want them to do.” (S)
5. The superintendent values teacher learning	“I think you first have to set an example that you value collaboration, that you value teacher learning.” (S)
6. Teacher effectiveness is a building goal	“Our teacher effectiveness data which is monitored through our walk-through.” (P2)

The researcher determined that twelve patterns emerged from the data under Capacity-Building with Focus on Results across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with the district’s instructional framework.

**Table 4-17 Patterns Related to the Learning Land Instructional Framework**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. Focus our work, to move a system, focus on a few things	“Instead of looking at fifty things, look at two.” (S)
2. The district is driven by goals	“At district office, it’s more about goal-setting and narrowing it down to priorities.” (S)
3. The Superintendent’s Advisory Team is responsible for setting goals and vision	“The Superintendent Advisory Team, who are the plan and work collaboratively with the principals and teacher to build where our future is.” (CO1)
4. Build a system to support professional learning	“Trying to help them build a system that’s going to support professional learning.” (S)
5. District aligns with the building	“Make sure that what you’re doing in the district aligns with the building.” (S)
6. Principals and teacher leaders develop the learning system and structure	“The superintendent allows us to develop the structure, or the framework.” (P)
7. Teachers are trained in the instructional framework to facilitate professional learning	“The teachers are trained in the instructional framework so that they could then facilitate the learning days for district collaboration or professional learning communities.” (CO1)
8. Develop and use a consistent instructional approach	“Knowing that we need some kind of a consistent instructional approach across our system.” (S)
9. Collaboratively develop goals	“Our administration, building administrators, collaborate with each other, with district office administrators and with the board to develop these goals, so they’re very collaboratively developed.” (P2)
10. Group collaboration is a part of the instructional framework	“We have created a professional learning plan centered around the instructional framework.” (CO1)

11. There is a common language on instruction	“We dictated a lot of professional learning because we wanted to create a common language about instruction.” (S)
12. Evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional framework	“We’re actually looking at data in regards to student achievement and educator effectiveness, and climate and culture.” (CO1)

The researcher determined that two patterns emerged from the data under Capacity-Building with Focus on Results across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with the district’s multi-year action plan.

**Table 4-18 Patterns Related to the Learning Land’s Multi-Year Action Plan**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The multi-year action plan provides the long term picture	“The multi-year action plan gives us a long term picture of where we want to be.” (CO1)
2. The multi-year action plan provides a strategic plan	“The superintendent has brought that framework of that lens of strategic planning and vision to our district.” (CO1)

The researcher determined that four patterns emerged from the data under Capacity-Building with Focus on Results across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with research.

**Table 4-19 Patterns Related to Research**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The superintendent uses the research of Robert Marzano for guidance	“It’s all been informed, this whole notion, this framework, primarily by Marzano’s work.” (P1)
2. The superintendent uses the research of the Learning Forward Professional Learning Standards	“We have national standards on what good adult learning should look like.” (P1)
3. The superintendent used the research of Charlotte Danielson’s evaluation framework	“We have evolved and added in layers of Charlotte Danielson’s work.” (P1)
4. The superintendent supports the use of Kagan cooperative learning to enhance student engagement	“We are implementing Kagan Cooperative Learning as another initiative to enhance our student engagement.” (P1)

### **Patterns Related to Supportive Infrastructure**

The researcher determined that four patterns emerged from the data under Supportive Infrastructure across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with the board support for professional learning days.

**Table 4-20 Patterns Related to Board Support for Professional Learning Days**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The board understands what our goals are	“The board of education understands what our goals are.” (S)
2. The board understands the instructional priorities	“The board of education understands our instructional priorities.” (S)
3. The board understands the important of professional learning time	“The board understands how important professional learning is.” (S)
4. The board approves the calendar to support professional learning	“The board of education support professional learning days.” (CO1)  “There is a calendar for professional learning.” (T1)

The researcher determined that four patterns emerged from the data under Supportive Infrastructure across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with fiscal responsibility.

**Table 4-21 Patterns Related to Fiscal Responsibility**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. Resources are provided around goals	“There’s a commitment to resources. One of the goals is fiscal responsibility and we know that by having more efficient things, that allows more money for other things that we may need.” (CO1)
2. Principals authorize dollars for resources	“We have a cycle set up as it pertains to what new resources do we need to be look at to be able to strengthen how we’re teaching that particular content.” (P1)
3. Resources are provided from the guidance of the instructional framework	“The superintendent is very supportive of the curriculum and professional development that are being provided to the district.” (P1)
4. Money is set aside for people to go to conferences	“Money is set aside.” (T2)



The researcher determined that four patterns emerged from the data under Supportive Infrastructure across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with the district’s multi-year action plan.

**Table 4-22 Patterns Related to Learning Land’s Multi-Year Action Plan**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The action plan focuses on teacher effectiveness	“A lot of it is owned by the faculty and they will be the ones who are hosting these sessions.” (T3)
2. It is a teacher choice what to work on as a professional	“It gives teachers a choice in terms of what they want to work on as a professional.” (T3)
3. Time is provided to scope out the new standards	“We scoped out our new standards, our new common core standards and kind of how that will look in our grade levels.” (T2)
4. Resources are provided from the guidance of the instructional framework	“The superintendent is supportive of the curriculum resources and professional development.” (P1)

**Patterns Related to Managing the Distractors**

The researcher determined that five patterns emerged from the data under Managing the Distractors across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with feeling valued.

**Table 4-23 Patterns Related to Feeling Valued**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. Principals feel valued	“We feel valued in what we are able to add to the conversation and change for teachers, that’s good.” (P3)
2. The superintendent cares about what I do in the classroom	“I feel like my district actually cares about what I do in my classroom.” (T1)
3. The superintendent values our opinions	“They value what we do and they value our opinions.” (T1)
4. Teachers feel valued	“I feel valued.” (T1)
5. The superintendent listens to principals	“One of the things our principal is really good at in his monthly meetings...so I think by listening to the principals.” (P3)

The researcher determined that 12 patterns emerged from the data under Managing the Distractors across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with laser focus on the district goals and action plan.

**Table 4-24 Patterns Related to Laser Focus on the District Goals and Action Plan**

Patterns	Data
1. The superintendent is very focused on the district goals and action plan	<p>“It’s being selective and everything is focused on the district goals and what we are trying to achieve through the action plan.” (CO1)</p> <p>“He doesn’t ‘chase the tail’ for new initiatives.” (P1)</p>
2. We focus on professional development and goals	<p>“Our meetings with our superintendent have been very focused on professional development and our goal areas.” (P1)</p>
3. We focus on the action plan	<p>“There is a focus of importance and there’s very high expectations communicated to everyone.” (CO1)</p>
4. We have an aligned system	<p>“We have an aligned system and make decisions together as a team.” (CO1)</p>
5. The instructional framework is flexible	<p>“I have a terrific amount of freedom to dictate that under the umbrella they’ve kind of give, so I think that’s been very effective.” (T3)</p>
6. The multi-year action plan serves as the roadmap	<p>“The multi-year action plan is shared with other people so everyone knows it’s the roadmap.” (CO1)</p>
7. The superintendent takes away the distractors so we can focus	<p>“The superintendent has a NO TECHNOLOGY policy in place in our administrator meetings.” (CO2)</p>
8. The superintendent communicates the important things	<p>“The superintendent lessens the distractors by communicating really those things that are rising to the top.” (CO1)</p>
9. The superintendent keeps away the distracting things	<p>“We don’t need to know all the distracting things.” (T1)</p>
10. There are expectations for what we’re trying to accomplish	<p>“Teachers know the language and every one of them across the system know what that means so it’s easy to show best practices between schools.” (S)</p>

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 11. There is consistency in talking about the same things | “There is consistency is talking about the same things, keep as focused on the same things.” (S) |
| 12. The agendas drive our meetings                        | “There is a structured agenda published in advance.” (P3)  |
- 

It is important to note in these patterns that “focus on the action plan” was coded 11 times across the participants. “Aligned system” was coded three times across the participants, and “agendas” were coded five times

The researcher determined that 11 patterns emerged from the data under Managing the Distractors across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with professional learning.

**Table 4-25 Patterns Related to Professional Learning**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The district office and building administrators are the ones that are driving what’s happening in professional learning	“The district office and district administrators and building administrators are the ones that are driving what’s happening in professional learning.” (CO2)
2. Professional learning is differentiated	“District professional learning is differentiated into content areas.” (P2)
3. There is flexibility for professional learning	“There is a loose-tight structure and flexibility.” (P2)
4. There is collaborative planning for agendas	“We have collective and collaborative planning of the agendas.” (CO1)  “Teacher leaders meet with the director of professional development to create agendas.” (P3)
5. Central Office has control over what is done during professional learning time	“There is feedback from our teacher collaboration teams on time needed and teacher input on professional learning days and times.” (CO1)

6. There is teacher input on professional learning days	“It’s a collaborative process that administrators are the ones who decide the balance of how to split the days but there’s teacher input into that as well, so there’s ownership.” (CO1)
7. There is a professional learning map for the year	“We have a professional learning map for the year.” (CO2)
8. We align professional learning to the instructional framework	“We have an aligned system and make decisions together as a team.” (CO1)
9. Teachers lead professional learning	<p>“Teacher leaders meet with the instructional support person once a month.” (P1)</p> <p>“The instructional framework gives teachers a choice of what they want to work on as professionals and a lot of it is owned by the faculty and that they will be the ones who are hosting these sessions.” (T3)</p>
10. In our meetings we model structured learning conversations	“Once a month principals meet for half a day; we model structured learning conversations.” (P1)
11. We carry out structures with our team	<p>“We carry out very similar structures with our actual team.” (T2)</p> <p>“I would model some of these things or I would ask them to share.” (T3)</p>

It is important to note in these patterns that “professional learning is differentiated” was coded four times across the participants, “flexibility for professional learning” was coded five times, “central office has control over what is done during professional learning time” was coded two times, “align professional learning to the instructional framework” was coded two times, and “carry out structures with our team” was coded four times.

The researcher determined that five patterns emerged from the data under Managing the Distractors across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with time.

**Table 4-26 Patterns Related to Time**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The district provides models for what we can and can't do during the professional learning time	"We have this month we have the Learning Land Instructional Framework Conference, teachers from all over the district apply to present." (CO2)
2. There is feedback collected from teacher collaboration teams on the time needed	"The next main focus, it became re-do the grade card and the research what would be the best for that." (T2)
3. We have time to plan together	"It gives me a chance to meet with my ten or so people and see what our needs are." (T3)
4. We plan how professional learning days will be shared, the building versus district time	"There are ten professional learning days and principals help determined the balance between district time and building time." (CO1)
5. The superintendent gives us support to plan	"The teacher leaders would meet with our assistant superintendent and we would plan together." (T2)

## Patterns Related to Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry

The researcher determined that six patterns emerged from the data under Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with accountability.

**Table 4-27 Patterns Related to Accountability**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. Monitoring is done with the use of the district data dashboard	“We’re looking at the data we’re collecting on the data dashboard.” (CO1)
2. The building principal aligns the professional development	“The superintendent relies on the building principal to align our professional development to that vision.” (P3)
3. We monitor our progress towards district goals	“We’re monitoring our progress towards achieving those district goals.” (CO1)
4. There is a system in place to help everyone be accountable to what is laid out in the instructional framework	“Clearly a ten, because of the system that is in place to help everyone be accountable to what is laid out in our instructional framework.” (P1)
5. Teacher leaders do walkthroughs	“Building team leaders do walkthroughs here in the district.” (CO2)
6. It is the principal’s role to align professional development with teacher goals	“The superintendent gives us the autonomy to focus on what our teachers need to strengthen their weaknesses.” (P3)



The researcher determined that seven patterns emerged from the data under Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with an aligned system.

**Table 4-28 Patterns Related to an Aligned System**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. District goals align to the action plan	“Everything is aligned. Our district goals align to our action plan, align to our evaluation, align to our monthly conversations that we have with him.” (CO1)
2. The superintendent sets the plan and the vision	“I think the superintendent sets the pans and the vision for the district.” (P3)
3. Everything is aligned around the action plan and instructional framework	“Everything is aligned because what we’re doing centers around the action plan, all center around the instructional framework, nice alignment between everything in our district.” (CO1)
4. The administrator meetings are aligned to our work	“Same thing in our administrator meetings, it’s all aligned to our work, and if it isn’t, it’s just not a priority.” (CO1)
5. There is an intentional process to our work	“There is an intentional process to focus on rigor and data.” (P2)
6. There is a board planning calendar	“I think we’ve aligned the system very well. I think our board planning calendar is aligned to that.” (S)
7. The teacher professional development goals are a lot like the district professional development goals	“The teacher professional learning goals should be a lot like what our district professional learning goals are, but they should be unique to the teacher.” (S)

The researcher determined that seven patterns emerged from the data under Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with the Learning Land Instructional Framework.

**Table 4-29 Patterns Related to Learning Land’s Instructional Framework**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. We model what we expect our teachers to be delivering in the classroom	“There is an expectation for how learning is delivered and it is to model what we expect our teachers to be delivering in the classroom.” (CO2)
2. The superintendent provides time and practice for professional development	“I think we give a lot of time, we really try to provide time, provide the direction and support, and resources.” (S)
3. The support is there for us through implementation of the instructional framework	“He really makes sure that the support is there from the time we start talking about it through implementation and beyond.” (CO2)
4. Teachers have ownership to implement new protocols and practices in the classroom	“They kind of give us the overall umbrella, the visions and expectations, but then giving us the time to implement and practice and apply that practice.” (P3)
5. Teacher professional learning goals are to implement high quality instruction	“Teacher professional learning goals are to implement high quality instruction through the instructional framework.” (CO1)
6. We use teachers within the district, we recognize the district wealth of knowledge	“As far as training goes, we use teachers from within the district, there’s a wealth of knowledge.” (T2)
7. Teachers get to decide on practices, as long as it fits into our instructional framework	“I think that’s why there hasn’t been too much pushback, because you want to feel like you have a say so or that you have a voice, and I think that’s evolved in that direction.” (T3)

## Patterns Related to Two-Way Communication

The researcher determined that three patterns emerged from the data under Two-Way Communication across the participants (superintendent, central office, principals and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with the professional learning survey.

**Table 4-30 Patterns Related to the Professional Learning Survey**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. Use professional learning survey to reflect on professional learning days	“We have evaluations that ask those specific questions, targeted specific feedback to teacher are giving their feedback.” (CO1)
2. The superintendent looks at the professional learning feedback with principals	“The professional learning feedback that we get, I look at that with the principals every month.” (S)
3. The superintendent gets input on professional learning from the professional learning survey	“We do a lot of surveys after professional learning.” (T2)  “The surveys are analyzed by the teacher leaders, the superintendent and the assistant superintendent.” (T2)

It is important to note in these patterns that “professional learning survey” was coded six times across the participants.

The researcher determined that six patterns emerged from the data under Two-Way Communication across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with the superintendent caring.

**Table 4-31 Patterns Related to the Superintendent Caring**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The superintendent cares what we think	“He actually cares what we think.” (P3)
2. The superintendent helps new teachers	“How we can help new teachers learn about our processes and things” (P3)
3. The superintendent encourages us	“What we need to do to be great and constantly encouraging and keep that bar high to expect us to rise up.” (P3)
4. The superintendent helps create that kind of “family feeling”	“He helps kind of create that family feeling.” (T1)
5. The superintendent listens to different groups	“He listens to a lot of groups, not just principals, but talking to new teachers, maintenance and transportation.” (P3)
6. The superintendent allows for input	“He’s always ready to listen, allowing for input.” (P3)

The researcher determined that ten patterns emerged from the data under Two-Way Communication across the participant groups (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) that dealt specifically with how the superintendent communicates.

**Table 4-32 Patterns Related to how the Superintendent Communicates**

<b>Patterns</b>	<b>Data</b>
1. The superintendent communicates through email	“The superintendent communicates through email two times a month.” (T1)
2. The superintendent communicates through district notes	“Every couple of weeks I’ll send out a note to the entire district so to say what’s going on, keep them in the loop.” (S)
3. The superintendent communicates through the district newsletter	“So, just kind of a newsletter kind of deal that comes out, just nice to have communication going across the board.” (T1)
4. The superintendent communicates expectations and to be continuous learners	“It’s very clear, never a question about the expectations and the direction because it’s written in black, white and blue on the wall everywhere.” (P3)
5. The superintendent is in buildings	“The superintendent is in the buildings on professional learning days.” (P2)
6. The superintendent has an “open door” policy	“He has an open door policy” (CO2)
7. The superintendent speaks to professional learning in his communications	“The superintendent speaks to professional learning in his communication.” (P1)
8. The superintendent sets the tone for importance of professional learning	“He and I put together a video with teachers of the instructional framework.” (CO1)  “He sets the tone for how important professional learning is.” (CO1)
9. The superintendent provides the rationale for “why” we’re doing this	“Everything he send out is always tied to the rationale of why we’re doing this and it goes back to district goals and action plan, so there’s this connectedness.” (CO1)
10. The superintendent communicates how the initiative plays a part in the goals	“It’s very clear where every goal is and what we’re doing and when we’re reporting to the board and we’re expected to show progress.” (P3)

The researcher found that principals mentioned four times that communicating goals are a part of the two-way communication process. It is important to note in these patterns that the “open door policy” was coded two times across two participant groups, central office staff and principals.

