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UMI
UNCOVERING BEST PRACTICES IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
FOR IMPROVED STUDENT OUTCOMES:
LESSONS LEARNED FROM THREE OF OHIO’S BEST

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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ABSTRACT

This study utilized a comparative case study approach to uncover the characteristics of best practices in teacher professional development for improved student outcomes. The study also examined the influence that external initiatives and standards, such as Venture Capital, BEST Practice, and state mandated report cards, had on the development and implementation of professional development efforts. As well, the contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining high quality professional development were studied. Case studies of a high performing urban elementary school, rural junior high school, and suburban high school were developed and used to describe the content characteristics, process variables, and context characteristics of professional development efforts being practiced in these selected schools, as well as to look comparatively at the practices across these settings.

The study found that professional development best practices were characterized by collaborative efforts among teachers who shared common beliefs regarding teaching and learning and who recognized the need for improvement of both student outcomes and their own professional practice. Professional development efforts in the schools studied were reflected in
building plans for continuous improvement which targeted improved student outcomes. The leadership of the building principal and community support were found to be a major contributors, while lack of time for joint work and learning and financial resources were found to be constraints.

Among the lessons learned was the need for coherent plans developed by all stakeholders that address the ongoing learning needs of both students and teachers. Leadership that empowers teachers to direct their own professional learning and creates a building culture that values and supports staff in efforts to work and learn together on the job is central to the development and implementation of best practices.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Calls for reform of public education in this country surfaced in the 1980s on the heels of much criticism of the institution of public education in general and the teaching profession in particular. Two major reform proposals, *Tomorrow's Teachers* (The Holmes Group, 1986) and *A Nation Prepared* (Carnegie Foundation, 1986) responded with recommendations that addressed changes in teacher preparation and in the culture of schools themselves. Now, ten years later, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) has released its report entitled *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*. The Commission Report points out that for the most part the school reform movement has ignored the obvious, that being, what teachers know and can do makes the critical difference in what children learn. Also ignored has been the understanding that the way school systems organize their work directly effects what teachers are able to accomplish. The Commission's bottom line is that "student learning in this
country will improve only when we focus our efforts on improving teaching (p. 6)."

The Commission makes clear that restructuring efforts must go in the following two directions: "toward increasing teachers' knowledge to meet the demands they face; and toward recognizing and using teachers' expertise in schools that are redesigned to support high-quality teaching and learning (p. 5)." Five recommendations that place teachers and teaching at the heart of school improvement are offered in the report. Among those is the recommendation to reinvent teacher preparation and professional development. Specific to that recommendation is to "make professional development an on-going part of teachers' daily work through joint planning, study groups, peer coaching, and research; and to organize teacher education and professional development around high standards for students and teachers (p. 20)."

The recent importance being placed on professional development as key in the restructuring of public education is not just a national phenomenon. New standards have been proposed for Ohio's schools which are framed on promoting higher expectations, continuous improvement, increased accountability and better results. One of Ohio's eight Process Standards for getting the conditions right for learning specifically addresses professional development. The focus of the Professional Development standard is on maximizing school improvement opportunities. Under this standard school districts would be responsible for crafting a professional
development plan which supports the district's Continuous Improvement Plan. The standard requires that a significant portion of individual staff members' professional development address the achievement of district and school goals. Districts will be required to systematically and regularly review and document the professional growth of staff.

This proposed Professional Development standard is linked directly to the requirements in the state's Teacher Education and Licensure standards adopted in 1996 by the Ohio State Board of Education. As Ohio moves a system of certification to licensure, educators will be responsible for the design of individual professional development plans, subject to approval of a locally established professional development committee, in order to renew professional licenses. These plans are to be based on the needs of the educator, the students, the school, and the school district.

The challenge of refocusing efforts on improving teaching and getting the conditions right for learning will require the redesign of teacher education, from recruitment through advanced certification. Teacher preparation programs and school districts alike must shoulder a heavy burden in redesigning preservice and inservice programs based on best practices and linked to high standards. However, an even greater demand will be placed on individual building principals if this effort is to succeed. The principal is key in any staff development effort to improve professional practice. (Behling, 1981; Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Curran, 1982; Glickman, 1991; Wood, Caldwell, & Thompson, 1987). Principals will now
have a greater stake in and responsibility for assisting individual teachers to grow professionally.

These new standards, both state and national, which place teacher learning at the heart of school improvement will require principals to take a more serious role in fostering teacher development. Unfortunately, even principals who acknowledge their responsibility to foster teacher development often claim it is not a function they feel capable of performing well (Leithwood, 1990). This inadequacy seems to be rooted in an unclear image of what effective teacher development looks like and an uncertainty about just how a principal might go about supporting such development given the usual job demands.

Related Research

The knowledge base in education has enjoyed tremendous growth in recent years, however some basic questions in the area of professional development have remained unanswered. Guskey (1997) points out that "we are still not sure precisely which elements contribute most to effective professional development, what formats or specific practices are most efficacious, or precisely how professional development contributes to improved teaching and learning (p. 36)." Research efforts have focused on activities such as surveying the literature to isolate salient factors (Massarella, 1980; Sparks, G., 1983); analyzing studies to identify successful program implementation (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978); and summarizing
research findings to offer guidelines for more effective practice (Showers, Joyce, & Bennett, 1987; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

Despite an expanding knowledge base in professional development, Guskey (1997) describes three reasons why definitive answers remain elusive. First is confusion about the criteria of effectiveness. Using student learning measures as the principal criteria has been exceptionally rare in determining effective professional development (Guskey & Sparks, 1991; Sparks, 1995). A second reason has been the misguided search for main effects. Efforts that seek to identify "general" effects gloss over critical interactions and as a result, more definitive findings are often overlooked. Guskey (1997) posits, "The more relevant question is: Under what conditions (that is, what content, types of formats, contextual characteristics, and so forth) is professional development likely to have an effect on student learning? (p. 37)." The third reason is related to the lack of emphasis that has been placed on collecting more qualitative forms of data.

Guskey (1997) believes that if we are convinced that professional development can and does make a difference, we must ask how we can better understand its influence (p.38). He suggests we start by looking closely at efforts that have produced demonstrable evidence of success. This requires us to study programs that have led to improvements in reliable measures of student learning.

The relationship between quality staff development and improvements in student learning is central to any and all school
improvement efforts. Student learning outcomes should provide the starting point for all school improvement and staff development efforts. While it has been generally assumed that there is a strong and direct relationship between staff development and improvements in student learning, Guskey & Sparks (1996) point out that efforts to clarify that relationship have met with little success (p.34). Understanding this relationship has never been more important to schools and students with both state and federal mandates requiring results-driven standards and high stakes testing.

A model outlining the relationship between staff development and improved student learning proposed by Guskey & Sparks (1996) is based on the premise that quality staff development is influenced by a variety of factors. They have organized factors which have an immediate and direct influence on staff development into these three categories: content characteristics, process variables, and context characteristics. Content characteristics refers to the "what" of staff development and focuses on expanding both the theoretical base and the professional development craft knowledge base of teachers. Process variables reflect how staff development is carried out. This includes all aspects of "how": from planning, to delivery, through on-going monitoring and follow-up. Context characteristics address the "who," "when," "where," and "why" of staff development. These characteristics account for the influence of the organization, system, or culture in which staff development occurs.
The best and most effective professional development efforts are only as good as those who plan, deliver and monitor them. While we recognize that teachers, administrators, and parents all have critical roles to play in improving student learning, building principals play a key role (Wood & Thompson, 1993; Guskey & Sparks, 1996; LaPlant, J. 1997). La Plant (1997) points out that one reason the position of the principal is pivotal is due to the deference, earned or not, given to principals (p.55). He states, "Where school improvement efforts succeed, the principal is frequently praised. Where school improvement efforts fail, the principal is viewed as a blocker. But seldom have we examined the role of the principal in professional development in a manner that would dramatically change the principalship (p. 50)."

Guskey & Sparks (1996) conclude that while administrators typically do not influence student learning directly, their knowledge and practices indirectly impact students in two important ways. First, their interactions with teachers; both directly, as in the case of evaluation activities; and indirectly, by modeling high standards of professional behavior, are powerful. Second, the position of the principal provides a leadership role with the capacity to influence policy and practice at both a building and district level. Policies and practices such as school organization, grading, discipline, attendance, curriculum, etc. have a direct effect on how students learn, what they learn, and how their learning will be reported.
Problem Statement

It is clear to see we are faced with well researched and articulated National Goals and State Standards compelling us to establish as a priority the promotion of professional development based on best practice and linked to building performance and student learning outcomes. The research has well documented the "what’s" and "why’s" regarding improved professional development for increased student learning. However, there is a need to know "how" best practices in professional development can be instituted and applied to daily life in schools and what role principals play in that process. It is also clear that the building principal will be a key player in any successful effort to improve professional practice (Wood & Thompson, 1993).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze best practices in teacher professional development being used in selected high performing schools. It is intended to uncover the content characteristics, process variables, and context characteristics of specific "best practices" being utilized, either by design or incidentally, in these Venture Capital schools. Also studied is the role external initiatives, such as Venture Capital, BEST Practices, and state mandated building report cards, have played in promoting professional development to improve student outcomes. The study also examines the contributors and constraints to these efforts.
This study is significant in that it will inform and contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the field of professional development. As well, this study will provide valuable insight for building principals into the teacher development practices that support school improvement. Of great significance is uncovering and describing the "how's" or specific strategies for applying best practices in professional development to daily life in schools. Certainly any information regarding the efficacy of the Venture Capital program, Ohio's BEST initiative, or state mandated report cards will be useful to those evaluating the impact of those efforts.

Research Questions

The research questions which guided this study were as follows:

1. What characterizes the content, process, and context of professional development best practices in high performing schools?

2. How have external standards and initiatives influenced the development and implementation of best practices in professional development in these schools?

3. What are seen as contributors, constraints or both to cultivating and sustaining ongoing high quality professional development efforts?
Underlying Propositions

The following propositions serve as the theoretical underpinning of this study:

1. Improved student learning outcomes should provide the starting point for all school improvement and professional development efforts (Guskey & Sparks, 1996).

2. Those principals and their staff members who are committed to school improvement understand the pivotal role effective professional development plays in any effort made toward the improvement process.

3. Improved teaching and learning through a coherent plan of ongoing professional development at the building level is essential to improved student outcomes (Speck, 1996).

4. The building principal is key to any effort to improve professional practice (Speck, 1996).

Definition of Terms

Best Practices. A term that refers to educational practices that are researched-based and when used by practitioners have produced demonstrable evidence of success. Examples may include novel ways of restructuring the school day, the multi-age grouping of students, and "hands on" instructional strategies.

BEST Practice Initiative. The Ohio’s BEST Practices initiative was launched in 1995 to identify, salute and promote exemplary grassroots
education programs that have been successful in improving the performance of Ohio's students, teachers, and schools. To be eligible for recognition a program or practice must demonstrate documented success at using an innovative approach to overcoming a common education problem and contribute to the achievement on one of the eight National Education goals. Nominations are evaluated by 100 trained reviewers for their significance, effectiveness, transferability, responsiveness, and originality. Some two hundred practices around the state have received this honor.

**Content Characteristics.** A term that refers to the "what" of staff development. They concern primarily the new knowledge, skills and understandings of any staff development effort. Content characteristics also include aspects relating to the magnitude, scope, credibility, and practicality of the change required to implement the new knowledge (Guskey & Sparks, 1996).

**Context Characteristics.** A term that refers to the "who," "when," "where," and "why" of staff development. They involve the organization, system, or culture in which staff development takes place and where the new understandings will be implemented. An important part of the context, for example, may be the pressure created by a district's high expectations for the learning of all students (Guskey & Sparks, 1996).

**Professional Development.** A term often used interchangeably with staff development, teacher development, and inservice education. Professional development is defined by Fullen (1991) as "the sum total of
formal and informal learning experiences throughout one's career from preservice teacher education to retirement (p. 326)." For the purpose of this study professional development refers to staff development activities targeted for the professional growth of practicing teachers.

**Process Variables.** A term that refers to the "how" of staff development. They concern not only the type and forms of staff development activities but also the way those activities are planned, organized, carried out, and followed-up. Examples include the quality of training and the value of sustained follow-up activities such as peer coaching, action research, and study groups (Guskey & Sparks, 1996).

**School Improvement.** This term refers to comprehensive efforts that focus on long-term, positive change in schools. Such efforts may include enhancing teachers' instructional strategies, strengthening leadership, updating curriculum, improving physical facilities, or a combination of some or all of these. The development of teachers is one key component in school improvement efforts.

**Student Outcomes.** This term refers to performance indicators of student learning based on previously established goals and objectives. Examples may include, proficiency test scores, graduation rates, employability data, portfolio presentations, etc.

**Venture Capital Initiative.** Venture Capital was an initiative funded through the Ohio legislature in 1993. It was intended to spark school renewal efforts and to encourage risk-takers who wanted to create a more
effective educational system. Schools awarded Venture Capital grants received $25,000 each year for up to five years. To qualify for the award, Venture schools had to document support of their improvement plan from 80 percent or more of their building staff, gain approval to apply supported by a resolution by the school board, and had to generate community support. Venture Capital grants were designed to be long-term, evolving efforts focused on a particular dimension of change, e.g., curriculum development, professional development, assessment.

