CASE STUDY: ENTRY-YEAR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A dissertation submitted to the Kent State University College and Graduate School of Education, Health, and Human Services in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving daughter P’Ashe Jones who has been a part of my journey and an inspiration to me and being loving and supportive daughter, thank you. This is also dedicated to my parents, my loving and prayerful mother Lovinia Ann Coakley who always encouraged me even when it was difficult to continue my studies to pray to God for guidance, thank you for being the gatekeeper of my life. To my step-father Rudolph Henry Coakley and my mother for all your prayers, love, guidance and financial support has made my dreams come through. To my loving sister Lorenda Woodside who has motivated me to excel, through your prayers and financial support made it possible for me to fulfill my dreams and therefore this degree is as much yours as mine.
This qualitative case study was designed to investigate elementary first-year teachers’ (EYTs’) perception of the value of their professional development. Good teachers form the foundation of good schools. Improving educators’ skill and knowledge is one of the most important investments of time and money that local, state, and national leaders make in education (American Educational Research Association, 2005). The challenge that reformers, policy makers and educators face with professional development is trying to evaluate the impact on teachers learning. Professional development evaluations must look at how to better understand the influence on teachers and to document its impact. My goal for this study is to shed light on entry-year teachers’ views of their professional development and document impacts on teacher learning. In the context of my dissertation research, two entry-year teachers (EYTs) were studied - both teachers at Booker T. Washington Elementary School, a public charter school in northeastern Ohio.

Data sources for this case study included four (4) teacher interviews, thirty-six (36) teacher observations per participants, and field notes. Data sources were also triangulated in order to answer the research questions. The findings of this study confirm previous research on
how teachers view professional development. Specifically, this study finds the need for EYTs to be allowed latitude to participate in the planning and implementation of their own professional development activities. Furthermore, being able to work in a collaborative and collegial workplace are critical to teachers’ professional growth. It was evident that during the study group meetings the EYTs focused more on their learning and the learners. Moreover, teacher perception of their professional development plays an important role as to how teachers learn the knowledge and skills and apply them in their classrooms. Professional development should be ongoing. The results of this study highlight several implications for entry-year teachers (EYTs) and professional development.

From the study findings, here are two areas for practice, policy and further research: (1) Study group, (2) teacher professional development.

**Key Words:** Entry-year teachers, professional development, teacher perception
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Educational and societal stakeholders want to know if professional development is a worthwhile investment. Opportunities have to be in place for follow-up, review, and monitoring of implementation of the teachers new knowledge from professional development. Professional development can be described as, "The sum total of formal and informal learning experiences throughout one's career from pre-service teacher education to retirement" (Fullan, 1991, p. 326). I agree that the focus of professional development evaluation should be on teachers’ newly acquired skill and knowledge base, as well as those changes that impact teaching practices and if those changes impact students’ outcomes (Mitchem, 2003; Mizell, 2001). The question that many researchers are asking, “What do we know about professional development programs and their impact on teacher learning?” (Borko, 2004). Puma and Raphael (2001) argue that evaluation of professional development should be viewed as part of the process of building local capacity reform. Documenting the connections between professional development and teachers’ learning is crucial for the improvement of student learning. Teachers knowledge and practices are the most immediate and significant outcomes of any staff development (Guskey & Sparks, 1996). Villegas-Reimers (2003) state:
One of the key elements in most of these reforms is the professional development of teachers; societies are finally acknowledging that teachers are not only one of the ‘variables’ that need to be changed in order to improve their education systems, but they are also the most significant change agents in these reforms. (p. 5)

Professional development delivery has changed over time, and many districts are now providing more intensive professional learning opportunities for teachers on a continual basis, rather than offering only short-term, in-service workshops (Puma & Raphael, 2001). In the context of new academic standards, school districts, schools, teachers, and students are held responsible for improved educational outcomes. Additionally, Puma and Raphael (2001) contend this is a result of an era of systemic, standard-based reform. They added, however, there are tensions involved in professional development evaluation:

But if the bottom line, ultimately, is the impact of a program on student achievement, the question becomes how much weight to give other intermediate effects, such as changes in teachers’ knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Should changes in instruction be considered an intermediate or an end outcome? (p. 3)

Furthermore, the researchers stated this question is dependent on the goals of the professional development program and the evaluation, as well as upon the constraints on the scope of evaluation. Linking professional development to student outcome is important because it is the effect of professional development on its direct participants – teachers; however, many districts evaluate the effect of professional development on
teachers without going on to assess the effects on students taught by those teachers (Puma & Raphael, 2001, p. 8).

The quality of staff development, Guskey and Sparks (1996) argued, is the central component of the model. Enhanced teacher knowledge and improved practices are the most immediate and significant outcomes of any staff development effort. Three important implications of the model are: (a) the relationship between staff development and improvement in student learning is complex, it is neither random nor chaotic; (b) the model offers guidance to those interested in evaluating the effectiveness of staff development efforts; and (c) the model illustrates the importance of a systemic approach to staff development and the need to view reform from a systems perspective (Sparks, 1996b).

Furthermore, Butler (1992) examined three areas of staff development: (a) the needs and characteristics of participant learners; (b) the program characteristics of purpose, structure, content, process and follow-up; and (c) the organizational characteristics that contribute to, or support, effective staff development. Butler contends staff development must be seen as an integral part of teachers’ professional lives, not as remediation with the implication that teachers are not adequately doing their jobs. Smith (1982) asserted that effective staff development programs should take into account the nature of adult learners and the need for making learning accessible to them. Furthermore, Elmore and Burney (1999) concur:

Successful professional development focus on concrete classroom applications of general ideas; exposes teachers to actual practice rather than to descriptions of
practice; it offers opportunities for group support and collaboration; and it involves deliberative evaluation and feedback by skilled practitioners with expertise about good teaching. (p. 263)

This chapter includes:

- Statement of the problem
- Purpose of the study
- Rationale of the Study
- Assumptions
- Definition of terms
- Overview of the study

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are continually bombarded with requests to upgrade their knowledge base, acquire and master new skills, and revise their teaching practices to ensure that all students achieve higher learning standards (Westchester Institute for Human Services Research, 1998). Little (1989) stated that over the past two decades, professional development had become a growing industry. Furthermore, Louden (1991) states, teachers are the key to educational change and school improvement. A teacher’s role is vitally important and it is what teachers think, believe, and do in the classroom that eventually shapes the kind of learning young people get (Louden, 1991). This is an enormous responsibility for novice teachers to shoulder.
In addition, The Westchester Institute for Human Service Research (1998) states, “Although there are a few documented examples of effective in-service training programs, these initiatives have emphasized feedback, frequent follow-up, coaching, and other forms of classroom technical assistance that are rarely used by districts” (p. 2). Furthermore, the report states that one of the characteristics of professional development effectiveness is that it should ultimately be evaluated on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning (The Westchester Institute for Human Service Research, 1998). It is imperative that educators, researchers, and policy makers try and determine the true impact of professional development. If the goal of teachers’ professional development is to enhance teachers’ knowledge and skills, then there needs to be more scrutiny about teachers’ subjectivity and their subsequent work in the classroom. Knight and Wiseman (2005) state,

Studies of professional development need to focus on classroom outcomes, which include impact on teacher classroom behavior and student performance. Weaknesses in this area include a lack of connection between professional development and student outcomes and inclusion of largely anecdotal accounts of teacher and student impact. (p. 403)

As schools endeavor to keep up with national standards for improved programming for teachers’ professional development, more studies are needed that take into account teacher perceptions of the types of professional development available, the quality of the professional development they have attended, and their views on the value of the professional development, as well as what students benefit from, they had learned.
Policy makers and reformers are beginning to see what and how educators teach depends on the knowledge, skills and commitments they bring to their teaching, as well as opportunities to continue learning in and from their practice (Fieman-Nemser, 2001). The teacher’s role has been described as creating a twenty-first century context for learning by making educational content relevant to students’ lives, while both bringing the world into the classroom and taking students out into the world (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003).

The importance of helping teachers cope with so many responsibilities becomes apparent when one considers that teachers are regarded as the chief factor affecting students’ performance. Beyond knowing their subjects well, competent teachers must also understand how to motivate students, access student achievement, diagnose problems in student learning, and use student assessment data to alter instruction to meet the needs of students (Hasselbring, Smith, Rakestraw, & Campbell, 2000).

The value of professional development in advancing school improvement has become evident in several state and national reports, as well as in research reports on school restructuring initiatives. Professional development programs are aimed at, and designed for, teachers in order to equip them to “be better teachers and educators” (Shaha et al., 2004). Most of the literature and research on professional development suggests that the goal of professional development is to provide opportunities for teachers to learn and grow within the profession, thereby making an impact on student learning (Lowden, 2005). The No Child Left Behind legislation recognizes professional development’s key role in school reform. The law also prescribes professional development activities to be
high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction, as well as the teacher’s performance in the classroom (Lowden, 2005).

That study purports the need to know more about teachers’ perceptions on the relationship between their professional development and possible impact. As Guskey (2002) and Killion (2002) pointed out, however, there are few studies that provide satisfactory data on teacher outcomes. Hence, policy makers and funding agencies are currently asking researchers for more evidence regarding the effects of professional development on student learning (Floden, 2001). However, several states and districts have encountered serious obstacles in their efforts to evaluate teachers in terms of students’ performance on standardized tests (Porter, Young and Odden, 2001). In light of this, researchers are coming to the conclusion that before we evaluate the success of professional development on student learning, professional development should prove beneficial to teachers first. Puma & Raphael (2001) state: “The question becomes how much weight to give other intermediate effects, such as changes in teachers’ knowledge, attitudes, and behavior” (p. 3).

In addition, Adsit (2004) and Bransford et al. (1999) contend that the majority of teachers’ professional development opportunities are described as ineffective because of the use of a defective model: a top-down, one-shot, lecture approach. This approach is not reflective of teachers’ interests, experiences, knowledge bases, or instructional realities. Cradler and Cradler (2002; 2003) and Donovan, Bransford, and Pellegrino (1999) indicated that the characteristics of learning opportunities needed by teachers are
similar to those needed by their students. Professional development evaluations must examine how to better understand the influence of professional development on teachers and document its impact on teacher learning.

Presently there is an abundance of literature exploring professional development delivery methods. Delivery methods come in numerous forms and reflect various aims; however, workshops and courses have been the most frequently employed methods (Moore, 2003). One-shot, in-service sessions have been regarded by too many educators, researchers, and staff developers as irrelevant (Dettmer et al., 1998; Guskey, 1995; Joyce & Showers, 1988). Darling-Hammond and Ball (1997) assert “professional development would be substantially improved if we were to develop ways to learn and teach about practice in practice” (p. 17). They also proposed that teachers could gain powerful and complex teaching strategies if they participated in well-designed staff or professional development focusing on those strategies (Dettmer et al., 1998; Joyce & Showers, 1988).

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to ascertain whether the two EYT’s were able to implement some of the strategies in their classrooms and to secure empirical evidence to support the value of professional development and to evaluate the subjects’ professional journey by documenting their perceptions of their professional development. Engaging the participants in meaningful dialogue, while collecting empirical data, allowed me to conduct prolonged observations of the participants’ actual use of the knowledge and skill they gained from professional development. I believe that by conducting this case study, investigating first-year, or novice elementary teachers, and their perception of the value
of their professional development this school district will receive crucial information that will enhance teachers’ educational quality and, therefore, possibly increase student learning. Hirsh (2005) argues that the quality of the teacher in the classroom has a greater impact on student achievement; therefore, through effective professional development this can improve teaching practices and close the achievement gap.

There are issues in evaluating professional development. The U.S. Department of Education: Division of Adult Education and Literacy (1997) stated it is important to consider the following:

- Sufficient time is required to pass before professional development activities can be expected to show success.
- Impact on instructors, program services, and learners must be measured.
- Data must be collected concerning the context in which instruction takes place, the extent administrative and other support structures reinforce practices promoted through professional development, and the nature of the professional development activities themselves.
- Professional development activities can only result in improved instruction and better instructional practices if adult education programs encourage and support instructors, allow instructors access to special knowledge, provide instructors the time to focus on requirements of a new task, and provide time to experiment and to observe others. (p. 5-6)

This case study can be justified strictly on the basis of the descriptive information it will provide to the manner in which the No Child Left Behind legislation recognizes
professional development’s key role in school reform. Operating from a constructivist point of view, my research will attempt to investigate teachers’ perceptions of the value of their professional development. This perspective provided me with a conceptual framework through which to investigate teachers’ personal experiences, thereby giving them a voice. It is my hope this study will assist educators and policy makers in focusing on the need for effective professional development to assist entry-year teachers. It will also provide data on the efficiency of these programs in improving students’ and teachers’ outcomes.

Rationale for the Study

Professional development is ‘enhancing teachers’ effectiveness’ and can also be described as ‘supporting professional growth’ (Villegas-Reimer, 2003). Educators, policy makers and reformers have identified professional development as the vehicle for teachers to require growth in knowledge, skills and judgment (Guskey, 2000; Guskey & Sparks, 1997; Little, 1992). There is an extensive collection of professional development literature over the past three decades. After reviewing the literature, I have learned that few studies focus on EYTs perceptions of their professional development activities in terms of improving teacher outcomes. Moreover, a number of those that claimed to do so evidently fail to take into account the range of variables that may affect outcomes.

Since 1997, Ohio has been one of the few U.S. states that allow charter schools due to the growth of ‘school choice’ that allow parents and students to leave the public schools and choose a school that they believe better meets their needs (Legislative Office of Education Oversight, 2002). Although there have been many studies conducted about
professional development in public schools, there are few regarding charter schools. During the past ten years, with the expansion of charter schools in the United States, more studies are needed to document what professional developments are being provided for these educators and their options for professional development and impact on teachers’ learning.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) state, “Many staff development initiatives take the form of something that is done to teachers rather than with them, still less by them” (p. 17). The researchers noted the teachers are clearly the key to change in the school (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996). Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) state,

For, teachers, change is not a paper plan or an elegant flow chart. It must happen in the busy and complicated worlds of their own classrooms. A consultant or a teacher educator can do a superb lead lesson, but it is the teacher who has to emulate that lesson hour after hour, day after day, week after week. A video on cooperative group work with computers can demonstrate excellence in strategies of instruction, but it is the teacher who must somehow carry out that group activity alongside all the other pressing demands of other students in his or her classroom. Change is too often idealized; thought of in self-contained systems and packaged too neatly. It needs to be dealt with in ways that are much more sensitive to the real world demands of the context of teaching. (p.19)

The promise of a high-quality education for all children is not simply dependent on a total restructuring of schools, but on the knowledge and commitment of practitioners to the project of restructuring (Dilworth and Imig, 1995). The climate for professional
development, as Judith Warren Little (1994) noted, includes five streams of reforms: subject matter teaching (standards, curriculum, and pedagogy); problems of equity among a diverse student population; student assessment; social organization of schooling; and professionalization of teaching. In order to remedy the problems of schools, policy makers are asking for professional development programs to meet the needs of the students in the hope they improve students’ learning. The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), The Healthy Start Initiative 1991, and many more initiatives address professional development as a needed component for educators to be able to assist in addressing the needs of their students’ learning. There will always be a need for teachers’ continuing education and teachers should play an essential part of the planning and implementation of their own professional development (Tuomi, 2004).

Sparks (1994) contended that staff development had undergone a paradigm shift and postulated three powerful ideas that shaped the movement: results-driven education, systems thinking, and constructivism. Professional development is essential for professionalization (Joyce & Calhoun, 1994). It is the contention of numerous researchers that professional development must focus on those things that research indicates are related to improved student outcomes (Wood & Thompson, 1993).

It is my contention that professional development helps teachers understand their beliefs and fosters understanding about their students. The National Education Association (NEA) and the Foundation for the Improvement of Education inspire public education employees to ensure that all students succeed. Teachers’ professional development is the means for change. Educators are still seen as agents of change.
However, more studies on teachers’ perception on the value of their professional development are needed. My study, along with others, should shed light on the growing need for districts to evaluate the success of professional development.

Assumptions

This study was guided by the researcher assumptions that entry-year teachers (EYTs) perception of their professional development and impact on teachers’ learning is not clearly understood and that by using a qualitative case study would provide in-depth rich data showing the relations. The researcher assumptions were made regarding entry-year teachers and professional development:

1. If the entry year teachers (EYTS) were engaged in their professional development activities and gave it a positive rating then they would want to acquire the knowledge and skills from the professional development.
2. If the EYT's were dissatisfied with the professional development it would have no impact on them or their teaching.
3. The EYT's involved in this study would give honest responses of their true perception of their professional development.

Definition of terms

*Professional development* - activities teachers participate in to inform or improve the job-related knowledge, skills or attitudes of school employees or a process of growing and becoming a professional.
Teacher perception – educator’s personal response as it relates to their professional development experiences.

Teacher impact – measureable change or outcomes that an educator makes from professional development.

Public charter school – An alternative to public school and independent of traditional school bureaucracies where innovative teaching and learning could occur. Vouchers allowed public school students to opt out of the public school system and use the money allocated for their education towards private schools.

Entry-year teacher - An educator who holds a 2-year provisional license, is employed full-time in the field of their provisional license, and is teaching in field for at least 120 days (Ohio Department of Education).

Study Overview

This qualitative case study dissertation is divided into five major chapters that present the research designed to investigate elementary entry-year teachers’ perception of the value of professional development. Chapter one provided an introduction for the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, rationale of the study, assumption, and definition of the terms relevant to the study.

Chapter two provides a review of related literature, a conceptual framework for the study that identifies the importance of teacher professional development and a historical review overview of professional development.

Chapter three describes the rationale of using the qualitative case study methodology, making reference to literature on qualitative research design. The chapter
also describes the role of the researcher in the study, a descriptions of the two teacher participants, descriptions of the school, and methods used for data collection.

Chapter four presents a summary of the data collected (professional development days, teacher interviews, teacher observations) and the emergent themes.

Chapter five provides a discussion of the implications of the study’s findings, and further research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Framework

There is a need for studies that investigate first-year elementary teachers’ perception of the value of their professional development activities over time. After reviewing the literature, I found few studies focusing upon teacher training to better understand the influence of professional development on teachers.

This current study draws upon the literature of teacher professional development (Adger & Temple, 1999; Belzer, 2003; Borko, 2004; Guskey, 1995; Shaha et al., 2004; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990); beginning teachers (Andrew & Andrew, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Hecks & Williams, 1984; Howe, 2006; Weiss & Weiss, 1999); and teacher change (Guskey, 1986, 1995, 2000, 2002; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Malone & Rowe, 2003; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). Professional development is the process of growing and becoming a professional (Morrison, 2003, 2006). The terms professional development, staff development, and teacher in-service education will be used interchangeably throughout the literature review. Rodriguez (2005) describes teacher professional development as being enshrined “in articulation, standards, accountability, competences and ultimately licensure” (p. 2). Further,
professional development is described as the primary vehicle in efforts to bring about needed change, and its purpose is to help teachers improve their practices (Belzer, 2003; Guskey, 1995; Guskey, 2002; Shaha et al., 2004). Teacher professional development is regarded as an essential tool for providing teachers with continual support in their teaching. An extensive collection of professional development literature has accumulated over the past three decades. Numerous studies clearly show that teachers participate in professional development activities because they believe these activities will expand their knowledge and skills in ways that will enhance their effectiveness with students (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978; Guskey, 1986).

In the book *Paths to Partnership*, Knapp and his colleagues (1994) stressed the importance of preparing professionals for complex human needs. They emphasized that professionals are seen as agents of change. The *National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future* (1996) reported that teachers’ knowledge and skills powerfully influence students’ learning. They added there is no real system in place to ensure teachers secure access to the kinds of knowledge they need to help their students succeed. Changes in society and in theories of learning and teaching have created new pedagogical challenges requiring educators to reshape learning environments and reform classroom activities (Brown et al., 1998; Rasku-Puttonen et al., 2004).

The 1997 report, *Doing what matters most: Investing in quality teaching*, which was issued by the National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future, focuses on the relationship between teacher knowledge and student performance as well as the kinds of teacher education and professional development teachers require in order to learn how to
teach to high standards. The report also discusses what particular states were doing to provide these opportunities for teachers, and with what results (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1997). It is the researchers’ contention that teacher knowledge of subject matter, student learning and development, and teaching methods are all-important elements of teacher effectiveness. The commission (1997) recommended that states, schools, and colleges reinvent teacher preparation and professional development through the following measures:

1. Organize teacher education and professional development around standards for students and teachers.
2. Offer graduate level teacher preparation programs which provide year-long internships in a professional development school.
3. Create and fund mentoring programs for beginning teachers which provide support while also assessing teaching skills.
4. Create stable, high-quality sources of professional development, and allocate 1% of state and local spending to support them, along with additional matching funds to school districts that invest in teacher learning.
5. Take steps to embed professional development in teachers’ daily work through joint planning, study groups, peer coaching, and research.

Five premises that would make a difference were discussed in the report on professional development. These five premises were: (a) teachers’ prior beliefs and experiences affect what they learn; (b) learning to teach to the new standards takes time and is not easy; (c) content knowledge is key to learning how to teach subject matter so
students understand it; (d) knowledge of children, their ideas, and their ways of thinking is crucial to teaching for understanding; and (e) opportunities for analysis and reflection are central to learning to teach (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1997). Darling-Hammond & Ball (1997) stated:

Professional development that links theory and practice, which creates discourse around problems of practice, that is content-based and student-centered, and that engages teachers in analysis of teaching can support the serious teacher learning needed to engender powerful student achievement. (p. 35)

As noted, effective professional development is at the center of educational reform, and it is an integral part of current efforts to transform and revitalize education (Dilworth & Imig, 1995). In 1994, Congress adopted The National Educational Goal, which states:

By the year 2000, the Nation’s teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the 21st century (Ravitch, 1995).

Historical Overview

A turning point in the history of U.S. teachers’ professional development occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, a significant period of educational reform. The so-called Sputnik Era saw the launch of such reform efforts due to an increase in federal funding in response to public perception that American schools were weak in science, technology, military, and economics. Educators, scientists, and mathematicians broadened and
accelerated educational reforms and new programs were developed in mathematics and science education throughout the 1950s. As critics argued that the curriculum did not develop the intellectual skills needed to compete in the development of technology (Spring, 2004), a new emphasis was placed on raising academic standards, especially in the areas of science and mathematics.

The 1950s and 1960s were an era characterized by a didactic approach to teaching research. The premise of this approach was that characteristics of teachers and teaching were linked in some causal way to desired student outcomes, and the purpose of research was to seek out the relationships between those variables (Gage, 1963). The key thinkers of the didactic approach were Thomas Gage, Pierre Laplace, and Descartes. During this period, many experimental and quasi-experimental research designs were employed (Campbell & Stanley, 1988).

In the National Defense Education Act of 1958, a great emphasis was placed on scientific inquiry and mathematical problem solving. The American Educational Research Association (1995) reported that 1960s research on the links between teacher learning and student achievement focused on “generic” teaching skills, such as allocating class time, providing clear classroom demonstrations, assessing student comprehension during lectures, maintaining attention, and grouping students. During this period, the focus was on basic skills (Carlson, 1992). Similarly, Allen and Ryan (1969) describe the 1960s as a period characterized by micro-teaching, whereby teachers learned instructional skills during professional development. This era also saw a surge in process-
product studies focused on the association between teaching and student learning (Floden, 2003).

During the early 1970s, research on staff development focused on attitudes of educators about the effectiveness of their in-service programs. The findings indicated dissatisfaction with the then current in-service programs (Brim & Tollett, 1974; Joyce & Peck, 1977). Spring (2004) noted social-efficacy advocates joined forces to emphasize, as a solution to discipline and economic problems, expanded vocational offerings and closer linkages between the curriculum and the needs of the labor market. Most research on teaching around the mid-70s was based on a model that sought to establish associations between certain measures of student learning. Ravitch (1995) noted that, in the 1970s, measured declines in student performance on tests led to a host of critical reports by national and state commissions about the quality of education. The 1970s research in teaching gave its attention to understanding and, in the process, began to embrace a broad range of pedagogic thinking (Hamilton & McWilliam, 2003). This marked a period characterized by interpretive and critical approaches to studying teaching. Researchers contended it was important for teachers to understand their experiences and stressed that teachers were in a position to study their own practices. As Hamilton and McWilliam (2003) noted, research – at least research focused on teaching – began to pay renewed attention to the understanding, or interpretations, of practitioners.

During the 1980s, standards were raised and research focused on supporting skills-oriented approaches to professional development. Around this period, the public was dismayed by the poor performance of American students on international
assessments of mathematics and science and policy makers demanded accountability for results (Ravitch, 1995). Additionally, during the 1980s, staff development emerged as a primary tool to improve student learning. As Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) stated:

[Staff development] was the focus of countless conferences, workshops, articles, books, and research reports. State legislators and local school district administrators considered staff development a key aspect of school improvement efforts. Many school districts initiated extensive staff development projects to improve student learning. (p.235)

In 1986, Thomas Guskey presented a model which focused on the process of teacher change through staff development programs. He contended that the educational field required enhancement of the professional skills of present staff members. This article examines the systemic attempt to facilitate teachers change through staff development. Guskey contended there are two critical factors that cause staff development failure. He stated that staff developers do not take into account “[w]hat motivates teachers to engage in staff development, and the process by which change in teachers typically takes place” (p. 6). This “teacher change” model was an alternative to pre-existing models in that it focused on the process of teacher change. Guskey’s model, however, does not account for all the variables that might be associated with the teacher change process through staff development or professional development.

Judith Little (1989) sought to develop guidelines for staff development when she set forth the following measurements: duration of formal activities, demonstrable links to the classroom, and congruence with developments in curriculum or other aspects of the
educational program. She identified four mechanisms by which teachers assert their own interests and priorities in professional development: (a) teachers act as independent consumers when they elect to pursue a course of university study, to attend conferences on their own time, or in other ways follow their individual interest; (b) teachers participate in a range of formal and informal needs assessment activities; (c) teachers secure a modicum of collective influence through the operation of formal advisory committees at the school and district level; and (d) teacher’s organizations constitute a mechanism for collective influence.

For years, the traditional models of professional development available to teachers were ‘staff development’ or ‘in-service training’ usually consisting of workshops or short-term courses that would offer teachers new information on a particular aspect of their work (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Ingvarson (1989) stated that the traditional system, while essential, was no longer enough. He proposed that in the in-service education system the teacher’s role is limited and the level of commitment may be low. Ingvarson added that the in-service is usually done for, or to, teachers. In the standard-based system, on the other hand, teachers take ownership of this system. Ingvarson stated:

A standard-based professional development system has the capacity to reduce that mismatch by providing much clearer, long-term goals for professional development. Such a system would place greater responsibility for professional development in the hands of the profession and thereby strengthen teachers’ sense of ownership and responsibility for its quality. (p.138)
Similarly, Sheerer (2000) took issue with the traditional model, contending it supports theory over practice. Sheerer preferred a collaborative model for researchers and in-service teachers and argued that professional development for teachers’ needs to go beyond training to allow teachers to act as well-informed critics of reform. This model emphasizes collaborative action research projects in partnership with universities and schools (Moore, 2003).

During the 1990s, teachers’ professional development tended to focus on subject matter and student learning (American Educational Research Association, 2005; Guskey & Sparks, 1996; Little, 1989). Leading experts operating in this era suggested that traditional forms of teacher professional development lacked the focus, intensity, and continuity needed to change classroom practices (Little, 1993). This view was exemplified in Research Points: Essential information for educational policy, a report published by the American Educational Research Association (2005), which stated:

[Research has] suggested that professional development can influence teachers’ classroom practices significantly and lead to improved student achievement when it focuses on (1) how students learn particular subject matter; (2) instructional practices that are specifically related to the subject matter and how students understand it; and (3) strengthening teachers’ knowledge of specific subject-matter content. Close alignment of professional development with actual classroom conditions also is key. (p. 4)

Thomas R. Guskey and Dennis Sparks (1996) suggested that documenting the connections between staff development and improved student learning was becoming
more crucial. It is their contention, however, that school leaders must ask questions such as: What improvements in student learning do we seek, and what changes must be made to get those results? What types of staff development are required to make those improvements? How will we know if staff development led to those improvements? In their article, Guskey and Sparks described a model that focused on the relationship between staff development and improvements in student learning. The premise of the model is that the quality of staff development is influenced by three major components: content characteristics, process variables, and context characteristics.

Guskey and Sparks (1996) argued that the quality of staff development is the central component of the model. Enhanced teacher knowledge and improved practices are the most immediate, and most significant, outcomes of any staff development effort. Three important implications of the model are: (a) the relationship between staff development and improvement in student learning is complex, it is not random or chaotic; (b) the model offers guidance to those interested in evaluating the effectiveness of staff development efforts; and (c) the model illustrates the importance of a systemic approach to staff development and the need to view reform from a systems perspective. The strength of these three factors largely depends on how they interact, and therefore, it varies from setting to setting. This model clearly shows there are many variables that affect student learning.

Additionally, Guskey and Sparks (1996) contend that if staff development does not alter teachers’ professional knowledge or their classroom practices, there will be little improvement in student learning. They further stated that while the model is helpful, it
does not adequately portray the important role desired student learning outcomes should have in determining the content, process, and context of staff development.

There are numerous factors which make professional development essential for educators as the number of children living below the poverty line increases; studies are being conducted to determine a relationship between poverty and schools (Simbeni & Allen-Meares, 2002). According to Milner (2006), teachers and schools, in large measure, appear to be falling behind in their thinking, pedagogy, and curriculum decision making, particularly with students of color. According to Knight and Wiseman (2005) professional development that includes intercultural skills and knowledge for teachers of diverse students may be needed to address the mismatch between conditions in current classrooms and the characteristics of diverse students (p. 389).

Teachers Change through Professional Development

Professional development is a journey all teachers travel throughout their professional career. Stage theory of teachers’ cognitive processes which Berliner (1994) contend in order for teachers to move from novice to expert through five levels: novice, advance, beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. The researcher noted teachers’ experience is not the only variable through which they move through these five levels. However, Richardson (1996) argues that the concept that beliefs can affect change in practice and therefore requires attention in any change process and become the focal point of change effort (Richardson & Placiers, 2001). Throughout the literature on change in teacher education and staff development is belief (Richardson & Placiers, 2001). Furthermore, the researchers noted beliefs are examined as factors, that interacts with the
change process and affect outcomes vice versa. The researchers cited Smylie (1988) study, which concluded teachers ‘perceptions and beliefs were the most significant predictors of individual change. Another concept that received significant attention in the literature was reflective practice. Schon (1983) conception of the reflective practitioner, Richard and Placier (2001) state, “A challenge facing researchers in this area has been to develop ways of determining whether teachers and pre-service students are reflective and ways to assess whether changes in reflection occur as result of an intervention “ (p. 913). Moreover, this concept drove teacher education program and staff development.