After an extensive review of the transcripts, the researcher determined that the patterns that emerged were indicative of initial themes. After carefully reviewing the participant data, the researcher noted that certain patterns were mentioned many more times than others. There were significantly more patterns that emerged under the TASC constructs “Capacity Building with Focus on Results” and “Managing the Distractors.” The data supporting this finding will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

### **Themes Related to Direction and Sector Engagement**

A total of 17 themes emerged in the research collected and conducted in this case study. An analysis of the themes that have emerged from the participant interviews will be examined. In *Writing Up Qualitative Research*, Wolcott (2001) summarized the study’s description as [the] “most important contribution made” (p. 31). The following sections align the emergent themes by TASC construct categories. Each TASC construct will be examined in full through the supporting data of the case study participants.

**Table 4-33 Themes Emerging from the Data**

---

<b>TASC Components</b>
<b>Themes Related to Direction and Sector Engagement</b>
Educator Effectiveness
Board Expectations and District goals
Resources
Vision and Leadership
<b>Themes Related to Capacity-Building with a Focus on Results</b>
Administrator Meetings
Central Office Collaboration
Data Dashboard
Differentiated Professional Learning
District Provided Resources
Focus on Teacher Learning
Instructional Framework
Multi-Year Action Plan
Research Based
<b>Themes Related to Supportive Infrastructure and Leadership</b>
Board of Education Support
Fiscal Responsibility
Multi-Year Action Plan
<b>Themes Related to Managing the Distractors</b>
Agendas
Feel Valued
Laser Focus on District Goals and Action Plan
Professional Learning
Time
<b>Themes Related to Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry</b>
Accountability
Aligned system
Instructional Framework

---



---

## **Themes Related to Two-Way Communication**

---

Professional Learning Survey  
Superintendent Communication  
Superintendent Cares

### **Themes Related to Direction and Sector Engagement**

The school district's Board of Education has prioritized expectations and district goals for the Learning Land School District. Throughout the themes under this TASC construct, supporting time for professional learning is highly prioritized. The board also ensures the superintendent has their support to provide additional resources for the school district. The following themes emerged under the TASC construct of Direction and Sector Engagement.

#### **Board Expectations and District Goals**

The goal of the district office is to provide vision and leadership to support the direct line between district goals and professional learning. The participants shared how they perceived the board expectations and district goals. The superintendent summarized,

In my role here, I see it more as making sure that the resources are in place, that the systems are aligned, that we have our priorities in the way we need to be, that we have good congruence between what the board is expecting and what we're trying to accomplish at the district level, what the principals understand and what the teachers understand.

The district office sets goals and expectations for learning. As one central office administrator stated in the interview, "I think our district has adopted the idea that our teachers are the path to student success. We know that without growing our teachers and providing them with professional learning, our student achievement isn't going to increase." Another central office administrator further supports the expectations by stating, "It's great, but it's very different

than any other district that I've been in, in that there are very, very high expectations from everyone, including the students and parents and the community.”

In support of the board expectations and district goals, a principal shared, I think that it's easy to throw in the professional learning and walk away, that if we don't hold the teachers to the expectation of what the learning is and how it needs to be applied to students, then we're not doing the learning any justice by just dismissing it and moving on, and keeping to the “same old, same old,” that we have to expect the change and we have to be able to see it and we have to expect that from the teachers.

A teacher simply shares, “the one thing that is nice about our district, they have led us to kind of ‘open our horizons’”. All four participants clearly understand that expectations are set forth from the board, goals have been established, and they are supported in their work.

### **Educator Effectiveness**

A key concept of Direction and Sector Engagement is the established presence of veteran principals and teachers. The superintendent has supported the hiring of experienced administrators and teacher leaders who have expectations for learning and believe in the process of building the capacity of all educators. In order for the superintendent to implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district, the Learning Land School District must be willing to grow teachers and support professional learning to support student learning.

As the superintendent stated in the response to the interview question on Direction and Sector Engagement, “the superintendent's role is much more about setting the course of where and clarifying the expectations, but then also to help align the system so that we're all focusing on the same types of things.” A central office administrator summarized, “It's about achieving

our goals and building capacity of all educators, teachers, principals, and administrators.” A principal participant stated, “The principal facilitates and provides the right kinds of learning experiences for teachers.”

A common thread in the theme of Educator Effectiveness was the experience of the participants. The principal participants had all been in the district over six years. Prior experience of one principal was serving as an instructional coach.

As a part of Educator Effectiveness, one teacher shared, “The goal has really been to come up with implementing our plan, our instructional framework and carrying that out with our teams.” In aligning the system, the role of the teacher then becomes to implement the *Learning Land Instructional Framework*. Clearly the participants understand the relevance of veteran principals and teachers in building the capacity of the instructional framework, ownership of learning, growing teachers, and providing the right type of learning experiences for educators.

### **Resources**

The superintendent succinctly shared, “My role is to make sure resources are in place.” District provided resources might be time, opportunity, personnel or a commitment to funding. A central office administrator added,

The superintendent demonstrates commitment to professional learning through time, resources, funding and then just maybe one of the best ways too is just the commitment of ‘this is important’ and sharing the vision of why we’re doing the things we’re doing and why they matter.

Principals are responsible for providing resources and time. The principal also provides opportunities for teacher leaders for training, reflection and coaching. One principal stated, “Knowing that everything can’t come within the building, what do our colleagues have that they

can collaborate on and just providing them the time and the resources to do the learning, and then also maintaining the expectations that this is what we do here.”

One teacher shared a specific example: “It was a lot of support of, for science, we had a new curriculum, we had new technology. It was really nice to have a lot of support.” And the superintendent concluded, “Back to resources, I think that’s where you can help with that by saying no to certain things, that are wonderful things, but they aren’t really the priorities of the system.” The data supports the work of the district and that certain resources are needed to achieve the expectations of the board of education and what is need to achieve the district goals for learning.

### **Vision and Leadership**

The vision and leadership of the district begins with the superintendent. The superintendent understands and said, “So, I think the superintendent’s role is aligning things in a way that there is still ownership at the building level, but there’s a real direct line between what the district goals are and what is happening every day in professional learning.”

The district office plays an important role in supporting the vision and leadership within the Learning Land School District. A central office administrator reflected,

I think it’s important to build capacity, teacher capacity, not only of all educators, teacher, principals and other administrators. So, really I see the role of the district office as providing vision and leadership, and also something that is important is setting the goals and the expectations for how we’ll evidence, if you will, to know whether we’ve reached that goal.

The principal’s priority is to support professional learning. The principal is seen as the instructional leader and is responsible for growing leaders in the district. As one principal stated,

The principal is the instructional leader of this school, so it is a high priority for the principal to support professional learning. The professional learning is not necessarily all principal driven, but it is important for the principals to facilitate and provide the right kinds of learning experiences for teacher to that they can further their own learning.

Another principal stated,

Our superintendent has been very involved in helping design a vision for our district when it comes to professional learning and other goals as well, but primarily with professional learning, the way that he designed this vision was getting first input from all major stakeholders as to what specifically does it look like when it comes to professional learning. With the support of a very visionary, knowledgeable professional learning assistant superintendent, have together rolled out, with support from directors too within our district, a very impressive, well thought-out model for professional learning. He was integral in getting this going, as he was the “starter”, the visionary for us and having those conversations, and then using the right people and the right resources to define clearly what that should look like.

And as one teacher leader responded,

I think it's to be attuned to new developments in educational trends, but also balancing that with the specific needs of one's community, and the resources available for buildings, as well as community wants, what this envisions and of course at the end of the day, the financial capabilities of implementing the vision.

In conclusion, the themes that emerged under the TASC construct on Direction and Sector Engagement are Board Expectations and District Goals, Educator Effectiveness,

Resources and Vision and Leadership. Data has been shared to support each theme. Further examination and conclusions regarding these themes will be shared in Chapter Five.

### **Themes Related to Capacity Building with Focus on Results**

#### **Administrator Meetings**

The administrator serves as a core of communication and leadership support for the superintendent and central office administrators. The superintendent meets individually with each building principal once a month. In addition, all district administrators meet once a month for a half-day meeting. In these meetings, building administrators give input. The goal of these meetings as the superintendent shared is, “our administrator meetings, so they are very clear about when we talk about student engagement and we’re talking about how do you recognize student engagement, what are you looking for and how do you support it.”

#### ***Modeling Facilitation***

It is important that modeling facilitation techniques and protocols occur to shape learning behaviors. The superintendent added,

We model for them at our administrator meetings. Normally things that we want them to do with their staff, we do something like that at our administrator meetings so they are very clear about when we talk about student engagement and we’re talking about how do you recognize what are you looking for. We do that and model that at the administrator meetings so that they can then go back and many of them take what we do, almost verbatim, and take it back to their schools, and do it there to. So, I think it’s a modeling thing. It’s also an expectation thing and a consistency thing.

He also shared, “I think providing them time to plan for whatever they’re doing. Providing them with models of what they could or couldn’t do during those times.” A central

office administrator shared, “There is an expectation of how that professional learning will be delivered and to model what we expect our teachers to be delivering in the classroom.” A principal pointed out about the administrator meetings,

The superintendent and the assistant superintendents and directors, they model what they expect the administrators to be doing in a building setting. The modeling that’s occurring is structuring learning conversations around the key components of what it is that we’re supposed to be focusing upon.

While teachers are not directly involved in the administrator meetings, one teacher summarized, “Basically, we’ve had a program put before us over the course, gradually over the course of the past three years about skills and strategies they want to implement from the K-12 level.” Building principals and teacher leaders understand that modeling and implementation of strategies are both ways to foster learning based practices that can be replicated instructionally to other teachers and ultimately, shared in the classroom.

### **Central Office Collaboration**

Central Office administrators work collaboratively with principals and teachers. The principals are intentional about getting teacher leaders involved. Teachers also give input to principals and central office. The superintendent stated,

I think first you set an example that you value collaboration, that you value teacher learning, we are a learning organization. The learning of the teachers, administrators, and adults, period, in an organization, is just as important as the learning of the kids.

A central office administrator shared, “So, it’s a very collaborative process that administrators are the ones who decide the balance of how to split the days, but it’s all with teacher input and

then when it comes to specific days, whether it's building or district, there's teacher input into that as well." A principal gave another picture of collaboration,

Our administration, building administrators, collaborate with each other with district office administrators and with the board to develop these goals, so they're very collaboratively developed and then once those are developed, those become our road maps for what we value and for really everything that we do in our district.

One teacher added,

Because before we implemented this framework, we didn't have those collaboration days as a district, so the second grade team never really met together as a district and so by changing our calendar around and giving us those days together and that time together, you know, that has really helped us align what we need for resources.

All participant groups shared specific instances of how collaboration helps to broaden the scope of understanding and facilitation of the district's instructional framework.

### **Data Dashboard**

The data dashboard provides the accountability and serves as a conduit for providing the focused instructional framework data and effectiveness. The superintendent shared how he reviews the data: "I meet with the principals every month for an hour and we look at some of their data." Both central office administrators acknowledged this with statements. One said, "We created a data dashboard for student achievement, educator effectiveness, and climate and culture." The other central office administrator stated, "We have goals for our professional learning that we're monitoring in our district's data dashboard." The data from the district data dashboard is shared and reviewed with teacher leaders. One teacher leader shared her experience. "She [assistant superintendent] gives us kind of the guidelines and the surveys so we



know exactly how to target our professional learning.” The data dashboard is a document that is updated three times per year and keeps data in a “visual” form. The following are the data dashboard’s key data elements.

### ***Student Achievement***

Student achievement is monitored and reported in the data dashboard through the STAR assessment given three times a year to students in Kindergarten through 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The data is used to monitor the academic achievement of each student throughout the year. Achievement targets are set for each level - elementary, middle, and high school.

### ***Educator Effectiveness***

The district goal for educator effectiveness is to ensure high quality instruction in every classroom through fostering effectiveness. The evidence of success is monitored through the Learning Land walkthrough system and the professional learning event evaluations. The district has achievement targets set for the walkthroughs and targets for the professional learning evaluation feedback.

### ***Walkthroughs***

A walkthrough tool is used as a part of focusing and collecting data on student engagement and rigor. A central office administrator explained,

One would be our walkthrough tool, it’s a large walkthrough tool, but part of the process of developing our district goals and how we are going to measure that, when we talked as an administrative team. We decided of all the things that we could look through on the walkthrough tool, we chose two and those are the only things that are required for administrators when they are doing walkthroughs, to make sure and measure.

### ***Professional Learning***

The principals monitor professional learning to target professional learning. One principal explained,

Using the national standards on what good adult learning should look like, we have surveys that go out after every professional learning session, and we look at that data immediately, we get feedback on how everyone perceived the adult learning experience in that session.

This is a process that supports guiding adult learning, providing structure for professional learning and an evaluation of the system for effectiveness.

### ***Culture and Climate***

A Learning Land climate survey is administered yearly to all employees and parents. In addition, the survey is given to middle and high school students. This survey recognizes input from the following areas: quality instruction, safety, and feeling valued. The culture and climate survey also links to a theme under Managing the Distractors. This theme relates specifically to the case study participants feeling valued by the superintendent.

The district dashboard is a key component in sharing the data collected over time as well as reviewing to plan and set future goals. By updating the data three times a year, the district is able to share “just in time” data with the educators in the Learning Land School District. The district data dashboard is a key element in providing “evidence” to support the district instructional framework.

### **Differentiated Professional Learning**

Principals and teachers acknowledge the clear direction and autonomy given to develop differentiated professional learning. The superintendent understands in order to provide effective

professional learning, it must be delivered and focused at different levels. As the superintendent explained,

So, there was a district wide thing. This year we've gone to more of a building thing and now, more or less, a release of how the buildings are doing more, we still have some district, but we have more building. We also have grade level and teacher groups meeting for professional learning as opposed to a district-wide kind of thing.

The central office confirmed, "We are differentiating our professional learning based on what the teams need, it's not one size fits all, it's customized." A principal shared, "We have 'voice and choice' of what we want to focus on, buy-in comes from choice." The professional learning is composed of selecting agreed-upon effective skills and strategies through the grade spectrum, K-12. Models for professional learning are selected and demonstrated at district, administrator, and building level meetings. In addition, models are shared through coaching and planning conversations and support is given by the Assistant Superintendent of Academic Affairs and the Professional Learning Coordinator. Another level of support and focus is added by talking about professional learning experiences and the data from the professional learning survey. In conclusion, a teacher affirmed, "What has evolved out of this though is more one-on-one meetings from the assistant superintendent's assistant. To work one-on-one for the specific needs of each team, be it elementary or secondary." The Professional Learning Coordinator is identified in two constructs. The Coordinator provided resource support to ongoing professional development and guidance to the directives of the *Multi-Year Action Plan*. The coordinator was not an interview participant.

The district framework has been consistent in differentiating professional learning to support the individual learning needs of teams and educators. By allowing time for leveled

meetings, learning is prioritized to meet individual needs. This has been recognized by all participant groups.

### **District Provided Resources**

The superintendent realized the importance of resources. While there is a pattern under Direction and Sector Engagement that deals with resources, there are also resources needed for capacity building. The superintendent prioritized, “We are going to set aside time for learning, we are going to provide structures for professional learning and we are going to provide resources for professional learning.”

The district-supported resources include time for professional learning and opportunities for collaboration. The central office administrator commented on an example of a district provided learning resource created with the superintendent: “There’s also the vision we put together, he and I put together a video with teacher leaders of the instructional framework.” The district prioritized funding to hire a Professional Learning Coordinator to work closely with teacher leaders. One principal shared,

Monies have been expended to hire someone. We have this wonderful support person who works under our curriculum professional learning assistant superintendent. She meets on a monthly basis with each teacher leader who’s been identified in the district for each grade or content area. She meets with them on an ongoing basis and their whole focus is what is it that we’re going to do at the next learning session that is aligned with our Learning Land Instructional Framework, it’s our guide and she’s the one that holds everyone to that accountability, of using that in our professional learning designs.