Methodology

Design of the Study

This study utilized a comparative case study approach to uncover the characteristics of best practices in teacher professional development for improved student outcomes in three high performing schools. The study also examined the influence that external initiatives and standards, such as Venture Capital, BEST Practice, and state mandated report cards, had on the development and implementation of professional development efforts. As well, the contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining high quality professional development were studied. Case studies were developed and used to describe the content characteristics, process variables, and context characteristics of professional development efforts being practiced in these selected schools, as well as to look comparatively at the practices across these settings.
**Participant Selection**

The participant schools and their respective principals were selected and invited (see Appendix A) as cases to be studied based on the following criteria: the school has been implementing a Venture Capital grant for at least the past 3 years, there has been no change in the principalship during the last three years, the school has been the recipient of a BEST Practice award, and this Venture Capital school currently meets or exceeds proposed state proficiency standards of 75% or better on at least two of four parts of the Ohio Proficiency Test. The participant schools were further selected to represent a cross section of rural, urban, and suburban school districts, as well as schools at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels. Cases in this study portray an urban elementary, a rural middle school, and a suburban high school.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

A case study protocol was developed for this study which provided an overview of the study; detailed field procedures; and outlines of research questions, an analysis plan and the case study report (see case study protocol, Appendix B). Data collection relied on the following five sources of evidence: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, and physical artifacts. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with each principal and a teacher focus group at each school. Documents such as Venture Capital proposals and follow-up reports; BEST Practice proposals; Systemic Change Grant applications; and district and
building continuous improvement plans were collected and analyzed. Informal observations occurred during site visits and data gathering sessions and were recorded in an observation log. Analysis took place at two levels; individual case analysis and cross-case analysis. Data was coded and analyzed to provide a profile of each school as well as a profile of similarities and differences across schools.

Limitations

No claims are made regarding the generalizability of the findings of this study. Cronbach (1975) concluded that social phenomena are too variable and context-bound to permit very significant generalizations. Since qualitative inquiry is used to study social phenomena the aim of this study is not to generalize but to illuminate, describe, and interpret. The results of this study apply to the participants and settings in which this research was conducted. This researcher was limited by the amount of time spent in each setting and the number of opportunities in which teachers could be interviewed.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the study by presenting an overview of the background, the problem, primary research questions, underlying propositions, methodology, limitations, definition of terms, and general
organization of the study. Chapter 2 outlines a review of the literature that informs this study. This review focuses on the school improvement literature with an emphasis on professional development’s role in school improvement. A review of best practices in professional development and the relationship to improved student outcomes is also provided.

Chapter 3 describes the research methods utilized in conducting the study. Design of the study, participant selection, data collection methods, data analysis methods, politics and ethics; and trustworthiness are presented in this chapter. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the data for each case as well as cross case analyses. Chapter 5 will summarize the findings along with conclusions and recommendations for action, further study or both.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter is organized into three major sections. The first section provides an overview of recent reports and legislation that have propelled professional development to the center of school improvement efforts. The second section discusses new conceptions on professional development that will be required to respond to education reform initiatives. Implications of these new conceptions for policy makers and principals are presented. The third section reviews the literature that informs and describes current best practices in professional development. Assumptions about and characteristics of effective professional development are described. Models of teacher development are presented along with a review of the National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development.

Professional Development: A New Priority

Never before in education has there been greater recognition of the need for on-going professional development. Inservice training and other forms of professional development are a
crucial component in nearly every proposal for educational improvement. Regardless of how schools are formed or reformed, structured or restructured, the renewal of staff members' professional skills is considered fundamental to improvement. (Guskey, T. & Huberman, M., 1995, p. 1)

Professional development has perhaps finally arrived, not only as a discipline but as a national priority for improving our schools. The 1996 Report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, brings teachers and teaching to the heart of education reform with the goal to provide every student in America with what should be their birthright: access to competent, caring, and qualified teaching in schools organized for success (p. vi). This goal is based on these three simple premises: 1) What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn; 2) recruiting, preparing, and retaining good teachers is the central strategy for improving our schools; and 3) school reform cannot succeed unless it focuses on creating the conditions in which teachers can teach and teach well.

The Commission offers five major recommendations, one of which is to reinvent teacher preparation and professional development. Essential to that recommendation is the organization of professional development programs around high standards for students and teachers. Schools of education and professional developers need to "organize their work to promote the attainment of student standards through the use of teaching
standards that are grounded in contemporary knowledge about teaching and
learning (p. 77)."

Another essential element in the reinvention of teacher education
and professional development is the creation of stable high-quality sources of
professional development. The Commission points to and endorses the
major findings of the National Foundation for the Improvement of
Education’s report, Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning. Included
among the recommendations in this report are the following: school-based
professional development that attends to the needs and achievement of
students and the attainment of professional teaching standards; teacher
engagement in peer assistance and review as well as other expanded roles;
the integral use of information technologies in teaching and teacher
development; and more flexible scheduling along with an extended school
year for teachers to provide time for professional development (NCTAF,

Certainly, adequate financial resources are needed to support and
sustain the creation of high quality professional development. The
Commission found that while most districts spend substantial amounts of
money each year on professional development, much of it is unplanned, a
lot of it is unnoticed, and practically all of it is uncoordinated. The
Commission calls for funds to be organized around a coherent scheme of
professional development that works to improve teaching. Specifically, the
Commission recommends the allocation of at least 1% of state and local
funding to be consistently devoted to high quality professional development organized around standards for student learning and for accomplished practice (p. 84).

The Commission calls for reallocated professional development dollars to be used to organize new sources of professional development such as teacher academies, school-university partnerships, professional development schools and networks for learning across schools. Equally important is to utilize resources to make ongoing professional development part of teachers' daily working through joint planning, research, curriculum and assessment work, study groups, and peer coaching.

While it is understood that none of the Commission's recommendations are mutually exclusive, the fifth recommendation to create schools that are organized for student and teacher success is closely tied and critical to creating new high quality sources of professional development that are job-embedded. The Commission's specific recommendation is, "that schools be restructured to become genuine learning organizations for both students and teachers—organizations that respect learning, honor teaching, and teach for understanding (NCTAF, 1996, p. 101)."

In order to create such learning organizations, schools must structure their work so that teachers can work more intensively with students and with each other. The report describes the need to: restructure time and staffing so that teachers have regular time to work with one another and shared responsibility for groups of students over time; rethink schedules so
that students and teachers have more extended time together over the course of the day, week, year; and reduce barriers to the involvement of parents so that families and schools can work together toward shared goals (p. 102).

Transforming schools into learning organizations rests largely with the leadership provided by the building principal. The Commission report notes that principals are key leaders and gatekeepers of reform in schools. Their recommendation is that it is necessary to select, prepare, and retain principals who understand teaching and learning and who can lead high performing schools. "In a learning organization, the primary job of management is professional development, which is concerned with the basic human resources of the enterprise and people's capacities to do the central job of the organization (NCTAF, 1996, p.110)."

The National Staff Development Council cites several recent national reports, in addition to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future report, which have placed professional development at the forefront of school improvement efforts. The following are highlights adapted from these reports:

1. From *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* (1996), a report of the National Association of Secondary School Principals in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching:

"Educators cannot improve high schools without the proper preparation to take on new roles and responsibilities. Continuing inservice
must have a valued place in their day-to-day professional lives once they are on the job..." "The school district should help educators create a learning community in which substantive professional development, linked primarily to content knowledge and to instructional strategies, plays an ongoing part in their work."

2. From *Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success* (1996), a report of the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education:

The report challenges principals and other school administrators, working with teachers and existing resources, to create workplaces that support teachers' ongoing professional development. It challenges educators and communities to find a way to measure accurately what resources are currently devoted to professional development and ensure that sufficient resources are available and well spent. The report also challenges teachers and community leaders to create time for teachers' learning and partnerships with community institutions that will nurture teachers' growth and students' success.

3. From *Prisoners of Time* (1994), a report of the National Commission on Time and Learning:

Teachers, principals and administrators need *time* for reform. They need *time* to come up to speed as academic standards are overhauled, *time* to come to grips with new assessment systems, and *time* to make productive and effective use of greater professional autonomy, one hallmark of reform in the 1990s.

4. From *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners* (1996), a report of the U.S. Department of Education:

For teachers, learning must be continuous. Most teachers are eager to improve their practice, but have too few opportunities
to do so. The nation's school districts devote a meager percentage of resources to staff development.

This lack of professional development represents a lost opportunity, since evidence is mounting that high quality, focused professional development can lead to improved student achievement. Helping teachers acquire and practice effective strategies is one of the best investments our nation can make in our children's future so long as professional development activities are closely linked to the district or school plan for strengthening teaching.

5. From *Teachers and Technology: Making Connections* (1995), a report of the U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment:

"Helping teachers may, in fact, be the most important step in helping students... "Technology can help teachers improve instruction, change the teaching and learning process, and engage in regular professional development."

With its rise in national prominence, the critical need for high quality professional development is at the center of many state level school improvement initiatives. In the fall of 1996 Ohio began working with NCTAF and 11 partner states to collectively figure out what works and how to create new approaches to supporting teacher development. Ohio released its report, *The Best Teachers for Ohio's Children: A Report to the Public About the Status of Teaching in Ohio in Partnership with the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future*, in November 1997.

Ohio's education improvement agenda is aligned with the NCTAF's recommendations and is built around four cornerstone principles. While each cornerstone supports the notion of providing a competent, caring and
qualified teacher in every Ohio classroom, Cornerstone 2 calls for: World-
class teachers through increased professional development, continual
assessment and improved accountability for teachers and administrators to
ensure all students will be taught by teachers who have the knowledge,
skills, and commitment to teach (p. 5).

The National Commission's report rests on "what teachers know and
can do makes the critical difference in what children learn." In Ohio, as in
many other states, the bar has been raised on standards for students and
teachers and on accountability measures of student and school performance.
With the passage of Senate Bill 55, educators in Ohio will be publicly held to
documenting improved student outcomes. Never before has the recognition
of the need for high quality professional development been so clear and so
central to the school improvement process. Never before have the stakes
been so high for so many educators and students in Ohio and across the
nation.

New Conceptions of Professional Development

Professional development must be reconceptualized as
continuous learning, highly integrated with the moral task of
making a difference in the lives of diverse students under
conditions of somewhat chaotic complexity (Fullen, 1995, p. 257).

We have read the reports and can agree that professional
development enjoys a new place of prominence in school reform efforts. At
the same time we realize that the high quality professional development,
that is to ensure that all students learn at high levels, must be considerably
different than what has been offered in the past. Dennis Sparks and
Stephanie Hirsh, in their recent book, *A New Vision for Staff Development*
(1997), discuss a major paradigm shift in staff development. "Soon to be
gone forever, we hope, are the days when educators sit relatively passively
while an "expert exposes them to new ideas or "trains" them in new
practices, and the success of the effort is judged by a "happiness quotient" that
measures participants' satisfaction with the experience and their off the cuff
assessment regarding its usefulness (p. 1)."

Sparks and Hirsh (1997) point to these three powerful ideas that alter
the shape of schools and thus alters the staff development needed within
them: results-driven education; systems thinking; and constructivism.
Results-driven education judges the success of schooling not by the courses
students take or the grades they receive, but by what they actually know and
can do as a result of their time in school (p. 4). If results-driven education is
required for students then results-driven staff development is required for
educators. Results-driven staff development will be held to a new standard.
Its success will be judged not by the number of workshops taken or how good
educators felt about them, but by whether it alters instructional behavior in a
way that benefits students.

Systems thinking, described by Senge as "a discipline for seeing the
wholes, is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for
seeing patterns of change rather than static 'snapshots' (1990, p. 69)." Sparks
and Hirsh (1997) see two important implications that systems thinking holds for staff development. First, staff development must be a vehicle for systems thinking to be embedded at all levels of the organization, so all school board members, professional and classified staff, community members, and students understand the nature and power of systems to shape events. The second implication is that educational leaders must understand the limitations of staff development that is divorced from a systems perspective and appreciate the central role of staff development within systemic change efforts (p. 8).

From a constructivist perspective learners create their own knowledge structures rather than have them imposed by others. In this view, knowledge is not simply transmitted from teacher to student, but instead is constructed in the mind of the learner. Likewise staff development must model constructivist practices for teachers if those teachers are expected to see the validity of those practices and to understand them well enough to effectively integrate them into their classrooms. Staff development from a constructivist perspective will include activities such as action research, conversations with peers about the beliefs and assumptions that guide their instruction, and reflective practices such as journal keeping—activities that many educators may not even view as staff development (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997, p. 11).

Sparks and Hirsh (1997) suggest six "shifts" in the way we think about and do staff development that are significant and powerful. They are
essential to the creation of learning communities in which everyone—students, teachers, principals, and support staff—are both learners and teachers. These six "shifts" in thinking unleash the most powerful source of success for all students—the daily presence of adults who are passionately committed to their own lifelong learning within organizations that are continually renewing themselves (p. 16):

1. From individual development to individual development and organizational development.

2. From fragmented, piecemeal improvement efforts to staff development driven by a clear, coherent strategic plan for the district, each school, and the departments that serve schools.

3. From district-focused to school focused approaches to staff development.

4. From a focus on adult needs and satisfaction to a focus on student needs and learning outcomes, and changes in on-the-job behaviors.

5. From staff development directed toward teachers as the primary recipients to continuous improvement in performance for everyone who affects student learning.

6. From staff development as a "frill" that can be cut during difficult times to staff development as an indispensable process without which schools cannot hope to prepare young people for citizenship and productive employment.
New Challenges for Policy Makers

New and broader policies and practices will be required to support these new and broader conceptions of staff development. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) offer a frame for rethinking policies that will need to provide "top-down support for bottom-up change." Sustained change in teachers' learning opportunities and practices will require sustained investment in the infrastructure of reform. This means investment in the development of institutions and environmental supports that will promote the spread of ideas and shared learning about how change can be attempted and sustained (p. 598). What will be needed are policies that support new structures and opportunities for career-long teacher development. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin describe the needs and policy supports necessary for new forms of preservice preparation, as well as new opportunities for professional development within and outside of school.