Numerous studies on teacher change have concluded this phenomenon is dependant upon professional or staff development (Guskey, 1986, 1994, 2000 & 2002; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). Building Professional Development Partnerships for Adult Project, (1997) cited Kirkpatrick (1994) state,

Professional development has its most immediate and direct impact on instructors, since they are the direct target of the training. Evaluation can address three areas of such impact: (1) instructors’ reactions to the professional development experiences; (2) their acquisition of knowledge and skills gained from the experience; and (3) changes in instructional behavior resulting from experience. These aspects build on one another, and reactions are necessary condition for the acquisition of skills and knowledge; and its’ through the acquisition of skills and knowledge that change in instructional behavior can be expected. (p. 12)

According to Collins (2000), professional development is about change – change in what you know and believe about teaching and learning what can be done in the
classroom (p. 25). It is imperative that we be able to document teachers change as it relates to professional development. In addition, Building Professional Development Partnerships for Adult Project (1997) state,

Key issues in assessing change, therefore, revolve around identifying how much of the new learning finds its way into instructor’s practice, and whether the learning persists. What is already surmised is that more complex learning theories, knowledge and skills, or learning that is new to the instructor, will be less likely to find its way into practice. Some learning may translate into practice, but changes may be short lived if instructors do not perceive the changes as having positive effects on students, or they do not perceive support from administrators. Short-term changes may occur right after the learning experience, as instructors “experiment” with newly acquired skills. Integrating new knowledge and skills into daily practice, therefore, may be difficult unless support structures, teacher incentives, and opportunities for practice (e.g. mentoring, coaching), as well as feedback are in place. (p. 14)

Clark and Hollingsworth (2002) stated, “If we are to facilitate the professional development of teachers, we must understand the process by which teachers grow professionally and the conditions that support and promote that growth” (p. 947).

Richardson and Placiers (2001) discussed the empirical-rational and normative-re-educative approaches to change. The empirical-rational approach assumes that if a teacher is shown by others a good practice is good will act in their self-interest and makes the appropriate change either in knowledge, information, intellectual premises, and
behavior. The researchers contend the normative-reeducative approach propose
individuals act on the basis of sociocultural norms to which they are committed, which is
an essential condition for change and the individuals (teachers) would alter their
normative orientation and develop new ones (Richardson & Placiers, 2001; p. 917).

Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Malone and Rowe (2003) designed a study based on the
overall hypothesis that teachers change in different ways and degrees as a result of
participating in professional development, and that multiple factors influence the type and
amount of change practitioners experience as a result of professional development (p. 2).
They listed three factors: (a) individual factors, which involve the teachers’ experience,
knowledge, and attitudes about teaching as they come into the professional development;
(b) professional development factors, which are the quality and the amount of
professional development teachers attended; and (c) program and system factors, which
are the structure of and support offered by the program, adult education system, and
professional development system in which the teachers work.

Professional development and teacher change requires support (Stein et al.,
1999). Furthermore, teacher change is not easy to bring about (Bridges, 1991; Garmston,
1997; Richardson, 1998). Research has shown that teacher change through professional
development is not always linear (Fullan, 1990; Smith et al., 2003). Researchers,
however, agree that in order for teacher change to take place, professional development
should be longer in duration so teachers can learn about their own practice and follow-up
(Joyce & Shower, 1995; Smith et al., 2003; Stein et al., 1999). Clark and Hollingsworth
(2002) described six perspectives on teacher change:
1. Change as training – change is something that is done to teachers; that is, teachers are “changed.”

2. Change as adaptation – teachers “change” in response to something; they adapt their practices to changed conditions.

3. Change as personal development – teachers “seek to change” in attempt to improve their performance or develop additional skills or strategies.


5. Change as systemic restructuring – teachers enact the “change policies” of the system.

6. Change as growth or learning – teachers “change inevitably through professional activity”; teachers are themselves, learners who work in a learning community (p. 948).

According to the researchers, the central focus of current professional development efforts should be a “change as growth or learning” perspective (Clark and Hollingsworth, 2002). In addition, Sparks (1988) study was conducted to assess the behavior changes and attitudes. He found that teachers who viewed the practices as important implemented the practice in their classrooms more than teachers who did not. The researcher found that the improving teachers specified the training gave them a keen sense of control over their teaching surroundings and they have also a higher sense of self-efficacy.
Teachers need continuous access to the latest knowledge about teaching and learning (The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996). The Commission recommended states, schools, and colleges should provide:

- Organize teacher education and professional development around standards for students and teachers.
- Institute extended graduate-level preparation programs that provide year-long internships in a professional development school.
- Create and fund mentoring programs for beginning teachers that provide professional development; then allocate one percent of the state and local spending to support them, along with additional matching funds to school districts.
- Create stable, high-quality sources of professional development; then allocate one percent of state and local spending to support them, along with additional matching funds to school districts.
- Embed professional development in teachers’ daily work through joint planning, study groups, peer coaching, and research. (p. 4)

Changes in society and theories of learning and teaching have created new pedagogical challenges which require educators to reshape learning environments and reform classroom activities (Brown et al., 1998; Rasku-Puttonen et al., 2004). Looking at teachers as adult learners, the literature on adult learning provides connections and insights into teachers’ professional development. Wilson and Hayes (2000) described
adult learning as profoundly affected by the larger socio-cultural, economic, and political conditions in which they take place.

In the book *Building the Base for Quality Teaching*, Glatthorn and Fox (1996) contend that knowing how teachers develop professionally can help principals in fostering continued growth. They synthesized research on how adults learn from findings drawn from Cross (1981), Knowles (1984), and Lambert (1984), stating:

First, adults seem to prefer a learning structure that emphasizes flexibility of time and pacing, heterogeneity of group membership, individualization, and interaction with the instructor. Second, the learning climate is crucial to adults. They want to learn from each other and do better in a climate of trust, in which differing views are welcomed. They hold very clear expectations that they hope the instructor will take into account. (p. 8)

Donna Amstutz (1999) listed four dominant paradigms to describe adult learning theories, which Moore (2003) cited:

1. **Behaviorist**: competency-based curricula and programs, training programs, instructional design
2. **Humanist**: potential for self-actualization, self-direction, internally motivated towards changes in values, attitudes, and beliefs about the self
3. **Cognitivist**: mental and psychological processes of the mind, perception, insight, and meaning making
4. **Liberatory**: critically examining the values, beliefs, and assumptions of adult learners.
Reading about these four dominant paradigms led me to an understanding of the process of change in teachers’ professional development. Effective teachers’ professional development brings about transformative learning, which should be a goal for professional development (Cranton & King, 2003). The researchers included five strategies which can apply to professional development in order to promote transformative learning: action plans, reflective activities, case studies, curriculum development, and critical theory discussion. It is their contention that if we view professional development as an opportunity to cultivate transformative learning, it gives us a new perspective on our goals, what we do in our practice, and how we think about our work. They also postulate that professional development which is transformative in nature provides grounding for continual lifelong learning in the profession.

Regarding the goals of change or improvement, Moore (2003) indicates not all teachers change, either in practice or in cognitive development. Van Driel, Beijaard, and Verloop (2001) suggested two reasons why change is difficult: because (a) teachers are inclined to resist change and (b) their own practice is rooted in practical knowledge built over the course of their careers which has served them well. Teachers’ practical knowledge is built over the years as experience, and teachers are not likely to incorporate new techniques that will give them variety and new methods of instruction (Moore, 2003). The change in teachers’ practice has to be seen as useful and beneficial in order for them to make changes (Moore, 2002; Sanchez & Valcarcel, 1999).

Dettmer and colleagues (1998) state staff development can provide adults with opportunities they need to engage in lifelong learning. They state that adult learners need
practical focused help, options and choices, efficient use of their time, arrangements that provide for their comfort, and follow up on applications of staff development content (p. 15).

In addition, Olsen and Craig (2001), Sheerer (2000), and Shimahara (1998) also argue that activities inclusive of teachers’ views stressing lifelong learning and reflection are better for teacher professional development. Reflection provides teachers with an outlet to make the necessary changes or accommodations, because as King, Shumow and Lietz (2001) noted, teachers may speak of their practice in one way but their actual classroom teaching is quite the opposite, especially for inquiry teaching. Reflection in teaching is the process of critically examining and refining practice, taking into consideration the personal, pedagogical, curricular, intellectual, and ethical contexts (Knowles, Coles, and Presswood, 1994).

Through reflection, educators think about the dynamics of the classroom, their students and their teaching, and how what they do affects their students. This model of reflective teaching draws on the theory of critical pedagogy. Teachers examine and reflect upon underlying assumptions, norms, and rules that constrain and shape their practice (Moore, 2003). Freire (2000) stated that, through common reflection and action, teachers and students can discover themselves as “permanent re-creators” of knowledge of reality (p. 69). Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (2000) and Freire concur that transformation begins with people actively thinking, participating, contributing, and acting for change. Collins (2000) points out that a part of bringing about real change is creating a context or climate in which change is less difficult (p. 25).
In addition, professional development can lead to improvement in instructional practices and student learning (Borko, 2004). However, Borko argues that we are only just beginning to learn about the impact of teacher change and student outcome. Adler, (2000) contends, teacher learning “is usefully understood as a process of increasing participation in the practice of teaching, and through this participation, a process of becoming knowledgeable in and about teaching” (p. 37).

Teacher Perception and Impact

Researchers argue that assessing the efficiency of professional development offerings and validating their impact requires a multi-dimensional approach (Belzer, 2003; Guskey, 2002; Shaha et al., 2004). When thinking about different types of evaluation questions for teachers professional development programs, Guskey (2000) identifies five ‘levels’ of investigating: (1) participants’ reactions; (2) participants gain knowledge or skills and/or change attitudes or beliefs; (3) organization supports the desired changes; (4) participants change their behavior and students seem to be learning. There are also anecdotal accounts of teacher impact (Knight &Wiseman, 2005). Knight and Wiseman stated: “The nature of the study of professional development also needs to be considered. Studies of professional development need to focus on classroom outcomes, which include impact on teacher classroom behaviors and students’ performance” (p. 403). Furthermore, Shaha et al. (2004) contend there are three types of impact which professional development offerings should be designed to achieve and evaluated upon: learning, attitudinal, and resources. They also explain there are two levels of impact: teacher-educator and student. It is their contention there should be
verification of program efficiency which provides data on improvement in teacher-level knowledge and capability. Shaha et al. stated:

The verification of investment quality for professional development programs requires a balanced metrics approach, incorporating good principles of research design, reflecting impacts on teachers and on the students they serve. Those metrics include measurements of learning, attitudinal and resource impact to verify that a program made a real difference…. And educators should not invest in programs that cannot substantiate impact through genuine data from real educational settings that verify impact on teachers and subsequently on students. (p. 4)

There is a sizeable amount of money spent on teacher professional development and most of the time the impact is measured by looking at students’ performance on standardized test. More focus needs to be placed on teachers’ learning impact. Typically, at the end of a professional development, teachers are given a survey and often, based on their responses, assumptions are made that what they learned will transfer over to the students. Teachers are the ones chiefly responsible for implementing change (Guskey, 1995). More studies are needed which document teachers’ impact. Guskey stated:

Questions are being raised about the effectiveness of all forms of professional development. And with these questions have come increased demands for demonstrable results. Legislators, policy makers, funding agencies, and the general public all want to know if professional development programs really
make a difference. If they do, what evidence is there to show that they are effective? (p. 326)

Guskey discussed procedural guidelines for successful teacher professional development programs: (a) recognize that change is both an individual and organizational process; (b) think big but start small; (c) work in teams to maintain support; (d) include procedures for feedback on results; and (e) provide continued follow-up, support, and pressure. Furthermore, Guskey stated it is rare to find a professional development program designed and implemented with thorough attention to the guidelines or factors that underscore them. I agree with Guskey’s statement:

What is evident from these guidelines that the key to greater success in professional development, which translates to improvements in student learning, rests not so much in the discovery on new knowledge, but in our capacity to deliberately and wisely use the knowledge that we have. (p. 334)

Guskey and Sparks (1996) argue staff development is influenced by a numerous of factors. These factors the researchers classified into three major categories: (1) content characteristics, (2) process variables, and (3) context characteristics. Additionally, the researchers argued, if staff development does not alter teachers’ professional knowledge or their classroom practices, little improvement in student learning can be expected. Furthermore, change involves values and purposes associated with what is being changed (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). The researchers stated,

For, teachers, change is not a paper plan or an elegant flow chart. It must happen in the busy and complicated worlds of their own classrooms. A consultant or a
teacher educator can do a superb lead lesson, but it is the teacher who has to emulate that lesson hour after hour, day after day, week after week. A video on cooperative group work with computers can demonstrate excellence in strategies of instruction, but it is the teacher who must somehow carry out that group activity alongside all the other pressing demands of other students in his or her classroom. Change is too often idealized; thought of in self-contained systems and packaged too neatly. It needs to be dealt with in ways that are much more sensitive to the real world demands of the context of teaching. (p.19)

It is vitally important, as the Knight and Wiseman (2005) argue, that “there need to be linkages from professional development to teacher behaviors, as well as other cognitive and affective outcomes, and then from teacher behaviors to student outcomes” (p. 403).

According to Knight and Wiseman (2005), there are some overlaps with professional development models and they are combined in professional development approaches. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley’s (1990) chapter in the Handbook of Research on Teacher Education discusses five models of staff development: individually guided staff development, the observation/assessment, the development/improvement, the training, and the inquiry. This chapter examines what is known about staff development which is intended to improve student learning. Guskey (1986) and Collins (2000) argue that the new practice must make sense to teachers. According to Collins:

Numerous models exist for structuring professional development activities. Each has strengths and weaknesses relative to specific outcomes. No matter which
model is used, the activities should 1) focus on reducing the gap between actual and desired levels of student achievement, 2) involve participants in identifying the content and objectives, 3) help participants develop a theoretical as well as practical understanding of the new practice, 4) include follow-up and support, and 5) be linked to a comprehensive change process that focuses on student learning. (p. 4-5)

Knight and Wiseman (2005) assert that as long as teachers believe the reform or intervention is good for their students, then there is no need for positive attitudes and buy-in for professional development (p. 397).

Lowden’s (2005) study was designed to determine the impact of professional development in K-12 public schools by employing Guskey’s (2000, 2002) models of teacher change and evaluating professional development. In his approach, a survey was designed based on the literature, and the study included quantitative research methods. The study confirmed other research studies in professional literature indicating effective professional development is critical for teachers’ professional growth and student achievement. The study determined there was a significant positive correlation between Guskey’s model of Teacher Change (2000) and the way respondents evaluated their professional development experience. The results also support research literature indicating the importance of setting clear goals and planning professional development that aligns to the vision and needs of the school district. No less significantly, the study determined teachers felt that new knowledge and skills they learned as a result of professional development had an impact on student achievement.
Currently, accountability is the main focus surrounding the teaching profession. It is definitely true that the taxpayers, policymakers, reformers, etc. have a vested interest in knowing professional development is being presented in a way that ultimately enhances teachers’ knowledge and, in the end, increases students’ learning. With this view, it is imperative that we begin, at each district level, to investigate impact on teachers’ learning. Professional development in a constructivist paradigm promotes the predisposition towards inquiry into, and interpretation of, educational situations (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). Trying to make a connection to teachers’ professional development and student achievement is difficult because of numerous variables that can effect students’ achievement (Guskey, 1995; Guskey & Sparks, 1996; Joyce & Shower, 1995). During the 1990s, research on professional development’s capacity to improve student achievement focused on subject matter and student learning. The research also focused on students’ reasoning and problem-solving potential rather than only on basic skills (American Educational Research Association, 2005).

A study by Burkhouse et al. (2003) investigated the relationship between the Thinking Math (TM) professional development program and the mathematics achievement levels of 5th grade students in a northeastern urban school district. The researchers hypothesized that professional development affects teacher efficacy in teaching mathematics. The research questions addressed in the study were as follows:

What is the level of and the relationship between teacher confidence in and implementation of mathematics education practices emphasized in the TM program? Does greater confidence in and implementation of these practices result
in higher student achievement? Do 5th-grade students who have a TM trained teacher achieve at higher level in mathematics than those who do not have such a teacher? (p. 15)

This research project sought to determine the effect of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Thinking Mathematics professional development program on the mathematics achievement of 5th-grade students—as well as on teacher efficacy and implementation in mathematics instruction (Burkhouse et al., 2003). The project focused on four schools, three of which had teachers trained through the Thinking Math program. The fourth school selected had several faculty members who underwent TM training, but these teachers had no experience teaching at the 5th-grade level, which served as the control group. The teachers at the four schools were surveyed, with a response rate of more than 90 percent. The teacher questionnaire focused on the TM principles of interest. In the survey, the teachers reported on their gender, teaching experience, grade level, TM experience, and professional development activities. The researchers collected students’ achievement scores on two test batteries, which were taken in spring 2001. Math and Reading scores were also collected from the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). The teachers’ surveys showed that experience was significant in the area of math problem solving achievement, and professional development beyond TM emerged as significant only in reading comprehension. The study also found that TM training of teachers is associated with positive 5th-grade student performance on the PSSA assessments of total mathematics and
reading. The researchers, however, noted that teachers’ confidence and implementation varied across the principles.

The national Evaluation of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, which was conducted by the American Evaluation Service (AIR) based on longitudinal data from a sample of approximately 300 teachers, investigated the impact of the types of professional development activities. There were three strands of data collection: the National Profile, the Longitudinal Study of Teacher Change, and case studies. The report was based on data from the Longitudinal Study. The data allowed the researchers to examine teachers’ professional development and teaching practices over time. The teachers surveyed were those who taught mathematics and science. Participating teachers were asked to describe a professional development activity that was helpful to use in mathematics class on the survey. The report found that higher-order teaching strategies increased teachers’ use of those strategies in the classroom. However, the study also determined that teachers in the sample did not typically receive consistent high-quality professional development. The teaching practice did not change as much from 1996 to 1999. The researchers suggested that the findings indicated the positive effects of professional development on teaching practice. Additionally, the research concluded that high-quality professional development can bring about teaching change. Furthermore, the researchers found that professional development was effective when it focused on the use of technology, the use of instructional methods, and the use of assessment strategies for higher-order learning.
Shaha et al. (2004) conducted an important study that investigated the influence of professional development. The study was designed to contrast comparative learning and attitudinal impacts between teachers and students participating in the program and those of a control group comprising teachers that did not participate in the professional development and their students. There were no significant differences between experimental and control groups in terms of years of teaching experience. The average number of teaching years was 13.1, and the average number of years teaching at the grade level was 6.5. The researchers contended that there were three types of impacts that professional development offered: 1) learning impacts, 2) attitudinal impacts, and 3) resources impacts. The learning impacts included measures of educational efficacy related to cognition or achievement. This area involves measures of knowledge gained, skills achieved, or teaching relevant behaviors acquired. The research cited Smith 1995; Killion, 2002; Lewis & Shaha, 2003 research. The researchers postulated that professional development will also produce improvements in student learning. Moreover, they contended that attitudinal impact should become a consistent assessment domain and metric set for educational decision-making.

Bull and Buechler (1996) assert that the proper setting and support are critically important or else the best professional development initiatives undertaken by the brightest and most motivated school professionals are in danger of withering on the vine. They further explained that the three most important conditions for effective professional development are leadership, policy and resource support, and time. If these conditions are in place, according to the researchers, teachers will participate and profit from the
professional development and students will also benefit. Fiszer (2004) stated the school’s social climate, attitudes, and patterns of behavior influence the learning of both teachers and students (p. 11). In order for professional development to be effective, the professional development must be high quality, stable and on-going (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Kent, 2004).

Fielding and Del Schalock (1985) identified three broad purposes of professional development: (a) to foster growth or increase the effectiveness of individual educators, (b) to foster the implementation or improvement of an instructional program as a whole, and (c) to improve the effectiveness of a school as an organization (p. 6). Kent (2004) insisted:

Professional development is the catalyst to transforming theory into current best teaching practices. In order to provide effective professional development, there are many variables that must be considered by the school principal including teacher beliefs and receptivity, the school climate, and available local school support. (p. 427)

Professional Development Models

The Training Model

This training model is used mostly at in-service staff and professional development sessions. These sessions maintain clear objectives for the participants’ learners’ outcome. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) declared that training could be the most efficient means for a large number of teachers to view demonstrations and to
receive feedback as they practice. The training model comes from several sources and the researchers discussed the research of Joyce and Showers (1988) on training, exploration of theory, demonstration or modeling of a skill, practice, feedback about performance, and coaching in the workplace. In addition to this research, the studies of Sparks (1983) also cited as evidence of the importance of discussion and peer observation as training activities. Knight and Wiseman (2005) found the training model exhibited mixed impact on teachers and students (p. 401). Sparks and Loucks-Horsley stated:

The training model of staff development and reports of their effectiveness indicate, there is a much more substantial research literature on this model than on the others discussed earlier. Under the appropriate conditions, training has the potential to change significantly teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and behavior and the performance of their students. (p.243)

Researchers found that although this model is used in many staff development program, it is short term, involving teachers in several hours or days in workshops, with limited follow-up activities (Richardson & Placiers, 2001; Sparks, 1983; Ward, 1985). Similarly, Sheerer (2000) took issue with the traditional model, contending it supports theory over practice. Additionally, Hawley and Valli (1999) argued that the drawback to the model was teachers treated as recipients of knowledge transmitted by others (Miller, 1992), that professional knowledge and growth is held by someone other than teachers themselves (p. 96). Moreover, the implementation level of knowledge or techniques from teachers attending this type of model without follow-up has been estimated at 15% (Joyce & Showers, 1981; Meyer, 1988).
The individually guided staff development model is driven by the teacher who sets goals and selects activities that will result in achieving those goals. The underlying assumptions Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) proposed were that teachers are capable of self-direction and self-initiated learning and they can best judge their own learning needs. The premise of this model, according to Sparks and Loucks-Horsely, is that teachers are most motivated when they select their own learning goals on the basis of personal assessment. This model consists of four phases: (a) identification, of a need or interest; (b) development of a plan to meet the need or interest; (c) learning activities; and (d) assessment of whether the learning meets the identified need or interest (p. 236). The outcome of this model can be a teacher reading a professional journal article, researching a topic of interest, or attending a conference or workshop related to their subject area or an instructional tool or materials. Also according to the researchers, adults become increasingly self-directed and their readiness to learn is stimulated by real-life tasks and problems. The theoretical underpinnings and research supporting this model is client-centered therapy through self-discovery, that self-appropriated learning can significantly influence behavior (Rogers, 1969). The researchers also cited the adult learning theory (Kidds, 1973; Knowles, 1980; Levine, 1988). A more complex form of this model may be the teacher deciding to design and carry out a special professional project. However, Hawley and Valli (1999) contend that although this model brings personal satisfaction and even professional growth, it will do little to foster school improvement and student
achievement if disconnected from teachers’ daily practice and a coherent school improvement (p.135).

*The Observation/Assessment Model*

According to Sparks & Loucks-Horsley (1990), the observation/assessment model is a powerful staff development model because it is associated with evaluation. According to them, with this model: (a) teachers can be provided with data that can be studied and analyzed for the purpose of improving student learning; (b) reflection can be enhanced by another’s observation; (c) teaching can benefit both the teacher being observed and the observer; and (d) when teachers see positive results from their efforts to change they are more apt to continue to engage in improvement.

The theoretical and research underpinnings for the observation/assessment model, according Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990), are found in the literature on teacher evaluation, clinical supervision, and peer coaching. They assert that further studies are needed on this model to learn whether it must be combined with particular kinds of training if student learning is to be enhanced (p. 238). However, Shower and Joyce (1996) and Hawley and Valli (1999) argue that in order for this model to be effective, the coaches must be reliable sources of information about good teaching and there must be multiple coaching sessions in order for the learner to use the strategies consistently and effectively.
The Development/Improvement Model

The development/improvement model focuses on the combination of learning that results from the involvement of teachers in developing or adapting curriculum, designing programs, or engaging in systematic school-improvement processes that have as their goal the improvement of classroom instruction and/or curriculum (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). Three underlying assumptions Sparks and Loucks-Horsley discuss are (a) teachers’ learning is driven by the demands of problem solving, (b) people working closest to the job best understand what is required to improve their performance, and (c) teachers acquire important knowledge or skills through their involvement in school-improvement or curriculum-development processes (p. 239). The theoretical and research underpinnings of this model represent curriculum development and school improvement as types of staff development.

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) state mere involvement in these processes nurtures teachers’ growth (p. 239). However, they identify that research and evaluation evidence of impact on teacher knowledge and skills is thin, but there is research to show evidence that many of the factors that improve the probability of success are through the commitment to the process of school and building administrators. However, Hawley & Valli (1999) and Miller (1992) assert that the effectiveness of this model depends on the quality of the experience.

The Inquiry Model

The inquiry model sometimes referred to as the teacher-researcher model process, can be formal or informal. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1990) asserted teachers identify
an area of instructional interest, collect data, and make changes in their instruction on the basis of an interpretation of those data. The teachers ask questions about their practices and pursue the answer. With this model, the teacher, who in the other four models is a participant in the research, becomes the researcher. Researchers contend this inquiry model can take place in a classroom, a teacher center, or result from a university class (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990).

Researchers present three assumptions: (a) teachers are intelligent and inquiring individuals with legitimate expertise and important experience, (b) teachers are inclined to search for data to answer pressing questions and to reflect on the data to formulate solutions, and (c) teachers develop new understandings as they contribute to and formulate their own questions and collect their own data to answer them (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). This approach gives greater control over what is to count as valid educational knowledge to teachers (p. 243). However, Hawley & Valli (1999) argue the model can also be disconnected from a coherent plan for school improvement. They also assert it can vary in quality depending on teachers’ expertise in generating useful research questions and in analyzing and using data to improve practice (p. 136). In addition, “teachers must see their own learning as essential to practice, and must learn how to inquire systematically into practice” (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1997).

Check (1998) views teacher research as powerful professional development and contends “practitioner inquiry validates teachers as knowers, as well as doers” (p. 17). In addition, Check stated,
Fortunately, professional development itself is undergoing reform. The principles of this reform are already embodied in practitioner inquiry, which is an extended, sophisticated form of ‘reflective practice’ that develops and investigates questions immediately relevant to classroom situations (p. 17).

The researcher further argued that “reflective practice strengthens professionalism, creates learning communities, honors practitioner knowledge, and involves teachers in outside networks that provide new ideas and support.”

Miller and Woronv (1998) assert that interest in professional development is transformative and enables people to develop more complex capacities of mind. They postulate that the most powerful changes in professionals’ practice come about because professionals change their minds. Action research is the idea that the social world can only be understood by trying to change it (McTaggart, 2002). Furthermore, McTaggart asserts action researchers not only expect to make changes across these categories, they plan to “collect data” about such changes (p. 7). According to Arhar, Holly and Kasten (2001), action research is a form of inquiry designed to improve our practice by using professional (informed) eyes to observe our own work.

Sheerer (2000) preferred a collaborative model for researchers and in-service teachers, and argued that teachers’ professional development should go beyond training to allow teachers to act as well-informed critics of reform. This model emphasizes collaborative action research projects in partnership with universities and schools (Moore, 2003). Also, the teacher role changes: in the other four models the teacher is a participant in the research – in this model the teacher becomes the researcher. This
inquiry model can take place in a classroom, a teacher center, or result from a university class (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). Based on the work of Loucks-Horsley and her associates (1987), there are three assumptions used for this model:

1. Teachers are intelligent and inquiring individuals with legitimate expertise and important experience.

2. Teachers are inclined to search for data to answer pressing questions and to reflect on the data to formulate a solution.

3. Teachers develop new understandings as they contribute to and formulate their own questions and collect their own data to answer them (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990).

It is their contention that cooperative study by teachers is the most effective avenue for professional development. The approach gives greater control over what is to count as valid educational knowledge to teachers (p. 243). The individual teacher or group of teachers would first identify a problem of interest, explore ways of collecting data, analyze and interpret the data, and finally make changes; new data would then be gathered and analyzed to determine the effects of the intervention. Research supports this model of professional development more than others because it has the potential to significantly change teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and behavior and the performance of their students (Hawley & Valli, 1999). However, Hawley & Valli assert,

When it focuses on teacher thinking, explores theory, provides adequate demonstration and time for practice, and makes productive use of peers, it has the
potential to change significantly teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, and behavior and the performance of their students. (p. 135)

Professional development is not simply about engaging in activities to learn new knowledge and skills, but includes personal growth and the development of a context which supports that growth; these attitudes are reflected in other perspectives of professional development (Boggs, 1999).

For the most part, professional development is organized around collaborative problem solving (Guskey, 1995; Huberman, 1995; Little, 1993). Collaborative problem solving can involve activities; Hawley and Valli (1999) assert collaborative problem solving involves educators working together to address issues of common concern which facilitates the identification of both the causes and potential solutions to problems.

**Coaching, Mentoring and Peer-networking**

Coaching, mentoring and peer-networking supports teachers’ professional learning, organizational improvement, and teacher retention (Rhodes, Stokes & Hampton, 2004). Haney (1997) defined mentoring as a relationship between an experienced and a less experienced person in which the mentor provides guidance, advice, support, and feedback to the protégé. According to Kerka (1997) mentoring supports much of what is currently known about how individuals learn, including the socially constructed nature of learning and the importance of experiential, situated learning experiences. Teacher collaboration and mutual support in professional development is not new and has been used in the United States for years. It has been seen as effective and having lasting improvements in professional practice (Shalaway, 1995; Swafford, 1998). Robbins
(1995) defined the process as involving two or more professional colleagues working together to reflect upon current practices or problem-solving.

However, Guskey (2000) stated that mentoring could limit opportunities for greater collaboration and collegial sharing. Joyce and Showers (1988) research findings were that engagement of coaching assists the translation of training into increased impact on job performance. Rhodes, Stokes & Hampton (2004) asserted coaching was generally perceived as positive by teachers, with the potential to improve professional practice (p. 11). Collaboration is important in order for coaching, mentoring and peer-networking to be effective. Lieberman and Miller (2000) view collaboration as a tool of teacher empowerment. It is the contention of Joyce and Showers (1988) and Rhodes and Houghton-Hill (2000) that engagement among educators has the potential to raise standards and attainment.