Teacher resources include specific programs. One teacher added, “When we know we’ll need some Kagan development or we need some Google training, then he [superintendent] can work

with our other professional to try and get that training in.” Resources are a key support in two different TASC constructs, Direction and Sector Engagement and Capacity Building with Focus on Results.

### **Focus on Teacher Learning and Leadership**

The superintendent stressed the importance of the focus on teacher learning and leadership with this comment:

I think for years, we have said, the “kid’s learning” is so important, just to be in the classroom and we forget that if our teachers aren’t learning, they aren’t going to be as good with our kids as they could be. So I think it’s setting an expectation that your teachers’ learning is just as important as the kid’s learning, and we’re going to provide time for it, we’re going to provide resources for it, we’re going to provide structures in which you can get together and do the learning about the way, what you want to learn about too, not just, “we’re going to tell you everything”.

The central office administrator added, “I created the role of team leader which is a teacher leadership role where those team leaders were trained in facilitation skills, as well as the instructional framework, so that they could then facilitate the learning, the professional learning days, when they have district collaboration time of PLC time with their colleagues.” One principal shared,

Our superintendent is very good about allowing the principals and the teacher leaders to develop the system and structure, if it’s not something that is set in stone in the initiative, he allows us to frame it in the way that we feel our teachers learn it best.

Teacher leaders have one-on-one meetings with the Professional Learning Coordinator.

This supports empowering teachers, teacher effectiveness, and the message that teacher learning

is valued. This also maintains setting expectations for adult learning and a common language on instruction. Teachers work together with the assistant superintendent, as shared by one teacher:

I work more closely with the Assistant Superintendent. She's kind of helped us with surveying our teachers and she gives us kind of the guidelines and the surveys to use that we know exactly how to target our professional learning.

And another teacher stated,

As far as training goes, a lot of times we use teachers from within the district and some, a lot of times that's good because there is, you know, there's wealth of knowledge within these walls. We don't bring out as many people as we used to for professional development, like seeking a professional to come in, due to the budget cuts and restraints, and people miss that, you know, having an expert come in, but as far as, you know, him being effective in that is, I think it's working well to have people that are here and experts, providing that professional development.

Another teacher shared,

Since our instructional framework can be so varied for what it's trying to accomplish, that it gives teachers a choice, in terms of what they want to work on as professionals and a lot of it is owned by the faculty and that they will be the ones who are hosting these sessions.

### **Instructional Framework**

*The Learning Land Instructional Framework* was developed to begin a district-wide approach to transform professional development to impact student learning outcomes and to articulate and to design the professional development to make this happen. The superintendent was intentional in this process: "I think it's a matter of setting priorities, of knowing that we

needed some kind of a consistent instructional approach across our system because we have to talk a common language across our schools.”

The superintendent provides clarity of vision by being specific and maintaining the focus on the instructional framework. This means the process is much more about goal setting and focusing on the priorities of the instructional framework. The superintendent shared,

I think there’s a clarity of vision and clarity where we’re trying to go and an almost focusing, working on focusing our work as best we can on what we really believe is important and trying to help them to build a system that’s going to support professional learning so it’s not just a shot gun approach to the “flavor of the day” kind of thing.

The district is driven by the agreed upon goals. The superintendent works with the Superintendent Administrative Team who is responsible for setting goals and vision. The district is focused on aligning the goals to the building goals. This is intentional to build a system to support professional learning and design a vision for the district. As a part of the effectiveness of the instructional framework, principals and teacher leaders develop the system and structure. A central office administrator explained,

We have an instructional framework we have created that is a professional learning plan centered about the instructional framework. The instructional framework is very large and it’s a flexible model, but it’s all about good instruction and good assessment and planning.

One principal reflected on this process by saying,

Our superintendent is very good about allowing the principals and the teacher leaders to develop the system and structure, as long as we’re all consistent in delivering the information and the expectations, how we are allowed to do that is usually pretty flexible.

Included in this structure are the walkthroughs done by administrators and teachers. The teacher leaders are trained in the instructional framework to facilitate professional learning days. The principals and teachers also work together to establish collaboratively developed goals. The district provides scheduled time for collaboration. The superintendent supports the work by providing the time, opportunities and the resources needed to support the instructional framework.

The instructional framework provides structure. A teacher leader summarized, “The goal has really been to come up with, like you said, implementing our plan, our instructional framework, our scope and sequence that looks like the other grade levels, and just kind of carrying that with our teams.” The structure of the instructional framework has been recognized by the participants as providing the direction of district wide learning and the resources to achieve district goals.

### **Multi-Year Action Plan**

The Multi-Year Action Plan has been developed to support strategic planning and provide the long-term picture. The action plan contains a mission statement and is a four-year plan that is updated every year. The superintendent emphasized, “We look at professional learning data as just as important as we look at the student learning data. Our teachers provide us feedback after every professional learning event.” One central office administrator shared,

We set the Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan and then that goes to the Superintendent’s Advisory Team, and then we take that to our building administrators and they look over it, and they give input and feedback on what they think our goals need to be, and then our board does the same.



And as summarized by the central office administrator, “The multi-year action plan gives us this long term picture of where we want to be in an area.”

When developing or making adjustments to the district’s multi-year action plan, a principal shared, “He [superintendent] allows us to develop the structure or the framework about how we push that out.” A teacher leader added, “The assistant superintendent gave us a guide or a multi-year plan of what leadership looks like.” The *Learning Land Data Dashboard* is utilized to review data from the walk-throughs, the universal screener, and professional learning evaluation data. This provides the “accountability and structure for what’s happening at the building and district level when it comes to learning.” The data is used to adjust future professional learning sessions and the focus of those sessions. The multi-year action plan is based on two time frames, a yearly schedule for the broader delineation of work and a monthly timeline to break down the district learning work and goals.

### **Research Based**

The superintendent has focused on the research of Waters and Marzano (2006) in *School District Leadership that Works* to support the district instructional framework. Powerful evidence was shared by a principal on specific research used in the district planning process. A principal shared,

Our superintendent has relied heavily on Marzano’s work for some guidance and direction on how to, what does it look like? What does good professional learning look like within a district? Part of the structure Marzano has provided would be providing a framework of sorts. We’ve evolved and added in layers from Charlotte Danielson’s works.

Another research resource was commented on by another principal: “We are very fortunate that we have an assistant superintendent who is actually a part of a consortium called Learning Forward that developed the standards for professional learning.” The middle school principal added,

I would say our instructional framework would be a great example and a lot of our framework is based on Marzano’s work. The other piece that is heavily connected is Daggett’s Rigor and Relevance Framework. We’ve tried to pull together the pieces of that and then instead of having people go to all of these different bodies of work that are out there, kind of tried to bring that in and look at what is effective in our district with our students.

By selecting research to support the *Learning Land Instructional Framework*, the superintendent has established a foundation for the development of understanding what key resources support research based practices in the Learning Land School District.

### **Themes Related to Supportive Infrastructure**

#### **Board of Education Support for Professional Learning**

The Board of Education shares their support by adopting the calendar set for professional learning. The board understands the instructional priorities and the importance of professional learning. The board understands the goals set forth. The superintendent shared, “I think it’s working with the board as much as anything. They understand our instructional priorities. They understand how important professional learning is and the kinds of things we’re trying to accomplish.” One central administrator agreed, “The superintendent is very supportive to the board about continuing with ten professional learning days, so there’s a commitment to time.” One principal was specific in how time is supported: “We frontload everything with some very

intentional scheduling as to when work would be done.” A teacher leader noted how the calendar supports the district learning goals:

Before we implemented this framework, we didn’t have those collaboration days as a district, so by changing our calendar around and giving us those days together and that time together, you know, that has really helped us align what we need for resources.

In order to support the district instructional framework, time is needed to set aside for a systemic learning plan. In the adoption of the calendar, the board has supported and preserved the ten professional learning days. The participants understand this is valuable time needed to support the ongoing professional learning goals district wide.

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

The superintendent is supportive of curriculum and resources that are provided to strengthen teaching. Resources are provided to support the goals of the Learning Land School District and the principals authorize dollars for resources. This includes the professional learning resources from the instructional framework. A strong summary of this theme was shared by a central office administrator:

One of the goals is fiscal responsibility and we know that by having more efficient things, that allows more money for other things that we may need. There’s a commitment to funding because we pay stipends for each of our team leaders for their leadership for facilitating the professional learning times. There’s a commitment to teams which are school improvement members from each of the buildings, to the professional learning coordinator, who works with teacher leaders and professional development council members.

This is affirmed by another central office administrator: “We’re trying to be fiscally responsible as well as collaborative in nature.” A principal participant shared,

The superintendent is always very supportive of the curriculum resources and professional development that are being provided to the district and we do have a cycle set up, as it pertains to what new resources do we need to strengthen how we’re teaching that particular content. So, the superintendent is, he’s the one that has to authorize overall how monies are being spent and so that’s where he’s involved, but he’s not the one who necessarily picks which things would be purchased.

One participant teacher stated,

He really takes everybody’s account and everybody’s opinions into play before they make a drastic change on any of our resources. I also like the fact that when it comes to classroom resources or technology resources, we have a tendency in our district to always pilot it and test it, and see if we even like it.

### **Multi-Year Action Plan**

The Multi-Year Action Plan helps to ensure the focus on teacher effectiveness. The action plan sets forth the precedence for teachers to have a choice of what to work on as a professional. Time set forth by the plan allows for professional learning time for curriculum mapping and to scope out new standards. The action plan creates the long term “steps and structure” for navigating complex change. The superintendent understands this and shared, “We understand what our goals are. We understand how we’re monitoring those goals.” He also shared,

When we developed our action plan, our yearly action plan and basically back to our monthly action plan, there were areas, there were conversations with principals about what it is we needed to focus on, what areas were important and so on.

One of the central office administrators supported this by sharing, “Everything is very focused on our district goals and what we’re trying to achieve through the action plan.” A principal explained further, “I guess just through a continuum of, it’s through an action plan really of when these kinds of things are going to be implemented, it’s a multi-year action plan.” A teacher leader who understands that there are steps to learning said, “We thankfully, we have kind of, it’s very much like a stair-step way of implementing things.” The district’s multi-year action plan serves to gauge the district’s goals. By having the action plan, the instructional work of the district can be seen, adjusted and planned for the future.

### **Themes Related to Managing the Distractors**

#### **Agendas**

A key element of the superintendent’s work is to manage the distractors and maintain focus on the learning work of schools. The superintendent is intentional in his statement that “The agendas for meetings, district, administrator and building, all focus on the same agenda template and share norms for consistently maintaining the focus on instructional goals.” The agendas provide direction as explained by a central office administrator: “The team leaders talk with their colleagues and they plan the agendas; we have a template where they all use the same template. They plan the agendas based on what their teams need.” As another central office administrator explained,

We have requirements for anybody that’s doing professional learning in our district that their agendas are published one week prior to the professional learning. We have goals

for our professional learning that we're monitoring in our district's data dashboard and we know that in our professional learning, as we're planning any agenda, that we have to have certain expectations of what needs to be included in that.

A principal stated, "They come up with those agendas. I mean they, often times, they meet with our professional learning coordinator and they develop that agenda together." The agendas are intentional and focus on differentiation as one principal commented,

The director of professional development and the teachers actually get to create the agenda together and not everybody's agenda is the same, and that's done before every district professional development event and I think that's what is really nice for those teachers; it's very differentiated.

This aligns with a teacher leader's statement: "I think we've actually been given a really wide, wide girth for that, in that we get to set our own agendas as long as it falls under our instructional framework of what the goals are."

### **Feel Valued**

"The superintendent values our opinions" was a common theme. A principal explained, "We feel valued in what we're able to add to the conversations and change for teachers and the superintendent listens to principals." One principal values support and being heard and said, "I think that's a really hard one because I think our day is a distraction. I think just by being supportive. I think by listening to the principals." The teacher leaders shared that the district cares about what they do in the classroom and teachers aren't feeling undervalued. One teacher shared humor:

Our principals, our superintendent, when they have questions, they come to us and say, hey, what about this? What do you know about it? I think those are going to be our

examples that we have of showing, they value what we do, and they value our opinions because I think sometimes if we had that a little bit more in school, teachers might be a little bit more happier.

To support this affective goal, the district climate survey includes these three areas, quality instruction, safety, and feeling valued. These areas were determined based on feedback from the SAT (Superintendent Advisory Team), district leadership teams, and administrators.

### **Laser Focus on District Goals and Action Plan**

The superintendent remains very focused on the district goals and action plan. In discussing the action plan, the superintendent shared,

When we developed our action plan, our yearly action plan and basically back to our monthly action plan, there were areas, there were conversations with principals about what it is we needed to focus on, what areas were important and so on. Making sure that the focus is not only private, but public, so that everybody knows we're focusing on those things and that we're very clear that the board sees that, the community sees that and the teachers see that.

The focus remains on professional development and goals and maintaining an aligned system. The tools used for this include the walkthrough tool as well as an evaluation process. The instructional framework is flexible and the Multi-Year Action Plan is used to create the district roadmap. The superintendent is clear in his assessment that "You've got to say no, more than yes." As one central office administrator concurred, "I think it is just that laser focus of what we're trying to achieve on the district goals and the action plan." The central office administrator mentioned,

He tries to lessen the distractors by communicating really those things that are rising to the top, rather than forwarding any and every little email. It's selective; everything is focused on our district goals and what we're trying to achieve through the action plan.

Or as one principal shared,

He does a really good job about guiding us and facilitating us, the administration and directors and teachers, in having thoughtful conversations about what is the focus, what is it that we should be intentionally doing and not allowing other things to come into plan.

A teacher leader also confirmed this: "We don't need to know all the distracting things. He really focuses on what we need to know and I appreciate that, time-wise as well, and I think it helps." By managing the distractors, clear and constant focus is allowed to continue on the district goals, instructional framework, and action plan. All participants agreed that managing the distractors was important to each of their roles as educators.

### **Professional Learning**

District office and the building administrators are the ones that are driving what's happening in professional learning. This includes the support for freedom and flexibility in planning for professional learning. The planning for professional learning allows for differentiation of what is presented and shared by central office administrators, principals, and teacher leaders. This is supported by the collaborative planning of agendas for professional learning and the planning support and conversations with the professional learning coordinator.

One of the central office administrators explained,

Teacher leaders meet with our professional learning coordinator. They meet with her, the team leaders do, and they go through and they look at what they are wanting to



accomplish and she helps them find resources and they put all that together themselves, so they're definitely empowered with the ability to plan district professional learning.

A principal shared her acknowledgement, "We have a professional learning coordinator who is assigned to and who helps our district team leaders to construct their agendas for their team meetings."

Central Office has control over what is done during professional learning time but teachers give input on professional learning days and there is a professional learning map for the year. All of these professional learning events align the professional learning to the instructional framework. A teacher reflected, "When we have our meetings and we are planning out what is going to happen, we're there, right with the principals, as they're making the plans, as they're calling individuals."

The agendas serve as an important conduit to the professional learning planning. "It's the collective and collaborative planning of the agendas. The teachers are on the school improvement teams and they help plan the building professional learning days." This is important to the principals as well, as one shared, "being that teacher leaders are really the ones responsible for the district level of professional development is they meet with the director of professional development and actually create the agenda for their meetings based on their team needs." The professional learning coordinator position was explained by a teacher leader,

She meets with each teacher leader once a month and their whole focus is what is it that we're going to do at the next learning session that is aligned with our *Learning Land Instructional Framework*, she's the one that holds everyone to that accountability, of using that in our professional learning designs.

The teacher leaders stated that they were supported by the assistant superintendent: “she gave us so many positive structures and we worked through some coaching strategies and some really great questioning techniques to work out those kinks, she put in place a lot of structure.”

In summary and as supported by the superintendent, “They know the language and every one of the teachers across the system kind of knows what that means and so it gets very easy to show best practices between schools.” The professional learning sessions involve a survey that is completed by each participant after an event. The superintendent explained,

The feedback from the professional learning surveys what we do, the grade level teachers look at that, department chairs look at that. And then they provide feedback to us on what direction they think they need, what they need more of, so they kind of control whatever they’re doing.