Existing policies and practices must be assessed in terms of their compatibility with two cornerstones of the reform agenda: a learner-centered view of teaching and a career-long conception of teacher's learning (p. 601). Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin recognize that the success of changes in the policy will depend on locally constructed responses to specific teacher and learner needs. They have provided questions, based on principles of successful professional development efforts, to guide national, state and local
officials in assessing and rethinking their policies. The following are but a few of these questions:

1. Does the policy reduce the isolation of teachers, or does it perpetuate the experience of working alone?

2. Does the policy make possible the restructuring, space and scale within schools, or does it expect new forms of teaching and learning to emerge within conventional structures?

3. Does the policy link professional development opportunities to meaningful content and change efforts, or does it construct generic inservice occasions?

4. Does the policy focus on learner-centered outcomes that give priority to learning how and why, or does it emphasize the memorization of facts and the acquisition of rote skills?

Lieberman (1995), in response to the call for new conceptions of professional development, offers a continuum of practices that moves from "direct teaching" (the traditional and dominant mode of inservice training) to practices that involve "learning in school" to a variety of kinds of "learning out of school." (p. 592) Lieberman points out that if teachers are really ready to change the way they work then they must have opportunities to discuss, think about, try out and hone new practices. She suggests this can be accomplished by building new roles (e.g., teacher leader, peer coach, teacher researcher), creating new structures (e.g., problem-solving groups, decision-making teams), working on new tasks (e.g., journal and proposal
writing, learning about assessment, creating standards, writing case studies), and creating a culture of inquiry, wherein professional learning is expected, sought after, and an on-going part of teaching and school life (p. 593).

Teacher networks, collaboratives, coalitions, and partnerships represent the kinds of "learning out of school" suggested by Lieberman (1995). As a newer form of professional development, these types of opportunities allow teachers to engage in learning that is of personal interest.

By joining informal groups, teachers can develop stronger voices to represent their perspectives, learn to exercise leadership with their peers, use their first hand experience to create new possibilities for students through collaborative work, and develop a community of shared understanding that enriches their teaching and provides intellectual and emotional stimulation (p. 595).

Fullen's (1997) reconceptualization of professional development focuses on three components: the moral purpose of teaching, the culture of school, and the interrelationship between preservice and inservice teacher education. Reform initiatives have placed a renewed emphasis on the education of all students. At the heart of professional learning must be the acknowledgment of the moral task of making a difference in the lives of diverse students. Fullen believes that continuous learning must be organically part and parcel of the culture of school. Organic professional development is primarily about "reculturing" the school, not about "restructuring" its formal elements (p. 260). School cultures where teachers learn from one another, share beliefs, work collaboratively to solve serious problems, will be required for teachers to grow personally and professionally.
The linkage between preservice and inservice education has never been more important. Fullen (1997) states that, "if collaborative skills and continuous learning are essential for teachers, they must be fostered from the beginning in teacher preparation programs explicitly designed for that purpose. At the same time, synergy can be achieved through partnerships with schools and districts by working simultaneously on the inservice component (mentor training and development of collaborative schools) to develop school cultures supportive of preservice, beginning, and tenured teachers (p. 261).

New Challenges for Principals

New and broader conceptions of professional development broaden the notion of who the staff development leaders are to be. Teachers, principals, parents, and school board members can all play significant roles as professional development leaders. With a shifting emphasis on the primacy of the school as the key site for professional learning, the principal plays a particularly pivotal role as professional development leader (Arbuckle, 1997, p. 168). As the individual school is increasingly recognized as the unit of analysis and the critical force for change and improvement of student outcomes, the principals role in professional development is forever changed. Barth (1990) notes that the importance of the principal in the school is one finding consistently reported from a recent wave of studies. The words vary but the message is the same: 1) The principal is the key to a good school. The quality of the school program depends on the school
principal; 2) The principal is the most important reason why teachers grow—
or are stifled on the job; 3) The principal is the most potent factor in
determining school climate; 4) Show me a good school and I'll show you a
good principal (pp. 63-64). Principals are viewed as key to the professional
growth of teachers whether or not they have seen themselves as professional
developers.

"The traditional authoritarian image of the leader as 'the boss calling
the shots' has been recognized as oversimplified and inadequate for some
time. In contrast, building an organization's culture and shaping its
evolution is the 'unique and essential function' of leadership. In a learning
organization three roles of leadership are particularly critical: leader as
designer, leader as teacher, and leader as steward (Senge, 1990, p. 10)." It is
clear that principals will now be responsible for creating and managing a
culture which supports constant learning. As leaders of learning
organizations, principals will need to naturally assume a more serious role
in professional development. DuFour and Berkey (1995) make the following
ten suggestions for principals who promote organizational development by
focusing on professional growth of staff: 1) create consensus on the school
you are trying to become; 2) identify, promote, and protect shared values; 3)
monitor the crucial elements of the school improvement effort; 4) ensure
systematic collaboration throughout the school; 5) encourage
experimentation; 6) model a commitment to professional growth; 7) provide
one on one staff development; 8) provide staff development programs which
are purposeful and research based; 9) promote individual and organizational self-efficacy; 10) stay the course (p. 3).

Arbuckle (1997) provides a framework to further define and help principals understand the embeddedness of professional learning. This framework consists of five "arenas of work and learning" which are critical to creating learning-centered schools. They are: accessing and creating knowledge; creating collegial cultures; building learning infrastructures; continuously assessing; designing opportunities for learning; and maintaining the momentum for continuous learning (p. 169).

Arbuckle (1997) points out that Accessing and Creating Knowledge is particularly essential if we are to achieve a new vision of practice that requires educators to rethink their conceptions of teaching, learning and schooling.

Access to knowledge is critical. If teachers and administrators do not have the knowledge and skills needed to create new learning environments and challenging curriculums, the goals of restructuring will not be met. Rules, regulations, traditions, myths, and even building architecture pose significant barriers to change—but the biggest barrier is the absence of knowledge and skills needed to do one's job differently (David, 1991, p.13).

At the same time, it is not only necessary to infuse new information into the system but to foster the creation of new ideas about practice through activities that bring people together.

The second arena, Creating Collegial Cultures, is a vital strategy for individual and school development. The term "professional community" has been coined by McLaughlin (1994) to describe a school characterized by
reflection and talk about assumptions and practice along with a strong sense of collective responsibility. Arbuckle (1997) notes that professional community is a necessary condition for sustained learning and particularly critical if we are to link professional development with reformed conceptions of teaching, learning, and schooling (p. 173). A professional community requires (McLaughlin, 1994):

1. active school leadership with vision and commitment to developing a comprehensive community focused on learning, one that integrates rather than separates ideas and practice,
2. time and space to meet and talk,
3. interdependent teaching roles,
4. active attention to renewal of community through symbols and celebration, and
5. structures that encourage exchange of ideas within and across organizational unit, including schools and school systems.

*Building Learning Infrastructures*, the third arena, requires the creation of structures within school systems that explicitly promote, protect and set the expectation of learning of all people in schools, with a particular focus on teachers and other adults. Such structures include governing ideas that give focus to a system and are expressed in the form of a school's statement of purpose, which is a vision of a preferred future and guiding values and beliefs (Arbuckle, 1997, p. 175).
Continuously Assessing and Designing Learning Opportunities are two additional "arenas of work" in Arbuckle's (1997) framework. As the saying goes, "we won't know where we are going (or want to go) if we don't know where we've been." Principals in learning organizations recognize that assessment is a continuous process not limited to a standardized test or needs assessment, that collaboration is a key element in arriving at thoughtful conclusions about notable results and their causes, and that student work should be put at the center of the "data dig" to determine a focus for educator learning and growth (p. 177).

Continuous assessment is closely linked to designing learning opportunities, as assessment data serves as the basis of any such design. Assessing, planning, and learning are interwoven in a cyclic process. Reflection and dialogue about knowledge and its application are the cornerstone of all designs for learning (p.181). Lieberman (1995) perhaps says it best:

People learn best through active involvement and through thinking about and becoming articulate about what they have learned. Processes, practices and policies that are built on this view of learning are at the heart of a more expanded view of teacher development that encourages teachers to involve themselves as learners in much the same way as they wish their students would (p. 592).

The final "arena of work and learning" found in Arbuckle's framework is Maintaining the Momentum for Continuous Learning. She posits that it is simply not possible to stifle growth when new information is constantly infused and created in schools, structures promoting learning are
built, professional community is created, progress is continually assessed, and designs for learning proliferate. Deliberate and thoughtful attention to these arenas—and the ensuing momentum—is the work of principals and other professional development leaders (p. 182).

Leithwood (1990) offers principals four useful guidelines for formulating their own approach to teacher development. These guidelines are developed around knowledge of three dimensions of teacher development: development of professional expertise, psychological development, and career cycle development; and the recognition that adult learners are actively involved in bringing meaning to their work. It is therefore important that principals understand where teachers are developmentally and acknowledge and respect teachers' own views of their world. The first guideline Treat the Teacher as a Whole Person directs principals to be sensitive to all three development dimensions and to help teachers develop these in a parallel, interdependent fashion.

Establish A School Culture Based on Norms of Technical Collaboration and Professional Inquiry is the second guideline proposed by Leithwood (1995). Principals' teacher development strategies seem most likely to be successful within a school culture in which teachers are encouraged to consciously reflect on their own practices, to share ideas about their instruction, and to try out new techniques in the classroom. Principals need to develop norms of reflection through the substance of their own communication with teachers and the example of their own teaching.
Principals need to look below the surface features of their schools—at how teachers are treated and what beliefs, norms and values they share—and redesign their schools as learning environments for teachers as well as students (p. 83-84).

The third guideline, Carefully Diagnose the Starting Points for Teacher Development, provides suggestions for redesigning teacher evaluation and reminds principals that development is an incremental process that build on teachers' existing of attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Recast Routine Administrative Activities Into Powerful Teacher Development Strategies serves as the fourth guideline to principals. Leithwood (1990) believes that effective principals can use the energy and momentum created naturally by the demands of their work for purposes of teacher development. He points to McEvoy's (1987) study that identified these six strategies used by effective principals: informing teachers of professional opportunities; disseminating professional and curriculum materials to teachers with personal follow-up and discussion; focusing teachers' attention, through meetings and informal contacts, in a specific theme in order to expand the concepts and practices teachers considered; soliciting teachers' opinions about their own classroom activities as well as school and classroom issues, thereby contributing to a sense of collegiality among staff; encouraging teacher experimenting with innovative practices and supporting their efforts; and recognizing, sometime publicly, the achievements of individual teachers (p. 87).
It seems that many of those involved in the study of instructional leadership and school improvement have developed a set of guidelines for principals. Fullen & Hargreaves (1991) offer but yet another set of guidelines: 1) Understand the culture, 2) Value your teachers, promote their professional growth, 3) Extend what you value, 4) Express what you value, 5) Promote collaboration, not co-optation, 6) Make menus, not mandates, 7) Use bureaucratic means to facilitate, not to constrain, 8) Connect with the wider environment (pp. 84-85).

It is clearly no longer business as usual for those principals who value and embrace school improvement initiatives. These principals face new and challenging roles as facilitator, community-builder, leader of teacher-leaders, and leader of learners in their efforts to reinvent schools.

Creating Environments to Support Continuous Learning

Seymour Sarason (1990), in *The Predictable Failure Of Educational Reform*, contends that we will fail, as we have so many times before, to improve schooling for children until we acknowledge the importance of schools not only as places for teachers to work but also as places for teachers to learn. If we wish to improve schools as places for teachers to learn, we need to be able to identify those workplace conditions that promote or constrain learning. Smylie (1995) reviews the relationship between adult learning theory and organizational theory to provide a model of a school environment that may support teacher learning.
Smylie's (1995) review identified several specific conditions that promote learning in the workplace. One of the most salient conditions is opportunities for individuals to work with and learn from others on an ongoing basis. Collective learning exposes teachers to a broader knowledge and experience base. A second condition is related to the nature of collective learning that provides a free exchange of ideas, which in turn, promotes critical reflection, creativity and innovation, and self-directed, pro-active thinking and learning.

Shared power and authority and participative decision making is present in a workplace that promotes learning. Finally, varying aspects of work and creating autonomy and choice in work roles and tasks appear to promote learning. These conditions form the basis of the elements Smylie (1995) identifies as necessary for an optimal school learning environment: 1) teacher collaboration; 2) shared power and authority; 3) egalitarianism among teachers; 4) variation, challenge, autonomy, and choice in teachers' work; 5) organizational goals and feedback mechanisms; 6) integration of work and learning; and 7) accessibility of external sources of learning (pp. 105-106).

"Efforts to restructure schools will prove futile unless staff developers work to create an environment which signals to the staff, the students, and the community that the development of the intellect, cooperative decision making, and continual learning are central to successful change (Costa, Lipton, & Wellman, 1997, p. 92)." Costa, Lipton, & Wellman (1997) point out
that while efforts to enhance the staff's instructional competencies, develop curriculum, revise instructional materials, explore alternative assessment procedures may be important components of staff development in the adult world of schools, the work culture itself is the arena of meaning making and knowledge formation. They propose that staff developers must attend to dual goals—developing the capacity of individuals and developing the capacity for organizations—for experimentation, reflection and collaboration.

Costa, Lipton, and Wellman (1997) offer five guiding assumptions about the reciprocal nature of individuals and organizations, and offer potential new directions for staff development. Implicit in each assumption is a view of job embedded learning which embraces intellectual rigor and high standards of practice, for both individuals and organizations (p. 94). They are: Knowledge is both a personal and a social construction; Reflective practice is a powerful contributor to growth; There is a reciprocal influence between the culture of the workplace and the thinking and behaviors of its members; Feedback spirals provide potent processes of continuous growth and learning; and individuals and organizations are interconnected by invisible webs of energy.