Study Group

The study group model of professional development involves the entire staff; it is used to find solutions to common problems in the school and the school district. A definition of a study group is a place where [teachers] could “negotiate a shared agenda instead of having someone else’s agenda imposed on them” the focus was “on recognizing collaborative dialogue as a way of thinking through our issues and concerns, rather than relying on outside experts” (Birchak, Connor, Crawford, Kahn, Kaser, Turner & Short, 1998). The researchers Birchak et al. (1998) argue that a study group requires voluntary commitment; builds community and caring; challenges our thinking as educators; and integrates theory and practice. There are different types of study groups
and focus discussion: school-based, job-alike, topic-centered, issues discussion, professional book discussion, teacher research, readers, and writers groups. This model gives the staff an opportunity to share responsibility for a major task of teaching and student learning. Therefore, for this model to be effective, time need to be given for the groups to meet, share and collaborate. Guskey (2000), however, cautioned the possible dominance of some groups leaving out other groups involved. Guskey also stated it is important the study groups be organized and well-focused. Moreover, Murphy (1992) purposes that participation should be mandatory for all teachers and administrators. However, Murphy also suggests no more than six individuals in the group.

Study groups in a school build school community. Effective professional development builds individual and collective staff expertise and equips the school to tackle its most pressing goals, priorities, and problems (Little, 2006, p. 1). According to Lieberman (1995), teachers need opportunities to talk publicly about their work and to participate in decisions about instructional practices. However, study groups often face difficult times (Birchak et al., 1998). The researchers, Birchak et al. (1998) state,

Requiring that change occur for all teachers at the same time does not recognize the different ways in which teachers learn-some constantly make changes in their practices and then watch to see what happens, while others think through issues for a long period of time before taking action in their classrooms. Taking action is a natural outcome of the group but it is encouraged, not mandated. (p. 110)
Hawley and Valli (2000) focused on learner-centered professional development. It is their contention that if we spend more time and money on traditional forms of professional development, such as workshops, conferences, presentations, and courses remotely related to the daily challenges of teaching, we can expect little return on our investments (p. 1). Hawley and Valli listed and discussed nine guidelines and design principles for learner-centered professional development:

1. The content of professional development focuses on what students are to learn and how to address the different problems students may have in learning that material.

2. Professional development should be driven by analyses of the differences between (a) goals and standards for student learning and (b) student performance.

3. Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and, when possible, in the development of the learning opportunity and/or the process to be used.

4. Professional development should be primarily school based and integral to school operations.

5. Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving.
6. Professional development should be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and outside perspectives.

7. Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on outcomes for students and processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned through professional development.

8. Professional development should provide opportunities to engage in developing a theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills to be learned.

9. Professional development should be integrated with a comprehensive change process that addresses impediments to and facilitators of student learning (p. 6-9).

Hawley and Valli also stated that research on learning provides good reasons to believe that teachers who participate in professional development characterized by these design principles will be better able to facilitate student learning. The researchers added, however, there are only a handful of studies that directly link professional development to student achievement, and none of the professional development activities studied embodied all nine design principles.

First-year or Beginning Teachers

The literature on beginning teachers states that, overall, an excessive burden has been placed on first-year teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Howe, 2006; Weiss & Weiss, 1999). Niebrand (1992) and Butler (1999) contend that entry-year teachers believe they are expected to emerge from the university with skills and information to deal with
discipline, curriculum issues, and students. Entry-year teachers need help with discipline, classroom management, and teaching skills, as well as creating lesson plans (Ganser, 1996). Hecks and Williams (1984) indicate that, for some, the first year of teaching is charged with excitement, challenge, and exhilarating success. For others, it is confusing, uncontrollable, filled with unsolvable problems, and informed by personal defeat and failure. Novices are those at the first stage of career development, usually high in motivation and low in expertise, functioning at the basic level.

Featherstone (1998) postulated novice teachers need professional support and training during the critical first year of classroom teaching. The researcher found that first year teachers are learners as much as they are professionals. Beginning teachers are overwhelmed with the enormous responsibility thrust upon them during their first year. The literature on beginning teachers depicts new teachers struggling with alienation, isolation, attrition, lack of support, and conflicting educational norms as they transition from teacher education programs to the school sites (Dworkin, 1987; Huling-Austin, 1986; Meyer & Achinstein, 1997; Veenman, 1984). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) contend beginning teachers leave the profession because of working conditions.

Entry-year teachers are required to take the PRAXIS III examination to obtain their five-year state licenses. As Dwyer and Villegas (1993) observed:

The development and implementation of The Praxis Series: Professional Assessments for Beginning teachers is an endeavor that requires not only the sustained input of a highly diverse group of teachers and the other educators, but also their desire to work together in an attempt to effect important changes that
will benefit both teachers and students whose lives they profoundly influence. (p. 10)

This statement alone indicates that teachers have a huge responsibility during their first year. As Linda Darling-Hammond (2001) stated:

Current education reforms also create a broader range of roles for teachers in developing curriculum and assessing student performance, coaching and mentoring other teachers, and working more closely with families and community agencies…. This increased responsibility means that teachers need to be prepared to make such decisions responsibly. (p. 751)

Hanby (2000) stated that formal mentoring programs are one way to shape the induction process of entry-year teachers and address the issue of attrition. Hanby studied forty-one dyads and six lead mentors. The results of the study indicated mentors and novice teachers perceived the mentoring experience as being rewarding. The mentors attributed their success to being trained in Pathwise, a companion to Praxis III. In a conversation with Anne C. Lewis, Darling-Hammond (1998) remarked:

The reforms are asking teachers to do two things—to understand content areas at much higher levels and to do it in more flexible ways. Teachers need to know the big ideas in the disciplines and scaffolding around those ideas, then how to draw on them to create a curriculum for students that does more than just transmit rules and algorithms and facts—that makes major areas of the disciplines accessible. (p. 3)
The Ohio Department of Education mandated in 2002 that an entry-year program must be successfully completed prior to issuance of a professional license to a teacher or principal. Entry-year teachers are given a provisional teacher license, which is valid for two years. After successfully completing the entry-year program the teacher is then granted a professional teacher license, which is valid for five years.

Summary

There is a considerable need for more research in the area of teacher professional development. There are few studies that document the views of first-year elementary teachers’ perceptions of their professional development activities. After reviewing the literature, I have learned that few programs provide data of teachers’ perceptions of professional development and documenting the teacher learning. Moreover, a number of those that claim to do so evidently fail to take into account the range of variables that may affect outcomes. It is, therefore, my hope to build upon the efforts of previous researchers by exploring this vital area of education.

Chapter three provides a rationale for using a qualitative case study design and describes the case study method. In addition chapter three focuses on the role of the researcher, participants, school focus, methods of data and a summary of data collection.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research design is a qualitative case study involving two elementary entry-year teachers’ (EYTs’) perception of the value of their professional development. Understanding the two elementary entry-year teachers’ perceptions and interpreting their thoughts, feelings and actions requires the researcher to delve “in-depth into complexities and processes” (Marsh and Rossman, 1989). The researcher was be able to document the professional developments that the two participants have attended, their perceptions of what were offered in the school and be able to document any teacher learning (s) from the professional development, the researcher was able to spend long periods of time in the teachers classrooms documenting their lessons. The two EYT's were involved in three professional development days in the school, three study group meetings and one professional development outside the school, in which the EYTs were able to attend for a period of four days. This chapter discusses the theory of the research method, the participants and setting, the method of gaining entry, and the data collection and analysis procedures.
Methodology Rationale

The study was designed to investigate elementary teachers’ perceptions of the value of the professional development offered at the district level. In particular, the study focused on two White elementary entry-year teachers assigned to teach in an Afro-centric charter school in a Title I school building. There is a great need for studies that investigate the impact of elementary, entry-year teachers and their perception of the value of their professional development activities. The ultimate objective of professional development is to enhance learners’ outcome programs and to address the issues of how to assess such impacts (Building Professional Development Partnerships for Adult Project, 1997). In this descriptive study, the researcher will provide the perceptions of the teachers’ personal and professional insights regarding factors affecting the professional development offered. Moreover, I documented the teachers’ perceptions on the types of professional development activities that may advance or impede their success.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), qualitative research allows the researcher, as the instrument, to see the holistic context, to cope with complexity, to ask for amplification or clarification, and to explore anomalies. Because my study requires the provision of an in-depth analysis of entry-year elementary teachers’ perception of their professional development, qualitative methodology seems most appropriate. Bassey (1999) argue that the study of specific situations has an important contribution to make to the development of educational theory, policy and practice. However, case studies are, of course studies of singularities and so the suggestion that findings from them may be applied more widely may seemed somewhat contradictory if not invalid (Bassey, 1999, p.
Creswell (2007) choose to view a case study “as a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, or an object of study as well as a product of the inquiry” (p. 73). Furthermore, it allows for an open-ended, discovery-oriented, and developmental look at the process of educational change (Patton, 1990). The use of qualitative methods, Patton asserts, creates an atmosphere “within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world” (p. 24). Filstead (1970) stated, “Qualitative methodology refers to those research strategies, such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, total participation in the activity being investigated, field work, etc., which allow the researcher to obtain firsthand knowledge about the empirical social world in question” (p. 6).

As previously mentioned in chapter one, case study research plays an important role in the natural sciences as well as social sciences. Yin (1993) has identified some specific types of case studies: Exploratory, Explanatory, and Descriptive. Exploratory cases are sometimes considered as a prelude to social research. Explanatory case studies may be used for doing causal investigations. Descriptive cases require a descriptive theory to be developed before starting the project. Stake (1995) included three others: Intrinsic - when the researcher has an interest in the case; Instrumental - when the case is used to understand more than what is obvious to the observer; Collective - when a group of cases is studied. Yin (2003) contends case studies have more potential audiences than other types of research and the one essential task in designing the overall case study report is to identify the specific audiences for the report (p. 143).
Yin (1984) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (p. 23). In qualitative case study, we seek greater understanding of the case. We want to appreciate the uniqueness and complexity of its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts (Stake, 1995). Case studies referenced by Merriam (2001) are often equated with fieldwork, ethnography, participant observation, qualitative research, naturalistic inquiry, grounded theory, or exploratory research.

For many years, case study methods have been utilized in an interdisciplinary manner, particularly in the area of social science. Case study research is best defined as “research that focuses on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied” (Merriam, 1988). By using qualitative methodology, I will be able “to get close to the data,” (Filstead, 1970). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1996), case studies allow a researcher to observe, describe, and raise questions in a naturalistic manner. To understand the complex and dynamic nature of first-year teachers and their perception of the value of professional development, I chose a qualitative case design method. Merriam (2001) describes a case as a thing, a single entity, and a unit around which there are boundaries. In a qualitative case study, we seek greater understanding of the case. Merriam comments that the different approaches used by Yin (2003), Stake (1995), and Wolcott (2001) reveal that case studies contribute to the general understanding of the nature of this kind of research. Tellis (1997) states no single method of research has a complete advantage over the others; rather, they might be
complementary and used in tandem. Case studies can be single or multiple-case designs, where a multiple design must follow a replication rather than sampling logic.

The sources of evidence for my case study are four teacher interviews for each of the participants, three conducted after every professional development days and the last interview was conducted in August. The researcher also conducted thirty-six lessons of each of the participants using the school teacher observation protocol (Appendix F). The researcher took field notes during professional development days, the three study group meetings, during the interviews, staff meetings and informal meetings with the participants, which were conducted from the beginning of March until school closed. Maxwell (2005) stated that collecting information using a variety of sources and methods is one aspect of the process known as triangulation. Filstead (1970) argued that when qualitative methodological procedures are employed, the problem of validity is considerably lessened and concern over reliability of the data is increased (p. 6).

Triangulation reduces the risk that a conclusion will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows the researcher to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the issues being investigated. Through the use of case study methodology, it is the researchers’ goal to shed light on two entry-year teachers’ (EYTs) views of their professional development and document the impact on teachers’ learning.

Research Questions

I used qualitative methods to conduct this case study. It is fundamentally important to use qualitative methods to answer the three guiding research questions. Case
study research plays an important role in the natural sciences as well as social sciences. In case study, the researcher usually aims at gaining the most complete possible view on the object by regarding it as a holistic entity, the attributes of which you can wholly understand only when examining all of them simultaneously.

The goal of this case study is to document empirical evidence of entry-year teachers’ (EYTs’) perception of the value of their professional development. The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the entry-year teachers’ (EYTs’) perceptions of professional development?
2. How does district level professional development impact entry-year teachers’ learning in an Afro-centric school?
3. How do entry-year teachers (EYTs) perceive professional development as impacting their students’ achievement?

By using a case study to investigate elementary entry year teachers’ (EYTs’) perception of the value of their professional development activities, I was able to construct an understanding of what teachers experienced while participating.

The Researcher Role

A qualitative research approach provides the researcher an opportunity to study people in real-life situations (Maxwell, 2005; Yin, 2003). It is important, however, for the researcher to balance two roles – that of participant and observer (Berger, 2000). This data collection method attempts to understand the motives and meanings involved in
people’s behavior from the point of view of the participant. In order to complete an in-depth study and provide rich data, I spend as much time as possible with the participants in the study. Through participant observation I had access to the same places, people, and events as the participants and access to documents relevant to the role, including confidential reports and records.

The researcher role is that of a participant-observer. I have been an educator since 1990, with eleven years of teaching experience in the public school system of the Bahamas before moving to the United States to further my education. I was fortunate to work two years as a graduate assistant in an educational research center at a university in northeastern Ohio. After earning a master’s degree in education, in the area of Curriculum and Instruction, my interest was drawn to teacher education. In the course of my studies I took a class in teacher education and teacher professional development. In the process, I began to appreciate how teacher professional development has emerged as one of the most important areas for research in education, especially in the area concerning the relationship between professional development and student learning outcomes. The impact of teacher professional development became the motivating factor for my studies. It is my view that teacher professional development is an essential tool through which to provide teachers continual support in teaching.

I believe that as an educator, I should model theories and philosophies that provide the basis for practice. Changes in society and in theories of learning and teaching have created new pedagogical challenges which require educators to reshape learning environments and reform classroom activities. I believe that, regarding the goals of
change or improvement, teachers change either in practice or in cognitive development. Teachers must perceive this change as useful and beneficial if they are to embrace change.

As a graduate assistant in the Research Center for Educational Technology at Kent State University, part of my responsibilities was to conduct direct observations and interviews with teachers in their classrooms. I was trained to use different evaluation protocols. Some of the teachers were experienced while others were beginning or novice teachers who had less than five years in the classroom. During my observations, I realized the majority of the teachers I studied were White females.

During the summer of 2006, I was offered a job as a facilitator of a professional development workshop for three weeks at Booker T. Washington, an Afro-centric charter school. In this time, I learned that the teaching staff turnover rate in the school was high, especially during the 2005-06 school year; the first grade had three different teachers and the second grade had two teachers. Some teachers found it hard to continue teaching in the school and, on average, would stay for a year and move on. I became curious about how the low retention group of teachers performed during their service in that particular scholastic environment. I also wondered if their pre-service education had prepared them to work in an Afro-centric public charter school. I began to ponder the possible relative factors between teacher retention rates and professional development. If there was a relation between the two occurrences, what extra training would these teachers need to retain them? Would professional development help meet their needs and how would professional development impact their knowledge and behavior?
I accepted a position in the school as an assistant instructional leader/Faculty Coach, and I was responsible for mentoring, observing, and evaluating the teachers in their classroom using the school’s teacher observation forms. I also assisted with the planning of professional development activities.

In my new role, I was required to attend the *ETS-Pathwise* training for mentors. I attended a two-day training session to learn how to recognize teacher performance on nineteen criteria in a range of educational settings. The training focused on the four teaching domains: Domain A - organizing content knowledge for student learning, Domain B - creating an environment for student learning, Domain C - teaching for student learning, and Domain D - teacher professionalism. It was during the training that I experienced an epiphany concerning how I should study that group of teachers. It occurred to me that the staff at the school was fairly new to the teaching profession and that there was a need for professional development, especially to help them through the first year. However, there was also a greater need to document their perceptions of the professional development and if any knowledge and skills from the professional developments were utilized in their classrooms.

School Focus

From March 2007 to August 2007, I was able to conduct a case study at Booker T. Washington Elementary School based in an urban area in northeastern Ohio. The school, which is headed by a board of governors, is not only one of the first charter schools in that county, but also has been in existence for more than eight years. It is an elementary school that offers classes ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade. The
school staff was comprised of eight teachers and three administrators. Only two teachers returned from the previous year and the other teaching staff and administrators were new to the building. The teaching staff was composed of six white female teachers and three African-American female teachers.

This site was very unique for my study because Booker T. Washington Elementary School was the only Afro-centric charter school in the area; it had a student population of 96, a number which fluctuated over the years. The student population was predominately Black; ninety-eight percent (98%) of the student population was African-American with the other two percent (2%) biracial. The school established individualized instruction and intervention plans for behavior. During the year 2006-2007, the school had a high rate of behavioral problems. On average, about forty-five percent (45%) of the students transfer from the public school because of behavioral issues they had in the public school system.

The year 2006 was the first time in which the school met its Annual Yearly Progress Goals, which earned the school a rating of continuous improvement on the State of Ohio Report Card. The school was one of two elementary charter schools in the area to meet its annual yearly progress (AYP) goals for school year 2005-2006. The school performance index score over time showed improvement: 2005-2006 (70.7), 2004-2005 (46.9) and 2003-2004 (46.1). The school was on continuous improvement.

For the staff, the school day begins at 7:30 a.m. and concludes at 3 p.m. on Thursday and Friday. They were required to stay until 4 p.m. for weekly staff meetings on Tuesday and clubs meetings on Monday and Wednesday. Teachers were required to
take attendance and assist in the cafeteria during breakfast. The teachers had a thirty-minute lunch break. The teachers had five planning periods per week, one per day for 30 minutes. The five planning periods were eventually reduced to two planning periods in December of 2006 because the school did not have any staff to offer the specials, which were: physical education, health, music and art. The teachers were also required to turn in lesson plans on the preceding Thursday afternoon, prior to the week of the lessons.

Prior to the researcher starting the research, the school year began the third week in August, with a week of in-service training. The workshops that were offered prior to the research were: (1) The school policies, (2) classroom behavior Management; (3) culturally relevant pedagogy; (4) first aid training; and (5) examining the test scores. These workshops were structured one per day, however, a great deal of time was consumed giving teachers the opportunity to decorate their classrooms and locate textbooks, as well as other resources.

This was the first year that Booker T. Washington Elementary added a fifth grade. Previously, the fifth grade was a part of a middle school, which was housed in another church building around the corner. For years, the school district had two elementary schools, (grades Kindergarten through fourth and middle school fifth through eighth grade). Due to financial problems, low student enrollment and teaching staff problems at the middle school led the school board to make the decision in May 2006 to close the middle school early. The board then decided to add the fifth grade to the elementary school. As the school was housed in a church building, spacing was a major problem. When the middle school closed, all the resources, including furniture, books, and
supplies, were placed in the building. This created difficulties for teachers to set up their classrooms, as there was a lack of adequate space. Teachers worked late into the night during the in-service week and a few spent their weekends preparing classrooms for the beginning of the school year.

On the school calendar for 2006-07, the school district provided six professional development days. The teachers were also given options to attend professional development activities outside the district and the district paid for the teachers’ attendance. However, due to financial constraints, the school district only allowed a few teachers to attend professional development outside the district during school time because they would have to pay - not only for the professional development - but also for the teacher’s salary and a substitute, a fiscal difficulty exacerbated by the shortage of substitutes.

The schools calendar allowed a total of six teacher professional development days. On a typical professional development day, the school would try to offer two workshops. Professional development was scheduled from 9 a.m. through 3 p.m. We would have one speaker from 9 to 11:30 a.m., lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., and another workshop from 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. – thereby giving each workshop 2 ½ hours. The school usually provided snacks and drinks in between each workshop. At the end of each workshop, the teachers were given an evaluation paper that asked them to rate the session on a scale of 1 to 3 with “1” being very good to “3” being fair. Space was left at the bottom of the paper for staff for comments. The following questions were asked:

1. Was the service informative?
2. Did you receive information that will be beneficial?

3. Was the presenter knowledgeable with the information?

Prior to my research data collection, during the beginning of the school year, we were fortunate to have had three professional development days. A few professors and a doctoral student came and offered workshops at the school. Dr. Brown presented a poetry workshop; Dr. Rose presented on the topic ‘Learning the dance of diversity’; and Sally Jones, a doctoral student, presented on ‘Intercultural play’. We also had a presenter from the County’s children services about how to recognize when a child is being abused. The instructional leader also led a presentation about African games and how to integrate them into lessons.

As the assistant instructional leader and Faculty coach in the school, I asked teachers what types of professional development would benefit them and the school. My goal was to share this information with the instructional leader and the school board and from there be able to provide professional development that the teachers saw as a need. The majority of teachers wanted assistance in classroom management, discipline, and strategies in subject areas. However, I found out later that the instructional leader made the final decision, along with the school superintendent, as to what professional development we were going to offer in the school.

Gaining Entry

I spoke with my advisors about what I wanted to study and received their approval to conduct the study and completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix B). I received permission from the school’s board of directors to conduct the
study at the school. I explained the focus of the study. The board agreed by signing the letter of consent. I also met with the two teachers who were selected because they were the only entry-year teachers who had signed up for the PRAXIS III examination. The EYTs were asked to consider participating in the study. I carefully explained the study, requirements, and expectations. I further explained that during each professional development activity, field notes would be taken and it was expected that after each of the three professional development days they would be interviewed for 30 to 45 minutes to get their perceptions of the professional development and fourth interview will be conducted in August. The EYTs were also informed they would be observed at least three times a week in their classrooms and that their participation in the study would not be used in any part of their annual evaluation using the school teachers’ evaluation protocol (Appendix F). In the study, the representative school would be given a fictitious name.

The teachers were then given the teacher consent forms to sign in order for them to take part in the research (Appendix C) and they were also given the audio taped form (Appendix D) to sign in order for me to be able to audio-tape the interview sessions. They were asked to read over the forms and sign if they agreed to participate. They were advised they could withdraw from the study at any time by simply stating that. The researcher did not begin the study until receiving final approval from the Kent State University Institutional Review Board, which was received February 20, 2007.
Participants

The EYT were two White, female, first-year teachers with Bachelor’s degrees in Early Childhood Education and reading endorsements. At the time of the study, they had two-year provisional licensure from universities in northeastern Ohio. They were enrolled for the entry-year teachers program and attended the workshop. Before the end of the school year, they took the PRAXIS III examination and successfully earned their five-year license in May 2007.

Paula

Paula is from a White, middle-class family. This first-grade teacher graduated from a private college in northeastern Ohio in May 2006. She has a Bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education (preK-3) and earned an endorsement in reading. She commutes 45 minutes to work in the morning and is always the first teacher present. Prior to attending college, she worked in a daycare center for two years. In January 2007, she enrolled in the Masters Degree program Intervention specialist Mild/moderate at a university near her home, attending two classes on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. She incorporated music and dance into her teaching, two activities she personally enjoyed. She said that she only applied for the job at the school after not receiving one at the public schools. The charter school system was her last choice.

During the week of August 28 – 30, 2006, Paula, along with other Title I reading and math teachers, administered her first-grade students the First grade Reading and Math Diagnostic Screening Measure Test. All students were tested with the Screening
measure. Our goal was to ensure our students were comprehensively better served during the upcoming school year. It was a means of ensuring that teachers received an in-depth analysis about each student in the classroom, providing more thorough information to better inform instruction. The test analyzed each student’s total score as a range of competency in each of the content standard areas assessed. The results show that students tested poorly in every area and were below grade level. Paula met with the testing committee which included the researcher and the Title I reading and Math teachers.

All the students in Paula’s class were receiving title I services, seven (7) students were receiving Title I math, (5) Title I reading and eight (8) students were receiving both. Three of her students had an I.E.P. and were pulled out daily for an hour for Special education services. The students in class were all on free or reduced lunch. Seventeen (17) out of twenty (20) students came from single home family where the mother was the head of the household. Three of the students were in foster care and six of the students had parents incarcerated. Students’ attendance rate was high and on an average she would have two students absent every other week.

She used a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students to develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. She had twenty students in her classroom, and her students were given reading assignments every night for homework.

Ellen

Ellen is a third-grade teacher who is from a White middle-class family. She graduated from a college in northeastern Ohio with a Bachelor’s degree in Early
Childhood Education and a reading endorsement in May 2006. Ellen lives in the same county as the school and after receiving the job moved near the school and drives 10 minutes to work. Ellen has a baby girl who is only six months old. She enjoys outdoor activities and sports. She became the head of the sports club, which held a weekly meeting every Wednesday from 3 to 3:45 p.m.

In the beginning, Ellen’s class was made up of five boys and nine girls. The number decreased to three boys and seven girls by the end of the school year. Only two students in her class were not receiving free or reduced lunch. The class was receiving title I math and reading services. Thirteen out of the fourteen students came from single home family whereby the mother was the head of the household. Two of the students were living with their grandparents and one student, for most of the school year, spent most of his time in foster care because his mother was incarcerated. Two of the students were also receiving Special education services and had I.E.P.’s. Student attendance was good. On a weekly average, she would have between one to two students absent and some weeks without absences. She developed numerous centers in her classroom. She discussed the needs for professional development that will help her address the various students’ needs in her classroom.

While in the second grade, Ellen’s students had three different teachers. On the Terra Nova (5/25/05) scores, only two (2) students scored above 50 percent. Grade three is the indicator for the local report card and at the beginning of school Ellen, along with other title I math and reading teachers, administered her students the Ohio half-length practice test for Reading and Math. She was concerned that the grade three students were
not prepared for the grade three achievement Reading test, scheduled for the first week in October.

During the month of September, Ellen sat down with the title I math and read teacher and the Researcher. There was a combination of team teaching and small group instructions in the area of math and reading. Special attention was given to the areas of vocabulary and comprehension. Eight out of fourteen students were proficient on the third grade reading Achievement Test for 2006. Ellen was excited by the results.

Data Collection

The researcher gathered data from the two EYT's through interviews, teacher observations and field notes. The researcher wrote field notes on professional development days, study group meetings, staff meetings and informal individual conversations with the two participants throughout the study as it relate to their professional growth.

These methods are important in understanding the process of how EYT's perceive their professional development and its impact on their student learning. Data for the case study was done by giving special attention to completeness in observation, reconstruction, and analysis of the case under study. Case study is done in a way that incorporates the views of the "actors" in the case under study (Tellis, 1997). Three data collection methods that were used in this study were individual interviews with teachers (Appendix A), observations of classrooms (Appendix F), and field notes. These three methods of data collection provide triangulation (Denzin, 1970; Yin, 1994). It is the
contention of Marshall and Rossman (1995) that when interviews are combined with observation it allows the researcher the opportunity to understand the meaning people hold for their everyday activities. The data collection commenced in the beginning of March after receiving approval from the Kent State University the Institutional Review Board (Appendix B).

There were three more professional development days plan on the school calendar, and after each professional development day the participants were interviewed for 30 to 45 minutes. I conducted four interviews; three of the interviews were conducted following each professional development day and the last interview was held on August 12, 2007. I was able to collect field notes during meetings, and at least three times a week, I observed the teachers teaching lessons, using the school teacher’s observation forms [Appendix F]. See Table 1 for a summary of the Data collected.

Table 1

Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Sources of Data</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 1:</strong> What are the entry-teachers’ perceptions of professional development?</td>
<td>(4) Teacher interviews per EYT, Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 2:</strong> How does district level professional development impact entry-year teachers learning in an Afro centric school?</td>
<td>(36) Teacher class observations (4) Teacher interviews per EYT, Field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research question 3:</strong> How do entry-year teachers perceive professional development as impacting their students’ achievement?</td>
<td>(36) Teacher interviews per EYT, Field notes</td>
</tr>
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</table>
I began collecting data the first day in March through August, 2007. There were three professional development days and the following sessions were offered on:

March 23, 2007
- Classroom Behavior Management
- Guidance Strategies: Developing a Sense of Community, Part I

Teachers’ study group meetings
- Teachers’ study group meetings held March 27, April 10 and April 24, 2007. After the professional development day in March the teachers decided to develop a study group to discuss the book ‘Learning to Trust’ and three bi-weekly meetings were held leading up to the second professional development day.

April 27, 2007
- Guidance Strategies, Part II

May 11, 2007
- Creating African Centered Environment
- Intervention pyramid
- Defining the problems multisensory, structured language programs for grades K through 3

Professional development outside the school
- Differentiation Academy Part I April 3 & 4, 2007
- Differentiation Academy Part II May 15 & 16, 2007
Teacher Interviews

Berger (2000) stated interviews are one of the most widely used and most fundamental research techniques because they enable the researcher to obtain information that cannot be gained through observation alone. Using interviews allow the researcher to document the teachers’ reaction, knowledge and skills that they perceived from the professional developments. The purpose of interviewing is simply to find out what is in and on someone’s mind (Patton, 1980). Interviews seem to be particularly valuable in obtaining reports of changes in behavior (Building Professional development Partnerships for Adult Educators Project, 1997). Through interviews, the researcher is able to collect a lot of data quickly and to seek clarification during the interview sessions and later. The researcher was able, through this method, to establish rapport with the participants and clarify questions. In addition, Kvale (1996) and Rubin and Rubin (1995) argued that lived experience and insights of the interviewees are released through the interview, and the interviewer tries to gain access to the world of the subject and his or her perspective. The interviews were designed to gather the teachers’ views about their professional development activities. They were given an opportunity to express their views, respond, and comment freely on the professional development activities.

I wanted to investigate elementary teachers’ perception of the value of their professional development. I wanted to document their reaction to the professional development offered in the charter school setting and focus on their use of new knowledge and skills.
Overall, using interviews, as a source of data collection, had higher response and completion rates when compared to surveys. Over the span of five months, the interviews provided a vehicle for the teacher participants to share their thoughts, opinions, and attitudes with me, as well as to express their motivations. Berger (2001) further supports the use of recorded interviews in that they provide a record which can be analyzed in detail. The researcher designed the interview questions to help answer the three main guiding questions of the case study.