### **Time**

The superintendent has remained intentional about providing time to plan. “I think providing them time to plan, providing them support to plan, providing them with models of what they could or couldn’t do during those times.” As one central office administrator shared, “There’s a balance between district professional learning time and building time.” The superintendent is credited for the support to plan. He explained, “On a regular basis, the administrators are invited, or, we meet once a month for half a day.” A principal summarized,

The superintendent has given us time through professional learning days and leadership through our team leaders who have had intense training on how to facilitate those groups in a professional learning community, the resources of the framework and also, and I think probably most importantly, “voice and choice” because that team then was able to say, “here’s what we need the most”.

In summary, another principal shared,

But also just giving us the time, the built-in work day time to focus on the professional development and so giving the dedicated time for teachers to actually have uninterrupted focus on professional learning I think is the most important for teachers.

A teacher leader commented,

I mean, our district's plan is to increase, you know, the awareness in the application of our new framework and so really the only way to do that is to give us time and we are getting that. I think the calendar committee in conjunction with the superintendent and the board of education has been really great in giving us that time that we need to do all of those things.

Feedback is also solicited from teacher collaboration on the time needed to plan.

We would plan together what we were going to do with teachers, so the teacher leaders would meet with our assistant superintendent and we would plan together, and then we would carry out very similar structures with our actual teams.

This also includes the time for how professional learning days will be shared, building versus district collaboration time.

Time is a constant pattern throughout the TASC constructs. The time allowed to meet with administrators and teachers or to plan for professional learning is valuable work to completing the goals and timeline of the district action plan. The decision for how to structure the time allowed for the learning work in schools is also a joint decision making process between administrators, teachers, and the board of education.

## **Themes Related to Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry**

The Learning Land School District's learning work centers around three themes under Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry. Many participants were able to share the value in accountability, maintaining an aligned system, and the structure of the district's instructional framework.

### **Accountability**

Monitoring the district data dashboard is an important part of the Learning Land Instructional Framework. The results are collected and monitored in the fall, winter, and spring and are included on the Learning Land Data Dashboard and on each building's school improvement plan. The data dashboard also includes professional development results. The dashboard results are shared with administrators, school leadership teams, site councils, and the Board of Education. The superintendent highlighted the importance of the dashboard: "The things we're monitoring on our district dashboard are the same things that are on the building goals." A central office administrator stated, "We're looking at data we're collecting on the data dashboard." Principals do walkthroughs and this process has been expanded to teacher leaders being trained in conducting peer walkthroughs. From this data, the building administrators align professional development. The district instructional framework develops accountability through the district data dashboard.

There is a constant cycle and system of monitoring the progress towards district goals. A system is in place to help everyone be accountable to what is laid out in the instructional framework. When one principal was asked about the instructional framework, he replied, "Clearly a ten, because of the system that is in place to help everyone be accountable to what is laid out in our Learning Land Instructional Framework." And finally, accountability is explained

by one teacher: “Well, what’s nice is we always start with our goal and then everything else is based off of that.” The superintendent sets the vision and the plan and the goals are aligned to the action plan. Each participant understands their role in achieving the goals and the accountability needed to sustain the district model.

### **Aligned System for Learning**

An aligned system was created in the Learning Land School District and everything is aligned around the action plan and the instructional framework. There is an intentional process to the work. The board sets the planning calendar, administrator meetings are aligned to the calendar, instructional framework is established, and the action plan is implemented. Teacher professional development goals look a lot like district professional development goals. The superintendent shared, “I think teacher professional learning goals should be a lot like what our district professional learning goals are, but they should be unique to the teacher.” And one central office administrator concurred:

He’s had us create this vision of what we’re achieving. It goes back to the action plan, the district goals, and then we’re monitoring our progress towards achieving those district goals. Everything is aligned. Our district goals align to our action plan, align to our evaluation, and align to our monthly conversations that we have with him.

And another central office administrator said,

We’re always pushing to do better and so, you know, the system that we have set up with the board goals, and the monitoring of the goals, and the data dashboard, all of it just creates such a seamless, it just makes it all so seamless that when we’re in the midst of it and we’re not planning for the next point in time, it just runs, it just happens, which is really cool because I feel like in so many other districts, everything is disconnected.

A principal reflected,

I think that when the superintendent sets the plan and the vision for the district, then he has to rely on the building leaders to align our professional development to that vision and again, giving us the autonomy to focus on what our teachers need to strengthen their weaknesses in that vision. You know, he took more of a systems approach to it than a top-down approach, relying on not only the principals to be knowledgeable about it and to be able to talk about it, but he makes our teacher leaders involved and really, they ended up being the ones that actually rolled out our big learning plan or framework.

One of the teacher leaders further explained,

I think, that's why we are successful in our professional development, teachers had buy-in and saying to us, okay, this is what you said you guys felt like you needed and this is what we've provided and then now, let's go back, did we meet those goals?

This indicates the teacher leaders understood the process, the alignment of professional development to teacher acceptance, and the reflection of all participants to note adjustment of the framework. The superintendent summarized,

I was amazed when I came here that people were kind of hungry for getting on the same page and kind of moving the system forward in that kind of way, instead of everybody doing what they wanted to do. They wanted to be part of something bigger than a school that was good, they wanted to be part of a system that was good. So, it's been kind of fun to watch.

### **Instructional Framework**

The Learning Land Instructional Framework serves as the “how” of the systems approach used by the superintendent. The Learning Land School district models what they expect teachers

to be delivering in the classroom. Through his leadership, the superintendent provides direction and support, time and practice for professional development, and the support continues through the implementation process of the framework. The superintendent added,

I think we give a lot of time, we really try to provide time, provide the direction and support, and resources. For our first grade group, if they decide they want to really work on this, well, they get to decide that, just as long as it fits into our framework which we've all kind of established from the beginning and so they get to chose the path, in what they want to work on, but it's within the system.

And as summarized by central office administrators,

I think the teacher professional learning goals are to implement high quality instruction through the instructional framework. Every report we give is aligned to a district goal. Our Learning Land Instructional Framework: it's kind of the "meat and potatoes" and the big idea behind how we want instruction to look and feel here in the district.

One principal stated the following in response to the question, "How effective do you see the superintendent in providing ongoing professional development support to help implement new protocols and practices in the classroom?"

I think that it goes back to giving us the uninterrupted time to do it. Again, they kind of give us the overall umbrella, the vision and expectations, but then giving us the time to implement and practice and apply that practice is what makes the superintendent effective in delivering that professional development.

One teacher participant agreed with the process, "I feel like I have a terrific amount of freedom to dictate that under the umbrella they've kind of given, so I think that's been very effective." Teacher professional learning goals are to implement high quality instruction and to

ensure that teachers have ownership in this process. This participant agreed that freedom is needed to collectively achieve teacher goals.

### **Themes Related to Two-Way Communication**

#### **Professional Learning Survey**

The professional learning survey is used to collect and utilize reflection on the events held on the professional learning days. The superintendent receives input on professional learning through the survey. The superintendent also looks at professional learning feedback with principals:

We do a lot of surveys after professional learning and those surveys are then, you know, analyzed by the teacher leaders, the superintendent, the assistant superintendent at our meetings and so that would be a way that you could directly communicate your needs or what you think about what's going on.

A central office administrator confirmed,

Communication about the professional development happens through every professional learning day. We have evaluations that ask those specific questions, you know, to what was the engagement level. I mean, just a whole bunch of really targeted questions so teachers are giving their feedback which then goes to the team leader, the teacher leader, it goes to the building and it goes to the district.

One principal explained,

I think the evaluations are always a piece of that, that comes back to the superintendent, so I think the superintendent can kind of share some updates, "here's what I saw", and can do that because he is out there participating in some of the conversations, but then the



teachers also have the opportunity to give some feedback on their evaluations of professional learning, so it's all part of the system.

A teacher also added, "We do a lot of surveys after professional learning. The surveys are analyzed by the teacher leaders, the superintendent, and the assistant superintendent."

The professional learning surveys are a part of a systemic process to collect longitudinal data on professional learning in the school district. It is through the strategic design and use of the surveys that professional learning in the district is planned. In addition, the survey data helps to support the design and adjustment of the district's multi-year action plan and associated district learning sessions and events.

### **Superintendent Cares**

An important theme that surfaced during the data collection was affective in nature. Several comments were shared by interview participants along these lines: "He cares what we think, and he helps new teachers and encourages us. He listens to different groups and allows for input." A central office administrator summarized,

Our superintendent is a very friendly face and he's out in the buildings, not a stranger to anybody, by any means. The only thing that I will add is I think that we have something very, very unique that's going on here and I can't share it with enough people what an amazing system we have set up here for success.

As a veteran principal shared, "I'm very grateful to be able to be a part of a district that really is forward thinking and so I'm happy to be a part of this." As one teacher leader shared, "I think it helps kind of create that kind of family feeling of we're all in this together and we all have kind of the same goals that we want for our whole district, because this is what is going

on.” Participants shared that they felt the involvement and appreciation and form of feeling valued by the superintendent was pivotal to their work in schools.

### **Superintendent Communication**

The superintendent schedules time to communicate with principals. He also communicates expectations and encourages faculty and administration to be continuous learners. He is very vested in the instructional framework system approach and the superintendent stated, “the key things that I talked about were that adult learning was just as important as student learning.”

He prioritizes time to be in the buildings and supports an “open door” policy for communication. As a central office administrator shared, “He has an open door policy and he’s a very friendly face and is out in the buildings, you know, not a stranger to anybody, by any means.” One principal confirmed, “it’s basically in our district goals. We know, ‘here are our expectations’ and everything we do is going to have a purposeful movement to reaching our goals, and that includes our professional learning.” Another principal shared, “He also has taken advantage more so of tweeting this year and Facebook, and so he personally makes an effort, an intentional effort, as he goes about through the district to share celebratory kinds of things.”

The superintendent frequently emails the administrators, faculty and staff in the district keeping them informed of district learning events and activities. He meets with small focus groups several times a year to gather feedback about how things are going and what they need. He maintains communication in the summer with a teacher advisory team and a student group. A new webpage has been established to provide information about the district. He takes time to meet with the Human Resources assistant superintendent and the local teacher’s union. Board

notes are publicized after each meeting so that educators are aware of what's happening and what the conversations have been. One teacher affirmed,

He has an open door policy. He speaks to professional learning in his communications, sets the tone for the importance of professional learning and the rationale of 'why' we're doing this and how the initiative plays a part in the goals.

As one teacher confirmed,

One way that it was communicated and shared out with everyone, they made a framework guide, and the teacher leaders helped, it kind of detailed the framework, and then it's hyperlinked to resources and, videos, and about how does that look in the classroom.

Another teacher leader summarized,

I think the goal was, you know, if we had a brand new teacher that missed all of these years of meetings together and things like that, this would at least hopefully paint a picture, you know, as far as what the framework looks like and what we've been up to, and things like that.

Another teacher leader stated, "I think communication is a very big component of our district that I'm, I'm very happy, especially when I talk to other areas around us". The participants valued the different types of communication the superintendent uses. In addition, common themes of communication, focusing on instructional goals, sharing appreciation for progress and hard work, and keeping the connection and partnership strong between the superintendent, administration, teachers, and students consistently emerged.

## **Intersection of Themes**

There were three TASC constructs that developed an intersection between themes. Table 35 lists the constructs and the intersecting themes. The researcher in previous sections shared data examples of how and why the patterns evolved to create themes that emerged under more than one construct. As a result of themes appearing under more than one construct, the researcher identified this anomaly as an “intersection between themes.”

### **Direction and Sector Engagement and Capacity-Building with Focus on Results**

Educator Effectiveness was a theme under Direction and Sector Engagement. Educator Effectiveness was also a theme under Capacity Building with Focus on Results within the Learning Land Data Dashboard theme. Resources was a theme under Direction and Sector Engagement, and resources was also a theme under Capacity-Building with Focus on Results.

### **Capacity-Building with Focus on Results and Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry**

The Learning Land Instructional Framework was a theme under Capacity Building with Focus on Results. The Learning Land Instructional Framework was also a theme under Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry.

**Table 4-34 Intersection of Themes**

<b>Direction and Sector Engagement</b>	<b>Capacity-Building with Focus on Results</b>
1. Educator Effectiveness	1. Educator Effectiveness
2. Resources	2. Resources
<b>Capacity-Building with Focus on Results</b>	<b>Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry</b>
1. Instructional Framework	1. Instructional Framework
<b>Capacity-Building with Focus on Results</b>	<b>Supportive Infrastructure</b>
1. Multi-Year Action Plan	1. Multi-Year Action Plan

There were intersections of themes in Direction and Sector Engagement and Capacity-Building with Focus on Results. Both Educator Effectiveness and Resources were predominant in the patterns in both constructs. The use of the term “resources” held a variation on the nuance and are explained in detail to summarize the differences within each theme. There was an intersection of the theme Instructional Framework in Capacity-Building with Focus on Results and Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry. The researcher clearly identified that the Instructional Framework drives the work in multiple TASC constructs. There was also an intersection of the theme, Multi-Year Action Plan, in Capacity-Building and Focus on Results and Supportive Infrastructure. The Multi-Year Action Plan is also an identified driver of the work in two constructs. These intersection of themes will be discussed more in Chapter Five in the conclusions.

## Overarching Themes

Capacity Building with Focus on Results and Managing the Distractors contained the most coded passages, patterns, and themes. Both were important in that the numbers of coded passages and patterns were significantly higher than in the other TASC constructs and as documented in the transcripts. These are two TASC constructs the participants gave consistent feedback on and contained the highest number of patterns and themes.

Participants were repeatedly clear, as shared in the data findings, that the superintendent provided laser focus on the work in schools. The superintendent stressed the importance of focus on results by his emphasis on teacher learning and leadership. The superintendent was consistent and repeated often that, “the adult learning is just as important as the student learning.”

The participants were also repeatedly clear the superintendent manages the distractors to allow them to focus on their respective educator roles. The bulk of the data, the number of specific comments, and patterns and themes gave heightened focus to Managing the Distractors. By the superintendent managing the distractors and keeping unnecessary information away from the participants, participants were allowed to do their work in schools. A teacher leader also confirmed this: “We don’t need to know all the distracting things. He really focuses on what we need to know and I appreciate that, time-wise as well, and I think it helps.” By managing the distractors, the superintendent supports a clear and constant focus on the district goals, instructional framework, and action plan. All participants agreed that Managing the Distractors was important to their role as educators.

**Table 4-35 Overarching Themes**

---

---

**Capacity Building with Focus on Results**

**Managing the Distractors**

---

The researcher presented the data from the participants in this chapter. This chapter summarized the process of coding the data, analyzing the data, presenting the patterns across the data, and the themes that emerged. Chapter Five will present the conclusions of this case study, discuss and examine the research questions and the six TASC constructs, explain the significance of the study, and address implications for practice and recommendations for future studies.

**Summary of the Findings**

In the summary of the findings, the participants were clear in their contentment with the quality of support they receive in their educational environments by the superintendent. This is clearly articulated in the comments shared via the transcripts and highlighted by the researcher in the case study data. This is expressly why the theme “feel valued” emerged in Managing the Distractors. The researcher concluded that throughout the data collection and analysis, participants repeatedly stated they felt respected as educators in their jobs, treated as learning professionals, and felt supported and valued by their superintendent. The participants believed their superintendent provided clear focus on the work of the district via the board of education, board directives implemented via district office staff, and communication through principal and teacher leadership. In fact, the researcher was surprised by the lack of dissenting comments throughout the interviews and in reviewing the transcripts. The case study revealed that participants see the focus of the work in the Learning Land School District and expectations as articulated by the superintendent. The participants feel valued in their work.

The researcher felt validated and surprised that there was virtually no discord among the participants. One of the most poignant and significant findings of the case study was the lack of dissidence or anomalies in the data. The case study verified a sense of calm unity among the

participants. The high school teacher leader seemed to use stronger words saying, “I think our grumblings have been that we want more time,” but the participant later confirmed, “but what has been nice is there’s been a fair amount of opportunity for teacher feedback, so, there’s more buy-in.” Unknown to each participant, the researcher heard the same comments over and over again: the superintendent articulates the focus, keeps away the distractors, focuses on results, and lets us do our work. The case study emerged as an explicitly strong confirmation of “best practices” in the systemic infrastructure and design of professional development in a school district by the superintendent.



## Chapter 5 - Conclusions

Chapter Five shares the conclusions of the case study. The chapter includes discussion of the research question and the six sub questions driven by the TASC constructs. The guiding question for this study is: From the perspective of the participants (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders), how does a superintendent implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district?