Best Practices in Professional Development

Sometimes the best way to better understand what something is, is to closely examine what it is not. The following passage from Matthew Miles
provides a clear and pointed account of what high quality staff development
is not:

A good deal of what passes for "professional development" in
schools is a joke—one we would laugh at if we weren't trying to
keep from crying. It's everything a learning environment
shouldn't be: radically undersourced, brief, not sustained,
designed for "one size fits all", imposed rather than owned,
lacking any intellectual coherence, treated as a special add-on
event rather than as part of a natural process, and trapped in the
constraints of the bureaucratic system we have come to call
"school." In short, it's pedagogically naive, a demeaning exercise
that often leaves its participants more cynical and no more
knowledgeable, skilled, or committed than before. And all this
is accompanied by overblown rhetoric about "the challenge of
change," "self-renewal," "professional growth," "expanding
knowledge base," and "life long learning" (Guskey & Huberman,

Wood and Thompson (1993) provide another frame for looking at
what effective professional development "is not." They present these faulty
assumptions upon which much staff development has been based:

1. Teachers are the only people in the school who need to
improve their practice.

2. Inservice programs should respond only to the immediate
needs and interests of the district; there are no changes that require more
than one year to implement.

3. Staff development doesn't cost much; building maintenance,
textbooks, and computers require more funds.

4. The primary focus of inservice should be districtwide because
schools within a district are identical and have the same problems.
5. Two or three inservice days (12-18 hours) each year is sufficient to improve professional practice; educational reform doesn't really take much time.

6. Inservice training is something that only occurs when one learns his or her job; no one can learn from their involvement in teaching, on planning teams, in school improvement activities, or during peer observation.

7. Inspirational speakers are the best way to get teachers excited about new ideas, programs, and procedures. A good one shot session with an exciting, charismatic speaker that the faculty will enjoy is the key to a good inservice day.

8. Teachers will automatically transfer what they learn in workshops into the classroom without assistance. In fact, most teachers will rush back to their classroom to immediately implement what they have learned.

9. Participants should sit quietly and listen during training; they should not be active or practice anything. Movement, discussion or practice will disturb their learning.

10. Staff development is done to and for someone; teachers don't want to be responsible for their own growth since that is the administrators' responsibility.
11. Leadership for inservice activities should come from outside consultants or district administrators; they are the real experts. Teachers and administrators could never learn anything from their peers. (pp. 52-53).

Fortunately, a growing body of research on professional development has informed a new set of characteristics and assumptions on which to base current practice. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) present characteristics of a new image of professional development that replaces the old "preservice" and "inservice" models. They posit that beginning with preservice education and continuing throughout a teacher's career, teacher development must focus on deepening teachers' understanding of the processes of teaching and learning and of the students they teach. Effective professional development involves teachers both as learners and teachers and allows them to struggle with the uncertainties that accompany each role. It has a number of characteristics:

1. It must engage teachers in concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection that illuminate the processes of learning and development.

2. It must be grounded in inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that are participant-driven.

3. It must be collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among educators and a focus on teachers' communities of practice rather than on individual teachers.
4. It must be connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students.

5. It must be sustained, on-going, intensive and supported by modeling, coaching, and the collective solving of specific problems of practice.

6. It must be connected to other aspects of school change (p. 598).

An emerging knowledge base is beginning to identify common elements of successful professional development that have resulted in demonstrable evidence of improved student learning. Guskey (1997) describes four principles common to successful efforts he has studies. Successful professional development efforts: 1) have a clear focus on learning and learners, 2) focus on both individual and organizational change, 3) make small changes guided by a grand vision, and 4) provide ongoing professional development that is procedurally embedded (pp. 38-39).

Woods and Thompson (1993) developed a set of fourteen assumptions based on the growing body research on staff development, adult learning, shared leadership, effective schools and the change process (Bertani & Tafel, 1989; Lieberman & Miller, 1991; Wood & Kleine, 1988, 1989; Wood, Thompson, & Russell, 1981) and on what they learned from best practice. This new set of assumptions was intended to counter the faulty assumptions they had identified and to guide staff development decision making. Using the current research knowledge base and expanding on Wood and Thompson's (1993) assumptions, Speck (1996) arrived at twenty essential
elements of best practice in professional development. These essential elements formed the basis the Essentials of Best Practice in Professional Development for Sustained Educational Change Model. These twenty elements and the current research that supports each are briefly outlined below:

1. **Increasing student learning is the goal.** Improving student learning should be at the heart of all professional development efforts. The goals for improvement that guide staff development ought to focus on that which research indicates is related to improved student outcomes (Caldwell, 1998; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman, 1995a, 1995b; Sly, 1992; Wood, 1989; Wood & Thompson, 1993; Wood, Thompson, & Russell, 1981).

2. **The school is the unit of change.** The school, not the district, should be the primary focus of improved proactive and professional development. Districts improve school by school. (Berman & McLaughlin 1978; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, Goodlad, 1984; Henderson & Perry 1981; Lieberman, 1995a, 1995b; Wood, 1989; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

3. **Professional development is a multiple, diverse, and ongoing process, not a one shot approach.** Staff development must be tied to long range plans for school improvement. Substantial change in school practice typically takes four to seven years, and in some cases longer (Caldwell, 1989; Crandall, 1983; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Wood & Thompson, 1993; Wood, Thompson, & Russell, 1981).
4. **All educators should be involved throughout their careers—lifelong learners.** All school personnel must be committed to professional growth throughout their careers. As Rubin (1971) states, the minute educators stop their education, they start down the road to incompetence (Caldwell, 1989; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin; Joyce & Peck, 1977; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

5. **The principal is the key.** Principals are the gatekeepers of improvement. Successful professional development efforts find principals working collaboratively with staff in all areas of staff development, from goal setting through support of implementation (Behling, 1981; Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Curran, 1982; Glickman, 1991; Wood, Caldwell, & Thompson, 1987).

6. **Improvement should involve all stakeholders in the school.** Support of all who have a vested interest in schools (e.g. students, parents, teachers, administrators, school staff, community leaders) will be needed to bring about improvement. All members of the school community need to be involved in the selection of the improvement goals that will guide staff development (Goin, 1991; Sly, 1992; Wood, 1989; Wood, McQuarrie, & Thompson, 1992; Wood & Thompson, 1993; Wood, Thompson, & Russell, 1981).

7. **Efforts must recognize and address the values, norms, and beliefs that shape school practice and culture.** A school culture supportive of improvement efforts must value and commit to shared decision making,
continuous improvement, systematic change, concern for the individual and well as the institution, and learning for all involved in the educational process. Without a supportive culture, school improvement efforts are unlikely to succeed (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995 Deal & Kennedy, 1982, Saphier & King, 1985; Sizer, 1984; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

8. Policies and practices must be connected to change and constructed by practitioners in context. Staff development policies and practices must be part of a larger continuous improvement effort that is locally constructed in response to specific teacher and learner needs (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman, 1995a, 1995b).

9. Teachers develop ownership and commitment through input to change. Faculty ownership and commitment to improved professional practice are promoted when those affected by a change have input into those changes (Berman & Pauley, 1975; Goin, 1991; Sly, 1992; Sparks, 1983; Withall and Wood, 1979; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

10. The primary goal is school improvement—however, professional development must support both school and individual growth. School improvement and the resulting improvement in student learning are enhanced when teachers are permitted time to address their unique professional goals (Ellis, 1989; Krupp, 1989; Wood, 1984; Wood & Thompson, 1981, 1993).

11. School districts must provide resources. Resources in the form of time, money, personnel, and materials are necessary to implements new


13. **Coaching and systematic support are required for the transfer of learning from training into daily practice.** In order to transfer new learning successfully into daily practice teachers will need follow-up support over time. Coaching and feedback from others will increase the likelihood of sustained change (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Goin, 1991; Joyce & Showers, 1983,1995; Wood, 1989; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

14. **Schools should provide recognition and rewards for efforts to grow professionally.** Teachers and administrators need and deserve recognition for their efforts at professional growth and improving student learning. Restructuring supervision and evaluation procedures and supporting the development of professional communities are places to begin
15. Stakeholders must share decisions about time, schedules, curriculum, personnel, space, and materials. School-based staff development is essential component of any school improvement effort. Decisions required for school-based staff development require site-based management and site-based budgeting (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

16. Professional development should support instructional and program improvement linked to instructional supervision, teacher evaluation, and curriculum implementation. Educators need to think of staff development as another component along with evaluation and supervision of a system for improving curriculum and instruction. All components must support on another (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1992; McGreal & Wood, 1998, McLaughlin, 1992; McQuarrie & Wood, 1991; Wood & Lease, 1987; Wood & Thompson, 1993).

17. Teachers must have authentic opportunities to learn from colleagues “inside” the school. Teachers should share the work of their own professional improvement gained from work with students in daily dialogues and collaborative work with colleagues. Teachers learn best through their own involvement in defining, shaping, and articulating the
problems of practices and what they have learned over time (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman, 1995a, 1995b)

18. **Opportunities, time, and support mechanisms should be provided inside school to discuss, try out, reflect on, and hone new practices.** This can be accomplished in several ways: by expanding teacher roles (coach, researcher); by creating new structures (problem-solving groups, research teams); by working on new tasks (proposal writing); and by creating a culture of inquiry (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, Lieberman, 1995a, 1995b)

19. **Broader support mechanisms outside the school are needed.** Teachers can benefit from participation in networks, collaboratives, coalitions, and partnership through developing a stronger voices for expressing their perspectives, learning to exercise leadership with peers and developing communities of shared understanding (Lieberman, 1986, 1995a; Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Warren Little & McLaughlin, 1991, 1993;

20. **Cross-role participation stimulates shared understandings and new approaches.** Collaborative efforts contribute to a common sense of purpose and practice among all members of the school community (Bridges & Hallinger, 1992; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Fullen, 1991; Lieberman, 1994)

**Models of Teacher Professional Development**

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) outline five models of staff development: individually guided; observation/assessment;
development/improvement process; training; and inquiry. The key characteristic of the individually guided staff development model is that the learning is designed by the teacher. The teacher determines his or her own goals and selects the activities that will result in the achievement of those goals. This model assumes that individuals are capable of self-direction and self-initiated learning and that they can best judge their own learning needs. It also assumes that adults learn most efficiently and are more motivated when they initiate and plan their own learning. Individually guided staff development takes a variety of forms; from journal reading, to attending a subject specific conference, to engaging in professional projects and grant writing.

The observation/assessment model of staff development provides teachers with objective data and feedback regarding their classroom performance. The purpose of such data is not intended to evaluate job performance, but rather to assess teachers in their selection of areas of growth. Clinical supervision and peer coaching are two examples of observation/assessment models. Involvement in a developmental/improvement process engages teachers in developing curriculum, designing programs, or engaging in a school improvement process to solve a general or particular problem. This model operates under the assumption that adults learn best when they have a problem to solve. It also assumes that the people working closest to the problem understand the best what will be required in order to improve.
The *training* model, which is often synonymous with staff development in the minds of many educators, involves teachers in acquiring knowledge or skills through appropriate individual or group instruction. It rests on the assumption that there are behaviors and techniques worthy of replication by teachers in the classroom and that teachers can change their behaviors and learn to replicate new behaviors not previously in use in their classrooms. Training is conducted with a clear set of objectives and utilizes a variety of activities such as lecture, demonstration, role-playing and simulation. The *inquiry* model requires teachers to identify an area of instructional interest, collect data, and make changes in their instruction on the basis of those data. It reflects a basic belief that teachers have the ability to formulate valid questions about their own practice and to pursue objective answers to those questions. Inquiry can occur at many levels (individually, small groups, university partnerships) in a variety of ways either formally or informally.

Sprinthall, Reiman, and Thies-Sprinthall (1996) outline some of the newest thinking relative to teacher development models, noting that the current period in teacher development research can be considered as a time of transition in that emerging theory and research is often too broad or too narrowly focused. Teacher development approaches and programs are organized around two models: the craft model and the expert model. The craft model recognizes that a body of knowledge exists in the hearts and minds of experienced teachers that should form either exclusive or at least a
major basis for teacher development. Career development of teachers in the
craft model can be summed up succinctly: encourage and support in their
classroom tinkering (p. 679). Variations of the craft model include: Essential
Schools, autobiographical case study, school-based management teams, and
teacher centers.

The expert model is delivered by expert teacher trainers and centers on
the belief that there is a core of information and skills that expert and
professional teacher educators have developed. This knowledge base forms
the framework for inservice programs that vary in length and focus. The
overall framework is that experienced teachers like beginners and/or student
teachers need expert advice to improve practice. Examples of expert models
include: the liberal arts model and the process-product model.

Sprinthall, Reiman, & Thies-Sprinthall (1996) also detail several
interactive models. These models all seek to engage the teacher as an active
participant in the learning process. Included among these models is the
Practical Argument Staff Development program, the Teacher in Residence
program, teacher induction programs, and a variety of cognitive-
developmental approaches.

The model proposed by Guskey & Sparks (1996), which was referred to
in Chapter 1, specifically addresses the relationship between teacher
development and student learning. Factors that have an immediate and
direct effect on the quality of staff development are organized into three
categories: content characteristics (the "what" of staff development); process
variables (the "how" of staff development); and context characteristics (the "who", "when", "where", and "why" of staff development).

This model illustrates the importance of a systematic approach to staff development and the need to view reform from a systems perspective (Sparks, 1996). Staff development efforts that do not consider the complex relationship between staff development and improved student outcomes, or the factors that impinge on that relationship, are unlikely to succeed. This model also provides a frame for identifying and measuring factors that influence the relationship between high quality staff development and improved student learning.