Four teacher interviews were conducted per participants for this case study, March 23, April 27, May 11 and August 12, 2007. The first three interviews were conducted immediately following the three school’s professional development days and the last interview was conducted on August 12, 2007. They were tape recorded to ensure the informational accuracy, while also ensuring anonymity for participants. The tape recorded interviews were 30 to 45 minutes in length and transcribed into word processing computer files before the next interview was conducted. Each EYT was shown a copy of the previous transcription to proofread, providing an opportunity for clarification, elaboration, or additional commentary. Participants were given a pseudonym under which interview data would be analyzed and reported. I attempted to maintain the highest standards of confidentiality. For a means of increasing internal validity, the teachers were asked to verify interview data immediately after transcription. The interviews were held in a place of the participants’ choosing, which was conducted in their classrooms at the end of each professional development day.
The researcher believes that more research studies are needed to focus in these two areas. I wanted to know if the two EYTs perceived the professional development that the school provided was of value and practically realistic. The researcher designed the three main research questions as a guide to investigate the case and also constructed the interview questions (Appendix A) to provide answers for the three general research questions:

1. What are the entry-year teachers’ (EYTs’) perceptions of professional development?
2. How does district level professional development impact entry-year teachers’ learning in an Afro-centric school?
3. How do entry-year teachers (EYTs) perceive professional development as impacting their students’ achievement?

Field Notes

As a participant observer, I collected daily field notes of formal and informal meetings with the participants. These field notes were taken during staff meetings, classroom observations, during professional development workshops, and study group meetings. I jotted down notes as I sat in on meetings or interacted with the participants; and at the end of each day I was able to type the notes using word processing software. I was in a position to observed participants in their classrooms teach 36 times each for at least 30 to 45 minutes three days a week and take notes during meetings and professional development activities. For three months, I was able to observe the participants and take daily field notes. I was able to take notes during three study group meetings. According
to Stake (1995), as observations are made and time passes, knowledge is constructed. This observational strategy allowed the researcher to document teachers’ instructional activities and behaviors. Through the researcher’s field notes (reflections), there was a greater opportunity to learn about the types of professional development entry-year teachers perceive as being important, documenting the impacts and their views on how this transfers to their students’ achievement.

Teacher Observation

Each participating teacher was observed, at least three times a week, for 30 to 45 minutes, in the classroom during a lesson; the school observation protocol (Appendix F) was used. I conducted a total of 36 teacher classroom evaluations on each of the EYTs. The teacher observations were conducted to help answer question two of the general research question: How does district level professional development impact entry-year teachers in an Afro-centric school? Through using the observational strategy, I was able to assess teachers’ instructional activities and behavior. “Observations can be used to assess the impact of all professional development approaches; and are a useful strategy for identifying changes in instructional behavior-particularly when used over a period of time” (Building Professional development Partnerships for Adult Educators Project, 1997, p. 29). I was able to observe each of the teachers during different periods and teaching different subject areas. These observations were done at the back of the room; at the end of each lesson I would leave the room without interrupting the class. The overall goal for using teacher observations was to see if all or any knowledge gained during professional development transferred to the classroom. While in the classroom,
the researcher was able to record as many descriptive and reflective notes as possible to establish a substantial database for analysis. The teachers were told in advance that I would be present in their classroom to observe. I sat quietly in the back of the classroom and left at the end of the lesson; field notes were also taken during my observations.

Professional Development Days

*Professional Development Day One*

The Classroom behavior Management workshop was presented by two retired administrators on March 23, 2007. The two presenters were retired administrators: a school principal and a superintendent from a large public school district. The presenters asked the teachers to tell them about behavior in the classroom and the school. They talked about reasons to suspend or not to suspend a student and the enormous decision a principal or instructional leader makes. The teachers in the room were very willing to share the problems they were facing in their classrooms and the school. The teachers were asked what constituted an office referral and to list, in groups, the offenses for which a student is referred to the office. They were also asked how well they knew their students and their families (at this point, a few of the teachers shook their heads). The presenters then began telling about past experiences they had with some of their students and how they dealt with them. They also gave strategies on how to deal with behavior issues in the classroom and how to connect with parents.

Prior to the professional development, I was walking back to my office after spending the morning in the second grade class; I came across Paula walking in the hall.
She was holding her bag close to her, crying. At her wit’s end, she was close to walking out of the school. Surprised to see her in such a state, I asked her to come in the office with me. I had Paula take a seat while I checked on the first grade class. When I arrived at the classroom door, the Title I reading teacher was in the classroom reading a story to the students. I called her to the classroom door and told her Paula was in my office. I asked if she could continue teaching the students until the lunch break. She told me she would keep them and I left to speak with Paula.

Upon returning to my office, Paula began telling me she’d had enough and was tired of the instructional leader who always blamed her for every behavior problem in the classroom. Paula believed that when a teacher asks for help, the instructional leader should come right away and assist. She also believed that when a student was sent to the office, the student should use that time to reflect upon their behavior. She said that a few of her students looked forward to being sent to the office and saw it as “play time”. “I feel the students are being rewarded for bad behavior”, said Paula. She went on to explain how she had sent a student to the office for hitting another student and that it was not the first time. Paula continued teaching her class. In the middle of her lesson, she was called to the office and informed by the principal that she needed to work on her classroom management. The principal then sent the student back to the classroom. After listening to Paula, I told her I would speak with the instructional leader. I advised her not to leave the school and to spend the period in my office to calm down. I told her the students needed her and we would work it out. This was just one of many incidents that occurred because of behavioral issues in the school.
The teachers expressed a great need for a professional development that dealt with behavior management. They felt that behavioral problems had escalated to such a point that it began to interfere with their teaching. The teachers also felt there should be some type of policy or procedure that unilaterally addressed behavior. These teachers felt that the school needed to implement a plan that allowed students with major behavioral issues to be dismissed from the room, whether it is was being sent to the office, in-school suspension, or even suspension from school. The teachers also expressed a need for the administration to provide them with disciplinary strategies to use in the classroom. The views of my two study participants are quite reflective of the general teaching staff of the school. I saw the teachers upset when a student would fight in the classroom and after only a few minutes were sent back to class by the instructional leader.

*Paula:* I am so tired of sending students to the office for major offenses and the instructional leader coming asking me questions as if it was my fault. I don’t know what to do next because I need to be able to come in and teach my students instead of dealing with so much dumb stuff. We definitely need help in this school. This is a big joke! [Field notes, March 23, 2007]

*Ellen:* Administration needs to give teachers strategies to use in the classroom for discipline. They need to be supportive and a little more understanding. Also, when problems arise from a student not in your class and you go to administration the problem needs to be handled immediately not told that it needs to be written and then it will be handled. [Field notes, March 23, 2007]
The EYT's were upset over the discipline in the school and wanted to see changes. At the end of the presentation the participants thanked the presenters for coming and said they had learned a lot from them.

*Guidance Strategies: Developing a Sense of Community, Part I*

The afternoon session Dr. Sam an assistant professor at the nearby university was the presenter for the topic: Guidance strategies: Developing a sense of community, part one. Dr. Sam had worked with the university for over five years and I previously heard Dr. Sam speak about discipline. I thought she could be of assistance to the teachers. After telling her about the overwhelming need for the teachers to develop disciplinary strategies for the classroom, I invited her to lecture at the school. Two weeks before the professional development event, Dr. Sam sent me an e-mail asking that the teachers respond to two questions:

1. How I would like the children to be when they are grown?
2. What opportunities do I provide for them to learn and practice the skills they’ll need to be that person?

I was curious and wanted to know the responses because, at times, I would hear from some students “My teacher doesn’t care about me.” I asked each teacher during a staff meeting and overall they were positive and wanted so much for their students. They were not only looking at what their students could accomplish in their classroom, but beyond the classroom. It was during this time that Paula was having a hard time with discipline in her classroom, with constant complaints. On a daily basis, Paula would send four or five students to the office.
Ellen’s and Paula’s responses to the two questions were as follows:

Question one: How would I like the children to be when they are grown?

**Paula:** I want my students to be productive, responsible people that live their dreams and provide opportunities for the next generation.

**Ellen:** I would like the children in my class to be successful. Success is a word that is different for every person. To me, success means following your dreams and believing in yourself. I want the children to be proud, go to college, and do things no one believes they can do.

Question 2: What opportunities do I provide for them to learn and practice the skills they’ll need to be that person?

**Paula:** Right now I give my students the opportunity to dream and talk about their futures. I tell them that they are responsible for their actions first, but they should make sure community (classmates) is in check.

**Ellen:** The opportunities that I provide include telling them that I believe in them, I am proud of them, and they can do anything they want if they put their mind to. I also give them many opportunities to work in groups and problem solve on their own.

During her workshop, Dr. Sam asked every teacher to talk about their students’ behavior. The teachers told her what they saw as the problem(s). One of the main problems stated was they did not feel as if the administration took the students to task for their misbehavior; when the students were sent to the office they were not being punished. Dr. Sam asked what the teachers thought might merit a student going to the
office and she made the teachers write lists and then discuss what they wrote down. She then asked the teachers to role-play the action of a student misbehaving in a classroom and how it should be dealt with by the teacher. Dr. Sam then asked about the administration’s rules and their classroom rules. The teachers were also given the opportunity to describe a typical school day. The teachers discussed problems with the school schedule and how, at time, it was purely chaotic, especially because the students were not getting their specials and they only got two planning periods out a week. Dr. Sam then posed a question to the teachers: Did they know how to create a caring community in the classroom and the school? Dr. Sam talked about developmental discipline and told the staff that it views the classroom as having four main functions: helping children learn a specified set of academic skills, concepts, and facts; fostering their love of learning; helping them learn a set of social skills, values, and expectations; and fostering their commitment to those values (Watson & Ecken, 2003). She said that the classroom management practices a teacher uses must be consistent with all four goals.

Before she left Dr. Sam gave each of the staff a copy of the book *Learning to Trust: Transforming difficult elementary classrooms through developmental discipline* by Marilyn Watson (the books were donated by the department in which Dr. Sam works). The teachers were challenged to read the book and discuss it – Dr. Sam felt the book was appropriate for the staff and that the text could foster learning opportunities for them.

With Dr. Sam still present, the teachers verbally petitioned the instructional leader for time to discuss the chapters of the book by using some of the time from staff meetings, which were held every Tuesday afternoon from 3 to 4 p.m. The teachers asked
if it was possible to receive memos from some of the meetings and use other time for discussion. The instructional leader agreed and this led to a noticeable boost in morale amongst the staff. They also came to a mutual agreement that bi-weekly one of the teachers would facilitate the discussion session. The book was broken into three main parts. The teachers made a decision, with the guidance of Dr. Sam, to read the forward and the introduction first and discuss it before moving on to the main parts so the teachers could establish a firm, fundamental understanding of what the book was about. The three main parts of the book are (a) Building Trust, (b) Managing the Classroom, and (c) Putting It All Together.

‘Learning to Trust’

‘Learning to Trust’ was written by Marilyn Watson in collaboration with Laura Ecken is a case study that can be used by other teachers as a resource book on how to developed relationships in a classroom. This book draws on theory of developmental discipline while documenting the experiences of Laura Eckens and her students. The book outlines the developmental approach to discipline. Laura Ecken was a part of the Child Development Project (CDP). The Child development project core assumption is that the more teachers and others are able to create caring classroom and school communities, the more likely students are to become good people as well as good learners (Watson & Ecken, 2003). In the foreword of the book Alfie Kohn (2003) states,

But the real value of this book derives from what it has to say to practicing teachers and administrators, particularly those who have reluctantly adopted one or another traditional discipline strategy because they assume they have no choice. This
The book teaches educators that their role is to build trusting and caring relationships, among them and their students. I agree with Alfie Kohn that the book ‘Learning to Trust’ offers a different or alternative way of understanding the classrooms and the people who live in them. This book not only explains developmental discipline but allows it reads an opportunity to see it at work in Laura Ecken’s classroom. Laura Ecken’s spends two years building a caring and trusting relationship with her students. The Child Development Project (CDP) approach to classroom management called Development Discipline, which is an approach to classroom discipline for the elementary school setting. Laura Ecken embraces, which stresses teachers:

- Form warm and supportive relationships with and among their students
- Help their students understand the reasons behind classroom rules and expectations
- Teach any relevant skills the students might be lacking
- Engage students in a collaborative, problem-solving process aimed at stopping misbehavior
- Use nonpunitive ways to externally control student behavior when necessary.

(Watson & Ecken, 2003, p. 4)

‘Learning to trust’ offers a lot of concrete examples showing many techniques that Mrs. Ecken’s used in her classroom of developmental discipline. Mrs. Ecken taught
in an inner-city school. The children were all poor, mixed African American and European American, seven and eight year old in a full inclusion classroom with approximately twenty-six students. Throughout the study Laura talked with Marilyn Watson almost every week for two years by phone. The book is divided up in three parts: part one, ‘Building trust’, part two, ‘Managing the classroom’ and part three, ‘Putting it all together’.

The book is a great resource book for educators on how to use developmental discipline that fosters the need for children to be a part of a caring community in their classroom while there is a balance for each child’s autonomy, competence and belonging. Throughout the book you learn about the importance of cooperative learning, which gives the students the opportunities to not only practice prosocial values, but also experience them, such as, being fair, helpful, responsible and considerate. Throughout the book with the guidance of their teacher the students learn to understand and empathize with each other. In ‘Learning to Trust’ the teacher works hard to create a warm and supportive relationship with each student despite their behavior. Mrs. Ecken uses standard academic learning situations to build teacher-child relationships and the book provides numerous examples of how Mrs. Ecken was able to achieve this goal which at times were not easy.

*Teachers’ Study Group Meetings*

Study group meetings were held bi-weekly, from 3:15 to 4:00 pm. The three meetings were held on March 27, April 10 and April 24, 2007. During the week I had overheard a few of the teachers talking about the book and I could not wait to be a part of the first meeting. I walked into the room at 3:10 p.m. after having a conversation with a
parent in the office and met the teachers sitting down with the book ‘Learning to Trust’ already opened. The first topic dealt with building trust. The first 15 minutes were given to the instructional leader for announcements. After the instructional leader finished and left to go to his office, two of the nine teachers excused themselves stating they had not read the book. Paula was also trying to complete the chapter. The first study group meeting was facilitated by Ms. Ruth, a retiree who’d worked with the public school district for 40 years. Mrs. Ruth began by asking us what we had learned in the first few chapters; she also asked if we saw any similarities in the book to the school. During this first session, we compared the school, teachers, and students in the book to our own. The teachers noted how similar our situation was to that of the teacher in the book. We also discussed the meaning of community and how we can show we care about our students. Teachers talked about some of the students and the student demographics. The teachers discussed ways in which they could get to know their students and their families. The teachers also discussed developmental discipline vs. Assertive discipline that they used in their classrooms. They talked about changing to use developmental discipline which is not going to be easy and they would need as much time as the teacher Mrs. Ecken to work with their students instead of a few months.

During this time the teachers listed the things they knew about the students in their classrooms. They listed: (1) mostly from single parent families, (2) many transferred to the school because they had behavioral problems in the public schools, (3) many of the parents were unemployed, (4) a few of the students were living in foster care, (5) a few students were homeless and family were living with other family members, (6)
at least two students in each class had a parent incarcerated, and (7) many of the mothers were teenagers when they got pregnant.

The teachers then talked about how they thought the parents perceived them. Many of the EYTs were upset about how often some of the parents would come and speak with the secretary about problems involving their children rather than speaking directly to them. They were upset also that some parents thought the teachers did not care about their children and were only there because of a job. The EYTs also felt that the parents did not trust them because they were from a different race. A few of the African American teachers told them not to take it personal because many of the parents, because of their relationships with different schools, thought teachers were not giving their children the opportunity to succeed. The meeting came to a close with every teacher in the room making a decision to try out some of the strategies used in the book and to read the next unit for the second meeting.

For the second meeting, Mrs. Luke, the fourth grade teacher, was the facilitator. The main focus was managing the classroom. This time, all of the teachers were present; this was positive because we were discussing how to create community and who would be a part of the community in the classroom. Mrs. Luke began by telling how much she was enjoying reading the book and then asked if anyone had a question or just wanted to share something from the book with the group. Teachers discussed the strategies in the book and if they thought it would work in their classrooms. In this meeting they also began discussing some of the strategies in the book that they had began to use. Teachers who had used some of the techniques in their classroom shared how their students were
responding to the change. Ellen talked about how she started to invite a few students each day to have lunch with her in the classroom, how she asked a different student to talk about their family each day, and how quiet the class was when they were sharing their family stories. Paula sat during this session quietly taking notes. Before the session was over everyone was given a page with a list of strategies from the book to use. They all agreed to try to create a caring community in their classrooms although some thought they would have a difficult time.

Our third and final study group meeting was on the theme putting it all together. The session was led by the fifth grade teacher who began by asking about classroom behavior and all teachers stated they saw some improvement. They said the students were helping out more in the classroom and being more responsible. The teachers shared what they were doing and were happy they had the book to use as a guide. When asked by the facilitator if they thought these strategies could work in their classroom, the majority response was “yes”. Ellen talked about how she visited a few homes and thought the visits went well. She also discussed how she was doing a lot of group projects in her classroom and that they were working out fairly well. Every morning, teachers spoke with the students about setting a classroom behavior goal and a personal goal. At the end of the day, the teacher would ask the class if they thought they accomplished the goal and, if not, what changes could be made the following day. What I thought was great during this session was how every teacher had an opportunity to talk for a few minutes and ask each other questions about the various strategies. The dialogue was fluent, constructive, and helpful. Overall, the teachers thought the book was highly
beneficial for the school and wished the text had been available at the beginning of the school year; the teachers felt as if they would have made fewer mistakes throughout the year.

*Professional Development – Day Two April 27, 2007*

*Guidance Strategies: Developing a Sense of Community Part II*

Dr. Sam came back to follow up on the book *Learning to Trust* and to gage the practical experience teachers derived from using the book. Dr. Sam facilitated the meeting, which was supportive and informative. She asked questions, giving the teachers an opportunity to explain how they were able to apply the book’s strategies and how they’d made changes in their classrooms. Paula talked about how she was able to increase communication with her students’ parents through writing positive notes about each student and the sharing in the classroom. Ellen also talked about the lunch dates in her classroom, home visits, and taking some of her students out on Saturdays with her family. Ellen shared with the other teachers her “To do personal files”. These files, Ellen told the teachers, were designed and individualized for each child in the classroom. After the morning meetings, each student knew they had 15 minutes to work on something in their file. She explained that if, for example, a student was having a problem with capitalizing pronouns, and grammar worksheet was placed in their folder. The files had extra work for each student to complete depending on their area of need. After reading how the teacher in the book dealt with her class, Ellen began having morning meetings which lasted for the first ten minutes and each day a different student lead the meeting and they
could talk about themselves, their family, sports, etc. I listened as the teachers shared what strategies were implemented in their classrooms. They all admitted it called for a lot of work.

Dr. Sam was happy about the teachers’ growth and recommended they continue to use the book as a guide. She also told the teachers to continue sharing with one another and to send her progress e-mails, or contact her if they needed any advice.

After lunch, we found out the second presenter had the dates mixed up and would not be coming to the afternoon session. The teachers were then told to take the time and use it as a planning session.

*Professional Development - Day Three May 11, 2007*

For the third professional development day, the instructional leader wanted to present on the topic ‘Creating an African Centered Environment’. I thought the topic was important to the teachers because at the beginning of the school year they all expressed a great need to learn strategies they could use to cultivate a greater cultural awareness to enhance the scholastic environment.

During the presentation, the objectives were not stated – the teachers were instructed to watch a documentary, made in 1970, but there was no name for the documentary because he began the tape halfway through the documentary and said that he had found it and watched it and that it was important for the teachers to know about their students’ culture. The instructional leader put the tape in, asked them to watch the 40 minute plus tape, and then left the room. I looked around the room and teachers were either talking to each other or reading a book. Paula and Ellen were not paying attention.
Ellen said out loud, “What am I supposed to learn from this to teach my students?” At the end of the video, the instructional leader returned and began asking questions about the documentary. He then gave them the school song and pledge, asking everyone to sing along. Then, he asked them what they thought each stanza in the song meant and the school pledge. At the end of his presentation, the instructional leader gave each teacher a map of Africa. The teachers were asked to use crayons and try to label the countries. The teachers were trying to see how it related to the standards and if it mattered. Overall, they were upset and thought it was a waste of time.

Teachers who attended professional development activities outside the school were asked to present during this day’s professional development. The Special Education teacher presented on the professional development she had taken on the topic ‘Defining the problems multi-sensory, structured language programs for grades K through 3’. She discussed the overall goal of the professional development which was to identify three common types of reading problems and describe assessment strategies for determining each of the problems. She talked about the information she received about dyslexia and presented copies of the supplementary and remedial instructional materials for teaching, reading, writing and spelling skills. Then, she asked the teachers to pair-up and identify common types of reading problems. Afterward, they reconvened and, as a group, described assessment strategies. Overall, the teachers were enthusiastic to share. Ellen and Paula regarded the experience as beneficial. Both teachers welcomed the idea. However, they agreed that timing was a problem and more time needed to be set aside for this learning process. This first session was held for an hour and a half.
The Title I math teacher had also attended a professional development call ‘Intervention pyramid’ she talked about how the goal of the professional development was to sit down and write down all the needs that our students have in the school. The teachers were happy to list some of the needs, especially in the academic and behavioral areas. Then, the title I math teacher asked teachers to jot down what the school needed to do, as a whole, to address those needs. The teachers talked about the role of the school, the teachers, and the parents. There was a consensus that modifications needed to occur in order for the students to be successful in their classroom and the school. Particular emphasis was placed on a handful of the students in the school; the teachers believed there should have been I.E.P.s to address their behavior. When this session was over, teachers wanted to continue discussing it and four of them stayed in the room talking about developing an intervention pyramid, including Paula and Ellen.

**Professional Development Outside the School**

The EYTs were given the opportunity to sign up for a professional development outside the school building. They were wanted to attend workshops that would help them teach their students more effectively. They felt that they needed assistance with preparing their lessons to teach the different learning ability levels in their classrooms. They decided to attend the workshop on Differentiation Academy Part I and II, which was offered over a period of four days: April 3, 4 and May 15 & 16, 2007.

Differentiation Academy professional development gave the EYTs the opportunity to learning needs of students within their classrooms. The goals of the professional development were to create a climate of learning for all the students; being
able to assess the needs of the learners; how to plan lessons to meet the needs of all the students by focusing on readiness, interest and learning styles. The professional development also allowed teachers to examine different strategies to mentally engage students and discussed different approaches for instruction. The teachers were also able to investigate options for developing strategic learners. The EYTs were able to plan differentiation lessons together. They were also able to network with teachers from other school districts.

Data Analysis

A case analysis was conducted. I opted for a case study because it requires careful investigation of the potential case. In this event, the challenge is to minimize the chance of misrepresentation and maximize the access needed to collect the case study evidence (Yin, 2003). Data analysis is thus not a matter of data reduction, as is frequently claimed but of induction Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 333). As previously mentioned, teacher interviews were transcribed, and I listened carefully to the tapes, paying special attention to the written transcript for patterns once they were completed. The transcribed interviews were given to each participant for member checking and read three times. Each time, I assigned each interview response one or more codes. The researcher used memo writing and tables to track the coding process, which allowed the researcher the opportunity to track her thought process when defining categories. Miles and Huberman (1994) asserted this process of ongoing coding allows real or potential sources of bias to be uncovered and identified as well as incomplete or equivocal data which could be
clarified with subsequent interviews and observations. The researcher also used peer
debriefing in this study.

Procedures

The data analysis included the identification of broad categories which
represented major themes that emerge out of the data (Patton, 1990). Additionally, word
processing files were developed for the classroom observations and field notes. The
matrices and word processing files were analyzed to identify broad themes that guided
the case study. I constantly analyzed the data collected for this case study by reading
over the field notes and transcriptions, writing memos, and reflecting on an ongoing basis
throughout the research process. I developed a preliminary list of coding categories and
emerging categories were noted on index cards.

As the themes continue to emerge, I began to select quotations and carefully
screen my field notes to capture the context to support those themes. Coding process
continued until there were no new significant categories, themes, or issues coming to the
data analysis, ‘theoretical saturation’ (Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The
researchers coding process was also supported by member-checking the coding process
and conclusions from the data. The data analysis stopped and the researcher gave all the
raw data to a researcher for peer debriefing. He took the raw data and read them over and
came up with codes and tentative themes before meeting with me over a period of three
weeks. When he had completed his coding we met to discuss the codes and tentative
themes were then identified and compared. If there were not significant data evident to
support a theme it was eliminated and this cycle continued until we could agree on
significant data that supported the themes. I had written down. This method ensured trustworthiness of the data which included peer debriefer and triangulation of the data sources.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

According to Merriam (1988), the researcher must be sensitive to biases inherent in a case study. I paid particular attention to documenting the decisions and actions, as a researcher, in order to meet the criteria of confirmability and dependability. Merriam also noted that because the primary instrument in a qualitative case study is human; all observations and analyses are filtered through one’s own world view, affected by one’s own values and perspectives. There was prolonged engagement and observation throughout the study. This study also required substantial involvement with the teachers. After each transcription, the teachers were given an opportunity to review the transcripts and verify the accuracy of the transcription. Guba and Lincoln (1989) describe this process as the most critical test for verifying data and interpretation.

My aim for this research was to accurately represent the participants’ realities, which was established through the use of member checking and peer debriefing. For member-checking, Each EYT was shown a copy of the previous transcription to proofread, providing an opportunity for clarification, elaboration, or additional commentary. For peer debriefing, I permitted another researcher, one with extensive years of qualitative experience, to review the transcriptions and field notes to see if the themes I observed were there and discuss reasons for the themes before writing the
analysis. During this process questions were asked about the case study so the account would resonate with people other than the researcher.

The reviewer works in a research center and has a Ph.D. in the area of qualitative research. He has also taught classes at the college level in the area of research methodology. The researcher was asked to code independently and then met to compare the codes. By employing this method, each transcript, field notes and teacher observations was coded by more than one person, to safeguard against missing important but unexpected data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). We finally came to an agreement on which codes should be used for the study based on the case.

Limitation of the Study

My study does not presume to predict what may happen in the future, nor generalize, but rather seek to reveal the nature of a particular case at a time. It also seeks to communicate the participants’ perceptions of the professional development they received and to document impacts teachers’ learning. Flyvbjerg (2006) acknowledges that others question qualitative research, but he responds to and discusses five statements that “non-believers” often use as reasons for not relying on qualitative research. The statements are: (a) theoretical knowledge is more valuable than practical knowledge, (b) one cannot generalize from a single case, (c) the case study is most useful for generating hypotheses, (d) the case study contains a bias toward verification, and (e) it is often difficult to summarize specific case studies. Merriam (2001) stated that a case be selected because it is intrinsically interesting. Merriam also explains three special features that can characterize qualitative case studies: particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. Sturam
(1997) viewed a case study as a generic term for the investigation of an individual, group, or phenomenon. It is Sturam’s contention that a holistic or systemic approach quite often entails qualitative techniques in order to tease out the interrelationships of complex variables (p. 61). I agree with Merriam (1988) that the role of the researcher in such methods of qualitative research has been compared to that of a detective.

Furthermore, Merriam and Caffarella (1999) suggest that interpretive researchers make sense of the world by understanding the meanings that people construct. One of the main questions that intrigue reformers, policy makers, parents, and educators alike is whether teachers’ professional development affects student levels of achievement. As mentioned earlier, education is a process and school is a lived experience, and understanding the meaning of the process or experience constitutes knowledge (Merriam, 1998). Secondly, the participants were deliberately selected for the study. They were aware of their role and, therefore, may behave in authentic ways according to the “Hawthorne effect” (Suter, 1998). Therefore, the participants were asked to describe their personal views on the professional development activities they attended and I observed the participants to document if they used any or none of the information they learned during the professional development. In addition, the researcher uses a variety of methods to collect data. Throughout the study, the researcher made decisions regarding what constitutes the case, how and what data to collect, how best to deal with the data as it is collected, and the overall process.

The researcher acknowledges the possibility of her bias towards highlighting the positive responses from the teachers about their professional development activities and
the impacts. However, Guskey (1997) contends that case studies are usually conducted in a single setting and, therefore, the generalizability of their findings is always questionable (p. 5). The use of descriptive case study methodology far outweighs its limitations. I will be able to address issues of methodology design. Being able to interview the participants, being a participant observer in the study, and documenting the experience also provided validity to the study. Member checking and peer debriefing were used for validity of the study.

Summary

This chapter provided explanation for the methodology and presented a detailed description of the role of the researcher, setting, participants, data collection and analysis procedure. The results are expanded upon in the fourth chapter, yielding more information in the area of elementary entry-year teachers and their perception of the value of their professional development.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This case study investigated and documented entry-year elementary teachers’ (EYTs) perception of the value of their professional development activities and what impact these activities have had on the teachers. This chapter presents first summaries of: the professional development days the teachers attended, study group meetings, the teacher interviews, the teachers’ classroom observations and the findings from data gathered from the two elementary entry-year teachers’ perception of the value of their professional development. Data from my case study consists of teacher interviews, teacher observations and field notes. In this fourth chapter I report on my findings. There is a call for a direct link between a professional development experience and an observable impact in the classroom (Piexotto & Fager, 1998). This chapter is designed to respond to the three guiding questions stated in chapters one and three:

1. What are the entry-year teachers’ perceptions of professional development?
2. How does district level professional development impact teacher learning for entry-year teachers in an Afro-centric school?
3. How do entry-year teachers perceive professional development as impacting their students’ achievement?

The following professional development activities were offered during the study:

- Classroom Behavior Management held March 16, 2007
- Study group Meetings – March 27, April 10, and April 24, 2007
- Differentiation Academy Part 1 April 3 & 4th, 2007
- Guidance Strategies, Part II held April 27, 2007
- Differentiation Academy Part II May 15 & 16, 2007
- Teachers’ Sharing - ‘Intervention pyramid’ and ‘Defining the problems multi-sensory, structured language programs for grades K through 3’ May 11, 2007
- Creating an African Centered Environment May 11, 2007

Summary of Professional Development Days

The days began at 8:30 to 3 p.m. and there were two workshops on each day. The training model was used more in the workshops except for the workshop Guidance Strategies: Developing a Sense of Community, and parts one and two. Both EYT participants thought those two workshops more rewarding because it enabled them to collaborate with other teachers and reflect on their teaching and an opportunity to make necessary changes. The professional development was structured in a way giving them time to implement some of the strategies presented in the workshop and provide follow-
up with the instructor of the workshops. They both said there should be changes in teachers’ knowledge. They were new to professional development but had an idea of what they viewed as being effective. The professional development activities were considered effective for them when they were able to learn something new and then implement it in the classroom to use, but also able to have time to think about the workshop material and revisit the new knowledge in a subsequent follow-up workshop.