To answer the research question, the following sub questions (driven by TASC) guided the investigation:

- 1) How does the superintendent manifest the overall vision and direction “from the top” in the provision of district-wide professional development for teacher leaders?
- 2) How does the superintendent develop district-wide capacity in the areas of new knowledge, resources, and motivation with a focus on results?
- 3) How does the superintendent provide a supportive infrastructure, capacity and coordination, and leadership development for central office staff, administrators, and teacher leadership?
- 4) How does the superintendent manage the distractors who divert and sap energy to focus on goals?
- 5) What are effective leadership practices and how can this be replicated and modeled for school and district success?
- 6) How does the superintendent strengthen two-way communication across the school system?

## **Introduction**

This study examined how a superintendent can implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in a school district. Through analysis of the study's participant interviews, 27 themes emerged under the six TASC constructs. This chapter will include the discussion of the research question and sub questions, discussion of themes, conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future study.

### **Main Research Question**

The guiding question for this study is: From the perspective of the participants (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders), how does a superintendent implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district?

The participants of the study have shared the effectiveness of the superintendent of the Learning Land School District to provide teacher professional development in their district. The main research question helped to provide the data that Capacity Building and Managing the Distractors were the TASC constructs that most impacted their work. Through this case study, the researcher has exposed a rarity as discovered through qualitative inquiry and interviews. There was no discourse mentioned in the interviews among the participants or the superintendent. The participants mentioned repeatedly the success of the superintendent in supporting their role and the aims of the district instructional framework. This district is an already high performing district and teachers are aware that expectations of them from the district stakeholders are very high. This matters because this case study has shown the participants have authenticated the effectiveness of the system and the superintendent leadership

through validating how a systemic model of professional development expands the learning capacity of the school district educators.

The data has shared there is little dissent on the superintendent's methods of instructional leadership. Similar themes run constant in the data of how the superintendent provides professional development. The superintendent supports the work of the central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders explicitly by providing professional development in the form of an instructional framework that includes time, resources, collaboration, and focused and consistent communication. By creating the instructional framework, this district can serve as a "how-to" model for other systems. The TASC constructs clearly outline the specific ways in which the superintendent is making it work in the Learning Land School District. The superintendent is an expert in leading the integration of key components needed to provide comprehensive professional development to guide leadership and learning. The following sub-research questions clearly identify specific ways in which this system and the superintendent are being successful.

### **Discussion of Research Sub Question One**

**How does the superintendent manifest the overall vision and direction "from the top" in the provision of district-wide professional development for teacher leaders?**

It is critical and apparent that superintendent leadership, board expectations, and goals guide the learning work at the Learning Land School District and that the district office extends the vision and leadership for the learning system in the school district. The superintendent places the responsibility on himself to create the circumstances, environment, support, and system to ensure learning is occurring at every level in the school district. He sees his role and the role of the district office as facilitating the goals, expectations, and direction for learning. This aligns

with the findings of Waters and Marzano (2006) that “district-level leadership matters and effective superintendents focus their efforts on creating goal-orientated districts” (p. 3). The authors go on to assert that “We have found a substantial and positive relationship between district-level leadership and student achievement when the superintendent, district office staff, and school board members do the ‘right work’ in the ‘right way’” (p.11). The superintendent takes responsibility for learning “from the top.”

Educator effectiveness is a focus of the superintendent and his role as the instructional leader. “Leadership isn’t about rank—it’s about responsibility. Effective leaders embrace their responsibility for results because they recognize that the taking of responsibility is the very heart of leadership” (Gardner, 1993, p. 152). The superintendent has a specific responsibility. “The primary responsibility of all school leaders,” states Hargreaves and Fink (2003), “is to sustain learning. Leaders of learning put learning at the center of everything they do. They put student learning first, and everyone else’s learning is directed toward supporting student learning” (p. 695).

The themes under Direction and Sector Engagement all require the commitment of extended time for planning and implementation for professional development. The board and the superintendent intentionally have time regularly set aside for educators by adopting policy for meeting, planning, goal setting, and collaborative consensus of district instructional goals by administration and teacher leaders. All Learning Land educators are ultimately a part of the decision-making process to endorse and implement professional development in the school district. Starting “at the top” results in a seamless partnership between the board, superintendent, administration, and educators that “time” for learning “is important in our school district.” The result of prioritizing and adopting days for professional development in a school district for all

the educators creates extended focus on expectations and creates the culture for a learning organization.

Leading for learning is the notion that leaders not only set the stage for learning, they also take concrete steps along pathways that lead to student, professional, and system learning. In this sense, leaders can exert a direct and identifiable influence on learning results. (Knapp et al., 2003, p. 13)

Every district resource is designated in the overall vision for professional development to support instructional practices. From the helm of leadership, goals, time, expectations, and vision are clearly allocated and articulated to position the learning work. The superintendent endorses the duty and obligation to take into account every learning opportunity for administration and staff. The process of self-reflection and learning growth of the superintendent has a profound impact on the learning culture in the school district. The ongoing process of expanding the learning capacity of the entire district learning community is not to be taken lightly. Ultimately, the superintendent shares his doctrine that learning and leadership are not sequestered for one district population. “Through this process of ‘defined autonomy’ the superintendent encourages his leadership teams to assume the responsibility for student success” (Waters & Marzano, 2006, p. 4).

Through the process of clearly defining the instructional goals and responsibilities for learning and leadership in the district, and clearly designing the instructional framework and professional development needed, together the superintendent and school leaders expand their ability to impact the learning of students. “Leaders’ success comes when they build leadership capacity within others and within the systems in which they work” (Hirsh & Killion, 2007, p. 38). The superintendent shows confidence in his knowledge and leadership and the leadership in

the organization that allows for fully functioning and self-directed principals and teacher leaders. The TASC construct Direction and Sector Engagement is the seedbed and “sets the stage” to implement the instructional framework and professional development needed in the Learning Land School District.

### **Discussion of Research Sub Question Two**

#### **How does the superintendent develop district-wide capacity in the areas of new knowledge, resources, and motivation with a focus on results?**

The superintendent focuses on, prioritizes, and is very deliberate about how time is spent with administrators. At the once a month district administrator meetings, time is spent on modeling and practicing facilitation skills. The superintendent meets one on one with each administrator every month to have meaningful conversations about data, expectations, and goals.

The literature included in Chapter Two, *Have Theory, Will Travel: A Theory of Action for System Change*, supports and speaks directly to “lateral capacity building.” Lateral capacity building occurs when the structures and framework for instruction are designed to expand the inherent behaviors and learning environment of a school as well as district culture. This lateral and indirect process creates “learning collateral” that strengthens the organization and cannot be taken away. Professional colleagues learning together is a powerful source of capacity building. The superintendent is ardent in his role in developing the instructional environment by providing intentional time designed and allocated to learning activities. The superintendent “seeks best ideas wherever they can be found and uses the ‘wisdom of the crowd’ to spread and assess their worth and impact” (Fullan, 2009, p. 283).

The literature supports the idea that the superintendent is responsible for growing these indirect influences to ensure the presence of well-trained administrators who will enhance and

magnify applied professional development practices and strengthen the culture of teaching and learning in the school district. “Developing shared vision requires dialogue, not monologue, and conversations, not presentations. Shared vision requires leaders who position themselves among those they serve rather than above them” (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 201).

Purposively designed collaboration is a form of professional development that helps to broaden the scope of impact and facilitation of the district’s instructional framework. The district’s instructional framework relies heavily on the central office designed collaboration. The superintendent establishes the central office instructional unit and the principals as the action arm of change and implementation. This includes determining together how each district professional development day will be used and the time and resources needed for site-based collaboration. Effective district leaders are intentional about the integration of collaboration into their learning opportunities and structures so they are not seen as add-ons (City et al., 2009). The leadership of the participants focuses on a “we-we” model. The superintendent permeates an intentional community of intellectual risk-taking that permeates and strengthens the boundaries of the learning culture. “The leadership teams of our school districts need as much autonomy as possible to pursue excellence, to innovate, and to build a culture that passionately pursues the best that the district can be” (Abbate, 2010, p. 37).

The data dashboard can be described as the “conduit” to the instructional framework. The programs, surveys, and data that underlie the data dashboard are key to reviewing the progress of student achievement, walkthroughs, professional development sessions, and the culture and climate in schools throughout the school year. The literature in *Beyond Islands of Excellence* (2003) succinctly outlines the approach that includes principal led teams of teacher leaders and data teams that employ the constant use of data for regular review of results. The

*Learning Land Data Dashboard* is used consistently, three times a school year, to monitor the results of teaching, learning, and student engagement in the school district. The superintendent used this data to guide conversations with his administration.

The structure of Learning Land's professional development is differentiated to enable teachers to have a variety of learning experiences structured to each level, elementary, middle, and high school. The district has focused on professional development as the key district resource to guide the learning of all educators. The focus on educator learning allows for the seamless navigation of the instructional framework. The *Learning Land Instructional Framework* is further extended by the express guidance of the *Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan*. The action plan defines and outlines the progression of learning goals in the multi-year format to promote the smooth implementation and evolution of intentionally designed professional development. The framework and action plan also supports a seamless transition as the district employs and inculcates new teachers to the district. By collaboratively expanding the learning power in the district, all educators become well prepared to mentor and guide new practitioners.

Waters and Marzano's (2006) district level leadership research and guidance specifically holds the superintendent as the key partner in determining the district learning outcomes and supporting the professional development needed for progress. The TASC construct Capacity Building with Focus on Results serves as a powerful alignment to the research based framework of the Waters and Marzano (2006) findings and parallels explicitly how the growth of "lateral capacity building" strengthens the learning community (Fullan, 2009, p. 283). This is a powerful finding of the case study. As the participants shared, district level leadership clearly matters in the capacity building of district administrators and teachers.



### Discussion of Research Sub Question Three

#### **How does the superintendent provide a supportive infrastructure, capacity and coordination, and leadership development for central office staff, administrators, and teacher leadership?**

The researcher views the TASC construct Supportive Infrastructure as the powerful, underlying, quiet partner among the TASC constructs. This study's participants were all poignant and purposeful in their conversations about the Board of Education's endorsement of professional learning in the school district, specifically the board's constant reinforcement and support of the importance of ten professional development days and how the adopted calendar serves as a key catalyst for ensuring the resource of time.

The participants were also all conscious and appreciative of the superintendent's role to establish the fiscal responsibility needed to support the *Learning Land Instructional Framework*. This is demonstrated by the stipends paid to teacher leaders to devote additional time to the leadership components of the instructional framework. As mentioned by a teacher leader, our time is a valuable commodity in the district and serves as the key to the collaboration needed to develop learning tools such as standards based progress reports.

The superintendent is supportive of curriculum and resources that are provided to strengthen teaching. Resources are provided to support the goals of the Learning Land School District. This means the principals are allowed to authorize dollars for mutually identified resources aligned to district and building goals. This concretely aligns to Waters and Marzano's (2006) Finding Two, the use of resources to support achievement and instructional goals.

The study confirms that the *Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan*, creates the distinct long term "steps and structure" for navigating complex change, and this aligns with the literature.

As Fullan (2009) shares, “At the school and community level, the new capacities of leading collaborative cultures need to be firmly embraced. Principal and teacher leadership is required for this task” (p. 286). The action plan lays out the specific timeline and responsibilities needed to accomplish learning outcomes. The multi-year action plan solidifies that in order for learning outcomes to become systemic, and for long term change in practice to become embedded, a sustained and consensus driven intensive plan must occur over a defined period of time.

To spread the power of the action plan, formal and informal leadership is required. The literature in the TASC theory states professional development planned and implemented must provide for “leadership development for the change agents working in the infrastructure” (Fullan, 2009, p. 287). The *Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan* provides a focused infrastructure whose main duty is providing professional development associated to specific goals and identified results (Fullan, 2009).

The superintendent establishes the degree of coordination and rapport across the leadership levels to ensure the infrastructure work as designed in the *Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan* is accomplished. The participants have all been assigned key leadership roles in the delivery of the multi-year action plan. The action plan does not serve as a “quick fix” but as a systemically designed instructional framework with purposefully designed professional development and monitoring for results.

#### **Discussion of Research Sub Question Four**

**How does the superintendent manage the distractors who divert and sap energy to focus on goals?**

The researcher concludes that Managing the Distractors is one of the more pronounced constructs to principals and teacher leaders. As discussed in Chapter Four, the principals and

teacher leaders were appreciative of the ways in which the superintendent protected the learning work in the district. A subtle component for all groups was the structuring of meeting agendas. Through a common protocol, the agenda drives the outcomes of the district, building, and teacher level meetings. The agendas serve to protect the time specified and allocated for learning work. When time is protected, defined, and prioritized, the participants felt valued in their roles and their participation in the superintendent's vision and work of schools. The agendas provide a blueprint to the district goals and action plan. In turn, this honors the time needed to participate in professional development sessions for all district educators. This allows the energy of the organization to work together to achieve educator and student learning outcomes. The literature supports these actions. Managing the Distractors is critical to the work in schools as it honors the capacity that has been built among individuals to strengthen the systemic design of learning.

This is further supported by the parallel work of DuFour and Marzano (2011). To build systemic leadership, every stakeholder must be able to see and articulate the vision set forth by the superintendent and the leadership of central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders. Managing the Distractors includes frequent and consistent communication from the superintendent about the importance of the learning work being accomplished in the school district and tying it to the overall vision of the district goals (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). With clearly communicated focus and proximity to the vision and goals, educators in the Learning Land School District are allowed the time to establish greater autonomy to accomplish district instructional goals.

The researcher made notice that the term "feeling valued" was mentioned multiple times by the participant groups (central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders). "One of the most important motivators in any organization is the belief that the work being done is valuable and

worthwhile, that it is making a positive difference in the world” (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 202). The literature in *Beyond Islands of Excellence* (2003) clearly confirms that the Learning Land School District is building deeply engrained learning experiences using administrators and teacher leaders in the capacity building of best practices, modeling, data mining, and support and mentoring for new teachers (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

In the literature, the work of Waters and Marzano (2006) is the “what” and the work of Togneri and Anderson (2003) becomes the “how.” Both align succinctly with the TASC construct Managing the Distractors. The superintendent is abundantly clear in his documented and defined efforts to “manage the distractors” to maintain a laser focus on the goals of the district as articulated by the board leadership, the superintendent, and the Learning Land Action Plan.

#### **Discussion of Research Sub Question Five**

##### **What are effective leadership practices and how can these be replicated and modeled for school and district success?**

The researcher concludes that Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry aligns to accountability and perpetual system alignment. The aligned system for learning begins at the superintendent and board level. The board approves the planning calendar and the superintendent aligns administrator meetings to the calendar, instructional framework, and the action plan. The superintendent propagates a seamless system to drive the instructional framework through his leadership by providing direction, support, time, and practice for professional development. The support continues through the implementation process of the framework. The data dashboard provides a constant cycle and system of monitoring the progress towards the district goals. “These actions and behaviors represent the basic procedural, or ‘how-to,’ knowledge

practitioners need to translate research into practices” (Waters & Marzano, 2006). This results in an aligned system that is in place to help everyone be accountable to what is laid out in the *Learning Land Instructional Framework*.

The literature of *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad* states a key finding: “professional development must be intensive, ongoing and connected to practice” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p. 5). The Board of Education provides the ongoing support for professional development time and includes it as a part of negotiations and the district calendar considerations. The board continues to legalize, through policy, the systemic learning practices by their formal ratification of negotiations and adoption of the district calendar. The practices outlined by Darling-Hammond (2009) and her colleagues in the literature are clearly adopted in the Learning Land School District. Professional development in the school district is aligned, ongoing, legally adopted, and linked to instructional practices formally via policy and the *Learning Land Instructional Framework* and the *Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan*.

### **Discussion of Research Sub Question Six**

#### **How does the superintendent strengthen two-way communication across the school system?**

The researcher concludes that Two-Way Communication is the driver of the constant conversation and attention to the goals of the district. The professional learning surveys serve as a key source of communication, documentation, and validation of the professional development sessions provided as a result of the *Learning Land Instructional Framework* and the *Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan*. The surveys communicate what type of learning takes place, how successful the structure and format of the facilitation of the learning sessions are, and the key learning outcomes of the learning sessions for the participants. As Elmore (2002) observes:

The job of administrative leaders is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result. (p.15)

The professional learning survey data is a key accountability measure to the professional development offered as a result of the formation of the instructional framework and the district's multi-year action plan. The surveys provide clearly articulated, two-way communication about the quality and focus of district planned professional development. The TASC construct Two-Way Communication aligns directly to Finding Two of Waters and Marzano (2006), monitoring goals for achievement and instruction; it also aligns with the findings of Togneri and Anderson (2003) on the importance of decision-making based on data and a system-wide approach.