Guskey & Spark's (1996) model has been used to inform the Standards for Staff Development recently developed by the National Staff Development Council in cooperation with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Some fifty standards at each level, elementary, middle, and high school, have been identified and organized into three categories: context, process, and content. Each set of standard contains an assessment tool which schools and districts may use as they evaluate and plan for professional development.

Summary

A review of the literature has provided an overview of the new status and demands placed on professional development in efforts to improve our
schools and ultimately student outcomes. New ways of conceptualizing professional development and what these new conceptions mean for policy makers and administrators were outlined. The research that informs and characterizes best practices in professional development was presented. This literature provides a firm foundation upon which to focus the study of best practices in professional development and provides a conceptual framework upon which to base the research questions. What are the context, process, and content characteristics of high quality professional development? What influence do external standards and initiatives have on the development and implementation of high quality professional development? What role do principals play in supporting ongoing professional development? What are the contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining ongoing, job-embedded professional development?
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The new emphases on teacher education, including the on-going professional development of teachers in the field, will be enhanced by research and development efforts that generate and disseminate knowledge that is useful to teachers and constructed with teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1993, p. 759). The purpose of this study was to describe the "best practices" in teacher professional development in use in three high performing schools. This required an in-depth look at the characteristics of, influences on, and contributors and constraints to high quality staff development activities practiced in these schools. Such an exploration lends itself to a naturalistic method of inquiry and the utilization of a case study method.

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study and is organized into several sections. The first section will describe the case study design of the study and will provide a rationale for the use of a case study approach. The second section details the selection of participants and description of the setting. Methods of data collection and analysis are
described and issues of ethics and trustworthiness as well as limitations of the study are discussed.

**Design of the Study**

This study utilized a comparative case study approach to uncover the characteristics of best practices in teacher professional development for improved student outcomes. The study also examined the influence that external initiatives and standards, such as Venture Capital, BEST Practice, and state mandated report cards, had on the development and implementation of professional development efforts. As well, the contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining high quality professional development were studied. Case studies of a high performing urban elementary school, rural junior high school, and suburban high school were developed and used to describe the content characteristics, process variables, and context characteristics of professional development efforts being practiced in these selected schools, as well as to look comparatively at the practices across these settings.

The need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. "Case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1994, p. 1)." Patton (1990) points out that "case studies become particularly useful where one needs to understand
some special people, particular problem, or unique situation in depth" and when the aim is "to capture individual differences or unique variations from one program setting to another, or from one program experience to another (p. 54)." Good case studies can "provide more valid portrayals, better bases for personal understanding of what is going on, and solid grounds for considering action (Stake, 1981, p. 32)."

Guskey (1997, p. 32) posits that if we are convinced professional development can and does make a difference, we must ask how we can better understand its influence. Until recently, research efforts in this area have provided little with regard to addressing the how questions. Guskey points out that even those research findings that are clear, are usually so general and theoretical that they offer little help for practical-minded educators who want specific answers and workable solutions.

He suggests using an alternative approach, which is gaining wide acceptance, that begins at the end and works backward. Such an approach would start by identifying cases that have produced demonstrable evidence of success. "By analyzing results from successful efforts in a variety of contexts, the dynamic influence of specific elements within a context can be better understood, and applicability of professional development across contexts can also be considered (Guskey, 1997, p. 38)." The research questions that emerged from the literature and guided the design of this study were as follows: 1) What characterizes the content, process, and context of professional development best practices in high performing schools?; 2) How
have external standards and initiatives influenced the development and implementation of best practices in professional development in these schools?; and 3) What are seen as contributors, constraints or both to cultivating and sustaining ongoing high quality professional development efforts?

Participant Selection

The participants in this study, an urban elementary, a rural junior high school, and a suburban high school have been identified as high performing schools and selected as cases to be studied. These schools and their respective principals were chosen from among all Venture Capital schools in Ohio as cases using the following criteria: the school has been implementing a Venture Capital grant for at least the past three years; there has been no change in the building principalship during the last three years and since the initiation of the Venture Capital grant; the school has been the recipient of a BEST Practice award; and this Venture Capital school currently meets or exceeds proposed state proficiency standards of 75% or better on at least two of four parts of the Ohio Proficiency Test.

The first step in the selection process was accomplished by analyzing data from a survey on Venture Capital schools conducted by Dr. Michael Fuller and Dr. James Mahoney of the Muskingum Valley Educational Service Center. The survey data was reduced to reveal Venture Capital schools whose students met or exceeded 75% proficiency on three of four
parts of the 1996/97 administration of the statewide proficiency test. The sample was further reduced to those schools who had been involved in school improvement efforts through the Venture Capital initiative for at least three years and who had no change in the principalship during that time.

The second step was to cross reference the sample with a listing of BEST Practice recipients over the last three years. One assumption of this study is that those principals and their staff members who are committed to school improvement recognize the pivotal role professional development plays in any effort made toward the improvement process. While Venture Capital plans and BEST Practice awards may not always explicitly address professional development, teacher development is recognized as inherent in any serious improvement effort.

The following reflects the number of possible sites finally identified: one suburban and one urban high school; three rural middle schools; two rural elementaries, three suburban elementaries, and two urban elementaries. The participant schools were further selected to represent a cross section of rural, urban, and suburban schools districts, as well as schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. This resulted in the selection of an urban elementary, a rural junior high school, and a suburban high school. The following is a brief demographic profile of each school. A more detailed description of the district, school, and principal are presented in Chapter 4 as part of the analysis of each case.
1. **Urban Elementary School Site** This elementary school has a current enrollment of 580 students, a teaching staff of 28 and a principal. It is part of a large urban district which serves nearly 64,000 students. This school has been designated an alternative school and has distinguished itself as a literature-based school. About half of the students come from the neighborhood, while the other half are selected through a districtwide lottery system.

2. **Rural Junior High School Site** This junior high school houses approximately 250 seventh and eighth grade students in the same facility as the high school. One principal and assistant serve both the junior high and high school populations. Junior high staff includes 15 teachers that make up the seventh and eighth grade teaching teams. The district serves approximately 1,600 K-12 students in 4 schools and is situated in three counties.

3. **Suburban High School Site** This high school is one of two high schools in a large suburban district which serves approximately 13,000 K-12 students. The school's current enrollment which is close to 2,200 is served by a teaching staff of 126. The principal and four assistants are responsible for the daily operations and instructional programming.

The principal of each school was notified in writing of their selection along with a request for their participation (see Appendix B). This notification was copied to each superintendent. The researcher met with each principal at the school site to further explain the research project and to
determine their willingness to participate. Upon the agreement of each principal to participate, the district superintendent was contacted and permission was received from each to proceed. The principals at each site were key to this study. They were not only key informants by providing interview data, but also arranged site visits and helped in the selection of teacher focus group participants, which is described in more detail later. These principals were also instrumental in supplying the researcher with valuable documents and records.

Data Collection

Data collection relied on the following five sources of evidence: interviews, documentation, direct observation, archival records and physical artifacts. A case study protocol as described by Yin (1994) was developed to detail timeframes and structures for collecting evidence (see case study protocol, Appendix B). A structured interview with a teacher focus group was conducted and audiotaped at each site. As well, the principal was interviewed twice, one informal conversational interview during which notes were taken and one structured interview which was audiotaped. Informal conversational interviews with a variety of other staff, such as those involved in special projects or on restructuring committees, were conducted and noted. Observations were noted in a log during site visits and documents such as Continuous Improvement Plans, grant applications, self-assessments of the National Staff Development Council’s Standards, etc.
were collected from teachers and administrators and included as part of the research data.

**Interviews**

Interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs (Yin, 1994). Informal conversational interviews were conducted with the principal during the initial visit to each site. Information gathered during these informal interviews was carefully noted in the observation log and used to generate a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide which was later used with the principal and a teacher focus group during a follow-up visit. The open-ended focused interviews with each principal and a focus group were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. All participants received a copy of the interview guide prior to the interview.

According to Patton (1990), the "object of the focus group interview is to get high quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others (p.335)." In addition, Patton (1990) points out that "focus group interviews can provide some quality controls on data collection in that participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other that weed out false or extreme views (p.336)." The strategy for selecting focus group participants varied among the sites and was developed in collaboration with the building principal in order to access a representative group. Selection of focus group members was based on teacher availability, commitment over time to the Venture and BEST.
initiatives, and willingness to participate. All participants signed informed consent forms and were assured all transcripts would remain anonymous and confidential.

The focus group at the urban elementary site consisted of six teachers who serve on as the school's SCIP team, school continuous improvement planning team. This group was interviewed after school. The focus group at the junior high, rural site was made up of the seven members of the seventh grade team. They were interviewed during their regularly scheduled team meeting time. The high school, suburban site focus group members were selected following an explanation of the study to department facilitators. This group consisted of twelve teachers, either department facilitators or selected representatives from each department. This focus group interview took place during the last period of the day at the regularly scheduled department facilitators meeting.

Document Analysis

Document analysis was a key form of data collection in this study. Yin (1994) points out that it is most useful in corroborating and augmenting evidence from other sources. The documents that were collected in this study were categorized into three groups: grants and awards; self-assessments; and school/district profile data. Included in the category of grants and awards were Venture Capital and BEST Practice documents for each school, as well as various other awards and grants received by
individual schools such as Blue Ribbon Schools, Network for Systemic Change, and Raising the Bar grants.

Each principal and teacher focus group member completed a self-assessment of staff development practices based on the National Staff Development Council's (1994, 1995a, 1995b) Standards for Staff Development (see Appendix C). The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has developed standards for middle school, as well as standards for elementary school in cooperation with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and high school standards in cooperation with the National Association of Secondary School Principals. These standards represent best practice in professional development based on current research and are intended to be used by schools and school districts to improve the quality of staff development in order to improve student outcomes. The standards can be used in two primary ways: by individuals seeking to better understand and implement effective staff development practices, and by groups who wish to study and implement the standards to improve the organization’s staff development effectiveness (NSDC, 1994, p. 3). The standards at each level are organized into three categories: context, process, and content.

The NSDC developed a self-assessment of the standards for each level, elementary, middle, and high school. The self-assessments utilize a Likert scale, with a score of 1 indicating strong disagreement to a score of 5 indicating strong agreement, to rate two statements developed for each context, process, and content standards. A scoring guide is provided with the
recommendation that any assessment statement receiving a score of 3 (somewhat agree) or less by a majority of the staff or team should be considered for improvement. Any statements that received a score of 4 or higher by a majority of team members were considered a strength. Focus group members were given the self-assessment inventory and instructions for completing it following the interview session. The completed self-assessment inventories were later picked up by the researcher. The self-assessment data and results will be returned to each school site for possible use in the continuous improvement planning process.

Each principal completed a PeopleSmarts Behavioral Profiles: Self-Assessment (see Appendix D). The PeopleSmarts self-assessment was used as a means for looking at general behavioral similarities or differences among the principals in the schools studied. The self-assessment uses a unique combination of Open and Self-Contained, and Direct and Indirect behaviors to assist an individual in identifying with one of four distinct, identifiable, predictable behavioral patterns or styles. The Open/Self-Contained dimension describes a continuum of behaviors that reflect a person's priorities-ranging from highly relationship oriented to highly task oriented. The Direct/Indirect dimension describes a continuum of behaviors that reflect the degree of a person's introversion or extroversion. The four behavioral styles, referred to as Director, Socializer, Relater, and Thinker, reflect a generalized character type rather than a complete or accurate description of any individual.
The PeopleSmarts Behavioral Profiles materials were developed by Dr. Tony Alessandra of Alessandra and Associates in collaboration with Dr. Michael O'Connor, Vice President for Product Development, Carlson Learning. The PeopleSmarts materials were tested for validity and reliability against the DISC Four Style Model and the Wilson Social Style Questionnaire by the California School of Professional Psychology (CSPP).

A variety of documents were collected which profiled each school and its district. Documents included building and district continuous improvement plans, district and building report cards, annual reports, course offerings, student handbooks, building schedules and duty rosters, brochures, etc.

Observation

An observation log including written field notes was maintained throughout the study. Speck's (1996) Administrators' and Teacher's Checklist: Essentials of Best Practice in Professional for Sustained Educational Change, which outlines twenty best practices based on current research, was used as a guide while making site visits. Evidence of any of the twenty essentials, such as teachers have authentic opportunities to learn from colleagues inside the school and the program supports both school improvement and individual growth, was noted. Field notes from the initial visit to each site were used to help frame the semi-structured focus interview guides (see Appendix B). The observation log was also used to
note questions for follow-up. Field notes were also analyzed for any patterns or common themes that emerged.

The observation log was also used to describe features of the school environment which might influence teacher learning on the job. Attention was paid to and observations were made of the formal and informal work areas. Also noted was the access teachers had to professional materials and technology.

Archival Records and Artifacts

Two additional sources of evidence collected as part of this study were archival records and physical artifacts. Archival records collected for each school included budgetary information, such as average per pupil expenditure, percent of budget spent on professional development, and average teacher salary, and district/building demographic data. Evidence of physical artifacts, such as teacher awards, school awards, and displaying of credentials was collected and reported in observation logs.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was conducted at two levels, analysis of individual cases and an analysis across cases. Miles & Huberman (1994) describe the analysis process as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (p. 10). It should be pointed out that data reduction occurs continuously throughout the life of any qualitatively oriented project. Glesne and Peshkin 68
(1994) state, "Data analysis done simultaneously with data collection enables you to focus and shape the study as you proceed (p. 28)." The analyses of these studies focused on searching for "key linkages" (Erickson, 1986), or central ideas that show patterns of generalization within and across cases.