Ellen: The goals were stated in the beginning when I attended the professional developments Guidance Strategies: How to Create a Learning Community which was offered by the school and ‘Differentiated Instruction’ which was offered out of the school that the school allowed me to attend. There was also time provided between each session to allow me to try the strategies and then meet again to discuss them. What also was important was that I see the need for the professional development and that it would help me with my professional growth. [Interview 4]

Both participants saw a great need for the classroom behavior management workshop, but wished it was offered earlier in the school year. The presenters, Mr. Sands and Mr. Johnson were retired administrators who were members of the Bunker School Sponsor Company offered different strategies and told anecdotes of when they were classroom teachers and shared with the teachers what worked and did not. During the workshop the teachers discussed their students’ behavior, classroom rules, and what they do in their classroom to decrease behavioral problems.
Both participants were able to attend four days of professional development differentiated instruction workshop which were held on April 3 & 4 and May 15 & 16, 2007. Both teachers wanted to attend the professional development because they wanted more information and strategies to help plan effectively to meet their students learning needs in their classrooms. They wanted to be able to tailor the instruction or adjust the instruction to meet various ability levels. When they returned from the Differentiation Academy workshops, they talked about how important the professional development was because they were able to focus on learning for all their students and spend sometime during the workshops identifying their students’ skill levels. They valued this professional development because it focused on students’ academic abilities, learning styles, teaching the whole child, teaching practices and strategies to help them meet the needs of their diverse learners. They talked about the most rewarding part of the workshop for them was being able to discuss different approaches for instruction and sharing how they used those strategies in their classrooms with the other teachers. The teachers said that having four days of professional development, which also provided ample time for the teachers to use the strategies in their classrooms and having two days of follow-ups, were very beneficial.

During the professional development in May, two of the teachers in the school who had attended professional development outside of the school presented. The Special education teacher presented on the workshop she had taken in March on ‘defining the problems multi-sensory, structured language programs (K-3)’. She talked about reading problems that students may have in the classrooms in the school. The teachers identified
some of the common types of reading problems they saw and then she talked about some of the assessment strategies for determining each type of problem. During the hour and half, she talked to the teachers about dyslexia and instructional methods associated with multisensory structured language programs. Both participants said that it was an important workshop and said that they would have liked the opportunity to attend a workshop emphasizing multisensory structured language problems. They also said during the interview that they enjoyed the participating.

The Title I teacher also presented on the professional development ‘pyramids of intervention’ to the teachers for an hour and a half. The overall focus of the workshop was identifying the different ability levels in their classrooms and they spent time discussing their students abilities and talking about activities and how to assess the students. They discussed why it was important to monitor the students’ progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction. Both participants saw creating an intervention pyramid was important for the school and learning how to use various assessments to monitor the student progress was essential. They both noted the sharing session was beneficial and they learned a lot from both teachers, however they need more time.

Overall, both participants thought that the professional development days were essential but that more time was needed for the professional development on classroom management seeing that this was one of the major weaknesses that they faced as beginning teachers. They also thought that teachers sharing what they learned from different professional development outside the school were important, but more time they
need as a group to go over what they learned. ‘Creating an African Centered Environment’ workshop EYTS’ rated this workshop a zero because of it structure and they could not see the connection to their students. The instructor was not present in the room for more than half of the workshop. He told the teachers that he had a lot of paperwork to complete for the board in his office and went back to his office until the documentary was over and a teacher went to let him know it was finished. The documentary showcased black people dancing in 1970 in Suriname, but the presenter failed to explain how it related to the students in their classroom and the objectives and goals of the workshop. He did not explain the documentary, but began talking about home school curriculum and the importance of the school pledge. He also asked the teachers to label the countries on the map of Africa and to color the map of Africa using the crayons that he provided. They noted that professional development should be ongoing and saw more value in the study group meetings with their peers.

_Ellen:_ Professional development should be ongoing especially for beginning teachers, I think when we can meet every week or every other week to discuss a strategy or strategies it helps teachers, but once a month is not enough. I think for me having the two workshops on guidance and having the study group meetings around that book was a rewarding experience for me and I will be able to use those strategies for years to come. [Interview 4]

_Paula:_ As beginning teachers we are still learning, and professional development should be designed to help us reflect on our practice and try new strategies or acquire new knowledge. We need time to sit and reflect as a group instead of
having someone come in and talk about something and there is no follow up. The guidance workshops and the study group meetings were great and I was able to make some changes in how I communicated with my students and parents. I began to take more time interacting with my students outside the classroom.

[Interview 4]

Summary of the study group meetings

There were three study group meetings which were held on March 27, April 10 and April 24th, 2007 and both participants along with the other staff members were in attendance. The meetings were held bi-weekly giving the teachers an opportunity to read the chapters and try out the strategies in the book ‘Learning to Trust’ was facilitated by Dr. Sam who was an assistant professor from a nearby university. After school the teachers arrived early for staff meeting. They could not wait for Mr. Tim, the instructional leader to finish talking before they started to share at the same time. Teachers wanted to put plans into action and everyone seemed to want to share their plans. I was accustomed to their talking and complaining about the school’s lack of resource and discipline. The complaint list was long, but they used the sessions to collaborate, in regards to their students and changing the school’s climate. Teachers shared about how surprised their students were about the changes they were making in their classrooms. Getting to know their students and trying to develop a community in their classroom were important to them. Teachers talked about constructing classroom rules and consequences, as well as setting goals with their students. Paula and Ellen
listened as the Title 1 teacher asked questions. Ellen raised her hand and told the group that she had already began using some of the strategies in her classroom. She said:

I began by letting the class help me come up with some new rules for the classroom. Our students here in the school mostly listen in the classroom, but they have a problem following directions if we are at morning assembly or outside in the yard. I also told them that we need to learn how to respect and treat each other. [The Researcher Field note, April 3, 2007]

When the time was up for this meeting, teachers remained and discussed the book. They were taking steps toward improving classroom practices. This book ‘Learning to Trust’ provided the teachers with comprehensive tools.

Ellen: The book provided me with an example of a teacher in a similar position like us here in Booker T. Washington, and being able to read about strategies that she used in the book with her students who each of us can identify with; not only made it easy for us to try, but knowing that we were doing it as a group made a great difference for me. [Interview 2, April 27, 2007]

The study group was important to the teachers.

Paula: The strategies in this book are helping me communicate with my students and my parents. It is not easy, but knowing that it is a group project, I don’t feel alone and it has been working with my students. They are being respectful to others and you know they have their bad days, but overall, I see changes. [Field note, April 17, 2007]
This study group provided support for the EYT's and they voiced how important it was for them to be a part of the group:

*Ellen:* At first I thought the book would have been just extra work for me, but listening to the other teachers talk about their experience and hearing about what they were doing in their classrooms, and going to see their students work made a great difference. [Interview 4]

Paula made the following comment in the third study group meeting:

I do appreciate all the sharing and just want you to know that a lot of the time it is easy to read a book, but it is hard at times to try the strategies; but coming to these meetings and being able to talk to most of you and asking you for suggestions reassured me about what to try and I just want to thank you for all your support. [Researcher Field notes, April 24, 2007]

The study group meeting gave the teachers an avenue as a pedagogical sounding board. They worked through issues of behavioral problems and how to make connections with their students and parents. This sounding board did not encourage “finger-pointing”, whereby blame is placed on others, but rather sought proactive and practical solutions. Paula commented during the second interview:

*Paula:* I enjoy meeting with those teachers because the teachers don’t judge me, but I know they are my support. For a long while in here I thought if other teachers know how difficult it was for me to teach these students they would laugh or make a stupid remark, but that is not the case. I see us now all working together for the same goal. [Interview 2]
During the third study meeting Ellen stood up and made the following comment:

I knew I cared a lot for the children but I never thought I can play a much greater role and can really make a big difference in their life. I never sat down and thought about their home situation and not that I am selfish it is just I think about all the work I have to do here with less time to honestly think about these students, and you know I really need to do that starting today. I was so focused on discipline and not thinking about what creates those problems. [Researcher Field notes, April 3, 2007]

Teachers talked about their classrooms. When they talked about their students, the teachers would usually asked “what should you do?” giving the teachers a verbal or silent opportunity to reflect on their own actions.

The conversations focused on creating a school community where teachers were not only reading the book, but also reading research articles that would help them develop a community in their classrooms. At every meeting, they would begin by talking about some of the changes they made in their classrooms and if they had copies of a resource that they used or created in the classroom. For example, Ellen showed her ‘individualized folders’ and Paula brought in a copy of her personalized letters for the group to view. By showcasing the work they were doing in their classrooms, a sense of well-being was added to the EYT’s professional experience. Paula commented during the last interview:

Having other teachers tell me that I was doing something well made a great difference to me, I finally felt like one of them. It made it worthwhile trying and I
wanted to try even harder when I met with them or spoke with them about a strategy in the book. [Interview 4]

The reflections were important for the EYTs because they had an opportunity to examine their practices and make adjustments where needed. They were able to use strategies and not be judged for not trying something else. They were not critical of one another. They also realized that they were at different experience levels. Both participants were using strategies from the book and seemed to have made a lot of changes to their approaches. During my conversation with Ellen, she said:

The book was an awesome idea. It was good to see us as a group discussing what we can do in our classroom on guidance. We are finally following through as a group from what we learn from professional development. I liked what you just said about guidance and it is important that we do know the role we all play in this school. I agree; I did not know all my students’ parents and I want to get to know them. Did you know that I have a lot of students’ parents who just came out of prison? I was also surprised to find out that some of the students in my classroom had spent time in foster care. [Researcher Field note, April 19, 2007]

The teachers were asked to dream about an ideal school. I made the following observation of the two participants during the first meeting:

Paula and Ellen were sitting next to each other and they both burst out laughing at the same time. Ellen said: “Are you joking, I don’t even want to think about the type of school I would like to be teaching in”. The teachers looked at her and the facilitator told her to think about her role in the school. The group then began
talking about things a teacher or teachers can do to make a school ideal.

[Researcher Field notes, April 2, 2007]

Through reading the book and attending the study group meetings, teachers got to know their students. This is an observation made during the last study group meeting:

The teachers talked about their students and played the game ‘did you know?’ with this game a teacher had to tell ten things about a student in their class, but how the game worked is a teacher in the group would say the name of a student, and then the teacher had five minutes to talk about that student. This activity was done in the last meeting. [Researcher Field notes, April 24, 2007]

Overall, the EYT's thought that the study group meetings were the most beneficial professional development activity and that they should have been a part of such a group from the beginning of school. Ellen made the following comment:

I was able to grow as an educator because I was a part of the study group. The book was great, but I think if we had to study anything together as a group it still would have made the world of difference. I did not feel alone and I had a lot of support and we had time to not only make plans, but work those plans and follow-up. I think we learned a lot from each other. [Interview 4]

During the final interview Paula confirmed and supported what Ellen said:

Everyone knows how much I struggled throughout the year and it seemed impossible to do anything right for a long time. You know what was fascinating was meeting with the group and making changes while so many things were going wrong with the organization. Some days we were not sure about our jobs,
but teachers still wanted to provide the best classroom for their students to become successful, and that motivated me more than hearing administration asking us to do anything. [Interview 4]

Ellen: I walked away of the meetings feeling refreshed and motivated to start something exciting the following day. I honestly felt like a kid with a new toy. It was interesting seeing the difference it made in my teaching and my students. [Interview 4]

Paula: You know I did not want more work put on me, like reading a book, but with your encouragement and watching the other teachers get excited about it made me want to try and you know what; I honestly enjoyed our sessions most of all and wish it had begun at the beginning of the school year instead of almost at the end. [Interview 4]

Summary of Teacher Interviews

Interview One

Workshops: Classroom Management and Guidance Strategies: Developing a sense of community part one.

The first interview was held on March 23, 2007 immediately at the end of both workshops. I asked Paula and Ellen about the two workshops classroom behavior management and Guidance strategies: Developing a sense of community, part one. Generally, they agreed they had learned a lot of strategies to use in their classrooms. They liked the teaching strategies that were incorporated into the presentations and they
enjoyed having opportunities to reflect on the school and its rules. When they talked about the first workshop of the day, Classroom Behavior Management, this is what they stated:

Paula: Learning more ideas on behavior management was extremely helpful. I would have liked for us together to have put a plan in action, but I also would have liked teachers to collaborate on ideas instead of some of them just talking and complaining about the school’s discipline. I’m excited to try them out. [Interview 1]

Ellen: I hope we can implement, collaborating the rules now. I would like to hear more about scientific based research, or have a list of resources, of discipline strategies and statistics of what works with environments that have little resources for the children that may need a lot of extra help and attention. [Interview 1]

Paula and Ellen commented on the workshop, Guidance Strategies: Developing a Sense of Community, as follows:

Paula: It was a very good session. She tried to get us to discuss issues openly and effectively. The book idea was awesome now we would have an opportunity to collaborate with each other. She also inspired me to think about my teaching and my students. [Interview 1]

Ellen: The workshop turned out to be very good. I feel we actually talked about things we can use in our classroom. I liked the open communication and talking forum. I am so happy we have a book to read and look forward to the discussions. [Interview 1]
Interview II – Workshop Guidance Strategies, Part II

This interview with both EYTs took place after the workshop on Guidance Strategies, part II. Ellen and Paula were pleased that Dr. Sam came back and gave everyone an opportunity to talk about changes that had taken place in the classrooms. They viewed discipline as important, but saw a bigger picture; they believed the classroom to be an extension of the home and that creating a caring relationship with each student was fundamental.

Ellen: The more I showed interest in my students their likes and dislike I realize that they began to warm up to me. My students started to open up to me more and I think we all felt comfortable. I began to let my class know every chance I got since reading the book how much I care about them and their future. [Interview 2] Paula: I began writing short one line to each of my students at the end of each week and letting them take it home with the words, “I care about you, have a nice weekend”. They would ask me to read it to them, especially because they could not read and would all smile as they line up for the bus. If I knew it would have made a big difference in their behavior I would have done it a long time ago. I am sorry I started late in the school year, but now every week I think about something positive to write them. [Interview 2]

Throughout the interview the EYTs talked about how important it was for them to read the book ‘Learning to Trust’ as a group and having the opportunity to discuss it and having the strategies to used in their class was a big help. They said they learned a lot and having Dr. Sam come to follow –up with them was important and the fact that the
facilitator wanted them to communicate to her via e-mail about the book was important. Both EYTs wished that all the workshop session had the same format. They also talked about how much they had learned about their students after reading the book and using some of the strategies in their classrooms. During the interview, Ellen and Paula made the following comments:

*Ellen:* It helps those that want to attain a better understanding of their students. I use what I learn to problem solve and expand my children’s learning in the classroom. For instance the things that I learned from the discussions and reading *Learning to Trust* I applied in my classroom and when other teachers share their good ideas I then take them and use them in my classroom. I use morning meetings, weekly goals and let my children talk more than I normally would and all because I had to learn and adapt a new teaching style based upon my environment. Being able to read, sit down and have dialogue over the material has been a wonderful experience. [Interview 2]

*Paula:* I am happy Dr. Sam came back today and it was good to let her know we really used those strategies. That book helped me more than attending many little workshops. Overall, I think we helped each other, although it was a lot to read, but it was practical and informative. I was able to relate to the teacher in the book knowing that she went through the same school situation, and it helped a great deal. [Interview 2]
Teacher Interview III – Workshops: African Centered Environment, Intervention Pyramid, and Defining the Problems Multisensory, Structured Language Programs for Grades K through 3.

This third interview was held on May 11, 2007 immediately following the professional development sessions. The interviews were held in each of the participants’ classrooms at the end of the professional development day. In reference to the documentary made in 1970, Ellen and Paula were still upset about the presenter’s instructional choice and the lack of a second presenter for that day. They did not see the relevance of the morning’s workshop toward their students and believed it was of no use to them. They kept stating how it was “a waste of time” and if they knew what the workshop would entail, they would have stayed home. They wanted to be able to see the value of the professional development and saw no relevancy to the curriculum standards. Paula and Ellen made the following comments:

Paula: I would give this workshop a zero. It was not interactive and putting on a video is non-effective. The person who was giving the video was hardly inside the room. It was an old documentary that was not relevant for today. To be honest I did not learn anything from the workshop. [Interview 3]

Ellen: I would give it a two because I really did not get much out of it that I can use in the classroom. There was no information on how to apply standards in an African centered environment, and there was absolutely no information that is applicable to my students. Men going to Surinam to learn about their African heritage in an African village that’s not even in Africa in the 1970s does not teach me how to teach my students better. [Interview 3]
Ellen and Paula both liked the idea of having teachers who had attended professional development out of the school come back and share what they learned and bring resources back to the school. Ellen and Paula thought more time was needed for teachers to discuss what they had learned at the professional development. Overall, they saw a great need for the ‘Intervention pyramid’ and ‘Defining the problems multi-sensory, structured language programs for grades K through 3’ professional development.

Ellen and Paula said:

*Ellen:* The intervention pyramid seems like an awesome idea. It is too bad our instructional leader would not take the time to make one for our school considering we have many students that would need the extra help, and the teachers need to know what direction we head towards. What the special education teacher shared about the workshop she attended …I got more from it like I said and will be paying attention to interventions and work with other teachers that work with my students to meet their needs. [Interview 3]

*Paula:* I did learn information some teachers learned at professional development meetings. I think that some of the teachers were confused due to the amount of information presented. I think it would have been more beneficial if the day focused on just one speaker instead of many speakers. Our students have a lot of needs and until we sit down and try to address those needs we are going to continue having problems in our classrooms. [Interview 3]
They thought more time was needed for the teachers to discuss professional development and complete group activities. Ellen and Paula said:

*Ellen:* I learned a lot from the teachers who presented today. We just need more time to present on things we have learned. I believe teachers know a lot and sometimes they should be given more opportunities to present. [Interview 3]

*Paula:* The information I learned today hopefully I can use them, but with some assistance. I think if we sit down as a group and research that topic more we can benefit from it. [Interview 3]

**Interview IV-Follow-up Session**

This interview took place after the school closed on August 12, 2007. I wanted this interview to take place in August after the third grade Ohio Achievement Test results had arrived and to give the teachers time to reflect on the school year and their professional development activities. Overall, eight out of the ten students in Ellen’s class was proficient or above in math and seven out of ten students were proficient in reading. Ellen like the overall result, but wished she had attend professional development to give her more strategies and techniques in reading and math.

*Ellen:* I am happy about results on the Ohio Achievement Test, but I can not point any specific professional development that provided me with resources to use in my class. I wish I had been able to attend workshops in math and reading that were aligned with the Ohio standards or in a specific area on the examinations and then I can say differently. [Interview 4]
Paula was able to review the results of the first grade Ohio Diagnostic Screeners that was given to her class at the beginning of school and at the end. At the beginning of school her grade was below average on the Ohio Diagnostic screeners and at the end of school only three of her students were below average on the test in reading and math. Paula also stated the following:

My students did very well on the screeners the second time and I am happy I don’t think there was anyone professional development I can think about that I can say contributed to their scores. I wish I had professional development in the areas of math and reading to help them even more. [Interview 4]

The EYT’s did not identify any one professional development as contributing to the students success on the standardize examinations. They both admitted that, overall, it was difficult to work in the school because of a lack of resources and preparation for student needs. They also noted that a sense of community and group collaboration made it more possible for them to continue teaching in the school throughout the year.

“Working together to develop strategies to create a better learning environment in the classroom”, said Paula, was key to their professional dedication for the year. They pointed out that strategies learned from the university professors were tools they would utilize in other schools because, as Ellen stated, “they are the expert.” Both participants said that teachers new to the profession especially needed a lot more support and professional development throughout the school year. The following final comments resonated with me from the participants:
Ellen: Without professional development the last past months, I don’t think I could have continued, because it just was too many things going on in the school. Although I learned a lot from the presenters coming in from the university, I still believe working along with the other teachers was much more beneficial because we were able to set goals and worked at them together. [Interview 4]

Paula: There is so much we still need to learn and professional development will be a continuous process for me. It made me examine my teaching and through doing that, I was able to make some changes. [Interview 4]

Summary Teacher Classroom Observations

I used the school’s teacher observation protocol to document Ellen and Paula’s lessons. I wanted to see if they would use any of the knowledge or skills or resources provided to them at the professional development in their lessons. I was able to document thirty-six lessons for each of the two EYT’s. At the beginning of the research, Paula and Ellen were not making cultural connections. Both EYT’s, prior to the professional development, did not want to infuse the African American culture into the lessons. However, after the professional development on March 26, in my classroom observations, I took the following notes:

Paula was teaching coin identification in her math class, and as she began to teach the students about coins, she told them about Maggie Lena Walker and how she was the first African American woman to be president of a bank. I saw that the students looked surprised and wanted to know more about her. She showed them
a picture of her and told them to ask their parents and that was going to be their homework assignment. [Researcher Field note, March 26, 2007]

I smiled and later told Paula that it was good that she connected the lesson. Previously, Paula wanted to teach her lessons and could not see why it was important to infuse the African American knowledge. She told me later that the more she read about it - although it was time consuming - she saw why the students needed to know more about leaders in their culture. Later that day, I went to Ellen’s classroom and wrote the following field notes:

Ellen’s lesson was social studies and she was discussing with them the Underground Railroad. She began the lesson by asking the students if they heard about the Underground Railroad and told them that it ran through a part of Ohio. The students were quiet and wanted to know more. She read them the story “Aunt Harriet’s Underground Railroad In The sky”. She then asked the students to sit three at each computer and they were able to be apart of the interactive story from the National Geographic website. Ellen is really trying hard to incorporate new knowledge into existing knowledge. She developed the lesson to meet the needs of her students in the classroom and she assembled the lesson in a manner in which her students found it meaningful. [Researcher Field notes, March 26, 2007]

On March 27th Paula’s science lesson was on sequencing events. The lesson was well planned and the classroom was well organized. The students walked in, quietly getting their books out while Paula stood waiting. She made the lesson culturally
relevant, she discussed with her students how their ancestors planted their own food and asked them to think about the types of food they think their great-grandparents planted. The students began giving her their list of foods. She then gave them seeds and they decided to grow plants in the classroom. The students were excited about it and she asked them how long it would take?

Today the students were not only organized, but they were enjoying the lesson. They were raising their hands and Paula had great rapport with them. [Field notes March 27, 2007]

Ellen decided to teach her students the topic ’Community’. This topic was one that the teachers had discussed, in detail, during their study group meetings. I noted this during the lesson:

April 1, Ellen this afternoon was teaching a social studies lesson and wrote on the board ‘Who makes up a community?’ She told them that at the end of the week students will have a firm understanding of what a community is, who make up a community, and what people of the community do for a living. She began by talking about Vernon Odom and how he was an important member of a community and how he has a street and housing development named after him. She then asked the students to discuss the jobs members of their families have in pairs. She then told each student that they would need to take notes and report to the class. The students had ten minutes to interview each other and Ellen then asked each student to stand and give their report. She then told the class for homework to write a letter to an important member of their community telling
them about their classroom community and what they learned in class.

[Researcher Field notes March 30, 2007]

I wanted to be there to hear the students present their homework assignment about their community. So, I showed up early for class. As I walked into the room, I observed the following:

Ellen was sitting down on a rug in the front of the classroom while her students sat quietly looking through Ellen’s family albums. They would laugh out at some of her baby pictures and asked her a few questions about her family. Ellen looked quite comfortable sharing with her students. After ten minutes she told them that tomorrow they could start bringing in pictures of their family and share them with the class. [Researcher Field notes, April 2, 2007]

Ellen wrote on the board ‘What does it mean to be a good citizen?’ They brainstormed the idea. The students told her being honest, helpful, respectful and supportive. Ellen was happy and told them ‘Good Job’. She then asked each student to stand and read their letters aloud, Tina’s letter made me want to cry, when she said, ‘My teacher has taught me how we need to see our classroom and school as a community and that we all need to play a role in building a safe community.’ She then asked the students at the end to create a postcard that shows a place in the community where their family goes to have fun. [Researcher Field notes, April 2, 2007]
I wanted to find out from Ellen how she felt when Tina read her letter, at our bi-weekly meeting which was held on April 10, 2007. Ellen spoke to the other teachers and I noted the following:

I was so touched by what Tina said in class today. I had to bring you a copy of her letter to read to you because sometimes we think we are not making a difference in these students life, but we are. It is good to know that the small things we do make a big difference to them. [Field notes, April 10, 2007]

On April 5th, Ellen and Paula returned from professional development ‘Differentiating Instruction’. They talked about the knowledge they had acquired and the resources they had brought back. On April 10th, I walked into Paula’s classroom and she had the students separated into groups. I observed the following:

Paula had her best readers reading stories to each other, and she always had five students who were having difficulty reading, and she would usually send them out of the classroom to the Title I reading teacher. But today, Paula was there reading to them in the group and telling them to put their fingers on the words. As she read she would stop and ask them questions at the end of the reading. Paula put new words on the word wall. The title I teacher was also surprised and came into the room looking for the students and Paula signaled to her that she was fine with the group. [Researcher Field notes April 10th, 2007]

I walked down to Ellen’s classroom, which was next door, and some of the students had finished their work. I looked as two students, James and Susan, walked to
the door and took a folder off of the wall with their names on it and sat down. They began to read and write:

Ellen was sitting down helping Taylor with her math assignment. A few of the students were also out of their seats helping others complete their work, so I walked over and looked into a few folders, they were all different. Ellen finally finished her work and came over, so I asked her about them and she told me the folders were all unique and it was to help address the subject areas that they were struggling in; be it a concept or them just needing extra work. I asked her where she got the idea from and she said that she thought about after attending the professional development ‘Differentiating instruction’ I told her to share it with the other teachers. [Researcher Field notes, April 10, 2007]

The teacher observation protocol required teachers to infuse afro-centric information into their lessons. For a long time, teachers complained that it was a lot of work and they did not know how to do so, relying on administration to give them resources to use. On April 16th, I was able to observe the following when Ellen taught a math lesson was about place value:

She wrote the objective on the board: Explain the concept of tenths and hundredths using physical models, such as metrics pieces, base ten blocks, decimal squares or money. She then proceeded by putting up pictures of Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan, and LeBron James. When she placed LeBron James’ picture up the students were excited and started to talk about him and his team. Ellen asked them what they knew about Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods. She
told them that although they are different African American athletes they use numbers to be successful in their sports. She told them that as athletes they use numbers every day when comparing statistics and setting goals, and if they did not understand the value of the number they would not be able to keep track of their points and how well they perform. She then put the students into three groups to research each of the three athletes paying special attention to their statistics. [Researcher Field notes, April 16, 2007]

Paula also made some changes to her lessons, making it culturally relevant. I observed the following:

May 7, I walked in and sat in the back of the class as usual, Paula was writing on the board the subject Social Studies and the state standards: Citizen’s rights and responsibilities. The objective for the lesson was to show why it is important to have fair play, good sportsmanship, respect for the rights of others and to treat others the way you want to be treated. Paula read aloud the objective of the lesson and told the class that it was an achievable objective. She wrote on the board the words respect, prejudice and discrimination. She turned on the cassette player and to my surprise the song ‘Respect’ by Aretha Franklin played. The class was happy and a few of them began to sing out loud. She told them if they knew the song; “don’t be shy… sing it” and she stood in front of the class dancing the song. [Researcher Field notes, May 7, 2007]
At the beginning of school, Paula brought in opera music and would play it in the morning. The students did not like it. She would always say that they needed that type of music instead of hip hop and rap music (which she referred to as “junk music”).

After the song came to an end, Paula asked the class what it meant to be respectful. The students gave her a few examples and she agreed. Paula then asked the class about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a few of the students told her about his death and what he fought for and she wrote their responses on the board. Paula proceeded to ask the students to come and sit on the rug in the front of the classroom. The students began to run to her and she authoritatively clapped her hands. They stopped immediately and she said, “Let me see you walk”. This again surprised me and I had to look at the students to make sure it was the first graders! This was a big change. They stopped and she began to read the book.

Paula read the story and told the students that Dr. King is still respected by people even after his death because of his life. After reading the story she went to the board and defined the word discrimination and then asked the students to raise a quiet hand if they ever felt discriminated against or left out? She then told the class that Martin Luther King felt left out and was discriminated against by many people. He was respected by others by what he did for people. She then had the class role play how they can be respectful to others. The students did a great job. After the role play she wrote on the board the writing prompt ‘I will respect others by…’ and she then asked the class to write as many things they can do to show
they respect each other, teachers, parents, etc. The students began to write and ask Paula to spell a few words. [Researcher Field notes, May 7, 2007]

I made a note of this observation as Paula used the school pledge in her lesson.

After the professional development on ‘Creating African Centered Environment’, both participants said that they did not learn anything from it and it was a waste of time, but I realized that Paula used the school pledge as one of the resources in her lesson:

In her Social Studies lesson, Paula asked the students to first write a sentence each saying something good about believing in themselves. She then took out a copy of the Booker T. Washington Pledge and asked the students to say the pledge, and to explain the meaning of it. She later put a circle around the words respect, pride, uphold, spirit and said the words out loud asking them what they meant. She explained the words to them and told them the story about Rosa Parks, she told them to never give up and that Rosa Park stood up for what she believed in. She then asked them if they have dreams and students were happy to share. Paula at the end played the song, “I believe I Can Fly” students who knew the words sang along. I left the class with tears in my eyes and later told Paula how proud I was about the lesson. She then asked them to each complete the sentence “I believe I can ….” And placed the papers on the wall and told them that they were great goals to reach for and to never give up on their dreams. [Researcher Field notes, April 30, 2007]

Paula later told me that although she did not like the instructional leader’s workshop, she realized that she could still use the information. She said that reading the
book ‘Learning to Trust’ helped her realize that her students needed to dream just like her and she learned how to build a caring community. I never thought I would hear this coming from Paula because she had once seemed to be so distant. She was doing a great job.

I walked into Ellen’s class expecting to observe a math lesson, but apparently she had taught math two periods earlier. She wrote on the board ‘People In Societies’. She then told the students they will discuss that all types of people live in all three different types of communities: cities, suburbs, and rural. She asked the students to compare and contrast the differences in the communities. Ellen then discussed the similarities and differences with the class. She later asked the students to describe some of the differences and similarities of how African Americans live in these particular areas. It was interesting listening to the students and hearing most of them wanting to live in suburbs because they heard they were much safer, and rural they heard were boring. I smiled because none of the students wanted to live where they were now in the future for many reasons.

For homework she asked them to write a paragraph about where they live including supportive details. [Researcher Field notes May 18, 2007]

Overall, the teachers’ observations provided me with opportunities to document changes teachers made because of professional development. The descriptive data I collected over the course of five months also appears to suggest the following helped me to develop the themes:
Themes

As data was being collected, I began to select relevant text based on my case study and began organizing the relevant text into emerging patterns, and those repeating patterns into more general themes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). After reading over the transcripts, teacher observations, and field notes, I began to notice certain patterns. First, I gave them a code and then read over the notes again (while keeping mental notes for other codes, keeping in mind what the case was about). I found myself going back and forth as I coded my data. I began discovering emerging themes within each research question. Here is the list of emerging seven themes that were decided upon: Theme:

(1). Teachers’ needs assessment-part of the decision making process, (2) Strategies/techniques, (3) Time, Continuity and structuring of professional development, 4. Impact on student learning, 5. Teacher change, 6. Collegial collaboration, and 7. Lack of support.