The central office staff, principal, and teacher leader participants shared a common theme: our superintendent cares. Two-way communication under the TASC construct includes a type of affective communication through which, according to the study participants, the superintendent expresses cares about what they do as educators. The teachers defined this as listening and allowing for input. The TASC construct, Two-Way Communication was two pronged; the communication relies on 1) data and, 2) written and verbal communication from the superintendent to the participants affirming their hard work.

Kouzes and Posner (2010) have focused three decades of research on effective leadership and report the following:

People said the leader made them feel empowered, listened to, understood, capable, important, like they mattered, and challenged them to do more. The overwhelming sense

we get from thousands and thousands of these responses are that the best leaders take action that make people feel strong and capable. They make people feel they can do more than they thought they could. (p. 69)

The participants stated the superintendent is approachable, friendly, and spends time in their schools. “The attitudes and actions of district, school, and classroom leaders shape the climate of their respective domains” (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 198). His presence in schools shows the participants the importance of linking the relationship of the superintendent to the school building. The act of spending time in schools shows educators the superintendent values and cares about their work and educator outcomes as defined by the *Learning Land Instructional Framework*. “To become the best leader you can be, think of learning as the ‘master skill of leadership’, never stop learning about how to become more effective, and translate your learning into action” (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 121).

The central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders were explicit in defining two-way communication in concrete ways. The literature supports the TASC component of Two-Way Communication and speaks directly to the superintendent’s use of emails, digital correspondence, district web page, and frequent updates and notes of encouragement across the district and to district stakeholders.

The communication component of TASC is very much a two-way street: speaking and listening go hand in hand. Feedback from two-way communication provides ideas for reshaping or refining a strategy, and problems with implementation are often revealed and can then be acted upon. (Fullan, 2009, p. 290)

The superintendent promotes an “open door” policy for participants to share information and concerns. The superintendent has expanded his use of tweeting and Facebook posts to

provide interactive communication between more formal methods. Throughout the interview process, the central office, principal, and teacher leaders commented that all communications delivered by the superintendent focused on core content, the articulation of district goals, and achievement.

Leaders establish a public, persistent focus on learning by making it central to their own work; consistently communicating that student learning is the shared mission of students, teachers and administrators, and the community; articulating core values that support a focus on powerful, equitable learning; and paying public attention to teaching. (Knapp, Copland & Talbert, 2003, p. 14)

Overall, the case study of the Learning Land School District aligns directly to the overarching definition of professional development stated in Chapter One. Professional development is supported through the process of district adopted policy, goals, and the implementation of district-wide commonly agreed upon best practices. Professional development is systemic, occurs over time, uses various forms of data to support practice, and is planned intentionally to support ongoing instructional improvement.

The researcher concludes the Learning Land School District formally commits its organization to the definition of professional development offered in the literature. The school district does this by explicitly focusing on teacher learning and student engagement to create a culture of learning as bounded by the *Learning Land Instructional Framework*. The district promotes professional development several times a week through district and building based collaborations. The district administration and teacher leaders are the district experts and create activities, workshops and conferences as their own experts, and maintain professional memberships in the state and national organization, Learning Forward.



### **Discussion of Intersection of Themes**

Through the identification of the intersection of themes, the researcher found themes that were prominent in more than one TASC construct. These themes were identified in the TASC constructs of Direction and Sector Engagement, Continuous Evaluation and Inquiry, and Supportive Infrastructure. These themes were a “nucleus” of the study and were reinforced in their importance through their intersection across constructs.

This ties back to the main research question of how does a superintendent implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district. Participants stated in each of these three constructs the importance of educator effectiveness, resources, the district instructional framework, and the district multi-year action plan as key capacity builders within the district. The participants stated by the superintendent specifically providing different kinds and levels of professional development, capacity building occurs. This in turn assisted in supporting all district educators and expanded the leadership and learning among administrators, teacher leaders, and teachers. The participants were emphatic that this is an effective way the superintendent invests in each educator, their skill level, and what they contribute to the Learning Land School District. The intersection of constructs serves as reinforcement to the significance of the themes within constructs.

### **Discussion of Overarching Themes**

The highest number of themes emerged in two TASC constructs, Capacity Building with Focus on Results and Managing the Distractors. The central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders were consistent and repeated that the “superintendent keeps the distractions away from them and allows them to focus on the learning work in their district.” These constructs mattered

the most to the principals and teachers. This supports the main research question and answers “how” the superintendent strategizes the use of professional development in a school district.

The central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders were consistent in their responses that increasing their leadership responsibilities, providing the protocol and modeling for facilitation of learning, and the time for practice, enabled them to increase the capacity to lead and learn in their respective roles. “Leaders, regardless of their role in the educational system, make learning the focus of their work because they hold a belief that when adults learn, students will as well” (Hirsh & Killion, 2007, p. 38). These themes emerged quickly as the researcher reviewed and coded the data. The participants, especially the teacher leaders, were abundantly clear: keep away the distractors and provide the time for us to do our work. This is “how” a superintendent accomplishes the effective practice and use of professional development in a school district.

### **Conclusions**

This study affirms that superintendent leadership is the driving force behind the improved practices and the staff’s perception of the effectiveness of providing focused professional development aligned to district goals. The superintendent’s role is identified as the chief academic officer. Professional development designed, provided, and selected must align to the district goals. This case study has outlined the framework to provide teacher professional development. More than any other employee, the superintendent is responsible in bringing together all district stakeholders to embrace the vision of the system and continually stress the importance of accomplishing the instructional goals of the organization and what specifically must be provided to make this happen. The superintendent knows how to delineate leadership needed to work with the Board of Education, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders.

The superintendent is specific about what and how each type of professional development will be delivered to assist each level of educator. The superintendent is deliberate in defining these actions by creating the instructional framework. The *Learning Land Instructional Framework* is fluid and cyclical, like the TASC constructs, by addressing the goals set by the Board of Education and the superintendent, and changing them based on the use of data to select collaboratively agreed upon practices to guide instruction.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) share common themes in their research. According to these prominent leadership experts, a superintendent is responsible for “setting directions” (p.3). This practice includes “identifying and articulating a vision, creating shared meanings, creating high performance expectations, fostering the acceptance of group goals, monitoring organizational performance, and communicating” (Leithwood & Riehl, p. 3-4). Core leadership principles extract common themes about the duties of a superintendent. The superintendent is the key individual for uniting the system rather than letting individual schools operate in isolation with site-based goals that may not align to a common vision (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). Through lateral capacity building, the superintendent does not sequester himself to the instructional implementation and accountability in the district, but ensures that all levels of leadership are brought along to influence the expansion of instructional best practices.

The superintendent perceptively follows the research of Waters and Marzano (2006) and Fullan (2009) in expanding the leadership capacity in the district. This also parallels the research of Fullan’s TASC constructs. The new understanding for the study is supported by both bodies of research in that they each define common practices that expand lateral capacity building among all levels of leadership. To do this, the superintendent provides the learning experiences needed to model instructional leadership. This is done through his use of meetings, agendas,

collaboration, and the components that provide the data included in the data dashboard. The power of the organization is engineered on the ability to self-generate among the participant groups to lead and learn in the district.

The superintendent understands that the pinnacle of leadership depends on his ability to “grow” other leaders. As confirmed by the literature, the theory of Fullan’s TASC constructs, and the study, the superintendent understands the importance of working side by side with central office administration, principals, and teacher leaders to strengthen the lateral capacity of the organization. This in turn increases the depth of instruction and best practices to affect the level of learning in the classroom. The superintendent “walks the talk” by exposing his leadership through modeling at meetings, undeviating meetings with central office staff and principals, being present in buildings, and consistently confirming his leadership goals via digital correspondence.

Both Waters and Marzano (2006) and Fullan (2009) place importance on the superintendent as an instructional leader. The superintendent is responsible for leading the instructional initiatives in the district, leading the goal setting process, and implementing and monitoring the leadership and work in schools to ensure professional development is targeted and effective. The central office administrators, principals, and teacher leaders consistently stated the superintendent manages the distractors to allow them to have a “laser focus” on their work and stay the course in their acquisition of the learning needed to lead in their respective roles.

All participants recognized the importance of an “aligned system.” This means the board goals are aligned to the leadership responsibilities of the central office administration, principals,

and teacher leaders. The indirect result is broadening the scope of adult learning and its effect on learning transferred to the classroom.

In the outcome of this study, it is apparent that the main research question is addressed by the central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders as they explicitly share how the superintendent uses professional development to increase the effectiveness of the instructional framework to ensure a learning system. The researcher has shared through the data explicit examples of how a superintendent successfully provides professional development in a school district to accomplish goals. The district is an already high performing district, but with that comes enhanced accountability to stakeholders to expand the circumference of high quality and explicit instruction. This also increases the pressure and deliberation from other school districts and systems as they look to a “how-to” model for systems improvement for teaching and learning. The TASC elements and evidence clearly outline the specific ways in which this system and the superintendent are making it work.

### **Implications for Personal Practice**

More and more is asked of school leaders. The superintendency has evolved from the past role of fiscal leader and manager to an instructional leader. “Leadership from the central office matters—both in terms of raising student achievement and in terms of creating the condition for adult learning that leads to higher levels of student achievement” (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 45). Superintendents need to understand not only the importance of the district’s greatest capital, its educators, but also how to shape the district learning environment to impact the classroom. As the researcher and a superintendent, I was drawn to this case study topic as a lifelong practitioner and learner. I remain interested in how to initiate change to spawn

systemic learning capital horizontally across the district and add the vertical growth of instructional practices to impact student learning.

In the past, districts used models that were school-based versus district-based for the implementation of improvement strategies for teacher and student learning. Most models do not focus strategically on the teacher's learning as a key catalyst to instructional change and improvement. All of the theoretical approaches shared in the literature review overlap with a basic component: systemic improvement guided by the chief officer of learning, the superintendent. Throughout the data, principals and teacher leaders were explicit in how the focus, scope, and sequence of their work is expected to be protected by the superintendent. Dufour and Marzano (2011) share in their book, *Leaders of Learning*, that there are core practices that strengthen the superintendent's ability to design professional development and lead instructional change. This includes a "clear and compelling vision" connected to goals (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p. 201). The main research question exposes how the superintendent shapes and supports the district's learning environment by focusing on professional development for instructional change. This approach most succinctly aligns to sub-research question one dealing with how a superintendent manifests the overall vision and direction "from the top" to provide professional development in a school district.

Accountability includes the superintendent using data to ensure the burden for learning is carried by everyone. This is what Fullan (2005) has called "intelligent accountability" (p. 14). Through this accountability framework that provides transparency to building and leadership practices, the superintendent is able to identify what makes a leader effective as a result and extension of his leadership.

Much more focus has been placed on the organization of learning in a school district. The research of Fullan (2009), DuFour (2007), and Darling-Hammond (2009) each reiterate explicit cynosure on how to use time and collaboration for peer to peer learning and the amount, types, and quality of professional development to be provided by a school district. Capacity building is a central component of each of these researchers. This coincides prominently with Learning Forward (2011) standards and the definition of professional development. Student learning is unable to occur without the continuous improvement and best practices of educators. “As professionals, they seek to deepen their knowledge and expand their portfolio of skills and practices, always striving to increase each student’s performance” (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 15). The superintendent collaboratively identifies the specific types of professional development that demarcates the uninterrupted practice needed to strengthen educators’ knowledge and skills. A benefit of improved practice is confidence and ability to enhance classroom learning, for both the educator and the student. The collaboration between district office, school administration, and teachers becomes learning orientated and trust-based to provide practitioners habitual opportunities to work within a framework that increases their skills and confidence for new pedagogy experiences.

The TASC constructs explicitly outline what systems work in school districts must contain. The constructs are permeable in nature as they guide the systemic learning work in schools. One or more of the constructs may be addressed simultaneously and in no certain order. By articulating the TASC constructs to a community of practice, “central office and school policy and practices become consistent with theories of action” (Honig & Copland, 2008, p. 3). The superintendent must be consistent in efforts to hold the organization accountable for all learning and leadership is delegated across the system (Learning Forward, 2011). Districts that

experience success create opportunities and partnerships for learning of all its constituents. By creating the conditions of trust to address “problems of practice,” the conditions are created to elevate the learning of educators and students (Honig & Copland, 2008, p.3). The participants of the case study expressed very clearly in the interview process that two constructs were the most relevant to their work, Managing the Distractors and Capacity Building with Focus on Results. The cusp and take away from the case study was clear. Participants valued keeping the distractors away and empowering them to do their work.

Finally, as a result of systemic redesign to create a stronger, more lateral learning system, the researcher would like to see more school districts and schools filled with experienced and inspired leaders who create energy and action when addressing instructional practices. Leaders who “feel” the power of learning and are able to share a defined model of systemic learning will bring about the learning growth of all educators that will impact student learning. Leaders and educators will work relentlessly when they see the “big picture” connected to specific practice by a confident and experienced instructional leader. Educators appreciate and value leadership when they see the bigger purpose. The end result is that principals, teachers, and students are more accepting of change when the district is functioning better by the leader putting into place a stronger system to learn. The school district stakeholders feel better served when they can see, hear, and understand the focus of the leader’s time. This case study is grounded in how specifically a superintendent’s leadership work aligned to the TASC components --particularly, Capacity Building with Focus on Results and Managing the Distractors-- to ensconce his leadership repertoire.

I participated in a thorough research and review of the literature, interviews with participants, collection of documents, and informal observations that deepened my knowledge of



how a superintendent implements district-wide experiences designed with the intent to positively impact teacher professional development. In addition, a district model was studied that encourages, supports, and enlarges the learning capacity in a district without a “top down,” heavy handed approach to accountability and learning.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

As districts and superintendents become better at defining, organizing, and providing the types of learning experiences designed to support educator learning, educators must be allowed to have ample time to expand pedagogy skills. The element of time is driven by an agreed upon definition of professional development that is further delineated by meeting with peers, reviewing data in teams, teacher to teacher observations in the classrooms, and modeling and documenting the learning experiences that increase student engagement and support healthy school cultures.

By determining a shared definition of professional development, understanding can develop among the board of education, administration, and the bargaining unit of how much time is needed for professional development, how it will be designed (instructional framework) and by whom, and how data is collected and used to inform instructional practice. When educators feel they have a “say” in their learning, they are more apt to take an active lead in collaboratively identifying and designing professional development to expand deep instructional practice (Fullan, 2009).

#### **Recommendation One**

The instructional framework as presented in this case study, could be replicated in a new setting. The central components of “aligned system” and “capacity building” could be studied to determine if superintendents who lead districts with fewer resources could restructure existing

instructional practices, according to the framework. This could focus deliberately on creating an aligned system to center and maximize educator learning. This could also include future research, such as the Fresno-Long Beach partnership, where a district could be matched to a mentor district to form a partnership where both districts work together to “spread the wisdom of the crowd” to increase educator learning practices (Fullan, 2009, p. 283).

This case study has provided an instructional framework model of how one superintendent provides professional development to increase the learning of the educators and students in a school district. This model may be shared with other school district superintendents who may have considerably fewer resources, urban or rural, or a lower socio-economic status among students. The model could be replicated in a school district by making adjustments and alignments to the district demographics and student population. Often times, districts have resources that have been unidentified by the entrenched habit of practicing in isolation without the concept of collaboratively based practices and leadership. The TASC model contains constructs that identify what constitutes and how to implement a change prototype.

### **Recommendation Two**

Leadership and learning go hand in hand. More research is needed to determine what theoretical approaches school districts, who wish to develop a successful model of systemic learning, are best suited to conceptualize, adopt, and implement changes in instructional practice. This means superintendents must better learn how to identify and segregate the precise components of a change theory that strategically focuses on professional development to increase educator effectiveness. The case study identifies the superintendent as the facilitator of processes resulting in aligned action throughout the district system and its people. And then correspondingly, to related standards for leadership that focuses on professional development to

promote educator learning in a school district. This case study has identified how the TASC constructs guide the process to make the connection to systems change that promotes higher levels of principal and teacher leader involvement. The study then identifies specific leadership standards as the path to an improved administrator skill base. Since this connection has been identified, more research may be done so states and organizations may glean a clearer, documented picture of learning through this brokering of theoretically based, exposed practice, and model of systemic professional development that improves educator leadership and learning that impacts the classroom.