Data reduction is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that "final" conclusions can be drawn and verified (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reduction activities include coding, categorizing, clustering and written summarization of data collected from interview transcripts, field observations, and document analysis. Data display is the organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action. Matrices have been designed as part of the case study protocol (see Appendix B) to serve as a starting point for organizing data for analysis.

In order to begin data reduction, the first step was to organize the transcripts, documents and field notes according to each case. Transcriptions of interviews were completed verbatim throughout the data collection process and were organized in color coded pocket folders. The documents were sorted and ended up being categorized into three groups: grants and awards; self-assessments; and school/district profile data. Field notes which provide a written record of site visits and researcher reflections were organized by site and maintained in color coded folders.

The next step in data reduction was to consider the interview data one case at a time. Transcripts were read and text was highlighted for relevance
to the researcher in light of the research questions. During a second reading of each case, notations were made on transcript margins regarding emerging patterns. This process of summarizing the interview data was the first step toward the identification of categories.

Data reduction continued as documents and field notes were analyzed in relation to the emerging patterns revealed by interview data. The matrices developed as part of the case study protocol (Appendix B) were used to triangulate the data and identify categories within and across cases. In addition to the descriptive and demographic data which provided a profile for each site, the categories that arose out of each research question were as follows:

1. **Characteristics** Within this category several themes emerged in relation to the content, context, and process of high quality professional development. Themes in this category included shared leadership, empowerment, opportunity, collaboration, recognition of local expertise and self-initiation.

2. **Connections to Continuous Improvement and Learning** The role of continuous improvement planning and grant writing activities were found to be a common link across cases. In each case the school has been active in pursuing outside funding to support school initiatives. Grant requirements along with mandated requirements for continuous improvement plans have led these schools to look at professional development in a more coherent way.
3. **Contributors and Constraints** Common themes identified as constraints that emerged in relation to this research question were time to learn in school, time to learn out of school, and lack financial resources. The role of the principal was common across all cases as a major contributor.

**Ethics**

Researchers must consider the ethical issues related to their research before they enter the field. Ethical requirements will be met, in part, by completing The Ohio State University's human subject's review process (The Ohio State University, 1992;). Each participant received a written outline of the case study protocol and a copy of the researcher's credentials. All participants signed an informed consent to participate, outlining their expected role in the study which included participation in audiotaped interviews. Participants were informed they would be made available any and all documents including the completed study. Issues regarding anonymity for the participants and their school were documented on the informed consent.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry is based on the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the data which has been collected and analyzed. Patton (1990) points to these three factors which influence the credibility of any qualitative study: what techniques and methods are used to
ensure the integrity and accuracy of the findings, what the researcher brings
to the study in terms of qualifications, experience, and perspectives; and what
paradigm orientation and assumptions undergird the study (p. 461).

Studies that produce the richest data and appear the most trustworthy
employ a variety of data gathering methods. The methods used in this study
included observation, interview, and document analysis. The use of
multiple methods within a study facilitates triangulation of the data (Yin,
1994, p. 90). Findings from one data source will be used to corroborate
findings from other sources. Peer debriefing and member checks are other
methods which are used to protect the integrity of the findings.
Interpretations of the data in the form of a drafted case study report was
shared with the research participants in order to verify the accuracy of the
researcher's accounts.

The case study protocol as described by Yin (1994, p. 63) is a major tactic
in increasing the reliability of case study research and is intended to guide the
investigator in carrying out the study. A case study protocol (see Appendix
B) was developed for this study at the proposal stage and provides an
overview of the study, detailed field procedures, and outlines of research
questions, an analysis plan and the case study report. The protocol was
developed

Trustworthiness requires that the finding of the study be credible,
dependable and confirmable rather than generalizable. Cronbach (1975)
concluded that social phenomena are too variable and context-bound to
permit very significant generalizations. Since qualitative inquiry is used to study social phenomena the aim of this study is not to generalize but to illuminate, describe, and interpret.

The researcher, being the primary instrument in qualitative inquiry, must make their roles and qualifications explicit in order to lend credibility to the study. This researcher's credentials and researcher role, as outlined in the case study protocol, were provided to participants in writing prior to the initiation of the study. As well, researcher reflections will be maintained as part of the observation log throughout the research process. These reflections make explicit this researcher's wrestling with biases/subjectivity, noting of questions, and documenting the on-going emergent issues related to the study. One dissertation researcher described it as, "making available one's trail of decisions (Fresch, 1990)."

Summary

This chapter provided an explanation of the methodology which directed the conceptualization and implementation of the study. The methods that were used to gather, analyze, and report the data were also described. The steps taken to ensure that the results of this study are reliable and trustworthy were discussed. The case study protocol which was developed as a framework for the study provides a concise overview of data collection and analysis. Evidence related to specific practices and initiatives
resulting from professional development efforts within and across cases were closely examined.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data collected and analyzed and is organized into four sections. One section is devoted to an analysis of each of the three cases. Each case report begins with a descriptive profile of the school and school district. Next, findings related to the content, context and process characteristics of professional development activities in the case are outlined. Results are presented with regard to the connections professional development has with continuous improvement efforts, improvement in student outcomes, and community involvement. Finally, the contributors and constraints to high quality professional development which were identified in each case are reported.

The fourth and final section of this chapter is devoted to a cross-case analysis. This section describes the common elements and themes that emerged as the data was analyzed across cases. The problems that remain across cases is also discussed.
THE CASE OF THE SUBURBAN HIGH SCHOOL

District Profile

This district serves some 13,000 students and is situated in a suburban community of approximately 30,000 residents. There are 19 schools in the district: two high schools, three middle schools, and fourteen elementary schools. The district is located in central Ohio with easy access to several small colleges as well as a major research institution. It is reported that the average median household income in the district is $33,227.00 and 3.3% of students are economically disadvantaged. The average number of students per teacher is 21.6 and the teacher attendance is 95%. The district spends $5,690 per pupil compared with the state average of $5,939. The district reports that 1.2% of the annual budget is spent on staff support, which includes teacher training.

School Profile

Through these doors pass the finest students and staff in the world.

This motto found etched above the main entrance of the school is a message of pride which welcomes all who enter. This high school of nearly 2,100 students and 125 staff members is guided by the following district vision: Our mission is to produce creative, confident and independent citizens. Our number one priority is to improve student achievement. Our plan is to
strengthen education and build community through collaboration. This vision is further supported by a building strategic plan and school philosophy.

The building has enjoyed the leadership of the same principal for the past ten years. He leads an administrative team of four assistant principals who oversee the full complement of academic and extra-curricular activities. School staff are organized into the following sixteen departments: Art, Business, English, Family and Consumer Sciences, Foreign Language, Health & P.E., Mathematics, Media, Music, Science, Social Studies, Special Education, Tech Prep, Vocational Education, and Independent Study.

The school has distinguished itself in a variety of ways. Two BEST Practice awards have been received, one for an American Sign Language Program, and another for a Mentorship Program which also received a Seeds of Change award. Seeds of Change awards are given to a Best Practice award recipient from the previous year whose program or practice has had the most impact on other programs across the state. Seeds of Change awards represent the best of the BEST. The Family and Consumer Science Department was named the outstanding program in the state two years in a row. The school has demonstrated on-going success at gaining support for improvement efforts. In addition to, and since receiving a Venture Capital for the Ohio Department of Education in 1994, this school has received School to Work and Conflict Resolution grants and was selected as a partner in a Goals 2000 grant with a local college.
The school has also enjoyed recognition due to the accomplishments and awards received by individual staff members. During the past school year a teacher was designated a Tandy Scholar and a guidance counselor was named Guidance Counselor of the Year by the Ohio Association of College Counselors. In addition, the school faculty were extremely proud that their principal was named the Ohio Principal of the Year by the Ohio Association of Secondary School Principals.

What characterizes the content, process and context of professional development best practices in this school?

The characteristics of the context, process and content of professional development efforts in this school are described below. It should be noted that while these characteristics are described categorically they are dynamic and are not meant to be viewed as mutually exclusive. Focus group members were asked to complete a self-assessment of the context, process and content of staff development in their school based on the National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development. The results of the self-assessment data are only a reflection of how the members of the focus group viewed their school's efforts in light of the standards. The results reported are not intended to represent the views of all teachers.

Context Characteristics

The context characteristics that follow outline the nature of the environment in which professional learning takes place. Evidence of a
student centered environment, a strong sense of collegiality and collaboration, dedicated space for professional work and learning on the job and risk-taking are discussed.

Student Centered Environment

The climate in this school is one that is supportive of professional development. Teachers are encouraged to try out their ideas and pursue innovative practices and initiatives but always within the context of what is good for students. One teacher noted the principal's reaction when asking support for developing a new course was "yes, go for it, that's his phrase go for it, go for it." Another teacher put it this way:

He encourages you, and the other thing is that everything is for the students. He is very student focused which is kind of refreshing and because of this I think most people here are really centered on the students.

A poster with the slogan "Our Number One Priority: Improving Student Achievement" is obvious to all who enter the principal's office. This principal seems willing to entertain most any idea or initiative yet has a clear focus and helps others focus on improving student outcomes. While talking about specific examples of professional development activities, the discussion came back to:

But the question we always ask ourselves is, is this going to help kids? And, that may seem like a very mundane, generic type thing, but it is very important when we sit down to talk about things. Tell me how this is going to help kids?
Collegial and Collaborative

The climate in this school can also be described as collegial and collaborative. True to their mission to "strengthen education and build community through collaboration" there are many examples of such collaboration. A number of integrated courses have been developed and team-taught across departments. Some examples include Physics and Contemporary Literature, Quest II and Contemporary Literature (a service learning course) and American Literature and U.S. History.

I was able to observe a department facilitator's meeting and the nature of this collaborative environment firsthand. An issue was brought up, about which individuals clearly had differing views. It was interesting to see very strong opinions stated and yet differing positions seemed to be respected with a willingness to agree to disagree. The issue was finally resolved through a compromise suggested by the principal. There appears to be a high degree of mutual respect and appreciation of one another. One teacher noted:

I think our staff is really generous with each other. I mean we share a lot of material and a lot of ideas and it is very informally done. People started getting together on Sunday afternoons to work through problems. People share.

Collaborative efforts toward professional learning exist through established relationships with colleagues outside the local school. Two teachers described how their professional learning had been enhanced by participation in teacher networks or collaboratives. One math teacher participates in a group of math teachers from local high schools who focus
on improving the teaching of calculus. The school-to-work coordinator is active as one of twenty teacher leaders around the state working together to develop a knowledge base and disseminate information regarding best practices in career education. Networks and collaboratives provide teachers with opportunities to discuss and share perspectives and practices particular to their content area.

**Professional Library**

In my search for a soda during my first visit to the school, I was taken by a student to the "teachers' library." I entered this room and was taken back by its size and structure. The room was large and contained 50-60 desks in rows facing each other. The desks were personalized with subject specific professional books and materials, as well as family photographs, desk blotters, etc. The room also houses a phone, copier, pop machine, and a professional library. Professional materials such as books, videos, software which had been housed in the media center are located in this room. It struck me that this was not a teachers' lounge. Indeed, I found out that there is a teachers' lounge for teachers to use during lunch and for informal conversation. The room I had entered looked like a large faculty office.

It was apparent that this area, known as the professional library, was used by teachers to learn and work together on the job. I observed teachers from two departments planning what appeared to be an integrated unit. When asked about who gets a desk in this room the answer was "anyone who wants one." Most departments are represented in this room at least by
some members. However, the Science Department and its fourteen members have a suite of offices in another part of the building which is more convenient for them. They keep one common desk in the professional library. The focus group agreed that the library is "especially nice for new teachers because they can learn basic things quickly and they see sharing going on."

Risk-taking

Perhaps the hallmark of what defines the climate that promotes professional learning in this school is the encouragement and support for risk-taking. Nearly every innovative practice was initiated by the personal interest of an individual teacher or small group of teachers. Clearly, teachers feel empowered and supported in their efforts to search out and implement innovative best practices. Teachers feel safe to try new things because the expectation is to "go for it", rather than to promise success. This empowerment and support was expressed by a teacher during the focus group discussion.

I think the one thing that we have that I know I don't fully appreciate yet is academic freedom supported by our principal. Some of the things I have been doing lately have taken me out into the community, meeting with businesses and that can be risky. It's like putting your laundry on the line, I mean the best way to sum it up is I can make a big mistake, and I mean not intentionally, but I can still come home and I've talked to a lot of teachers doing things similar to me and they can't go home if they make a mistake. And I appreciate that.

The principal, himself, seemed to pinpoint this as he described some of the recent initiatives teachers had implemented.

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See, I think we have a building of risk takers. And that is what I like about it because risk-taking produces results and that is the neat thing about it, I think, as a principal to try to establish a kind of climate where you can have risk-taking. So then pretty soon you have four or five teachers thinking, this is really a neat idea can I jump on board, can I do this? These people no longer keep their dreams to themselves.

**NSDC Self-Assessment of Context Characteristics**

With regard to the ten statements on the NSDC's self-assessment related to the five context standards, these teachers agreed with the following statements: staff development is on-going and job-embedded; staff development activities result in changes in classroom practice for most teachers on the staff; and staff development is viewed as an essential component for achieving the purposes of the organization and is valued as an integral part of the strategic plan. An examination of the strategic plan, which is provided later, provides evidence that professional development is embedded in the school’s strategic plan.