*Theme One: Teachers’ Needs Assessment-part of the Decision Making Process*

This first emergent theme involvement in the decision-making process was stated repeated throughout the study. This study was designed to document the EYTS’ perception of their professional development. The two EYTs felt that it was not only important for the district to offer professional development to the teachers, but rather spend time focusing on the types of professional development teachers in the school needed, especially beginning teachers. Both EYTs felt a need for the school to offer professional development that would help the teachers be able to communicate
effectively with the students, parents and staff in the school. During the first interview they both stated:

*Ellen:* Professional development would give me strategies and techniques to deal with students, parents and staff in this educational setting. [Interview 1]

*Paula:* I need any workshop that would address how to communicate with these students and parents because I am not used to dealing with these students and at times I don’t know how to approach their parents. [Field notes]

All the classroom were inclusion and Paula was very concerned after her class had been tested with the first grade Ohio Diagnostic screeners in reading and math at the beginning of the school year and many of the students scores were below grade level. Paula wanted professional development that would help address the many ability levels in her class.

*Paula:* I need and I know other teachers in here need professional development that will provide us strategies and techniques on how to teach students with special needs and ways that I can help them even more would be beneficial. [Interview 1]

Both participants were concerned with the students’ behavior in their classrooms and throughout the school. During the first interview both participants spoke about the needs for professional development for teachers to be able to learn different techniques and strategies to decrease the behavioral problems in their classroom and throughout the school building and wanted professional development on behavior management.
Paula: I have asked and hoped for from the beginning of the school year for professional development that addresses behavior. It is very frustrating as a teacher to be faced with so many behavioral issues on a daily basis. I know this is one area that I need assistance with. [Interview 1]

Ellen: Today’s professional development was good and it is a start in the right direction on behavior. We do need more assistance in this area. The presenters today had a lot of experience, but what they don’t know is how difficult it is for me just starting out. I wish they would follow up and come to my classroom to see what we are doing and give me some tips after the class. [Interview 1]

Paula: Like I said time and time again, all teachers especially beginning teachers will need professional development in the area of behavior management. [Interview 2]

Ellen told me during the first interview after identifying the various needs in her classroom said that she needed professional development to be able to help her with her students in the following area:

Some of the professional development that I need includes working with students that have ADHD, working with students that are significantly below grade level, and writing strategies that I can use with my class. [Interview 1]

The EYTs wanted professional development in the different subject areas. They both felt that it should be ongoing in subject areas so that they could become effective in those subject areas.
Ellen: I think that every teacher would want more strategies and techniques in the area of reading and math. For me having to teach the third grade and knowing that they have to be prepared for the Ohio Achievement test I need professional development that are aligned with the Ohio standards in reading and math so I can learn more strategies and techniques to use in my classroom and that my students can be better prepared for the examinations. [Field notes]

Paula: The more professional development that we can attend in math and reading would definitely help my students. I need to learn as much strategies and techniques to be able to teach my students. At times, I feel as if I am teaching four different grades. I have students who can read and write, but can not count or don’t know there numbers. A lot of my students should have been in special education, but the school doesn’t want to pay the money to have them diagnosed. I think if I can attend workshops to help my students during this year I will feel much better trying to teach. [Interview 1]

They also wanted professional development in the area of classroom management. They both felt that they needed ongoing professional development in this area and that beginning teachers would need help in this area.

Ellen: I think entry-year teachers need professional development dealing with classroom management due to the fact that it sets a foundation for the learning environment. It also seems that this is an area that many teachers struggle with at times. [Interview 4]
Paula: Although I received assistance in the area of classroom management throughout the school year, I think all beginning teachers will need professional development in classroom management. It is not easy trying to plan your lessons and plan for all the transitions. It is difficult teaching basically all the lessons and trying to structure a routine especially for first grade students. [Interview 4]

Ellen and Paula had strong views of what professional development should be able to do for teachers. They wanted to be able to make decisions as to what type of professional development should they have based on their needs. Both participants felt that if professional development was to enhance teachers’ knowledge then teachers should have a voice in the process. I was able to document the following field notes which shows how much the two participants wanted to attend professional development to help them on May 14, 2007:

I saw disappointment and disbelief on Ellen and Paula’s faced when they received news this afternoon that neither of them could attend a differentiated instruction professional development. They had signed up for the professional development, which was outside the district, and the school had approved it; Ellen and Paula had already attended two sessions in April, however, the instructional leader decided to send one school representative, due to a lack of substitute teachers. Paula and Ellen were excited about attending the last two days of the professional development and had turned in their lesson plans for the substitute teachers. The instructional leader told the three teachers that he was sending Ellen and she could bring back the information and share it with the group. Ellen and Paula met me in
the office with the memo. Paula said, “I really need this professional development because it is teaching me how to design lessons for more students. It has been hard these months trying to come up with lessons that all my students can be successful with. This is just crazy, I am trying to better myself with the hope that my students learn from what I learn. I have had enough with this man and this place!”

They left my office and as I was walking down the stairs I saw a group of teachers standing outside under the tree around 3 p.m. The teachers all came back inside the building and requested a meeting with administration. As we got in the staff room the teachers began asking questions to the instructional leader about the three teachers not being able to attend the professional development. The teachers were upset and Paula began crying. Ellen then said, “I don’t want to go to the professional development if the other two teachers can not go also. The other teachers attending the professional development are from different schools and they came in teams of five.” At this point both participants began to tell the staff the things they had learned during professional development sessions and the other teachers to my surprise began volunteering to cover the classes for those two days. A decision was finally made for the two title 1 teachers and Special Education teacher to be placed in the rooms for the two days. [Researcher Field note, May 14, 2007]

During the first interview Paula made the following comment:
What is wrong with the administration asking a few teachers to sit on a committee to plan the professional development activities in the school? Administration should not make plans for teachers alone, teachers in the school should not only be asked what type of professional development they need like the school did, but also allow teachers to attend those professional development workshops. [Interview 1]

In addition, Ellen in the final interview spoke about the importance of teachers being a part of the decision-making process for professional development activities:

I think if professional development is going to be for teachers to benefit from then it is only fitting that teachers help make the final decisions on what types of professional development the school should provide or them. [Interview 4]

Both EYT's also spoke about the amount of money and time can be wasted on professional development if teachers are not a part of the decision-making process in making sure the professional development that the school or district offer are of necessity for the teachers professional growth. During the first interview the two participants made the following remarks:

Paula: It is a waste of time and money offering teachers professional development that they may not need. [Interview 1]

Ellen: I think it is important that teachers be asked what type of professional development they need first. [Interview 1]
Both participants expressed their needs as new teachers as being far greater and might be different than a teacher who has been working for two or more years. Ellen stated in a staff meeting:

We are all different here despite the fact that a majority of us here just graduated from college, we have different backgrounds and experiences, so it is important to find out what each of us need from professional development before planning our lessons. [Researcher field notes]

Ellen and Paula noted that schools should provide professional development to meet the needs of the teachers. During the beginning of the school year I had asked the teachers to write down the types of professional development they needed. However, the school did not provide all the professional development activities due to numerous reasons one in particular lack of finances. In the second interview Ellen and Paula said the following:

Paula: It does not make any sense for the school to ask teachers what they need in terms of professional development and then not offer it or allow us to take them out of the school building. Only a few teachers I see so far were able to attend professional development and now they don’t want us to go. [Researcher Field notes, May 1, 2007]

Ellen: There are a lot of things I hear other teachers talk about that they learned in college that I did not and wish that after we had filled out that survey on our goals and the types of professional development we thought we needed the school should have used that as a guide and then provide us with them. [Interview 2]
They wanted the option of choosing what should be offered to them since it was for their professional benefit, but they also wanted the professional development to benefit the school as a whole.

Ellen: I think from the beginning of the school year if all the teachers and administration had sat down and discussed the issues and goals in the school and created a plan of action then from there we could have decided on what professional development we needed as a group and overall it would have been beneficial to us. I wish that we had decided to decrease behavior or discipline problems in the school from the beginning and all the professional development could have been in that area. [Interview 4]

Throughout the interviews and field notes EYTS’ expressed a need for teachers to be on the planning committee for the professional development that should be offered in the school. They felt that the professional development that is offered to teachers in the school should address their professional needs or the educational needs of the students in order for it to be beneficial. They wanted to acquire more knowledge and techniques to use in their classrooms. The types of professional development are important because it is important that the professional development that the school offers its teachers should focus on knowledge and skill they need to effectively teach their students. Entry year teachers need different types of professional development than a veteran teacher may not need.
Theme two: Strategies/Techniques

Throughout the study this second theme strategies/techniques emerged as one to the EYTS’ perceptions of professional development. They talked about the importance of attending professional development to gain new strategies and techniques to become effective teachers. Both participants saw a great need for professional development, especially for beginning teachers and throughout the interviews and field notes they noted how difficult it could be to come up with strategies to use in their classrooms in order to assist their students academically. During the first interview Ellen and Paula made the following statements:

Ellen: I do think that professional development affects how teachers teach, but is more of a guide that gives you strategies and ideas. It is not going to change who I am as a teacher, but it will help me in areas where I am struggling. [Interview 1]

Paula: Yes, professional development affects how teachers teach. The ideas and strategies you gain will benefit the students learning when new ideas are implemented in your lessons. I am always open to new ideas and the opportunity to grow as a teacher. [Interview 1]

I was also present on March 22, when I saw Ellen standing outside her door having a conversation with a few parents and they were concerned about the upcoming third grade examination. Ellen told them that for the upcoming examination in reading and math the students would need to start studying more. She then gave each of them a list of websites they could let the students go on and complete the exercises.
When the parents walked away, Ellen told me she was concerned about the upcoming examinations and needed more assistance and I asked her in what and she told me that she wanted more techniques, strategies and resources to help her reach her students so they could become successful in the examinations. She asked if she could attend a few professional developments in the subject areas of math and reading and I told her to look online and see what is being offered and I will see if they can attend. She smiled and a parent came and I left the room giving them an opportunity to speak. [Researcher Field note, March 22, 2007]

Ellen and Paula came to my door to ask about the upcoming professional development day. First, they wanted to know what time to be at school and I told them the same time as usual. They wanted to know the topics and I told them that the sponsors were coming to speak about classroom management and the other topic was Guidance Strategies: Developing a Sense of Community, Part One. I recorded this instance the day prior to professional development. During a conversation I had with Ellen and Paula, they expressed their needs for professional development at the end of the day.

*Ellen said:* We do need both professional developments I don’t know any teacher who will complain about any of those topics. As I said before when you’re in college you think you know what to do from your teaching practice, but it is so different when you are the one in charge of the classroom. No teacher can have enough technique in this area. [Researcher Field notes, March 22, 2007]

*Paula commented:* I know this has been a big problem for me because I plan my lessons and I know Ellen you can hear me shouting at those students when I get
frustrated, I need help. I know I need it because this is difficult trying to plan for these students. [Research Field notes, March 22, 2007]

They talked about how a beginning teacher needs more professional development than a teacher who has been in the profession for a longer period. They both expressed a great need for workshops in the area of classroom management.

_Ellen:_ I believe entry-year teachers need professional development dealing with classroom management due to the fact that it sets a foundation for the learning environment also it seems that this is the area that most teachers, even many of them who have been in the profession longer than a year, face the most problems.

I do believe that if you can not control your class, then not a great deal of teaching and learning is going on. [Interview 1]

When it came to how they perceived the importance of professional development they saw it as a part of their professional growth and, therefore, of necessity.

_Ellen:_ It helps enhance who I am as a teacher and expands my knowledge.

Professional development is a great way to get strategies and techniques to use in my classroom. Professional development has been a great asset for me especially since it has taught me how to bond with my students and collaborate with my peers. [Interview 4]

_Paula:_ Yes, I do feel that professional development is important. Teachers collaborate and get an opportunity to enhance their knowledge about a specific concept and hopefully be able to use those strategies with their students. [Interview 4]
When they returned from the Differentiation Academy professional development sessions, the teachers were so happy about their overall experience and said:

*Paula:* That professional development provided me with teaching strategies and effective lesson planning geared towards differentiated instruction. I had a chance to expand my knowledge and become familiar with differentiated learning and how to modify my lesson to meet the needs of my students. [Interview 2]

Overall, Ellen and Paula gave positive ratings to the workshops. They based evaluating a workshop as low or high as depending on whether they saw a need for it. They also factored in whether or not goals were clearly defined, allowed time for teachers to try out the new strategies, and supported and extended time to meet again to discuss the changes that they had made. Guidance Strategies, Differentiation Academy and the study group meetings got top rating; they stated the workshop gave them time to use the strategies, work as a team, and there was a follow-up.

*Ellen:* I found myself growing while I was learning the strategies and using them in my classroom from the study group meetings. I had the opportunity to use strategies reflect on them with other teachers and be able to report if they work and what did not work. Being able to work through the process with other teachers helped me appreciate that workshop more. [Interview 4]

*Paula:* In the beginning I thought I would just have so much to do, but seeing how much my students began to turn their behavior around; it made me want to try those strategies more in my classroom, also having the support of the other teachers asking every two weeks, what did you do in your class and hearing them
talk about what they were doing motivated me to keep on going through the study
group meetings. [Interview 4]

The professional development with the lowest rating was ‘Creating an African
Centered Environment’. This professional development, they stated, was not organized
properly and the presenter did not know how to connect the workshop to their teaching.
Paula said, “The professional development program that has not been beneficial to me is
the ‘African Centered Environment’. Ellen and Paula did not negate the topic’s
importance, but felt that a different presenter would have done a better job.

Ellen: The topic was a good concept, but I think he should have sat down and
thought it through properly because it was a waste of time. I did not see the
connection and felt insulted because he just put a tape in and left while it played
and it made no sense to what we are doing here in this school. [Interview 2]

Paula: I think he should have looked at the standards and see what we need to
know and come in with some examples of what we can really use. I may not
know a lot at the time, but what I saw and how it was presented had no value to
me. [Interview 4]

Both participants talked about broadening their teaching to include the students’
community, which included their family, their culture, etc. Their main argument was that
topics for professional development should be relevant to them and for their students. The
workshops that the participants viewed as being of lesser value were workshops they did
not incorporate into their lessons nor added to resources.
Strategies and techniques the EYTS’ did not think they had adequate knowledge to deal with classroom management, differentiating instruction, behavior management and students with special needs. They felt more confident to teach their students when they were provided with strategies and techniques in the areas of classroom management, differentiating instruction and behavior management.

Theme Four: Time, Continuity and Structuring of Professional Development

This fourth emergent theme time and continuity of professional development was chosen because both EYTS felt that time and continuous professional development were very important and that more time should be for professional development, especially beginning teachers and that a day out of each month was not enough. With professional development, time was important. They felt more time was needed to learn new techniques. The participants noted that timing need to be built into the planning of a professional development. The allocation of time for professional development was essential to the participants and they wanted more time for ongoing professional development. They expressed a great need for continual professional development and that it should be planned for longer than a day, or a few hours. They felt that a short allotment of time could only graze the topic, creating difficulty to develop the skills without plumbing the depths of the subject. Both participants felt that more time or continuous professional development should be given to beginning teachers for professional development so they have sufficient time to acquire new knowledge and techniques.
Ellen: Just because we are educators does not mean that we need less time to learn a new concept. In fact we need more time, support, and resources to help us master new content to be able to integrate the knowledge and skills into practice. [Interview 1]

Paula: As a beginning teacher, I know personally that I would be more effective at my work if more time for professional development activities were allotted for me throughout the school year. We do need more than one day out of the month. I know I learned a lot during the study group meetings, because we made time to read the book, discuss it, and try different strategies from the book. [Interview 4]

Overall, both participants thought the professional development workshops were too short.

Ellen: I learned a lot today, but I think we need to meet again to follow up on those techniques and just coming in and talking to us for a few hours will not make a big difference unless we use the strategies and can come back and talk about what we did. [Researcher Field notes, March 23, 2007]

Paula: I don’t know what happens in other schools, but I do believe it can be cost effective if this school next year decides to incorporate more time for professional development and let teachers meet just like we did in our study meetings but from the beginning of the school year, so that we can set goals and the areas teachers need to work on. Maybe, another book meeting or something else but let it be an ongoing process because learning should not only take place on some days. [Interview 4]
Both EYT's saw this as being essential to their professional growth. They wanted to have time to meet with the Title I and special education teacher in the building during school hours instead of staying after school to meet with them.

*Ellen*: We need time to meet to work through the problems in the school. I wanted to meet with Mrs. Steven’s yesterday and she was teaching all day so was I. We don’t have the time to meet to discuss our students’ progress. I would like to know how my students are doing when they are in title I and special education classes because I am embarrassed when parents come to me to ask about them and I don’t know what to say. If I was in the public school I am sure they have meeting times. I am just tired missing lunch to meet with other teachers.

[Researcher Field notes, March 3, 2007]

Both EYT's felt the school should pay special attention to how the professional development was structured. Both participants wanted professional development that should be provided on a continual basis especially for beginning teachers.

*Ellen*: Professional development should be ongoing. We should not only have one day per month set aside for professional development. [Interview 1]

*Ellen*: We need continuous support especially in the areas of classroom management, so it would be beneficial for us to meet at least once a week instead of monthly. [Interview 1]

*Paula*: We need more than a few hours to learn a new technique or strategy. It is a waste of money and time without giving us opportunity to use the strategies and meet to discuss them. [Interview 1]
*Paula:* For entry-year teachers the school should structure time for teachers to meet to discuss different issues that may arise during the week with time for us to acquire new knowledge and skills to work through until we come up with a solution. [Interview 4]

*Ellen:* Many new teachers like [me] at times are overwhelmed by the huge amount of responsibilities, but what I realized that during the times when professional development is being offered when I attend the sessions I leave feeling refreshed and ready to work. Why aren’t there more opportunities provided through professional development so we can continue being motivated and ready to work? [Interview 3]

*Paula:* During the Study group meetings I learned more from those times because I had more opportunity to meet to discuss the book, try some of those strategies, share them with the other teachers and listen to what worked for them and it was more rewarding than attending workshops that are chopped up over time. [Interview 4]

*Ellen:* Professional development should be ongoing giving us opportunities to be able to evaluate our teaching and provide opportunity for us to reflect. Through reflection teachers like me have an opportunity to talk about what is working in the classroom and be able to come up with short term and long term goals with my peers. [Interview 4]
Overall, they wanted professional development that was ongoing and provided time for teachers to use the strategies and techniques, but also allow time for reflections and follow up and collaboration upon their peers.

Ellen: Professional development should be ongoing, we don’t need short workshops whereby someone comes in and teaches us new strategies and techniques, but there is no follow up. [Interview 2]

Ellen: I was given the opportunity to not only plan lessons for my class when I attend the workshop on differentiation instruction, but discuss plans with other teachers in other schools and sit down and discuss what will work or why not and I learned so much from being around them. [Field notes]

Paula: We need to be given opportunities through professional development to broaden our teaching approaches, which do not happen over a three hours workshop. [Interview 3]

Ellen: I feel that it is important to collaborate with one another and share insights as professionals. Some of the knowledge gained is useful in the classroom. However, just like our school itself, professional development would be more rewarding if it were better structured. [Interview 3]

Both EYT's saw the need for professional development to be ongoing and the topic is covered over a period of time because they both agreed that the one shot workshops were not as beneficial as attending professional development that give them time to try out the information that they have learned with their students. They also wanted time to be able to sit and reflect on what and how they use the information.
Paula: I like professional development because it provides time for teachers to try the new strategies and techniques then there is time for reflection and follow up. I think for me attending the differentiation instruction and being a part of the study group worked for me because we did not have to cram information, and we had time for collaboration, sharing, and reflection. It was more beneficial for me. [Interview 4]

Ellen: When we met for the study group meetings and tried different strategies out, I learned a lot. There has to be time built in the professional development for teachers to discuss what they had learned and be able to evaluate the process. Although we are teachers, professional development should be ongoing and I don’t think it is beneficial switching from topic to topic. [Interview 4]

Paula: I believe just like I was taught at the university to reflect on what I teach. There needs to be opportunities for educators to do the same thing through professional development. [Interview 4]

They felt that the professional development would have been much more meaningful if more time was provided for each of them. They thought the workshop ‘Guidance Strategies’ was the most successful in the school because the instructor introduced the topic, gave them time to read the book, they met as a group and she returned and followed up with the group providing time for reflection. They noted that professional developments that took place over time, providing an opportunity to work with the strategies, with reinforcing and collaborative meetings, were better – specifically when they were able to use the skills and meet over a period of time to discuss the skills.
Both EYTs talked about the need for providing a time for teachers to meet and reflect on those strategies or changes that they made. Most of all both teachers talked about the importance of reflection. Without these components placed in the professional development, they felt it would not be effective. They wanted more than a few days during the school year for professional development. They wanted a chance to engage with colleagues during the workday. This theme emerged throughout the study because the EYTS’ voiced their disappointment of not having enough time for continuous professional development activities throughout the week instead of only for a day every month. Expectations of teachers are much higher now in terms of mastering new skills and knowledge to ensure their students are successful academically, therefore more time is needed for them to acquire the necessary skills and professional development activities should be properly structured so teachers can benefit from them.

**Theme Four: Impact on Student Learning**

This fourth theme emerged throughout the study the impact on student learning. Both participants wanted to know how each professional development activity would transfer to their student learning. Both participants were seeking knowledge through professional development to impact their student learning. They both came in stating they wanted to know more about how to become more effective teachers; their measurement of being effective was having their students become successful in the different subject areas. Paula was always concerned with the different ability levels in her classroom more so than Ellen and wanted strategies that would help her meet their needs.
**Paula:** I hope to better help my students with what I learned from professional development. I have four different ability groups in my classroom, so I want as much knowledge or strategies I can learn to help my students. [Interview 1]

Ellen wanted to gain knowledge and skills to use in her classroom to help improve her students academically and raised their scores on the Ohio Achievement Test.

**Ellen:** I know everyone talks about professional development being important for my professional growth which should benefit my students. I need more professional development in the area subject areas of math and reading because I have my third grade class and they have the proficiency examinations coming up in May and I would like to see if not all at least 90% passing rates on both examinations, so I need a wide range of strategies in those subjects to be able to reach them all. [Interview 1]

They noted the importance of attending professional development and wanted to attend workshops based on clear objectives, and the relevancy to their students. They wanted the school to provide professional development that they could see a clear direct link to their students achievement. If the professional development was relevant to the teachers to address the needs of the students then, they could offer more, or if it was of no value to them, they should reassess the professional development.

**Ellen:** I love attending professional development whereby the instructors can based the importance of scientific research. If they can give me proof that something has worked not only on what they did, but others have tried then I see it as value and will use it. [Interview 1]
Paula: I like to see the connection to the standards and then I need to use it in my classroom. I think it is very important if we are accountable for what is happening in our classrooms. [Interview 1]

They wanted to use the information or skills from professional development in their classrooms. They also wanted professional development that was aligned with the standards. During the interviews, they spent a lot of time talking about their students being successful and examining the state standards, in an effort to meet those standards at the grade level.

Ellen: I hope that the professional developments that I attend are aligned with the state standards and I can learn as much as possible to teach my students so they can be successful on the Ohio Achievement examinations.

Ellen knew how important professional development was for the school because of evaluations is based on her students’ third grade achievement on the standardized tests scores in the area of reading and math results. She said the following in the first interview:

I need professional development in math and reading. When I gave the pre-test at the beginning of school in math and reading I found the areas my students were weak in and I need as much professional development that would provide me with strategies and techniques to help them pass those examinations. I think subject area professional development is important especially if we are accountable for the results, more professional development is needed. I want to take as much
professional development that will help me with my students’ achievement.

[Interview 1]

One of their concerns was the need to master new content and pedagogy and integrated these into their practice.

Ellen: I think that if I was provided with strategies and techniques or new concepts it would definitely help my students. [Interview 1]

They also noted that professional development can be beneficial to their students’ achievement if they are connected directly to their work with their students, organized around solving a problem, which is informed by research.

Paula: I believe that teachers attending professional development alone will not prove that the student achievement increased because of professional development, but rather if the teachers attend professional development that are aligned with the state standards and in the subject areas and use what they have learned in professional development then I can say that students will improve academically. [Interview 4]

When given the opportunity to attend a professional development outside the school they both decided to attend differentiated instruction because they both stated that they wanted more strategies to able to modify the instruction to meet all the needs of the students in their classrooms.

Ellen: I am glad I attended the differentiated instruction professional development because I feel more confident in designing my lessons to meet the
needs of my students. I don’t only want to write a good lesson plan, without focusing on different levels in my classroom. [Interview 3]

Ellen: When I was able to create those folders for my students and look for different activities for each of them to complete based on what they needed extra assistance in I felt good about doing that and walking around the classroom watching them complete their work was rewarding for me and made attending that professional development of differentiating instruction worthwhile. [Interview 4]

Paula: I know through attending the professional development on differentiating instruction has help me prepare and design my lessons to meet the needs of my students. I know that there are many variables that affect a student’s achievement, but I knew if I was taught strategies or techniques I could help my students. [Interview 4]

Ellen: I don’t know if the professional development that I attended this year helped my students, but I know that they helped me become a better teacher and I was able to bring that into my teaching; hopefully I was able to prepare my students more. Through professional development I was able to use many strategies in my classroom and I know that many of my students improved through what and how I was teaching them. I was also given a book of poems earlier in the school year and I used a lot of those poems to teach my students. [Interview 4]
Both participants wanted to see the connection between their professional development and every day classroom needs. They both believe that professional development was about change and that teachers play an essential role in the improvement of their students learning and behavior. The EYTs saw the connection of their development and their student development and saw professional development as being essential not only for their growth, but also for their students and wanted professional development that would ultimately show improvement in their students work and behavior.

_Theme Five: Teacher Change_

This fifth theme teacher change was seen throughout the interviews, teacher observations and field notes that I was able to observe and heard from the two participants. Ellen and Paula also expressed a desire to learn as much from professional development in order to become better teachers. I saw some major changes that began to take place after the first professional development. Prior to this professional development, both participants were not trying to make their lessons culturally relevant. During professional development, there were changes to both teachers’ attitude and behavior. There were also pedagogical changes.

I was passing Ellen’s classroom around 10:15 a.m. and heard Tina shouting at John. I was about to ask what the problem was when I saw Ellen step in and began encouraging them to work through their conflict. She asked them if the way they were handling the situation was going to solve the problem or create more problems. The two students began staring at her and you could hear a pin
drop and Ellen said, “Don’t forget class what did we discuss on Monday and the students raised their hands and she then asked John who said,” You said we must respect each other” and she then turned to Tina and asked “How do we do that and Tina, quietly said, “we respect other peoples’ opinions and differences.” She said, “Thank you guys, this is something we need to work at, it is not easy learning to share, but you know what we all need to do in order to communicate with others. I had to sit and think about that this weekend because I know I have to make changes. Later that day, I walked into her classroom and said Ellen, “I am so proud of what you did earlier, she looked confused and I told her that I was outside the door listening when she spoke to the students. She then told me that she was really trying to follow the strategies in the book. I then was a bit confused and asked which book, she smiled and told me about the book “Learning to Trust”. I walked away and told her I will begin reading tonight. [Researcher Field notes, April 5, 2007]

Here is another instance where I documented Ellen using the strategies from what she learned from the professional developments:

I walked into Ellen’s room at 8 a.m. and her students were sitting on this beautiful purple rug that I found out later Ellen had purchased during the weekend. The students were sitting down passing a photo album around and sharing pictures. I decided to join the group and realized they were looking at each other’s baby pictures, including Ellen’s, and laughing. Ellen then told them about the things her parents said she did when she was young. The students sat quietly listening
and would laugh when she said something funny. At the end, she told them that starting today every morning each one of them would have the opportunity to share something about them or their family.

After the morning meeting, I stayed in the class. I saw the students leave the rug and go to the door, starting to take folders off the wall. On the wall Ellen had written ‘My to do Folder’ and they each took one which had their names on it and sat down and quietly began to complete different exercises while Ellen sat at her desk. I was curious as to what was in the folder and could not wait to see Ellen at the end of the day to ask. I missed Ellen at the end of the day, but when we met for the study group meeting, Ellen talked about her morning meetings with students. She spoke of how happy she was, using the strategy from the book with her students responding well to the strategy. Later, I was able to ask her about the folders and she explained how heavy the workload was to create them, but she knew some of the students were having problems in different academic areas. After teaching lessons, she was convinced that giving them extra work in their problem areas would increase abilities to master the material. Later, after glancing at each folder, I found that Ellen had tailored every folder to the needs of each student. Needless to say, I was impressed. I asked her to take a few of the folders to the next staff meeting to share with the other teachers. [Researcher Field notes, April 6, 2008]
Through the study group meetings, the teachers talked about creating a community in the classrooms and here are few observations that I made during these meetings:

I walked into the classroom and the students had large white sheets of papers taped to the wall. I saw them in groups of two drawing and I asked Ellen what they were doing and she said that they were drawing the type of community they want and the people they want living in their community. The students were working closely together and I was surprised because as Ellen walked around she began asking the students to think about their community and what it meant to them and told them to think about a name for their community and its meaning. Students got excited and wanted to share and she would just tell them to talk to your group and there will be time to share. She then asked them if they could see her being apart of their community and they all said yes, she asked what she would do in order to live in their community. [Researcher Field notes, April 7, 2007]

Outside Ellen’s classroom door there was a sign that read “Our community” and a picture of the whole class. I met the Title I teachers and asked them if they saw it and they said yes, Ellen told them to come and look. What a change, the students were coming inside from recess and asked me if I like their sign and their picture. I said yes, and asked them what it meant and everyone began to speak at the same time. Finally Jan said, that they mean we know how to treat each other with respect, we know how to help each other and we are a part
of this class. I looked over and Ellen was only smiling. I told the class great job and walked away. [Researcher Field notes, April 8, 2007]

Here is an instance where I documented my observations about Ellen in the school after professional developments:

I wanted to see what would happen next in social studies so I returned to the class the following day and Ellen wrote on the board ‘What does it mean to be a good citizen?’ They brainstormed the idea. The students told her being honest, helpful, respectful and supportive. Ellen was happy and told them good job. She then asked each student to stand and read their letters aloud, Tina’s letter made me want to cry, when she said, ‘My teacher has thought me how we need to see our classroom and school as a community and that we all need to play a role in building a safe community.’ She then asked the students at the end to create a postcard that shows a place in the community where there family goes to have fun. [Researcher Field notes, April 20, 2007]

Later, as we continued to study the book, I saw Ellen and her students continue to create their family wall. Not only did it include their classroom, but it included their family members, as well. I saw a few parents came into Ellen’s class to view this wall, happy to read the things their child had written in support of them. Ellen and her class also developed classroom rules and put them up on the wall. These rules included how to transition from one lesson to other. Ellen also began taking out a few students during the weekend to meet her family and to do something fun. After these type of weekends, the students came back in good spirits. I had an opportunity to stay in Ellen’s classroom
because she was out sick. We were unable to get a substitute teacher and there were two other teachers out, so I had to substitute for half of the day. During this time, I captured the following observations:

Once, Ellen was out sick for three days. On the second day, the students wanted to write her letters. What caught my attention was that Jack, who had given her the most problems and did not seem to trust anyone, wrote a long letter telling Ellen why he missed her and he said, “I love Mrs. Bree because she loves me.” I wanted to cry as I walked around the class because at that time he was living in foster care while his mother was in prison; his father had left when he was three. This was a major change for him. At the beginning of the year, he was Ellen’s most challenging student when it came to discipline. In fact, she would send him to the office with a note at least once a day. [Field notes, April 27, 2007]

Ellen had also begun making home visits because she had study the book and read how the teacher had made those visits. At the beginning of the school year, teachers were asked to make home visits. Most of the teachers, especially Ellen and Paula, were afraid to visit their students’ homes and wanted the parents to meet them at the school. I was surprised when Ellen approached me about going to visit Jack’s home to meet with his mother and I captured this in my field notes:

Two weeks later, Ellen asked me in the lunchroom if she could have a word with me. She seemed rather upset, so I walked out into hallway. She told me that Jack, who had been in foster care, was moving back home with his parents. Jack had been in foster care since school began. In the beginning, Ellen had a rough
time trying to deal with his behavior issues. The teachers who had been in the school a year ago told her that every time the mother goes to prison, mostly for stealing or drugs, Jack would act out. Jack also had abandonment issues. Because of prior teacher turnovers, Jack was afraid that Ellen, too, would leave. He distanced himself to avoid a let down, in the beginning. After building trust, Jack and Ellen had finally gotten on track and Ellen was working well with him. A few times, Ellen had picked Jack and taken him, as well as a few of the other students, skating or for a day out with her family.