Much more research and attention is being placed on the conditions of learning within system-wide improvement. School district superintendents can look towards each other, rather than observing and conceptualizing instructional models from afar that inhibit action and change in educational practices. District leadership may become more trust based, transparent, exchanged orientated and learn from each other.

### **Recommendation Three**

Specific attention and research must transpire on learning leadership. The new 2015 Standards (NPBEA, 2015) provide a refreshed and expanded look at leadership responsibilities. The refreshed standards need to be examined and time is necessary to study and integrate them into leadership programs and the related assessments for licensure. “Systemic improvement is possible only when the major features of the system are aligned around a common set of goals, and actors at each level have the knowledge, skill, and competence to execute their part of the strategy” (Elmore, 2009, p. 229).

As the expanded standards initiate focus and change in leadership programs in institutions of higher learning, further research is needed to determine what related effects the

standards will have on instructional leadership in school districts and in school buildings. In the face of expanded leadership standards, we need to begin the progression of new research to determine if superintendents understand the type of leadership that more directly enhances student learning by way of teacher professional development and if indeed, these standards bring about this kind of convergence. As more expectations on leaders increase, so does the strategic support needed to isolate more refined instructional leadership practices. The refreshed standards serve as a guide to how this may occur.

### **Summary**

This case study provided a purposeful examination to clearly understand the superintendent's role in designing, implementing, and monitoring professional development in the school district. The study includes (a) the meaning of professional development; (b) examining school leadership theories and roles; and (c) analysis of how professional development impacts the classroom design of a district instructional framework for professional development. As a result of the research, we clearly understand the superintendent's role in documenting an instructional model with defined resources and expanded leadership standards to chronicle the systemic shift to capacity building at every level, from central office staff, to principals, and to teacher leaders.

The researcher has concluded that the TASC constructs and evidence answer the research question and sub-questions succinctly and defines specific ways in which this district and the superintendent are being successful. The researcher presents an extensive examination of how a superintendent provides professional development in a cyclical and fluid fashion, similar to the TASC theory's use of constructs, to support learning in a school district. The researcher shares how a school district articulates a model concretely for other researchers and school district

leaders to study. More intently, this study has provided an opportunity to share how higher levels of involvement and leadership of a superintendent impacts professional development and instructional practice.

## References

- Abbate, F. J. (2010). Education leadership in a culture of compliance. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(6), 35-37.
- American Association of School Administrators. (2007) *Leadership for change: National superintendent of the year forum*. Arlington, VA.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology; Study, design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559. retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QRQR13-4/baxter.pdf>
- Belchetz, D., & Witherow, K. (2014). Ontario district embraces an evolving approach to learning. *JSD The Learning Forward Journal*, 35(1), 18-22.
- Belden, Russonella, & Stewart. (2005). From the Top: Superintendents on instructional leadership report of a national survey among superintendents. Retrieved from Belden, Russonella, Stewart website:  
<http://http://www.brspoll.com/uploads/files/edweek-report.pdf>
- Bjork, L. G., & Kowalski, T. J. (2005). *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Bloomberg, L.D. & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing qualitative research: A roadmap from beginning to end*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (2th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Boston Consulting Group. (2014). *Teachers know best; Teachers' views on professional development*. Boston, MA: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- Buckingham, M., & Clifton, D. (2001). *Now discover your strengths*. New York: Free Press.

- Castanola, J. (2005, June 15). The role of the superintendent of schools in improving student achievement. Ed.D. Dissertation (Publication No. AAT 0808591). New Britain, CT: Central Connecticut State University
- Cavana, R. Y., Delahaye, B. L. & Sekaran, U. (2001). *Applied business research: Qualitative and quantitative methods* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). US & Australia: John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Council of Chief State School Officers. (2008). *Education leadership policy standards: 2008*. Retrieved from [http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2008/Educational\\_Leadership\\_Policy\\_Standards\\_2008.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2008/Educational_Leadership_Policy_Standards_2008.pdf)
- Council of Chief State School Officers. (2014, June 10). CCSSO and NPBEA lead effort to refresh model standards for education leaders. Retrieved from [http://www.ccsso.org/News\\_and\\_Events/Press\\_Releases/CCSSO\\_and\\_NPBEA\\_Lead\\_Effort\\_to\\_Refresh\\_Model\\_Standards\\_for\\_Education\\_Leaders.html](http://www.ccsso.org/News_and_Events/Press_Releases/CCSSO_and_NPBEA_Lead_Effort_to_Refresh_Model_Standards_for_Education_Leaders.html)
- City, E., Elmore, R., Fiarman, S., & Teitel, L. (2009). *Instructional rounds in education: A network approach to improving teaching and learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano, C. V. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five*

- approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. (2008). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Crowson, R. L. (1992). *The superintendency and school effectiveness: An organizational hierarchy perspective*. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 3(1), 69-88.
- Daggett, W. R., Jones, R. D., International Center for Leadership in Education, & Model Schools Conference. (2004). *Rigor and relevance*. Rexford, NY: International Center for Leadership in Education.
- Danielson, Charlotte. (2014). *The framework for teaching: Evaluation instrument*.
- Datnow, A. & Castellano, M. (2003). *Success for all: District and school leadership*. In Murphy, J. & Datnow, A. (2003). *Leadership lessons from comprehensive school reforms*, pp. 187-208, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Darling- Hammond, L. D., Wei, R. C., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). *Status report on professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad*. Retrieved from National Staff Development Council website:  
[http://http://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/nsdcstudy2009.pdf](http://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/nsdcstudy2009.pdf)



- Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., Meyerson, D., Orr, M.T., & Cohen, C. (2007). *Preparing school leaders for a changing world: Lessons from exemplary leadership development programs*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.
- Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- DeSantis, L., & Ugarriza, D.N. (2000). The concept of theme as used in qualitative nursing research. *West Journal of Nursing Research* 22(3), 362.
- DeWalt, K. M., & DeWalt, B. R. (2002). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Domenech, D. (2009). *A foundation for leadership support*. *School Administrator*, 66(4), 41.
- Duffy, H., Brown, J., & O'Day, J. (2009). *Special series on the Fresno Long Beach learning partnership: Perspectives of district leaders*. California Collaborative on District Reform. 1000 Thomas Jefferson Street NW, Washington, DC 20007. Retrieved from [http://cacollaborative.org/sites/default/files/CA\\_Collaborative\\_Fresno\\_LB\\_Brief1.pdf](http://cacollaborative.org/sites/default/files/CA_Collaborative_Fresno_LB_Brief1.pdf)
- DuFour, R. (2007). *In praise of top-down leadership*. *School Administrator*, 65(10) 38-42.
- Dufour, R., & Marzano, R. J. (2011). *Leaders of learning: How district, school, and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Education, Consulting, Research, Analytics Group. (2010). *Effective superintendents: ECRA literature review*. Retrieved from <http://resources.aasa.org/ConferenceDaily/handouts2011/3000-1.pdf>

- Education Commission of the States (2005). *Professional development database*. Denver, CO: Author. Retrieved from <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/report.aspx?id=425>
- Education Insights at Public Agenda, Johnson, J., Arumi, A., & Ott, A. (2006). *The insiders: How principals and superintendents see public education today* (4). New York, NY: Public Agenda.
- Elmore, R. F. (2000, Winter). *Rebuilding a new structure for school leadership*. Washington, DC: The Albert Shanker Institute.
- Elmore, R. F. (2009). Institutions, Improvements, and Practice. In Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. (Eds.) *Change Wars* (pp. 221-235). Bloomington, USA: Solution Tree.
- Farkas, S., Johnson, J., Duffett, A., Foleno, T., & Foley, P. (2001). *Trying to stay ahead of the game: Superintendents and principals talk about school leadership*. New York: Public Agenda.
- Fletcher, J. K., & Kaufer, K. (2003). *Shared leadership: Paradox and possibility*. In C.L. Pearce & J.A. Conger (Eds.). *Shared leadership: Reframing the how's and whys of leadership*. (pp. 21-47). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fullan, M. (2002, May). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(08), 16-21.
- Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership & sustainability: System thinkers in action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Fullan, M., Hill, P., & Crevola, C. (2006). *Breakthrough*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M. (2008). *What's worth fighting for in the principalship?* New York: Teachers College Press.

- Fullan, M. (2009). Have Theory, Will Travel: A Theory of Action for System Change. In Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. (Eds.) *Change Wars* (pp. 275-293). Bloomington, USA: Solution Tree.
- Fullan, M. (2009). Large-scale reform comes of age. *Journal of Educational Change*, 10(2), 101-113. doi 10.1007/s10833-009-9108-z
- Gardner, J. (1993). *On leadership*. New York: Free Press.
- Glaser, B.G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity*. Mill Valley, CA: Sage.
- Goldring, E., Porter, A., Murphy, J., Elliott, S. N., & Cravens, X. (2007). *Assessing learning-centered leadership: Connections to research, professional standards, and current Practices*. Leadership and Policy in Schools. doi:10.1080/15700760802014951
- Graue, M. E., & Walsh, D.J. (1998). *Studying children in context: Theories, methods, and ethics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Grogan, M., & Sherman, W. (2005). Superintendents in Virginia dealing with issues surrounding the black-white test-score gap. In D. Duke, M. Grogan, P. Tucker & W. Heinecke (Eds.), *Educational leadership in an age of accountability* (p.120). Albany: Suny Press.
- Hargreaves, A. & Fink, D., (2003). Sustaining leadership. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84(9), 693-700.
- Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2006). *Sustainable leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education setting*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Hirsh, S., Killion, J., & National Staff Development Council. (2007). *The Learning Educator: A New Era for Professional Learning*.
- Hirsh, S., (2011). Standards for professional learning. Retrieved from <http://learningforward.org/docs/learning-system/system5-09.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

- Honig, M., & Copland, M. (2008, September). *The center for comprehensive school reform and improvement*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED502905.pdf>
- Kawulich, B. B. (2004). Qualitative data analysis techniques. *Journal of Research in Education*, *14*(1), 96-113. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257944757\\_Kawulich\\_B\\_B\\_2004\\_Data\\_Analysis\\_Techniques\\_in\\_Qualitative\\_Research\\_In\\_Darla\\_Twale\\_Ed\\_Journal\\_of\\_Research\\_in\\_Education\\_141\\_p\\_96-113](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257944757_Kawulich_B_B_2004_Data_Analysis_Techniques_in_Qualitative_Research_In_Darla_Twale_Ed_Journal_of_Research_in_Education_141_p_96-113)
- Khan, S. N. (2014). Qualitative research method: Grounded theory. *International Journal of Business and Management*, *9*(11). doi:10.5539/ijbm.v9n11p224
- Killion, J. (2015, June 8). *Kentucky Department of Education: Professional Learning*. Retrieved from <http://education.ky.gov/teachers/PD/Pages/default.aspx>
- Knapp, M. S., Copland, M. A., Plecki, M. L., & Portin, B. S. (2006). *Leading, learning and leadership support*. Retrieved from The Wallace Foundation website: <https://depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/Synthesis-Oct16.pdf>
- Knapp, M. S., Copland, M. A., & Talbert, J. E. (2003). *Leading for learning: Reflective tools for school and district leaders*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Center for Teaching and Policy.
- Konnert, M. W., & Augenstein, J.J. (1995). *The school superintendency: Leading education into the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Basel, Switzerland: Technomic Publishing Co.
- Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2003). *The truth about leadership: The no-fads, heart-of-the-matter facts you need to know*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Learning Forward. (2010). Key points in Learning Forward's definition of professional development. *JSD*, *31*(6), 16-17.

- Learning Forward. (2011). *Standards for Professional Learning*. Oxford, OH: Author.
- Learning Forward (2014). *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership*.  
Retrieved from [http://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/designing\\_professional\\_learning\\_report.pdf?sfvrsn=0](http://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/designing_professional_learning_report.pdf?sfvrsn=0)
- Learning Forward. (2014, February 13). *Knowledge briefs*. Retrieved from <http://learningforward.org/publications/knowledge-briefs>
- Learning Land District Goals and Action Plan* (2013). Learning Land School District.
- Learning Land Multi-Year Action Plan* (2014). Learning Land School District.
- Navigating complex change, organizing for success* (2013). Learning Land School District.
- Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership*. Philadelphia: Laboratory for Student Success.
- Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Steinbach, R. (1999). *Changing leadership for changing times*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Leithwood K., Louis, K.S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning*. New York: The Wallace Foundation.
- Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2010). *How leadership influences student learning* (Report for the Wallace Foundation). New York, NY: Wallace Foundation.
- Leithwood, K. A., Louis, K. S., & Anderson, S. E. (2012). *Linking leadership to student learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Liamputtong, P., & Ezzy, D. (2005). *Qualitative research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Louis, Karen Seashore. (2010). *Learning from leadership project: Investigating the links to improved student learning: Final report of research findings*. Retrieved from University of Minnesota, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement website: <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/key-research/Documents/Investigating-the-Links-to-Improved-Student-Learning.pdf>
- MacQueen, K.M., McLellan-Lemal, E., Bartholow, K., & Milstein, B. (2008). Team-based codebook development: Structure, process, and agreement. In G. Guest & K. M. MacQueen (Eds.), *Handbook for team-based qualitative research* (p. 125). Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015). *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015*. Reston, VA: Author
- Navigating Complex Change*. (2013). Learning Land School District.
- Mizell, H. (2010). *Why professional development matters*. Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.
- National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015). *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015* Reston, VA: Author.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, (2004). *The quality of the teaching workforce*. OECD Observer policy brief, February, 2004, pp. 213-221.
- Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Petersen, G. J. (2002). Singing the same tune: Principals' and school board members' perceptions of the superintendent's role in curricular and instructional leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 40(2), 158-171.  
Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision of Curriculum and Development.
- Ravitch, D. (2007). *Edspeak: A glossary of education terms, phases, buzzwords, jargon*.  
Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision of Curriculum and Development.
- Richards, L., & Morse, J.M. (2007). *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rubin, H.J. & Rubin, I.S. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage.
- Sawchuk, S. (2010, November 10). Proof lacking on success of staff development. [Web log post]. Retrieved from  
[http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/11/10/11pd\\_research.h30.html?qs=november+2010++inmeta:Authors%3DStephen%2520Sawchuk](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/11/10/11pd_research.h30.html?qs=november+2010++inmeta:Authors%3DStephen%2520Sawchuk)
- Sipe, L. R., & Ghiso, M.P. (2004). Developing conceptual categories in classroom descriptive research: Some problems and possibilities. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 35(4), 472-85.
- Smith, W. F., & Andrews, R. L. (1989). *Instructional leadership: How principals make a difference*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Snow-Renner, R., & Lauer, P. (2005). *Professional development analysis*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED491305.pdf>
- Spillane, J. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Stake, R. E. (1994). Case Studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 236-247). Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.
- Starratt, R. J. (2004). *Ethical leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Superville, D. (2015, May 11). New school leaders' standards emphasize instruction, culture and managing talent - District Dossier - Education Week [Web log post]. Retrieved from [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District\\_Dossier/2015/05/new\\_standards\\_for\\_school\\_leade.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2015/05/new_standards_for_school_leade.html)
- Togneri, W., & Anderson, S. E. (2003). *Beyond Islands of Excellence: What districts can do to improve instruction and achievement in all schools*. Washington, DC: Learning First Alliance.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2012). *Race to the top district*. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/sites/default/files/rtted-executive-summary.pdf>
- Wallace Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/key-research/Documents/Bridge-to-School-Reform.pdf>
- Wagner, T., & Kegan, R. (2006). *Change leadership: A practical guide to transforming our schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



- Waters, J. T., & Marzano, R. J. (2006). *School district leadership that works: The effect of superintendent leadership on student achievement*. Denver, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning. Retrieved from [http://www.mcrel.org/products-and-services/products/product-listing/01\\_99/product-90#sthash.5zLeKpbQ.dpuf](http://www.mcrel.org/products-and-services/products/product-listing/01_99/product-90#sthash.5zLeKpbQ.dpuf)
- Waters, J. T., & Marzano, R. J. (2007). *The primacy of superintendent leadership*. *School Administrator*, 64(3), 10-16.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2001). *Writing up qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, Robert K. (1981). The case study crisis: Some answers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26(1), 58-65.
- Yin, R. K. (1984). *Writing up qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## **Appendix A - Interview Guide: Superintendent**

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this case study is to understand how a superintendent implements district-wide experiences designed with the intent to positively impact teacher professional development.

### Research Question

The research question for this case study is:

From the perspective of the participants (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) how does a superintendent implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district?