As a group these teachers disagreed with these context statements: the budget allocation supports ongoing professional development; twenty percent of the work week is devoted to joint learning and work; and central administration supports the work necessary to support school improvement goals and provides an adequate budget. Based on their responses to the context statements on the self-assessment, these teachers view their current efforts to be consistent with the standard directed toward continuous improvement.
Standards regarding support for time and budgetary resources were pinpointed as areas of need. Data reported through the statewide information management system indicated the one percent of the school's budget is currently being spent on staff development. Unfortunately this represents soft money such as the Venture Capital funds which will be exhausted in December of this year. Teachers reported during the focus group that there is no support for professional leave outside of efforts being supported by Venture Capital funds. Teachers may be given permission to attend a meeting or conference however they are responsible for assuming all expenses, including the payment of a substitute teacher.

Process Characteristics

The process characteristics outlined below describe "how" decisions are made related to determining the content and context of professional growth among staff at this school. The functioning of a school restructuring committee as well as the school's strategic plan were found to be key to the process of designing and implementing professional development activities at this school and are discussed below.

School Restructuring Committee

This school's Venture Capital initiative has provided a structure for the way decisions get made regarding staff development. As a result of receiving a Venture Capital grant a building restructuring committee was formed and continues to operate. This committee, which meets twice a month, is comprised of twelve teachers, three students, two parents, and one
community business representative. In the past this committee met and reviewed proposals from individual teachers or groups of teachers for the funding of professional development activities through Venture Capital. One teacher who sat on the restructuring committee described the process in the following way:

People wanting to apply would fill out an application and write a proposal. Then they would be put on the agenda and they would come and present their case; show the literature and where they were going and what they would do and who they would share it with when they returned and then after they left the room the people on the committee would vote yes or no if they thought it would be worthwhile for the school and if they didn't think it would benefit the school they would be turned down. Most people who came, however, had a wonderful time and made their case. It was very rare to be turned down, either we were out of money or because of the lack of substitutes they could only send one person.

Strategic Planning

When asked about the process for identifying the direction of professional development efforts the principal responded:

Well, I think we identify our strategic plan and we identify our building goals and most of what happens revolves around those.

The school has in place a strategic plan framed on building level goals which are consistent with district goals. The strategic plan covers six goal areas and identifies objective, strategies, persons responsible, target dates, and indicators of success for each area. This plan is reviewed quarterly by a committee of twenty school and community members. Revisions are made each year based upon the recommendations from this group.

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Six goals are identified in the strategic plan: to improve student achievement; to increase the graduation rate; to evaluate and improve the preparation of students for their future goals, including two and four year college, military and entry directly into the workforce; to continue to implement new instructional delivery systems which promote active learning and increase student achievement; involve parents, community members and business partners in our planning and implementation of service delivery systems; and to provide a safe and nurturing learning environment for staff and students.

Three of these goals have objectives which specifically address professional development. Goal Three, which aims to evaluate and improve the preparation of students toward future goals, has as its objective to continuously update, improve and evaluate the educational curriculum to better meet the needs of students preparing for a technological future and employment opportunities that will require specialized skills. A strategy which addresses professional development in this area is to provide teachers with two technology related inservice opportunities a year. These might include web page use and development or Internet training.

Professional development activity is deeply embedded in Goal Four, to continue to implement new instructional delivery systems which promote active learning and increase student achievement. The first objective of this goal is to increase the number of students who benefit from innovative methods of instruction. Strategies which have been identified include
continuing to provide opportunities for teacher to experience innovative practices by attending conference and visiting programs; and redefining the school's current indicators of success to more accurately assess the impact of innovative practices currently being utilized.

The second objective under Goal Four, to continue to encourage and promote a positive teaching environment that rewards innovative educational practices, outlines four strategies which create and require professional growth opportunities. These strategies are: to continue to implement integrated teaming in language arts, science, consumer science, social studies and special education; to continue to assess student learning through authentic assessment, co-operative learning, portfolio development and culminating performance practices; to continue the development and implementation of innovative curriculum options such as American Sign Language and Multicultural Literature; and to continue to pursue alternative teacher preparation support opportunities via grants and networks.

Goal Five, which aims to involve parents, community members and business partners in planning and implementing service delivery systems, provides a valuable opportunities for teachers grow professionally. Teachers are able to share their knowledge and perspectives beyond their peer group as well as have direct access to the perspectives and resources of the larger community. The objective, to increase the number of parents, community members, business partners, students and teachers in school improvement initiatives, provides two strategies for the meaningful involvement of all
constituents. The first is to involve parents and community representatives in directing the Venture Capital Restructuring Committee, Technology Committee, Goals 2000 initiative, etc. A second strategy is to implement a quarterly review of the strategic plan by a twenty member committee of school and community representatives.

**NSDC Self-Assessment of Process Characteristics**

The self-assessment results related to the NSDC’s eleven process standards indicated agreement among focus group members that their efforts are consistent with the following process statements: the school’s improvement plan addresses important aspects of organizational effectiveness such as decision making, communication, and team functioning; the learning climate of staff development is collaborative, informal and respectful; recognition of a need to seek improvement exists; staff development includes activities other than “training workshops” and consensus decision making is used to increase staff ownership. The results also indicate that the focus group currently disagrees with these statements: improvement plans include a carefully designed framework for the integration of the innovations being implemented; program evaluation assesses participants’ reactions to the program and measures the participants’ learning; and training and development in collaborative skills occur regularly, especially for new teams or committees.

In general the focus group, through the self-assessment, identified the standards related to systems thinking, data driven decision making, models
of staff development and collaborative skills as areas of strength. Based on these results the areas which might need to be addressed are integration of innovations, evaluation of staff development, and greater efforts made toward group development.

Content Characteristics

The content of most staff development has focused on the two major initiatives on which the Venture Capital proposal was based: developing authentic methods of assessing student achievement and restructuring instructional practices. Specific content seems to be determined by the needs and interests of individuals within departments and focuses on planning and implementing innovative instructional practices and utilizing alternative forms of assessment. Even district-wide professional development activities seem to be organized around content areas. On district-wide inservice days workshops are offered across the district for science teachers, language arts teachers, social studies teachers, etc. Within a high school setting this leaves little time to address building-wide concerns.

The principal points to two examples of department/teacher initiated professional development activities:

Language Arts teachers have this thing right now where they change and let people go and visit other language arts teachers, and give them feedback—It's called critical friends—the teachers volunteer to take each other's class so they can do that. Critical friends has been a very helpful thing. I guess the focus is that there might be an overall building expectation that whatever we do is going to improve student achievement but that is such a broad umbrella that it does not limit our teachers to say, well I think this is going to help my class or my students if I pursue
this knowledge or if I pursue further education in this area. So with that kind of umbrella which I support it allows the focus to be determined sometimes by departments, sometimes by individuals just like the lady you talked to about the American Sign Language course.

When asked about the critical friends group one teacher offered:

Two teachers from our department (English) went to a critical friends coaching training last year put on by the Ohio Center for the Coalition of Essential Schools and that's how our group got started. We've always done some peer coaching among ourselves.

While this effort was initiated by the English Department, because of the integrated courses taught with the science, social studies, and consumer science departments, the critical friends group expanded to include interested members of those departments. These teachers, as critical friends, spend time observing and critiquing one another's practice on a regular basis. The critical friends effort has also linked these teachers with a network of other teachers interested in improving professional practice through the Coalition of Essential Schools.

The American Sign Language course mentioned by the principal is an example of an innovation initiated by an individual. This innovation which received a BEST Practice award is described later. Another example of current best practice is evidenced by the teachers in the science department who subscribe to a constructivist theory of learning. Based upon their belief that knowledge is constructed in the minds of the learners these teachers believe that students learn best when they are actively engaged in the
learning process. This description outlining the philosophy and practice of the Science Department is telling:

...we believe that teacher directed classroom lectures are one of the least effective methods of instruction. Constructivist classrooms rely heavily upon numerous hands-on laboratory activities, guided-inquiry laboratory experiments, and performanced-based assessments. Students are actively "discovering" the natural scientific principals and concepts as they progress through their science courses.

This theory of teaching and learning is not limited to the students they teach but influences the way many in the department view their own professional learning. The department facilitator shared that there are several members of the department that meet daily to discuss beliefs and practices, plan activities together, and give each other feedback.

**NSDC Self-Assessment of Content Characteristics**

The self-assessment of the NSDC's ten content standards revealed at least some agreement that the school was addressing each standard. The focus group identified the highest level of agreement with these statements related to the content standards: service learning activities are included in the curriculum and service learning activities involve a meaningful application of knowledge and/or skills in real world settings. The self-assessment results indicated agreement with several other content statements including: teachers use a variety of approaches to teaching, know underlying instructional theories, and understand relevant research; through the use of a variety of instructional strategies administrators and teachers demonstrate a belief that all students can learn; teachers use
strategies that demonstrate high expectations for all students; student performance assessments include interviews, observations, portfolios, projects and demonstrations; student performance assessments focus on what students can actually do with the knowledge and skills they have acquired; and adolescents are known as a complete individual by at least one adult.

While the focus group identified agreement with every content statement, a lower level of agreement was noted for these two statements: teachers are familiar with and use the research-based findings that support a safe and orderly environment and parent/staff communication focus on the school's goals, classes, and curriculum with special attention to in-school and community opportunities to enhance student achievement. The content standards related to family involvement and classroom management appear to be possible target areas.

The results of the self-assessment indicate that the content standards related to high expectations, assessment of student performance and service learning appear to be strengths. Evidence of service learning can be found in the recent adoption and popularity of an interdisciplinary course developed by the English and Consumer Science departments. Efforts on the part of the English department to introduce electronic portfolios and the Science department by offering students hands-on opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge in the Science Learning Lab account for perceived strengths in the area of assessment of student performance. It is obvious that, in
general, this focus group viewed their efforts related to the content standards as the strongest dimension of professional development present in their school.

*How have external standards and initiatives influenced the development and implementation of best practices in professional development in this school?*

The following section addresses the influence external initiatives and standards have had on the development and implementation of best practices in professional development in this high performing school. The impact of Venture Capital, BEST Practices and other grant opportunities are discussed. As well, reactions to how new accountability standards impact professional development are presented.

**Venture Capital Initiative**

An excerpt from a recent grant proposal may provide the best testament to the positive influence Venture Capital has had on this school.

Five years ago the teachers in this school were almost entirely isolated in their classrooms, in their departments, and even in the building itself either by choice, necessity, or tradition. Our Venture Capital Initiative has opened doors and broken down walls. We now have a myriad of cross-curricular committees, programs, teams, and courses, each of which attempts to redefine good teaching, to reevaluate learning, and to improve student achievement.

A similar spirit was echoed in this interview response by a teacher when asked how Venture Capital had influenced the professional development of teachers:
I think what Venture Capital allowed us to do was develop a stronger sense of professional pride. We were able to go to professional meetings together and learn new things and also be validated because sometimes we saw that we were doing more innovative things than the presenters. We were able to form a genuine camaraderie. You know, because we've been together and learned things together and being able to boast about what is going on together.

It appears that at the very least Venture Capital is responsible for helping to create a professional community that understands the need for and values learning and working together. Venture Capital afforded motivated individuals opportunities to seek expert knowledge outside the school, which in turn resulted in building and recognizing in-house expertise.

The building principal also believes Venture Capital has had a positive influence:

I would say prior to Venture Capital the perception of our high school was that it was a good high school. And, it was a good high school. There was nothing we were doing that was wrong. I think what happened was that we decided that maybe we could do things better. It was not a reflection on anything that happened before because our kids were learning. I think what really happened was that those external influences like Venture Capital and the School-to-Work grant, which resulted in a teacher being released half-time to be a community liaison, reaffirmed the idea that there are better ways of doing things and if we can do things better and reach more kids and have greater success then we want to do that.

He is able to point to many benefits including the development of block scheduling of English and Science courses, creation of a mentorship and a service learning program, and development of American Sign Language courses which serve to meet a foreign language requirement. All of these
initiatives provided grounded opportunities for professional development as they required teachers to work together intensively to establish common goals and strategies for meeting them.

**BEST Practice Recognition**

Upon entering the school one cannot help but notice three striking terra-cotta figures of children behind a showcase. The brass plaques attached indicate that these are BEST Practice awards. This school has been honored with two BEST Practice awards, with one BEST Practice being acknowledged with a Seeds of Change Award. The School-to-Work Mentorship Program at this high school which provides for authentic career exploration in real world environments and has been a tool to introduce School-to-Work reforms to the academic program has received both the BEST Practice and Seeds of Change Award. The School-to-Work Mentorship Program has helped initiate a systemic change in expectations, enthusiasm and roles of students, parents, faculty, and administrators at the high school and has involved community mentors in career education.

A BEST Practice award was also recently received by the school for its development and implementation of a series of courses within the foreign language department in American Sign Language (ASL). This effort began with the interest and initiative taken by one teacher in her successful attempt at securing grant funding to begin the program. What began the first year with one teacher and 64 students is now a program that employs five teachers and serves some 450 students a year.
The benefits of the ASL Program to students are many. ASL, as a foreign language option, provides students with access to another option of meeting the foreign language requirement for college admission. ASL also provides students with the opportunity to gain skills and explore ASL interpreting as a career option. Several students have continued on to become interpreters. The study of ASL exposes students to the deaf community and increases sensitivity to all disabled populations.

In addition to the many benefits to students, the teacher that initiated the ASL program described this experience as a professional growth journey. The first step in that journey came with the researching for and writing of the grant. Once funded this teacher was empowered to establish the program which included hiring the additional teachers as the program grew. Now she serves as a mentor to the other four staff members working in the program. The ASL Program has truly been an asset to the general curriculum as well as a powerful professional growth activity for those involved with its development. The ASL vignette represents but one example of the experience many teachers, individually and in groups, have had as they have developed and implemented innovative practices and grown professionally in the process.