Ellen told me she had contacted the mother and asked if she could come over to meet her and to discuss Jack’s progress. The mother said yes. Ellen then asked me if I would accompany her on the visit because it was in what she heard was a dangerous area. She also noted that she could use the support and I agreed. We left the school and went to Jack’s house. The house looked as if it was condemned and I looked at Ellen’s face and she was waving at Jack who was standing outside the house happy and surprised to see us.

We walked up the driveway and sat on the porch where his mother was waiting. She was sitting down wearing a police ankle bracelet, which meant she was still on house arrest. We introduced ourselves and the mother told us she was surprised to receive a call from Ellen and asked if Jack was in any trouble. Ellen looked at Jack who stood nervously to the side and answered that Jack was not in trouble. Ellen explained that she just wanted to meet his mother and let her know that it had been a pleasure having Jack in her classroom. Ellen then extended an
invitation to Jack’s mother to come and visit the classroom whenever she wanted. Ellen told her about the upcoming examinations and what they had covered in class, giving tips on some study areas that Jack could use to help him at home. As we walked to the car, Ellen told me she was happy to finally meet Jack’s mother and after reading the book about home visits she had began reading articles about it and that they were important. [Researcher Field notes April 15, 2007]

I was able to document changes Paula made toward interacting with her students and I was able to document the following in my field notes:

I heard students laughing loud and heard music, I knew it was lunch time and began walking quickly down the hallway. As I walked I could hear students laughing and when I opened the classroom door, Paula was playing musical chairs with her students. I was so surprised but tried not to show it as much. The students quickly asked me if I wanted to play with them I excused myself and watched as Paula was laughing as she went around the chairs listening to rap music and then trying her best to reach a chair as the students dashed for them. It was great watching her laugh with her students. When they were finished I asked her why did they go outside to play and she said that she wanted to try something different with her students. When the game finally came to an end she told the students to throw away the cupcake wrappers and they were happy to do so before the bell rang. [Researcher Field notes, April 13, 2007]

Paula also made some changes from reading the book and being a part of the study group:
I walked into her class and she had placed a community board on the wall. The board included everything that each student thought was important to them: their birthday, favorite pet, singer, and talent all placed on the wall with a picture of each student – it was beautiful. [Researcher Field notes, April 6, 2007]

As the study group continued, Paula had read about ways the teacher Mrs. Ecken communicated with parents and began her own communication process by:

Paula also began writing positive home letters to each parent. She said that each night she would spend the time to think about the things each student did well in class and would jot it down. Paula sent it home with the student with a smiley face on it. She was surprised when Dean’s mother wrote her one day to tell her ‘thank you’ because it was refreshing to know her son was trying in class. Paula walked around sharing the note with the other teachers. The teachers were becoming noticeably more supportive of one another. [Researcher Field notes, April 24, 2007]

As the teachers used the various strategies, especially from the book, there were visible changes in their students’ behavior. The EYT’s began using the developmental discipline in their classrooms. They established morning and evening meetings in their classrooms, focused on teaching and setting classroom goals with their students, used cooperative learning as much as possible in their classroom, modeled and role-played working in a group or in pairs. The teachers spent a lot of time letting their students know they cared about them. Both Ellen’s and Paula’s relationship changed not only with the students, but also with the parents and teachers on staff. The students were more
courteous toward each other and were using words like ‘excuse me’ and ‘sorry about that’. The teachers were sharing this information with each other and discipline problems began to decrease. Ellen and Paula enjoyed talking with the teachers about what was working in their classrooms.

Ellen also initiated Scholastic book orders whereby the class earned free books. On the first order, the class spent over one hundred dollars ($100) and earned over 1000 bonus points to order free books. The students got to pick out $25 just for signing up.

She also signed her classroom up for the Classrooms that Care Project, a program where the students read one hundred (100) books to classrooms that does not have any.

Paula, who initially had a difficult time connecting with her students, took pictures of each of them to put up on the classroom wall in the form of a tree and had them write something about themselves. This took a lot of time because she had to walk around trying to spell for each of them. She asked the Title I reading teacher to assist. Paula also began to write personalized weekly notes to each parent letting them know about their child’s progress, highlighting the things the student was doing well and inviting them to visit the classroom. Parents started to come in to look over their child’s work and talk with Paula, who had been a bit distant in the beginning. A few parents started bringing in treats on Fridays for the students and, while in the first grade classroom, I could hear Paula laughing with the students and parents. I would also look outside during play time. I noticed that while in the beginning of the year Paula would sit under the tree watching her students play, she was now involved in the games and playing along with them.


Theme Six: Collegial Collaboration

This sixth theme collegial collaboration I saw throughout my field notes and interviews. The EYTs’ saw this as being essential to teacher professional development and they cited this throughout the study. Having peer support was important to their professional growth. They wanted to have time to meet with the Title I and special education teachers in the building during school hours instead of staying after school to meet with them. I was able to observe and noted the following on March 7, 2007 as I walked into Ellen’s classroom:

I watched Ellen’s eyes flood with tears that spilled over and began to run down her face. She said that today was very difficult for her because she had two students who wanted to fight and a parent had called saying that she wanted to take her child out of the school because she did not think her child was learning anything being there. Ellen kept on saying “I try my best I don’t know what to do.” At this point I also wanted to cry, but tried to keep it together for Ellen. I then shared with Ellen how it was not easy for me my first few years of teaching and that it was a learning process. She then told me that she would like to work with the other teachers more and that having support in the school helps her deal with the every day challenges. [Field notes, March 7, 2007]

Paula also commented in the first interview the need for teachers support in the school.
I think if we sit down together as a group and identify the problems in the school and come up with some goals we can make a great change in the school.

[Interview 1]

I met Paula and a few of the teachers standing in the hallway at the end of the day. I was able to observe the following:

*Paula:* I felt that the beginning was off to a vicious cycle that I seemed cursed with. However, the book is in place and it is a way for me to develop professionally and it has been providing me with an ongoing professional growth. I was happy for Paula and encouraged her to keep it up. The other teachers agreed. I know what I am going to do today when I get home, I am going to sit down and write personal letters to each one of my students’ parents inviting them to come in any day to sit down in class and also tell them about their child, but focus on the good things. When they come in we can then sit down and discuss things what we can work at together. I was surprised and also happy to hear her say that because Paula complained so much about doing extra work, especially at home. I asked her where she got the idea from and she shared with me some things the teacher did in the book “Learning to trust”. I realized I do need to get to know my students’ parents if I am going to see some changes from them, I wanted to know where Paula was and she laughed and said this is she, I smiled as I walked away, feeling proud. [Field notes, April 16, 2007]
Ellen and Paula believed the staff should be a part of the learning process and that spending time talking through issues, about strategies, and allowing each staff member to share their experience, or give tips was more beneficial to them than having people come in and spend a few hours on particular strategies. During the study sessions both participants shared how it was a rewarding experience and empowering experience for them.

*Paula:* I am happy that we have decided to read the book together not in isolation and be able to see and hear what each teacher is doing in their classroom helps me. I am able to walk into different classrooms and although I have the first grade I can still go and ask the fourth grade teacher for advice and she can tell me what was working in her room. I don’t feel so alone now. [Researcher Field note]

*Ellen:* I always wanted to work with other teachers and it is not easy because we don’t have extra time, but it is so good early in the morning to hear at least a few teachers talking about how it is helping them and asking me if the techniques we had discussed during the meeting was working in my classroom. I finally feel a part of the group. [Researcher Field notes]

Paula and Ellen talked in every interview and during meetings about wanting to collaborate with other teachers who would help them. They wanted time to work together, discuss issues in the school, set goals, and be able to come up with solutions. They both saw other teachers sharing what they learned from professional development or an article as vitally important as attending workshops.
Ellen: It is good when we as teachers can sit down discuss the problems in the school and seek ways to solve them. I have enjoyed all of our meetings so far and I am glad to know we are working together, I don’t feel alone anymore. [Interview 2]

They were excited about reading the book as a group and hearing other teachers talk about their experience of using the strategies in the book. During the second interview, I was surprised by Paula’s statement, which I found myself processing during the week, but was happy she was getting support from the other teachers when she said:

I am really enjoying the study group, often I leave school feeling like a loser as a teacher in this school. I get frustrated, angry, and I am never the kind of teacher I want to be. It is very encouraging to hear other teachers talk about their failures and where they are now. It gives me some hope that I can become a better teacher. I felt they understood my frustrations but wouldn’t allow me to stay in the same place. [Interview 2]

Both E YT s said that the opportunity to sit and discuss the book and trying to work together to accomplish a goal was empowering and they were able to foster a professional relationship with others in the building. They talked about feeling isolated for a long while in the school, but working now as a team had helped them.

Ellen: I finally felt part of the school and it was empowering to not only listen to experienced teachers talk about what was working in their classroom, but also being able to share with them and hearing them say that it was a great idea helped motivate me to keep on trying the strategies. [Interview 4]
They both reminisced about the day when the instructional leader said that only one of them could attend the second part of the professional development on differentiated academy. They recalled feeling great knowing that the other teachers were willing to sit down and plan how they would teach Paula and Ellen’s classes so that they could attend the professional development; it seemed to be a mass understanding of how important professional development truly was. When they returned from the professional development sessions, the teachers were so happy about their overall experience and told the staff during the staff meeting:

*Paula:* This workshop provided me with teaching strategies and effective lesson planning geared towards differentiated instruction. I had a chance to expand my knowledge and become familiar with differentiated learning. I am so happy that I was able to attend because of the support you provided me and I will never forget that you saw how important attending the professional development was us for us, thank you. [Researcher Field notes, May 5, 2007]

*Ellen:* I did attend the differentiated academy. This workshop provided me with teaching strategies and effective lesson planning geared towards differentiated instruction. I had a chance to expand my knowledge and become familiar with differentiated learning. I hope that the opportunity I had to attend the workshop because of your support you will allow me to provide you with the information and resources I received from the workshop, thank you again. [Researcher Field notes, May 5, 2007]
Paula: I can say I learned to adopt a lot of strategies to use in my lessons especially how to communicate with my students and parents. I find myself asking more teachers for resources and sharing them. [Interview 4]

Ellen and Paula viewed effective professional development as providing time for teachers to use the strategies or techniques in their classroom, providing time and support for the teachers to use the strategies or techniques along with resources. They thought that they were only successful in the end because of the support they received from the teachers in the building working together to accomplished the same goals. The teachers wanted the opportunity to discuss teaching practices within a group setting. They wanted the opportunity to meet as a group and they were given that opportunity through the study sessions to reflect on the book ‘Learning to Trust’ and talk about the changes they were making in their classrooms.

Teachers wanted more professional opportunities to collaborate among themselves, to address issues affecting them in the school and their classroom and as a group develop a course of action. The EYT’s did not like being isolated from their colleagues and saw collegial collaboration as an important part of their professional growth. The EYT’s wanted to make decisions with their colleagues in a collaborative culture –sharing ideas, resources and reflections. It allows the teachers to be committed to continuous professional growth, engage in dialogue and action among their colleagues.

Theme Seven: Lack of Support/Resources

This seventh theme, lack of support/resources, was observed and cited throughout the research. A less than supportive school structure can stifle teachers’
continual growth. The participants in the study were disappointed that the school did not provide more time for professional development. The two participants felt that if they were in a different school setting they would have had more time to collaborate with other teachers and would have been able to participate in more professional development. As the researcher reviewed the field notes and transcriptions, the participants cited lack of time as a major problem. Paula commented on the school schedule that made it difficult to use the information they learned during professional development because of the lack of time.

*Ellen:* It would have been good for us to have time to meet during the days even if it is only two of us, but it is extremely difficult and we only have a few minutes for lunch as it is. The meeting on Tuesday afternoon is going well, but if only we had more time to work together. [Field notes, April 3, 2007]

There was not enough time to meet with other teachers during the week. They felt that during the week they needed time to plan and it was difficult with so many responsibilities. They also said that if they were in the public school there would be more support for them. They also thought it was difficult to make use of everything they had learned at the professional development because the school lacked necessary resources. At the beginning of the research I was able to captured this observation,

Paula had a difficult time with classroom management and the instructional leader wrote her a letter. Here is an excerpt of one of the instances:

March 1st, I had just walked out of the second grade classroom on my way to my office when I saw Paula and her eyes were red and she looked upset. I was
concerned because I had just seen her an hour earlier and she was in a great mood. It was only ten in the morning. I asked her to come in my office and she walked in, sat down, and passed me a letter. She did not say anything at first, but sat quietly as tears began to flow down her cheeks. I asked her why and she did not respond, so I opened the letter and began reading it quietly. In the letter the instructional leader accused her of not knowing how to manage her classroom and that it was a concern for him from the beginning of the school year and he had requested a meeting with her. I passed Paula some napkins to dry her face and apologized to her and said that I understood it is not easy, but we will work together. I reassured her of her role in the school.

She told me that it was not fair that the instructional leader was picking on her and that it needed to stop. She said she told him that when she was in the middle of her lesson he should not come in her room and take out her students for minor infractions to stand up in his office for long period of time missing out on their learning opportunities and she believed that he only wrote her the letter as an attack. She said, “When teachers disagree with his leadership instead of saying I will work on it, he (Instructional Leader) is ready to attack us teachers in this school!” [Researcher Field notes, March 3, 2007]

The EYTs spoke about their working climate:

Ellen: Some days I feel so overworked and have to go home to sleep then get up to plan for my lessons. I would like to use many strategies and resources that I collected from the professional development but when you come in sometimes of
late the printers are not working, there is no internet service or the computers do not work. I think teachers would love to do so much in this school, but things need to be in place. [Field notes, March 19, 2007]

Paula: I am usually the first one in the building and I come in early to prepare for my daily lessons. What upsets me is walking downstairs to use the copier and it is out of order for over a week or not having paper to print the students work. We can attend professional development, but if the school lacks supplies or resources it does not help at all. [Interview 2]

Paula: We need clear and consistent discipline policy. Teachers need a planning period every day. Teachers need time to prep their classrooms during breakfast. It is not our fault that the school is under staff. We need time to implement what we learned through professional development into our lessons. [Field notes, March 22, 2007]

Ellen: I speak to my friends who are employed in the public schools and they have more assistance than we do here. I don’t have a problem with looking for resources, but I found myself this school year spending so much of the little money that I made to make sure supplies were in my classroom for my students. [Field notes, April 17, 2007]

Paula: Here we are trying to set goals as a staff to decrease the behavior problems in the school but sometimes it is just too much when there are shortages on supplies and I can keep on listing for days the things we need in here to help our children. [Field notes, May 12, 2007]
The EYTs were upset over a lack of resources, like ink and papers. The instructional leader said there was no money to pay the company to come in to fix the printers.

*Ellen:* I am tired of sitting home planning lessons and coming in to find no supplies. It is sad because I know everyone wants to teach, but when we don’t have books and printers, how much can our students learn. We are doing them an injustice. [Field notes, April 21, 2007]

*Paula:* I am tired of complaining about this place. It is sad when people want to work with these children and that the school does not provide the resources for us, this not good. [Field notes, April 21, 2007]

At the end of May, it was finally made known to the teachers that the school was in financial problems and they began to worry about their job security. I was able to document the following field notes:

I met the teachers all standing together reading the newspaper article and it was about the school’s financial problems. Ellen and Paula followed me to my office and began talking at once about the situation. Ellen said: “It does not make any sense to keep on working here to improve grades to get the school scores up if they may close the school down.” Paula said: “I don’t know what we are going to do. I am tired working here and the school is closing us down.” I assured them the school was not closing and told them that I would speak to the group as soon as I got more information. Later that day, the teachers seemed more relaxed. [Field notes, May 18, 2007]
Paula also complained about the lack of support that she received from the Instructional Leader which made it difficult to work in the school.

He should not talk to me about management at all because he does not know what to do in this school most of the time. I am embarrassed that he is the school leader; the students don’t listen to him. He takes up too much time in the morning beating those drums and it is hard to get the students to settle down when I get up stairs to the classroom. I have been asking for help with classroom management all year. She later left and went back to her classroom where the Title I math teacher was teaching the class. [Researcher Field note, March 1, 2007]

During the first interview Paula talked about the challenges she was facing in the school with the lack of support she was getting from the instructional leader:

No! When I voice my opinion during faculty meetings, I feel my issues and all the other teachers seem to be less important than the issues the principal is faced with. We are teachers attempting to work together! We are reaching out for help and we are not being heard. We need support, positive reinforcement and no more excuses. [Interview 1]

Ellen during one of our staff meetings was upset about the lack of support and the amount of work that was expected of the teaching staff and made this comment:

The school, as we all know is understaffed, and some in administration expect no less than for teachers to pick up the slack on top of their already existing responsibilities. Some in administration do nothing to make the teachers feel appreciated; we are constantly “reprimanded” for not going above and beyond the
call of duty. For example: Teachers are not only expected to supervise recess, even though we do not have consistent specials, but we are also expected to organize structured activities for the children and purchase whatever you would need out of our own pockets. [Researcher field notes]

Teachers wanted to know that they were being supported not only by each other, but by the leaders in the school, but they did not believe they were support enough. They wanted the administration to realize that the more professional development opportunities were essential to EYT’s professional growth. Their first year was a crucial year and they were disappointed that the school lack sufficient funding for professional development and were understaffed giving them less opportunity to be involved in professional development opportunities in the school. They wanted more opportunities to work and plan more with their colleagues and they were not given that during the school day.

Summary

Data in the study showed the value of allowing teachers who are stakeholders of their own education to help make decisions as to what type of professional development activities would be of benefit to them. The EYT’s wanted to have input into what, why and how they learn. By assessing teachers’ needs the school will be able to identify the individual areas of improvement. When the EYT’s self-identified needs were addressed in the study, they felt more successful and professionally satisfied when they were involved in the decision making process. I agree with Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1999) who stated, “Involving participants in key decision about staff development is necessary for a program to have its greatest impact” (p.312).
Overall, the EYTs felt if the professional development was for their professional growth; therefore, the school should not only ask for their areas of needs, but also provide them with professional development in those areas. The teachers wanted the school to use the bottom–up approach to professional development decision making instead of a top-down approach, which at times are not effective. In addition, when the EYTs were able to participate in the decision-making process concerning their professional development activities, they were engaged and were able to transfer that knowledge, especially during the professional developments: Guidance Strategies, study group meetings and when they attended the Differentiation Academy. The teachers viewed the fore mentioned professional development of being of value and saw the connection to their students, and were able to make the necessary changes in their behavior towards their students and in their knowledge and techniques.

The researcher concluded that when EYTs learning needs were addressed through their professional development during the Guidance Strategies, study group meetings and differentiation instruction workshops the teachers were engaged and enthusiastic about transferring the strategies and techniques in the classroom. The consensus of the EYTs were for the school leaders to let the teachers be a part of the decision making process as to what type and what delivery method of their professional development should be used. School should always conduct a teacher needs assessment, as to what type of professional development they want to attend.

Like all teachers, both EYTs wanted to acquire basic knowledge in a number of areas, especially, math, reading, classroom management, student behavior, and how to
communicate with their students and parents. When considering this, they did not feel confident about the knowledge they had acquired from their teacher education programs. They spoke about these professional developments as contributing, ultimately, to the improvement of all students in their classroom. The EYTs measurement of being an effective teacher was having the required knowledge and skills to teach their students effectively. The researcher was able to note in the field notes initial signs that the EYTs began to invest themselves in developing learning environments where teaching and learning was meaningful and rewarding for them and their students. Through the study group meetings, the EYTs were able to not only read and discuss with their peers the book, but also began using many of the strategies in the book in their classroom and saw the changes in them and their students. Furthermore, I agree with Guskey (1995) that “positive changes can occur more quickly when everyone focuses on teaching and learning issues, investigating ideas on best practice, and questioning how particular practices work with students” (p.6).

The researcher will discuss the study implications for how entry-year elementary teachers perceive the value of their professional development; provide insight regarding professional development and teachers’ learning impact and further research.
CHAPTER V

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

Introduction

For entry-year teachers (EYTs) somewhat overwhelmed by the political dimensions of this profession, it becomes necessary to provide every opportunity to envision a “democratic good life” in their classroom and in the school which is possible through effective professional development. Teacher professional development as discussed earlier in this study is essential to teacher development and student achievement. In this study the researcher sought to collect two (EYTs) views of their professional development activities and document not only their views but also look for teacher impact. There is a need for direct links between teacher professional development experiences and observable impact in the classroom. The researcher recognizes the value of teachers’ views as it pertains to their professional development with furthering their professional growth. What was evident in this study was that teacher change is possible through professional development however; it is not a change that will happen rapidly, but over time through sustained, on-going professional development.
Implication for Theory and Practice

As professionals, we seek balance in making sense of our lives and our educational practices. Education is a process, and school is a lived experience. Understanding the meaning of the process or experience constitutes knowledge, the knowledge we seek is that of effective professional development. The research investigates two entry-year teachers’ perceptions of the value of their professional development. Only through constructing an understanding of the meaning of that process or experience do we build knowledge. The findings have several implications for teachers, professional development, school leaders and policy makers. The results of this study highlight several implications for beginning teachers and professional development. This case study investigated two-entry year elementary teachers’ perception of professional development. Teacher perceptions are an important, the only one aspect of conceptualizing professional and staff development (Holly, 1989).

Structuring Professional Development

In order for professional development to be effective for educators and in this case EYT's through this study the researcher recognizes the need for teachers to have time during the professional development to learn the theoretical knowledge, but it is also crucial that extra time is given to the EYT's to change what they have learned through professional development into practical knowledge. This practical knowledge should be applied into their classrooms as many times as possible; giving the EYT's opportunity to reflect on what they had used in their classroom and follow up to discussed the changes they had made in their classrooms. When the EYT's were allowed to use three of the staff
meetings to study the book, this change in school day structure also produce change in the EYTs and in turn they transfer what they discussed into their classrooms.

The EYTs cited a short allotment of time could only graze the topics, creating difficulty in developing the skills without plumbing the depths of the subject. The research confirms the necessity of time the EYTs needed to understand new concepts, learn new skills, develop new attitudes, discuss, reflect, assess and try new approaches and integrate them into their own professional development was a major finding.

We are definitely advancing from the notion that professional development activities should be held on set days within the school year. Learning does not and should not stop for educators; it should be an ongoing continuous process. Teachers, researchers, and policymakers consistently indicate that the greatest challenge to implementing effective professional development is lack of time (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). The consensus among the EYTs was that professional development should be continuous. As discussed earlier, professional development is effective when teachers are provided with continuous, ongoing professional development that allows time for follow-up and support for further learning (Hawley & Valli, 1999). As classroom teachers the EYTs wanted the necessary knowledge that would enhance their skills as educators and they knew that having professional development provided in the needed areas would help them do their job effectively. Furthermore, enhanced teacher knowledge and improved practices are the most immediate, and most significant, outcomes of any staff development effort (Guskey & Sparks, 1996). The researcher recognizes the importance of teachers’ growth and that the first teaching year for entry-year teachers is crucial.
Through professional development teachers are able to explore new roles, develop new instructional techniques, refine their practice, and broaden themselves both as educators and as individuals (Darling-Hammond, 1990).

The EYTs saw the need for professional development but felt that professional development especially for beginning teachers should be ongoing and the school day should be structured to accommodate time for teachers’ professional growth. During the study, the researcher was able to see how effective professional development was when it was offered over the course of time; giving the EYT’s opportunities to learn the skills, use them and to reflect upon them; this was evident, when the conditions were provided through the guidance workshops, study group meetings and when they attended the differentiation Academy professional development. The most critical change for supporting high-quality professional development is to structure the teachers’ workweek, allowing them opportunities for adequate preparation, consultation, and collaboration (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The EYT’s felt that it was the schools responsibility to structure the school day to provide opportunities for their professional growth. This case study has also confirmed that professional development should take place over an extended period of time and should offer opportunities for teachers to engage in inquiry of either the content or pedagogy (Kubitskey & Fishman, 2005).

Impact on Student Learning

The finding confirms other research studies that when teachers are engaged in their professional development they make the connection in their classroom or when they are given the opportunities to learn and grow within the profession they can make an
impact on their students learning (Guskey, 1994; Lowden, 2005; Shaha et al., 2004). Furthermore, researchers (Borko, 2004; Guskey, 1994; Guskey & Sparks, 1996; Killion, 2002; Lowden, 2005) state that the relationship between teacher professional development and student learning outcomes has emerged as one of the most important areas of research. Moreover, as discussed earlier in the study, a number of studies who claim to do so evidently fail to take into account the range of variables that may affect outcomes.

It was evident, during the study group meetings and after, the EYTs had less classroom disruption, the students’ treatment towards each other improved and the parents became more involved. The students in both classrooms improved in their behavior, class work and attendance. However, the EYTs did not identify any specific professional development that they had taken as the one that contributed to their students’ success on the third grade Ohio Achievement test and the First Grade Ohio Diagnostic Screeners in math and reading. The EYTs were skeptical of identifying their professional development activities that they received since the study began as attributing to their student achievement on those standardize tests. They admit that their students had improved in their learning and behavior and that their professional development played a role, however, the EYTs noted if they had been given professional development that focus on a specific content area on any part of the examinations given to their students then they would have been able to make that claim. Hence, there remains an urgent need for research that more adequately addresses the relationship between teachers’
professional development and student achievement. Overall, the EYTs perceived that with effective professional development they can improve their students’ achievement.

**Teacher Change**

There is an emphasis on professional development as the primary vehicle in efforts to bring about change (Guskey, 1994). In addition, Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) stated, “We do not develop in isolation as educators. We develop through our relationships, especially those with others who are significant for us. These significant others act as a kind of mirror for our developing selves” (p. 37). Teaching is not an “isolated profession” but where teachers spend time isolated from other adults. In this case study the researcher documented how the two EYT's viewed collegial collaboration as being essential to their professional growth. Teacher learning need to take place before we look for changes. One of the main focus of this study was the impact on teachers’ learning and it was evident in this study that through some of the EYT's professional development activities, study group meetings, guidance strategies and Differentiation Academy the researcher was able to not only hear teachers talk about how much the professional development impacted their learning, but was also able to document those initial changes, which the researcher would have liked to see as having more long-term impact. It was also evident in this study, that EYT's were more supportive when they were able to collaborate with each other. Both EYT's made changes to their practice through their professional development activities. It was evident that during the study group meetings the EYT's focused more on their learning and the learners. In addition, they also spend a lot of time focusing on making individual and organizational changes. As
discussed earlier, this case study has confirmed what numerous research has concluded, that change is dependent upon professional development or staff development (Guskey, 1986, 1994, 2000 & 2002; Joyce & Showers, 1982; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990).

What resonated through the study was the importance of providing entry-year teachers with opportunities to make the necessary changes to their practice, they needed to be able to examine their actions and decisions on how they teach their students a particular subject, what they think worked well in the lesson and how they perceived their students and how their students perceived them in the classroom. Moreover, they were able to identify with the teacher in the book ‘Learning to Trust’.

*Teachers Learning from their Peers*

When teachers can work together to address issues that affect them collectively, they can problem solved through share knowledge and expertise (Fullan, 1991; Guskey, 1995; Little, 1993). Further, both EYT cited the importance of working with their peers and that they were able to learn from each other, through sharing and modeling strategies and techniques. Moreover, Barth (2006) argued that a collegial relationship among teachers and administrators are one when educators are talking with one another about practice, sharing their craft knowledge, observing one another while they are engaged in practice and rooting for one another’s success. Pragmatically speaking, teachers need to be decision-makers working along with their colleagues to enact change.

It is not a change that will happen rapidly; however, inquiry scaffolding can be negotiated daily as professionals interact with each other and various stakeholders. The EYTs were able to spend time especially during the study group meetings discussing
educational matters and made rational choices with their peers. They were able to develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their learning on their students. Equally important, they became students of their own teaching practices. The EYTs made pedagogical and attitudinal changes in the way they presented their lessons, classroom management, and interaction with their students, parents and teachers. By working along with their peers, it would appear that the EYTs acquired the means and motivation for sustained growth and development once the professional development program ended. The EYTs through working with their peers in the study group meetings were able to monitor their own teaching and learning while learning about Mrs. Ecken’s experiences.