### Protocol for Interview

Interviewer: Janet K. Neufeld

Nature of relationship with interviewees: None of the interviewees work in the same school district as the interviewer. The interviewer has no prior professional or social relationships with any of the interviewees; however, telephone contact was made prior to the face-to-face interview.

Process: Consent will be collected in advance, in person, and in writing. Interviews will be scheduled at times convenient for the participants. An interview will be scheduled at a district site at a time selected by the superintendent. The interview will be recorded on a digital audio voice recorder and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. The name of the participant will be changed for anonymity. The interview questions below will serve as a guide for the interview; however, the interviewer may ask clarifying questions or requests for embellishment of specific topics related to the superintendent's role in supporting professional development in a school district.

## Interview Questions

The interview questions align with the Theory of Action for System Change discussed by Fullan (2009) in *Change Wars*. Using the research questions, the framework and the literature review, the following interview questions were designed. The questions are coded as follows:

- Direction and sector engagement - DSE
- Capacity-building with a focus on results – CB
- Supportive infrastructure and leadership – SIL
- Managing the distractors – MD
- Continuous evaluation and inquiry – CEI
- Two-way communication - TC

## **Appendix B - Interview Questions/Superintendent**

- 1) Please introduce yourself and tell me about your association with the Learning Land school district. (DSE)
- 2) The Learning Land school district has implemented a model to provide district-wide professional development for teachers to support student learning in the school district. What do you see as the superintendent's role in developing teachers? (DSE)
- 3) How does the superintendent work with central office staff, principals and teacher leaders to provide the implementation of district-wide professional development for teachers? (CB)
- 4) How does the superintendent create structures and systems for central office to contribute to teacher professional development? (CB)
- 5) How does the superintendent create structures and systems for principals to contribute to teacher professional development? (CB)
- 6) How does the superintendent create structures and systems for teacher leaders to contribute to teacher professional development? (CB)
- 7) How does the superintendent align district resources to support the development of instructional practices? (SI)
- 8) How does the superintendent manage the distractors for central office staff and principals to maintain focus on professional development? (MD)
- 9) How does the superintendent manage the distractors for teacher leaders to maintain focus on professional development? (MD)
- 10) How effective do you see the superintendent at aligning professional development with central office staff and principal professional development goals? (CEI)

- 11) How effective do you see the superintendent at aligning professional development with teacher professional development goals? (CEI)
- 12) How effective do you see the superintendent in providing ongoing professional development support to help implement new protocols and practices in the classroom? (CEI)
- 13) Describe actions in which central office and principals are given input into district professional development events. (MD).
- 14) Describe actions in which teacher leaders are given input into district professional development events. (MD).
- 15) Describe the two-way communication from the superintendent across the district to support professional development. (TC)
- 16) How is the overall vision of district-wide professional development articulated to central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders from the superintendent? (TC)

## **Appendix C - Interview Guide: Central Office**

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this case study is to understand how a superintendent implements district-wide experiences designed with the intent to positively impact teacher professional development.

### Research Question

The research question for this case study is:

From the perspective of the participants (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) how does a superintendent implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district?

### Protocol for Interview

Interviewer: Janet K. Neufeld

Nature of relationship with interviewees: None of the interviewees work in the same school district as the interviewer. The interviewer has a prior professional or social relationship with the Assistant Superintendent of Academic Affairs; however, neither the interviewer nor interviewee have worked together professionally for five years. The interviewer will strictly adhere to the interview guide and this will be demonstrated in the transcripts of the interview.

Process: Consent will be collected in advance, in person, and in writing. Interviews will be scheduled at times convenient for the participants. Interviews will be scheduled at district sites at a time selected by the participant. All interviews will be recorded on a digital audio voice recorder and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. Names of participants will be changed for anonymity. The interview questions below will serve as a guide for the interview; however, the interviewer may ask clarifying questions or requests for embellishment of specific topics

related to the central office staff's role in supporting professional development in a school district.

### Interview Questions

The interview questions align with the Theory of Action for System Change discussed by (2009) in Change Wars. Using the research questions, the framework and the literature review, the following interview questions were designed. The questions are coded as follows:

- Direction and sector engagement - D and SE
- Capacity-building with a focus on results – CB
- Supportive infrastructure and leadership – SIL
- Managing the distractors – MD
- Continuous evaluation and inquiry – CEI
- Two-way communication - TC

## **Appendix D - Interview Questions/Central Office**

- 1) Please introduce yourself and tell me about your association with the Learning Land school district. (DSE)
- 2) The Learning Land school district has implemented a model to provide district-wide professional development for teachers to support student learning in the school district. What do you see as the central office role in developing teachers? (DSE)
- 3) How does the superintendent work with central office staff, principals and teacher leaders to provide the implementation of district-wide professional development for teachers? (CB)
- 4) How does the superintendent create structures and systems for central office and principals to contribute to teacher professional development? (CB)
- 5) How does the superintendent create structures and systems for teacher leaders to contribute to teacher professional development? (CB)
- 6) How does the superintendent align district resources to support the development of instructional practices? (SI)
- 7) How does the superintendent manage the distractors for central office and principals to maintain focus on professional development? (MD)
- 8) How does the superintendent manage the distractors for teacher leaders to maintain focus on professional development? (MD)
- 9) How effective do you see the superintendent is at aligning professional development with principal professional development goals? (CEI)
- 10) How effective do you see the superintendent is at aligning professional development with teacher professional development goals? (CEI)



- 11) How effective do you see the superintendent in providing ongoing professional development support to help implement new protocols and practices in the classroom? (CEI)
- 12) Describe actions in which central office and principals are given input into district professional development events. (MD).
- 13) Describe actions in which teacher leaders are given input into district professional development events. (MD).
- 14) Describe the two-way communication from the superintendent across the district to support professional development. (TC)
- 15) How is the overall vision of district-wide professional development articulated to central office staff, principals and teacher leaders from the superintendent? (TC)

## **Appendix E - Interview Guide: Principal**

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this case study is to understand how a superintendent implements district-wide experiences designed with the intent to positively impact teacher professional development.

### Research Question

The research question for this case study is:

From the perspective of the participants (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) how does a superintendent implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district?

### Protocol for Interview

Interviewer: Janet K. Neufeld

Nature of relationship with interviewees: None of the interviewees work in the same school district as the interviewer. The interviewer has no prior professional or social relationships with any of the interviewees; however, telephone contact was made prior to the face-to-face interview.

Process: Consent will be collected in advance, in person, and in writing. Interviews will be scheduled at times convenient for the participants. Interviews will be scheduled at district sites at a time selected by the participant. All interviews will be recorded on a digital audio voice recorder and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. Names of participants will be changed for anonymity. The interview questions below will serve as a guide for the interview; however, the interviewer may ask clarifying questions or requests for embellishment of specific topics related to the principal's role in supporting professional development in a school district.

## Interview Questions

The interview questions align with the Theory of Action for System Change discussed by Fullan (2009) in *Change Wars*. Using the research questions, the framework and the literature review, the following interview questions were designed. The questions are coded as follows:

- Direction and sector engagement - D and SE
- Capacity-building with a focus on results – CB
- Supportive infrastructure and leadership – SIL
- Managing the distractors – MD
- Continuous evaluation and inquiry – CEI
- Two-way communication - TC

## Appendix F - Interview Questions/Principal

- 1) Please introduce yourself and tell me about your association with the Learning Land school district. (DSE)
- 2) The Learning Land school district has implemented a model to provide district-wide professional development for teachers to support student learning in the school district. What do you see as the principal's role in developing teachers? (DSE)
- 3) How does the superintendent work with central office staff, principals and teacher leaders to provide the implementation of district-wide professional development for teachers? (CB)
- 4) How does the superintendent create structures and systems for principals to contribute to teacher professional development? (CB)
- 5) How does the superintendent create structures and systems for teachers to contribute to teacher professional development? (CB)
- 6) How does the superintendent align district resources to support the development of instructional practices? (SI)
- 7) How does the superintendent manage the distractors for principals to maintain focus on professional development? (MD)
- 8) How does the superintendent manage the distractors for teacher leaders to maintain focus on professional development? (MD)
- 9) How effective do you see the superintendent is at aligning professional development with teacher leader professional development goals? (CEI)

- 10) How effective do you see the superintendent in providing ongoing professional development support to help implement new protocols and practices in the classroom? (CEI)
- 11) Describe actions in which principals are given input into district professional development events. (MD).
- 12) Describe actions in which teacher leaders are given input into district professional development events. (MD).
- 13) Describe the two-way communication from the superintendent across the district to support professional development. (TC)
- 14) How is the overall vision of district-wide professional development articulated to central office staff, principals and teacher leaders from the superintendent? (TC)

## **Appendix G - Interview Guide: Teacher**

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this case study is to understand how a superintendent implements district-wide experiences designed with the intent to positively impact teacher professional development.

### Research Question

The research question for this case study is:

From the perspective of the participants (superintendent, central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders) how does a superintendent implement district-wide professional development to support teacher professional development in the school district?

### Protocol for Interview

Interviewer: Janet K. Neufeld

Nature of relationship with interviewees: None of the interviewees work in the same school district as the interviewer. The interviewer has no prior professional or social relationships with any of the interviewees; however, telephone contact was made prior to the face-to-face interview.

Process: Consent will be collected in advance, in person, and in writing. Interviews will be scheduled at times convenient for the participants. Interviews will be scheduled at district sites before the contract day, after school, or during the interviewees' plan times. All interviews will be recorded on a digital audio voice recorder and transcribed for the purpose of data analysis.

Names of participants will be changed for anonymity. The interview questions below will serve as a guide for the interview; however, the interviewer may ask clarifying questions or requests for embellishment of specific topics related to the teacher's role in supporting professional development in a school district.

## Interview Questions

The interview questions align with the Theory of Action for System Change discussed by Fullan (2009) in *Change Wars*. Using the research questions, the framework and the literature review, the following interview questions were designed. The questions are coded as follows:

- Direction and sector engagement - D and SE
- Capacity-building with a focus on results – CB
- Supportive infrastructure and leadership – SIL
- Managing the distractors – MD
- Continuous evaluation and inquiry – CEI
- Two-way communication - TC

## **Appendix H - Interview Questions/Teacher Leaders**

- 1) Please introduce yourself and tell me about your association with the Learning Land school district. (DSE)
- 2) The Learning Land school district has implemented a model to provide district-wide professional development for teachers to support student learning in the school district. What do you see as the teacher leader's role in developing teachers? (DSE)
- 3) How does the superintendent work with central office staff, principals and teacher leaders to provide the implementation of district-wide professional development for teachers? (CB)
- 4) How does the superintendent create structures and systems for teacher leaders to contribute to teacher professional development? (CB)
- 5) How does the superintendent align district resources to support the development of instructional practices? (SI)
- 6) How does the superintendent manage the distractors for teacher leaders to maintain focus on professional development? (MD)
- 7) How effective do you see the superintendent is at aligning professional development with teacher professional development goals? (CEI)
- 8) How effective do you see the superintendent in providing ongoing professional development support to help implement new protocols and practices in the classroom? (CEI)
- 9) Describe actions in which teacher leaders are given input into district professional development events. (MD)



- 10) Describe the two-way communication from the superintendent across the district to support professional development. (TC)
- 11) How is the overall vision of district-wide professional development articulated to central office staff, principals and teacher leaders from the superintendent? (TC)

**Appendix I - Data Demographic Form**

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

Perceptions

Observations

--	--

Identifying information for my use	Gender	Superintendent Central Office Principal Teacher	Contact information for my use	ID NUMBER
Name of location where interview takes place				
Interview Date				
Other persons present during interview				
Interview rcd.				

## Appendix J - Data Inventory

This case study included interviews and district artifacts as provided by the Learning Land School District. The participants in this study are the superintendent, two central office administrators, three principals and three teacher leaders from the school district. The following data inventory in Table 1 is the number of pages generated as raw data during the case study data collection process.

**Table J-1 Data Inventory from Case Study**

Source of data	Number of pages	Number of pages total
9 one-hour interviews per participant	Interviews: #1 – 9 pages #2 – 10 pages #3 – 7 pages #4 – 11 pages #5 – 9 pages #6 – 7 pages #7 – 9 pages #8 – 7 pages #9 – 10 pages	9 Interviews = 79 pages
Communication (email, informal conversation)	3 pages per participant	27 pages
Spreadsheet for interview participants schedule	1 page	1 page
	<b>Total Pages</b>	<b>107 pages</b>

## Timeline

The time required to complete this case study data analysis was twenty-four weeks.

Table 2 below reflects the timeline used to complete project items by the researcher.

**Table J-2 Case Study Timeline**

Date	Project Item	Participant's Role
Week 1 Dec. 1 - 3, 2015	Contact lead participant by email to participate in case study research Visit with participant by phone conference to discuss case study and build relationship/rapport Confirm participation in case study Email participation letter and informed consent form to the lead participant Journaling	Communicate with researcher Decide whether to participate in case study research Visit with researcher by phone conference to discuss case study involvement Confirm participation in the case study Acknowledges the preferred contact method to district individuals participating in the case study (email)
Week 1, December 3, 2015	Email participation letter to the lead participant Visit with participants by email to discuss case study and build relationship/rapport Journaling	Acknowledge participation email with consent Visit with researcher by email to become aware of case study and gain an understanding. Ask questions of researcher
Week 3, December 7-11, 2015	Send each case study participant a thank you emailing for confirming participation and an informed consent form Journaling	Acknowledge participation email and return informed consent form
Week 4, December 17, 2015	Meet with five participants to conduct case study interviews Journaling	Participate in the interview Answer questions asked by researcher
Week 5, December 21-25, 2015	Transcribe five interviews Journaling	None
Week 6, December 28-January 1, 2016	Read five transcripts and highlight phrases	None

	Journaling	
Week 7, January 6, 2015	Meet with four participants to conduct case study interviews Journaling	Participate in the interview Answer questions asked by researcher
Week 8, January 11-15, 2016	Send each participant a thank you email for participating in the case study interviews Transcribe four participant interviews Journaling	None
Week 9, January 18-21, 2016	Read four transcripts and highlight phrases Journaling	None
Week 10, Jan.25-29, 2016	Do preliminary coding from nine interviews Journaling	None
Week 11, Feb. 5 - 11	Analyze other data sources Do preliminary coding from other data sources Journaling	None
Week 12 - 26, Feb. 12 – May 21	Analysis of data	None
Week 24, June 20	Member checking by participants of chapter four Peer review of chapter four, data analysis Journaling Peer Review	Chapter Four sent to participants.  Chapter Four sent to peer reviewer.

## **Appendix K - Definition of Terms**

Terms used throughout this study are operationally defined as follows:

**Achievement:** Accomplishment; the mastery of a skill or of knowledge as a consequence of the individual's effort, training, and practice (Ravitch, 2007, p. 9).

**Administrator:** An individual who is licensed to coordinate, supervise, or direct an educational program or the activities of other practitioners.

**Direction and sector engagement:** Leadership is demonstrated as originating at the top and provides overall vision. Sector engagement includes a sense of flexibility and partnership with the field.

**Data Dashboard:** Summative display of district collected data.

**District-level Leadership:** Superintendent and central office personnel of a local school district. For the purposes of this study, the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and technology director were synonymous with district-level leadership.

**Principal:** A licensed member of a school's instructional staff who serves as an instructional leader; coordinates the process and substance of educational and instructional programs; coordinates the budget of the school; provides formative evaluation for all practitioners and other personnel in the school; recommends or has effective authority to appoint, assign, promote, or transfer personnel in a school building; implements the local school board's policy in a manner consistent with professional practice and ethics; and assists in the development and supervision of a school's student activities program.

**Professional Development:** The term professional development means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (Learning Forward, 2011).

**Professional Learning:** Professional learning is defined as the process of educators taking an active role in their continuous development and places emphasis on their learning. Professional learning enrolls educators as active partners in determining the content of their learning, how their learning occurs, and how they evaluate its effectiveness (Hirsh, 2011).

**Public School:** Any school directly supported in whole or in part by taxation.

**School District:** “A local education agency directed by an elected or appointed school board that exists primarily to operate public schools” (Ravitch, 2007 p. 189).

**Superintendent:** An administrator, who promotes, demotes, transfers, assigns, or evaluates practitioners or other personnel, and carries out the policies of a governing board in a manner consistent with professional practice and ethics.

**Two-way communication:** Communication that is strengthened by careful planning, resolve, application of transparency, and district communications. These would include professional learning experiences, the district website, board meetings, and building-based communication.

Communication is an opportunity to disseminate and receive feedback, especially when communication is about vision and strategy (Fullan, 2009, p. 291).