*Teacher Empowerment*

The teachers felt a sense of empowerment to be able to participate with their peers in making a decision to bring about change in the school as it involved creating a community in their classroom and decreasing students’ behavior.

This study shed light on the need for more opportunities to foster collegial relationship among teachers because it empowered the EYTs. The implication of this study is that there needs to be further research conducted focusing on the effectiveness of collegiality and collaboration strategies in promoting teacher professional development. Both EYTs in the study wanted to work in a group. Furthermore, research has shown that teacher empowerment produces significant benefits for students, teachers and the school. The teachers were not afraid to take risk in their classrooms to bring about changes. Collaboration is strength-based and empowering, which involves mutual planning and
enhances the effectiveness of schools (Alameda, 1996; Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997). Through the study group meetings, the EYTs were able to spend more time together with experience teachers, which played a crucial role in reinforcing their competency and self-confidence. It was unfortunate because of a lack of staff members in the school, the EYTs were only able to meet after school, although there is a crucial need for collegial collaboration. The moments they had for collaboration, the EYTs were able to not only share ideas, but also learn from other staff members. I have no doubt that meaningful collaboration is taking place in many school districts which empowers or inspires other teachers to want to excel therefore, more studies needs to be conducted showing the value of those collaborations. I agree, “There has never been a time when the expectation has been greater that teachers working together in meaningful job-embedded ways (Leonard & Leonard, 2003). There is a crucial need for professional development activities that will empower educators to want to become effective in their teaching.

School Leadership

Effective school leadership is an essential variable in professional development. Entry-year teachers need to be supported by the leaders in the school. To implement change process effective administrative leadership is required. It is one of the responsibilities of the instructional leader or principal in a school to ensure that teachers’ professional needs are identified and these needs addressed with appropriate professional development. It is paramount that school leaders seek to remove any obstacle (s) that might hinder or stifle teachers’ development or growth. This support comes in many forms, structuring ongoing professional development, providing the necessary resources
the teachers would need to be effective in their teaching, providing times for teachers to collaborate with each other.

When teachers feel supported by administrators in the school, they are more eager to take risk in their teaching. Professional development should be properly organized if it is going to be effective. It is imperative that school administrators not use the top-down approach to professional development, but instead a bottom-up approach, which allow teachers to help make the decisions as to what type of professional development activities they should be involved in and the overall planning. I do believe that when teachers learning needs are addressed first, we as educational leaders will not need to worry because those changes will not only impact our students’ achievement, but also the organization of the school as a whole. Educators have to feel a part of the overall learning process because they are the main stakeholders. It is essential, for promoting the ‘democratic good life’ that teachers and administrators begin to collaborate in the school.

It is important for first-year teachers to have the necessary support and resources because numerous researches cited EYTs leaving the profession due to the lack of support and resources. Although this study focused primarily on teachers’ perceptions and teacher learning impact through professional development, this finding lack of support/resources was noted by the EYTs as affecting their professional growth. We are aware that every school building is different because of its leadership. It was evident through this study that the EYTs did not feel supported by administration.

There is a great need for administration in schools to promote a climate of collaborative problem solving and open communication. It is important that we begin to
study relationships of administrators in schools and teacher learning through professional development. We need to produce more studies that focus on school leadership and effective professional development. High quality professional development produces change in teacher knowledge and practice school culture and teachers’ leadership abilities (Loucks-Horsley & Matsumioto, 1999).

**Study Group**

There is a body of literature (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003; Murphy & Lick, 1998; Terehoff, 2002) about using the study group model of professional development, but there needs to be further study of beginning teachers’ involvement in study groups and their impact. The two EYT's cited their involvement in the study group as one of their professional development activities that impact them most. In this case study, I was able to see first-hand, how effective study groups can be. The study group promoted an atmosphere for professional growth for the EYT's. It was evident in the meetings that the EYT's were critically examining their own practice. Both EYT's talked about how their overall, experience was rewarding from being a part of the study group. Through the study group meetings, it was evident that the EYT's became a part of a “community of learners” (Barth, 1990). The EYT's thought that the book ‘Learning to Trust’ was appropriate for them to read and they were able to identify with the teacher in the book. The book provided the EYT's an opportunity to investigate a different approach to students’ behavior, but they also learned more about themselves and their students in the process, by using many of the strategies that the teacher in the book ‘Learning to Trust’ used in her classroom. However, the EYT's felt they should have been a part of a study
group from the beginning of the school year. During the study group meetings, teacher isolations were replaced with “shared ownership of issues a willingness to consider alternative explanations for practices and behavior, and a desire to work together as colleagues” (Lieberman, 1990). By using teacher study group meetings can reduce the need for outside expert supervision in the school.

Study group meetings should be designed to meet individual needs and group needs of the teachers. This is a critical strategy for peer collaboration, one of the most effective forms of professional development. I saw the EYTs involved in goal-oriented talk, discourse, conversation, and communication between educators, in which Bush (2003) describes as collaboration. When EYTs were given the opportunities especially through the study group meetings, they felt supported and influenced by their peers to improve their practice. They were given an opportunity to investigate research and best practice through reading the book ‘Learning to Trust’. The EYTs were able to spend time with the other teachers, discussing Mrs. Ecken’s experiences, modeling and reflecting on the practices in the book ‘Learning to Trust’. It was evident that through the conversations about the book ‘Learning to Trust’ the EYTs were able to apply new ideas in their classrooms and improved on their existing skills. The book allowed the teachers to focus on classroom and school issues, for example, addressing district and school based initiatives focused on improving student learning; more studies are needed in this area.

During the study, the EYTs felt that the school should address the discipline problems in the school, which was disrupting their teaching. Using the book ‘Learning to
Trust’ the EYTs applied different strategies to decrease discipline and they created a community in their classroom.

Teacher Professional Development

This case study confirmed other research studies, as well as the professional literature indicating that effective professional development is critical for teachers’ professional growth. Furthermore, studies have shown, professional development is essential to the professional growth of our entry-year teachers (EYTs), for them to become effective educators and be able to impact their students’ achievement, therefore the planning of effective professional development must be carefully planned to meet those goals. The researcher acknowledges the importance of understanding how adults learn and recognizes that diverse learning styles are imperative if we are going to see improvement or change in educators through professional development. This case study also confirms other professional development research when there was evidence of impact on teacher learning from EYTs attending effective professional development. For example, when the EYTs were given the opportunities to try new skills, learn, practice those skills, and reflect upon that practice the EYTs made some changes in their performance.

This question, “what are the characteristics of high quality professional development and how do we get teachers to change what they do in their classrooms?” This question resonates with the researcher. Educators when designing professional development should pay special attention to the content, process, and context of professional development. It gives you the opportunity to focus on what knowledge and
skills the teachers need to know. The *process* of professional development focuses on the delivery method of that new knowledge and skills. As noted in this case study, the process of professional development was essential and had a positive impact on the two EYTs depending on the activities that were planned, organized, carried, and followed-up. In contrast, the professional development that was viewed by the EYTs as disorganized, lacking time for discussion, practice and follow-up received a negative rating. The process of professional development should focus on the amount of time educators need to learn the new knowledge and skills. The *context* of teacher professional development focuses on the practitioners, which addresses: who, when, where and why the professional development (Guskey & Sparks, 1996). In addition, research has shown that the neglect to focus on any one of these variables (content, context and process) would weaken the effectiveness of professional development.

Further Research

*Study Groups*

Through the study group meetings, EYTs were committed to learning from other teachers. This model of professional development provided the venue for sharing and learning together. The goal of the study group was to find an alternative way of dealing with the discipline problems in the school. The book ‘Learning to Trust’, was relevant to both EYTs because they thought the teacher Mrs. Ecken, her students, and the type of school was similar to Booker T. Washington, so they were able to see the connection. There are other books that teachers can read to examine ways that schools can be
transformed to meet the needs of its students. For example, ‘Dreamkeepers’ by Gloria Ladson-Billings that teachers can read, examined and documented the pedagogical practices of teachers who are successful with African American students. Through reading the books about teachers would give the teachers in the group an opportunity to study other teachers classrooms and their experiences, which is difficult at times to observe when working in many schools, so through books about other teachers classrooms and experiences, they can have an opportunity to study other teachers and evaluate other teachers’ experiences through an open dialogue with the group members. The result of my study supports the research literature indicating the importance of study groups and their impact, however, there needs to be more study designed to investigate entry-year teachers impact using study group model professional development.

Professional Development

If the main focus of teacher professional development is for teachers and students success, therefore, it is imperative that we seek to find out the best process for professional development. Trying to make a connection to teachers’ perceptions of their professional development activities and impact on teacher learning are multifaceted because first we need to know the teachers’ prior knowledge of the topics they will cover in the professional development. Further studies need to be conducted to understand the qualities needed in professional development processes that are essential to teachers’ development. Moreover, this study finds the need for EYT to be allowed latitude to participate in the planning and implementation of their own professional development activities. Furthermore, being able to work in a collaborative and collegial workplace are
critical to teachers’ professional growth. In addition, effective professional development must be in place in order for teachers to translate research into classroom practice (Fine & Raack, 1994).

What was fundamental to the EYTs was the need for school to provide the necessary training, practice, feedback, individual reflection and collaborative inquiry into their practice for their development. During the study, the EYTs were given opportunities as stated previously in the study group meetings to share views and seek solutions to common problems in an atmosphere of collegiality and professional respect.

Further studies need to be conducted investigating entry-year teachers’ perception of the value of their professional development. The two EYTs in the study wanted to be engaged in professional development that were designed with sustained activities; opportunities for reflection, group support and collaboration and most of all adequate time needed to be provided during the school day for ongoing teacher professional development. However, there are numerous studies that documents teachers’ views about their professional development, but their needs to be further studies investigating impact on teacher learning. The focus of evaluation of teacher professional development should be on teachers’ new skills and knowledge and on how those changes impacts teachers’ practice and if those changes impact students’ outcomes (Mitchem, 2003; Mizell, 2001).

The EYTs perception is consistent with teacher learning from their professional development. It was evident through this study, that teacher perception was important in terms of how the EYTs perceived their professional development activities and
depending on a positive view the EYT’s had about the particular professional development, for example, study group meetings, Differentiation Academy and Guidance strategies, they were motivated to learn the strategies and techniques and applied those in their classrooms. In contrast professional development that the EYT’s had perceived negatively, ‘Creating an African Center Environment’ the EYT’s were less motivated to learn the information from the professional development. However, the professional developments ‘Intervention pyramid’ and ‘‘Defining the problems multi-sensory, structured language programs for grades K through 3’ although the EYT’s saw the professional developments as important, due to a lack of time for them to absorb the information, apply and reflect on them the teachers did not use the information because they did not feel confident that they could use the information effectively in their classroom, due to the need for more time to learn the knowledge and skills, so they did not apply it in their classrooms. Moreover, this study finds that teacher perception is an important variable as to how teachers make a decision to learn and use the knowledge and skills gain from professional development to bring about changes in their learning.

The study also confirms, that for the professional development to be viewed as effective the teachers need to be able to work in a cooperative atmosphere, whereby planning, implementation, follow up activities should be seen as joint efforts, which provide opportunities for those with diverse interests and responsibilities to offer their input and advice (Guskey, 1999; Massarella, 1980). As discussed earlier, perceptions result when a person gives meaning to feelings. Through the study group, EYT’s were able to challenge their beliefs and construct new knowledge that helped them develop and
improve their practice (Marble, 2006; Rock & Wilson, 2005). The EYTs needed to see
the connection to their learning to further their learning experience. Additionally, Short
and Burke (1991) state, “Our ability as learners to make the connections that bring
meaning and organization to our lives is dependent on being able to connect current
events to our past experiences and to our expectations for the future” (p. 14).

Conclusion

This case study examined how two entry year elementary teachers perceived the
value of their professional development activities and teacher learning impacts. The
researcher found evidence of initial teacher impact from their professional development,
hence there remains an urgent need for more research addressing the relationship between
teachers’ professional development and teacher impact. Working with the EYTs using
case study methodology provided a more in-depth understanding of the relationship
between the teachers and professional development.

In addition, it is imperative that schools continue to seek to know what types of
professional development and its format would be of benefit to their teachers, especially
entry-year teachers. It is also crucial that teachers be apart of that decision making
process; therefore the process should involve deliberation, sound questioning, and the
play of voices.

Every day we see changes in society and in theories of learning and teaching
which creates new pedagogical challenges that requires educators to reshape their
learning environments and reform classroom activities. However, challenging the
process is for educators, especially EYTs; if they are provided ongoing professional
development they will be able to overcome the difficulties through professional development that focus on the individual and group needs.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
APPENDIX A

Teachers’ Interview Questions

1. Do you consider professional development as being important? Why?

2. Does professional development affect how teachers teach?

3. Has professional development changed the way you teach at this school? How?

4. Which professional development program has been most beneficial to you and why?

5. On a scale of one to ten how would you rate the professional development workshop/in-service you just attended and why would you give it such a rating?

6. What new techniques you have just learned at the workshop do you plan on implementing in your classroom and why?

7. What professional development workshops do you think entry-year teachers should have in order to be successful and why?
APPENDIX B

HUMAN SUBJECT REVIEW BOARD
APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL TO USE HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Send completed forms to one of the reviewers designated for your Department or Katherine Light, Research and Graduate Studies, 113 University Auditorium LOG NUMBER ____________
Form can be downloaded from http://www.kent.edu/rags-alpha/forms/

Please type all information. HANDWRITTEN FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.
Move through the document using TAB or Mouse. Do not use the enter Key. To mark a box, click with the mouse.

I. Project Title: Elementary school teachers’ perception of the value of their professional development.

Type of Project: FACULTY RESEARCH ☑External Funded (Agency: ) Include copy of proposal

☐STUDENT DIRECTED RESEARCH (Advisor: )
☐Thesis ☑Dissertation ☐Course Requirement (Course #: )
☐Other (Specify: )

Duration of Project: Starting Date: 2-13-07 (But not before approval is obtained)
Ending Date: 8-14-07

I certify that the research procedures for this project and the method of obtaining consent (if any), as approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board, will be followed during the period covered by this research project. Any future changes will be submitted for Board review and approval prior to implementation.

If this project involves approval/permission from other institutions, the principal investigator (and the faculty advisor if the PI is a student) must sign below to certify the following statement: "I/we will not begin research at other institutions before having obtained their permission to do so."

Principal Investigator Date Faculty Advisor (If PI is a student) Date

Name: Deborah M Campbell, M.Ed
Telephone: 1-330-459-2244 Address: 404 White Hall, Kent State University Email: dmcampb1@kent.edu
Action Taken:

By REVIEWER:

By KSU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD:

- Level I, Category____
- Level II, Category____
- Level III, To Full Board

Project Involves:
- Deception
- Identifiable medical information
- Waiver of Consent

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<tr>
<th>Primary Reviewer</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Administrator, IRB</th>
<th>Date</th>
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Co-Reviewer (Level II) | Date

IRB Level III Action:
- Approved  Disapproved  Contingent Approval (Comments or Contingencies):

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<th>Chairperson, IRB</th>
<th>Date</th>
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APPENDIX C

TEACHER CONSENT FORM
Teacher Consent Form

Case study: Elementary entry-year teachers' perception of the value of their professional development

Ms. Deborah M. Campbell wishes to conduct a dissertation research and seeking your views on the value of your professional development. I want to investigate the perception of first year white middle class teachers, perception of the value of your professional development. This case study is therefore worth conducting because the descriptive information amassed will shed light on the phenomenon and No Child Left Behind legislation recognizing professional development's key role in school reform. If you decide to take part in this research, Ms. Deborah M. Campbell would like permission to collect the following data:

- Observations of your classes
- Interview with you concerning your reaction to the professional development offered at the school
- Collect the aggregate (class level) passing rates on standardized tests.

I assure your anonymity in this process. All data collected will be assigned an identifier to protect your anonymity. Your data will be viewed only by the researcher. Pseudonyms will be used in any publications or presentations. There will be instances in which your comments are quoted in dissertation, publications or presentations. However, your identity will not be revealed.

Your participation in this project is entirely up to you. No one will hold it against you if you decide not to participate. If you take part, you may stop participating in the research project at any time.

If you want to know more about this research project, please call me at (330) 459-2244 or you can contact my advisor (s) Dr. Joanne Dewey at (330) 672-6638 or Dr. Richard Andrus at (330) 672-6618. The project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University's rules for research, please call Dr. Peter Tandy, Vice President and Dean, Division of Research and Graduate Studies at (330) 672-2704.

You will get a copy of this consent form.

Sincerely,

Ms. Deborah M. Campbell, M.Ed
Graduate Student

B. CONSENT STATEMENT(S)

By signing below, I agree to take part in Ms. Deborah M. Campbell's Dissertation research project entitled, Case Study: Elementary entry-year school teachers' perception of the value of their professional development. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I understand what is required of me and that I can stop my participation in this study at any time.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Teaching, Leadership and Curriculum Studies
P.O. Box 5190 • Kent, Ohio 44242-0190
330-672-2580 • Fax: 330-672-3246 • http://educ.kent.edu/tlcs

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APPENDIX D

SCHOOL CONSENT FORM
Case Study: Elementary entry-year school teachers' perception of the value of their professional development

I, Ms. Deborah M Campbell wishes to conduct a dissertation research. This qualitative case study is designed to investigate the perceptions of first-year, white, middle-class teachers' value of their professional development. In the context of my dissertation research, two participants will be studied. The researcher observes that this case study could be justified entirely on the basis of descriptive information it will provide on the way in which the No Child Left Behind legislation recognizes professional development as a key element in school reform. Three general research questions were formulated and will be used as guide for this study:
1. How does district level professional development impact entry year level teachers in an Afro-centric school?
2. What are the entry year teachers' perceptions of professional development?
3. How do entry year teachers perceive professional development as impacting their students' achievement?

Data sources for this case study will include teacher interviews, participant observations and field notes, and aggregate (class level) passing rates on standardized tests. Data sources will be triangulated in order to answer the research questions. I have chosen a qualitative single-case design. The sources of evidence will be interviews, participant observations, and field notes. Single-case analysis will be conducted. I would like permission to conduct the research in the school. If you decide to take part in this research I would like your permission to collect the following data from the school:
- Observations of your classes
- Interviews with two participants
- Collection of the aggregate (class level) passing rates on standardized tests.
- The research will take place in the school from February through June 2007

I assure your school anonymity in this process. All data collected will be assigned an identifier to protect the school anonymity. Your data will be viewed only by the researcher. Pseudonym will be used in any publications or presentations. There will be instances in which your comments are quoted in dissemination, publications or presentations. However, the school's identity will not be revealed.

Your schools' participation in this project is entirely up to you. No one will hold it against you if you decide not to participate. If you take part, you may stop participating in the research project at any time. If you want to know more about this research project, please contact me at (330) 459-2244 or you can contact my advisor (330) 672-0639 or Dr. Richard Ambrose at (330) 672-0618. The project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University's rules for research, please call Dr. Peter Tashley, Vice President and Dean, Division of Research and Graduate Studies at (330) 672-2744.

You will get a copy of this consent form.

Sincerely,

Ms. Deborah M Campbell, M ED
Graduate Student

B. CONSENT STATEMENTS:

By signing below, I agree to take part in Ms. Deborah M Campbell's Dissertation research project entitled, Case Study: Elementary entry-year school teachers' perception of the value of their professional development. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I understand what is required of me, and that I can stop my participation in this study at any time.

Signature

Date

Teaching, Leadership and Curriculum Studies
P.O. Box 3190 • Kent, Ohio 44242-0091
330-672-2580 • Fax: 330-672-3246 • http://educ.kent.edu/llcs
APPENDIX E

AUDIO TAPE CONSENT FORM
Title: Elementary entry-year school teachers' perception of the value of their professional development

I agree to audio taping of my interviews with Ms. Deborah M Campbell at the school (4) times for 30 to 40 minutes a time, which will take place at the end of every professional development day beginning in March, 2007.

___________________________                          __________________________
Signature                                      Date

I have been told that I have the right to hear the audio tapes before they are used. I have decided that I:

____want to hear the tapes  ____________ do not want to hear the tapes

Sign now below if you do not want to hear the tapes. If you want to hear the tapes, you will be asked to sign after hearing them.

Ms. Deborah M Campbell and other researchers approved by Kent State University may/may not use the tapes made of me. The original tapes or copies may be used for:

____X____this research project ______teacher education ______presentation at professional meetings

___________________________                          __________________________
Signature                                      Date

Address:

Teaching, Leadership and Curriculum Studies
P.O. Box 5190 • Kent, Ohio 44242-0101
330-672-2580 • Fax: 330-672-2245 • http://educ.kent.edu/tics

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APPENDIX F

TEACHER OBSERVATION FORM
# TEACHER OBSERVATION FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER:</th>
<th>OBSERVER:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT/GRADE:</td>
<td>LESSON OBSERVED:</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE &amp; TIME OF OBSERVATION</th>
<th>DATE &amp; TIME OF CONFERENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This form will be used for formal and informal observations. If the observation is informal, the observer should circle the specific component observed on a given date. (Please note: Every element listed may not be observed during one lesson. Observer and teacher should discuss the bases of decisions for elements included.) Specific elements for improving instruction may be addressed in the planning conference(s).</td>
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</table>

## RATING: EFFECTIVE = E NEEDS IMPROVEMENT = NI NA = NOT APPLICABLE

### 1. PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>RATINGS/ANNOTATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implements standard-based instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community and curriculum indicators.</td>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Bases instruction on goals that reflect high expectations, conceptual understanding of the subject, the importance of learning, as well as the goals and needs of the school and community.</td>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Uses assessment results to monitor and adjust instruction.</td>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Uses current and accurate resources to link student learning to the community.</td>
<td>d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Selects and uses a variety of strategies at appropriate levels of difficulty and complexity to include questioning techniques, test items, higher order thinking skills and problem-solving skills.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

| Plans instruction to achieve goals that reflect curriculum guidelines and the state standards. | a. |
| a. Develops and uses mapping assessments to ensure curriculum implementation. | b. |
| b. Selects and uses appropriate indicators and strategies for lessons consistent with curriculum guidelines and the state standards. | |
| c. Develops and uses clear, logical, sequential lesson plans that include African/African infusion, technology and learning activities connected to instructional indicators. | c. |

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Diagnoses individual, group, and program needs and selects appropriate materials and resources to match the abilities and needs of all students.

a. Plans instruction appropriate for the developmental levels and needs of all students.

b. Selects and uses resources and methods appropriate for all students, including those with special learning needs.

c. Plans for and implements required accommodations for students with special learning or behavioral needs.

d. Plans instruction which is sensitive and responsive to the diversified needs of students within the classroom.

e. Implements intervention plans for students who are not successful, academically and/or behaviorally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>RATINGS/ANNOTATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses a variety of assessment strategies and instruments to make both short- and long-term instructional decisions to improve student learning.</td>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Utilizes multiple assessment practices congruent with indicators and state standards in content and process:</td>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Group or individual questioning</td>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Class debate or discussion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teacher-made and standardized quizzes/tests</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Students working at board</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Written assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Projects/labs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Uses division and school guidelines to maintain appropriate grading practices for records and reports.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Maintains and uses organized records and reports of student progress for instructional decisions.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Identifies and communicates specific student performance expectations and documents student learning using appropriate assessment instruments. | a. |
| a. Communicates to students and parents clear expectations for learning. | b. |
| b. Uses pre- and post-assessment data to develop expectations and to document progress. | c. |
| c. Provides students with prompt and meaningful feedback about performance and progress. | d. |
| d. Maintains students’ data folders. | |
### 2. INSTRUCTION

#### Setting the Stage for Learning

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Checks students’ understanding of the indicator(s) for the presented lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Raises level of concern and/or interest in the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Reviews and relates new learning to previous learning.</td>
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#### Acquisition of Learning

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a.</th>
<th>b.</th>
<th>c.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Combines auditory explanation with visual references and student involvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Provides teacher-directed structured practice in which all students participate.</td>
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</table>
| c. | Utilizes questioning techniques:  
  * builds on responses  
  * encourages relevant discussion  
  * utilizes “wait time”  
  * checks for individual understanding  
  * Paces instruction and uses motivational techniques to maintain interest and involvement.  
  * Implements instructional strategies recognizing the multiple intelligences of the students. |

#### Consolidation of Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a.</th>
<th>b.</th>
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</table>
| a. | Provides guided practice:  
  * provides model or other references  
  * moves throughout classroom  
  * provides positive corrective feedback (knowledge of results)  
  * provides input enabling students to move beyond the basics of the lesson  
  * utilizes flexible grouping practices |
| b. | Uses a variety of strategies:  
  * cooperative learning  
  * discussion  
  * project  
  * teacher directed instruction |

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**TEACHER:**

**SUBJECT/GRADE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
<th>RATINGS/ANNOTATIONS</th>
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- peer teaching
- learning stations
- other

c. Provides independent practice:
- provides assignments/homework relevant to the learning that has been practiced with guidance
- assigns homework in an appropriate amount and frequency
- assists students in planning, organizing, and preparing for assignments, long-range projects, and tests
- provides opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills beyond the introductory context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African/African-American Infusion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Incorporates African/African American cultural influences throughout the lesson/unit.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Selects and uses information that is documented, relevant and represents that which is historical and/or current.</td>
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**Integration of Technology**

- Utilizes available technological materials and resources effectively.
- Provides opportunities for hands-on use of technology.
- Demonstrates competence in technology standards.

**INDICATORS**

**Closure of Lesson**

- Relates lesson to the essential understanding.
- Allows for student involvement.
- Reviews the learning of the day to set the stage for the next learning.
- Checks the understanding of students.
- Encourages students to reflect on and take responsibility for their learning.
Actively implements a discipline policy that fosters a safe and positive environment for students and staff
  a. Establishes class procedures (rules) and routines and clearly communicates high expectations for appropriate behavior.
  b. Exhibits consistency, fairness, control and calmness when disciplining students.
  c. Establishes a climate that demonstrates caring, acceptance, and respect for the individual.
  d. Utilizes positive reinforcement.
  e. Uses incentives and rewards to promote and recognize success.
  f. Complies with school procedures regarding safety and emergency situations.
  g. Submits office behavioral referrals that are written in specific and objective terms.

Implements classroom procedures which maximize academic learning time
  • Creates and maintains a physical setting that minimizes disruption and promotes learning.
  • Maintains a well-organized, attractive environment relative to the curriculum.
  • Provides clearly defined and efficient instructional transitions
  • Plans purposeful assignments for teacher assistants, substitute teachers, student teachers, and others to ensure continuous student engagement in learning

Establishes and maintains rapport with students
  • Demonstrates enthusiasm for learning
  • Demonstrates tact, humor, courtesy, and active listening
  • Seeks and uses information about students’ interests and opinions
  • Promotes an appreciation for diversity and cultural awareness and gender sensitivity

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<th>INDICATORS</th>
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<tr>
<td>4. COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS</td>
<td>a.</td>
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Uses effective communication to foster positive interactions in the classroom
  a. Articulates clear learning goals and instructional procedures to students
  b. Models effective communication strategies
  c. Uses precise language, correct vocabulary/grammar and acceptable forms of oral and written expressions
  d. Uses a variety of media communication tools
  e. Provides opportunities for student expression in speaking, writing, and other media

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</table>
Forges partnerships with families to promote student learning at home and in school

| a. | Responds promptly to parental concerns |
| b. | Shares major instructional goals with parents/caregivers |
| c. | Sends home the monthly mapping for reading, math or content area(s). |
| d. | Establishes regular channels of communication between school and home that encourage parent/caregiver involvement |
| e. | Initiates communication with parents/caregiver concerning student progress or problems in a timely manner |
| f. | Involves parents and community in the learning environment |
| g. | Maintains a Home/School Communication Log for each student. |

Collaborates with staff, families, and community to promote an appreciation of diversity, cultural awareness, and gender sensitivity in the school community

| a. | Responds to identified needs of individual students and groups of students |
| b. | Promotes and celebrates school/community cultural programs and activities. |

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<tr>
<td>5. PROFESSIONALISM</td>
<td>Models professional and ethical standards as well as personal integrity in all interactions.</td>
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<td>a.</td>
<td>Relates to colleagues, parents, students, and others in an ethical and professional manner.</td>
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<td>b.</td>
<td>Represents the school/program favorably in the school and community.</td>
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<td>c.</td>
<td>Resolves student and parent concerns and problems in a constructive manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Maintains a professional demeanor and appearance.</td>
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<td>e.</td>
<td>Demonstrates willingness to share in school related activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Demonstrates willingness to share in community related activities.</td>
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<td>g.</td>
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<td>g.</td>
<td>Maintains accurate and appropriate record keeping.</td>
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<td>h.</td>
<td>Completes work assignment on time.</td>
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<td>i.</td>
<td>Completes work assignments accurately.</td>
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<td>j.</td>
<td>Communicates information accurately both orally and in writing.</td>
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<td>k.</td>
<td>Follows directions.</td>
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<td>l.</td>
<td>Observes work time responsibly.</td>
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<td>m.</td>
<td>Avoids unscheduled absenteeism.</td>
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<td>n.</td>
<td>Avoids tardiness.</td>
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<td>o.</td>
<td>Exercises good judgment and makes appropriate decisions in performance of duties.</td>
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<td>p.</td>
<td>Recognizes and resolves actual and potential conflict situations.</td>
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<td><strong>Takes responsibility for and participates in a meaningful and continuous process of professional development that results in the enhancement of student learning.</strong></td>
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<td>• Uses school and personal goals in planning professional growth.</td>
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<td>• Participates regularly in professional development activities.</td>
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<td>• Maintains a high level of expertise in assigned teaching areas.</td>
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<td>• Comprehends and applies current sources of information that enhance knowledge of educational issues, trends, and practices.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Works in a collegial and collaborative manner with peers, school personnel, and the community to promote and support student learning</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>a. Cooperates with staff and administration to accomplish the school/mission, goals, programs, and activities. (active participation on at least two school committees)</td>
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<td>b. Collaborates with other staff members to plan for individual student learning.</td>
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<td>c. Aligns goals/standards across classrooms/grade level.</td>
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# TEACHER OBSERVATION FORM

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TEACHER:</th>
<th>OBSERVER:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT/GRADE:</td>
<td>LESSON OBSERVED:</td>
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## 6. SUMMARY

### Areas of Strength

### Areas of Growth

### Recommendations

### Conference Notes:  (Conference Notes Attached - Circle One)

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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Signatures:  Evaluator ___________________________ Date: ___________________________
Evaluatee ______________________ Date: ______________________
REFERENCES
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In L. Adler & S. Gardner (Eds.), *The politics of linking schools and social services* (pp.137-151). Washington, DC: The Falmer Press.