State Mandated Report Cards

The reaction of this staff to the recent increased accountability standards requiring that building and district report cards be made available to the public was somewhat nonchalant. The building principal was well
aware of the report card and data that would be reported. He pointed out that while they have fairly strong proficiency scores there is still great pressure in that his district sits in close proximity to several other high performing suburban districts. Publishing the scores in the media has created increased competition among schools. Overall his reaction indicates acceptance of the report card requirement as just another challenge.

Well, it is a reality that we have to deal with. Sometimes I wish these initiatives would go away and we didn’t have to deal with them. But we have to live with reality and what the expectations are. And, there is an expectation that we are going to be evaluated as a building and you can’t get around it. And, people are going to read and form judgments about your school and we want to do everything we can to have the best possible building and district grade card that we can get. Most of those things we work hard at anyway. For example, proficiency testing. We don’t need a report card to tell us that we don’t want kids not graduating because they don’t pass their proficiency tests.

The reaction of teachers indicated little concern over the report card requirement. For the most part their comments indicated they believe this type of reporting of student success is meaningless. This cavalier reaction may due to the fact that their building strategic plan has targeted the improvement of proficiency test scores and attendance rates for the past three years. During that time they have initiated many proficiency intervention activities, in addition to conducting a realignment of the curriculum with proficiency outcomes. Currently students in the Science Learning Lab are writing proficiency intervention computer programs for use by other students in the building.
As teachers discussed understanding the need for increased accountability, it was apparent they feel more accountable for individual students rather than a composite of test scores published in the paper. One teacher commented "I let our superintendent worry about that." He went on to say:

I feel accountable when my principal comes by my classroom or another teacher comes by, when a student asks me how they did on a paper, when a parent calls. Those are the ways, when I ask myself how can I do a better job.

Another teacher shared a similar feeling,

I think we feel a greater sense of pressure to help struggling and failing students on a daily basis rather than worry about test scores.

Yet another teacher did share a concern that test scores can not measure the caring, concern and attention shown to many, often low performing, students:

My sense of this building, and I see it every minute of my day—is that teachers know the kids very well, they encourage the kids in every way possible and they are seeking ways for kids to be successful and to have a number be put on that is real disappointing.

All in all, the influence of the report card requirement on this school does not seem to be significant probably due to the fact that there is already a high degree of accountability for student success.
What are seen as contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining ongoing, high quality professional development efforts?

This section focuses on identifying the contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining high quality professional development efforts. A major contributor identified by teachers is the building principal. Financial resources, time and lack of substitute teachers were identified as constraints.

Contributors

The Principal

The leadership of this principal has clearly led to a culture where individuals and innovation are valued; risk-taking is encouraged and supported; and staff are empowered to assume leadership roles. One teacher describes his leadership this way:

His leadership looks deceptively simple but it is very complex. In fact, it is amazing to me that he is able to incorporate all the different leadership principles, and I didn't mean to make a pun, but all the different leadership areas, all the different leadership aspects into one pivotal person. It looks like he is not in charge but he is. Because the way he is in charge is by empowering others. It is just that he is such a craftsman, with being a leader without leading that kind of showy or personal power. There is just a whole lot more than meets the eye. He is just very, very skilled.

His ability to empower others—actually give or share power—may be the hallmark or his leadership. In discussing this with another administrators in the building she asked if I wanted to see the administrative hierarchy for the building. With that she drew a horizontal line and stated, "we are all the same, ultimately he may have the final say-he is the principal-but we are colleagues."
This administrator went on to share what she believed to be an example of his ability to share decision-making. A student action group and faculty members were excited about creating a Renaissance Program. They worked for a year committing themselves, following all the right steps and refining the proposal. The principal encouraged and supported the group throughout the process and wanted to see the program get off the ground. The final step was to present the program to the entire faculty for a vote. Unfortunately after much discussion, the program was voted down by the faculty, largely because of the impact the program would have on scheduling. The students were devastated and the principal tremendously disappointed. However, he respected the decision of the larger faculty and the decision stood.

Not only do these teachers feel genuinely empowered but also supported. The following exchange among teachers demonstrates this:

He has an open door policy, that is, a place where students can do in and get counseling and where teachers can go for protection should there be any problems. I mean he is willing to listen to what you have to say. He is also willing to stick his neck out and take the heat or anyone in the building even though they may have not been doing exactly what should have been done.

Yea, I've witnessed that.

He takes a lot of calls.

He takes care of all of us.

He does and when he goes to the board and talks at meetings he doesn't say what a wonderful school I've built. He talks about
teachers and students and what they've been doing—He is very gracious.

As part of this study the principal completed a PeopleSmarts Behavioral Profile. This profile utilizes a unique combination of Open (Supporting) and Self-Contained (Controlling) and Direct and Indirect behaviors to represent four distinct behavioral styles. This profile is based solely on the principal's own perception of these behaviors. The results reflect only a generalized character type rather than a complete or accurate description of any individual. As well, the results indicate behavioral types and are not intended to describe leadership styles.

In this case the principal identified with the style known as the Relater. Relaters are Open (Supporting) and Indirect, relatively unassertive, warm, and reliable. Relaters are sometimes seen by others as compliant, soft-hearted and acquiescent. Relaters tend to be the most people oriented of all four behavioral styles. They seem to have natural counseling skills and are extremely supportive. Having close, personal relationships first-name relationships with others is one of their most important objectives.

Relaters tend to be good active listeners and generally develop relationships with people who were also good listeners. They tend to focus on getting acquainted and building trust. One descriptor of Relaters, which was observed to be true in this case, was that their desks contain family pictures and other personal items. Their office walls have personal reminders as well as family and group photos, serene pictures and
mementos. They give their offices a friendly, warm ambiance and arrange seating in a side by side cooperative way. Relaters are said to be "high touch" in an high tech world.

Constraints

Resources: Money, Time and Manpower

As the saying goes, "time is money." When asked to identify barriers to professional development the teachers in the focus group answered with a resounding "MONEY, well, time". In this case it seemed almost impossible to separate the time and money issue. Teachers recognize the need for time to work and learn together on the job in order to expand innovative practices. One teacher shared her impression when learning of innovations occurring in other schools:

And when we come back and go "Holy cow we do all that here." They all have some common prep time or their kids are released earlier. That is really unusual for all the stuff staff does here, that we don't have an early release a couple of times a month and we don't have a common prep time.

These teachers feel they could accomplish even more given common times to work together. They see time as a money issue. The following passage from a recent grant proposal clarifies this issue:

The biggest problem we face in our district is an inadequate budget for staff development. We were always a school marked by excellence, but due to increasing diversity of our student population and the need to be more in touch with a technological community, our system needed a renewal. Our solution was to pursue our own funding to allow new initiatives and encourage teachers to be risk takers. This happened through Venture Capital and a School-to-Work Grant.
The principal also identified limited financial resources as a barrier to be addressed:

I think what has happened because we have had so much success that we've learned to look upon roadblocks as a challenge and not an obstacle. Finances are always—I don't care if you are in a rich district or a poor one—finances are always a problem. But at the same time I think we need to find ways to overcome those problems.

Another barrier identified by both the principal and the focus group was securing substitute teachers. Even when money is available to support professional development activities, coverage for teachers is scarce. Teachers have come upon creative ways to cover for one another which have been supported by the principal.

This school seems to have addressed the need for financial support of professional development by actively pursuing outside sources of funding. Interesting, one teacher who has had great success and enjoys grant-writing has been relieved of other duties to devote time to this effort. The teacher works with individuals from every department and meets with the principal two to three times a week to update him on possible opportunities and the status of current proposals.

**Summary**

Professional learning in this school is characterized by a highly professional environment that encourages and supports risk-taking on the part of its teachers. A coherent plan for school improvement which
addresses professional development is in place. The content of teacher development focuses on improving instructional practices and developing alternative forms of assessing student performance.

A Venture Capital grant received by the school has been essential in spearheading improvement efforts. Teachers were provided opportunities to "learn together out of school" by being able to attend regional, state and national conferences together. These opportunities helped staff members understand each other as learners and acquire new knowledge and skills. This resulted in recognition of expertise that existed among staff members and provided the impetus for crafting opportunities to learn together on the job. An emphasis on professional learning has led to a greater sense of professional pride among staff as well as the implementation of a variety of innovative practices.

The leadership of the building principal is a real contributor to teacher professional development by providing support for innovation and keeping the focus of innovations on improving student outcomes. Leadership is shared and staff are empowered. Time during the day to work with colleagues, adequate financial resources to support professional learning and the availability of substitute teachers were identified as constraints to professional growth. However, other problems remain. Teachers, through the NSDC's self-assessment of professional development standards, identified several needs in addition to time and money. While a variety of innovations exist in and among various departments in the school, teachers
have identified a need to better integrate innovations throughout the school community. There also appears to be a need to focus efforts on addressing group development and evaluation of staff development.

THE CASE OF THE RURAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

District Profile

This district was formed in 1954 when the schools of four small rural communities were consolidated. As part of the consolidation agreement a new high school was built on the current site. A junior high school wing was added to the high school in 1970. Each community retained a school; the high school and junior high school in one, and an elementary building in each of the other three communities. The district covers approximately 80 square miles and is located within three adjoining counties.

There are some 1,500 students, 100 certified staff, and 58 noncertified employees housed and working in four buildings. The elementary buildings are organized by grade level, with one building designated to serve children, kindergarten through grade two, another building designated for grades three and four, and the other building for grades five and six. The administrative staff is made up of a superintendent and five principals, one assigned to each elementary and one to the junior high school and high school.
It is reported that the average median household income in the district is $22,519.00 and 9.3% of students are economically disadvantaged. The average number of students per teacher is 23.1 and the teacher attendance is 95.5%. The district spends $4,985 per pupil compared with the state average of $5,939. The district reports that 1.0% of the annual budget is spent on staff support, which includes teacher training.

School Profile

This junior high school of some 250 students and 15 staff members is guided by the following district vision: Guiding Students into the Future. The school's mission statement is one that you can hear in your head and feel in your heart and one that was articulated over and over during my visits. The mission is to Make Schools Ready for Kids. The building has enjoyed the leadership of the same principal for the past eight years. School staff are organized into seventh and eight grade level teams and are housed in the same building as the high school.

The school has distinguished itself in a variety of ways. They have been the recipient of a BEST Practice award for their restructuring efforts, in particular their creative scheduling and use of time. In addition to, and since receiving a Venture Capital grant from the Ohio Department of Education in 1993, this school has received a Networks for Systemic Improvement grant in the amount of nearly $320,000 and a Raising the Bar grant funded at $150,000. Over the past two years the school has had many visitors from
school districts around the state who are interested in learning about the restructuring efforts occurring in this school.

What characterizes the content, process and context of professional development best practices in this school?

The characteristics of the context, process and content of professional development efforts in this school are described below. It should be noted that while these characteristics are described categorically they are dynamic and are not meant to be viewed as mutually exclusive. Focus group members were asked to complete a self-assessment of the context, process and content of staff development in their school based on the National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development.

**Context Characteristics**

The context characteristics that follow outline the nature of the environment in which professional learning takes place. Evidence of the innovative use of both time and space are discussed. The high degree of local community involvement and support for professional learning is described.

**Restructured Time and Space**

This school has recognized that professional development is a key element in any school improvement initiative. Every restructuring effort made by this school has focused on creating structures which allow time for sustained work and learning among staff. Three structures in particular
have been developed. Prime-Time utilizes a two hour delay of school once a month to give staff an ongoing time to meet. Introduction of a new schedule which includes an Encore period gives each grade level teaching team a common 45 minute planning period each day. A common districtwide planning time, from 7:05 a.m. - 7:40 am every morning, has been created by adjusting the starting time of school.

Prime-Time has been a fundamental piece of the school's restructuring process which resulted from Venture Capital initiatives. Prime-Time utilizes the two days per year set aside in the teachers' contract for professional development. These hours are banked and used to accommodate a two hour delay of school one day of every month. This gives each building an ongoing segment of time on which to plan and carry out staff development activities. Prime-Time topics have included cooperative learning, authentic assessment, technology, motivating the reluctant learner, block scheduling, and staff discussions on the nine principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools.

Since its inception, as you would expect, Prime-Time and its focus and delivery have further developed. The principal puts it this way:

When we first started our Prime-Time, you have to start someplace and I think you do need to start with observing or having someone come in to give you some "how to" and then, I think, as the staff grows they become more instrumental, and teachers is kind a the premise that we have been using more recently because they are the experts and I think our staff has learned to believe that.
The primary purpose of restructuring the school day was to better meet the needs of all students which would ultimately increase student achievement. With this purpose in mind a group of staff, students, community, board members and parents worked to create a new junior high schedule. Under the new schedule study halls have been eliminated and academic class periods lengthened to nearly an hour to allow additional instructional time.

Two Encore periods have been developed and introduced to accommodate a common planning period for each teaching team. Encore offerings support the core curriculum and are revised annually based on teacher feedback. Encore periods offered at the seventh and eighth grade level are a combination of required and elective courses taken for six weeks, nine weeks or a semester. Examples of Encore electives include current events, sports literature, conditioning, and a integrated art, literature, and music of the 60s course known as the Retro course. Required courses in physical education, art, and keyboarding also occur during the Encore period.

One intended outcome of the new schedule was to create a daily common planning period. When the focus group was asked about opportunities teachers have to work and learn together on the job one teacher responded, "you're looking at it." Another teacher chimed in, "This is great, we can complain, we can discuss, we can plan, we can..." Finally, yet another member of the team clarified:
This is called our power planning period. (chuckling) We do all of the above. We plan, we discuss students, we have had parents come in that we can meet with on a group basis. We've had, not recently, the need to use the conference phone. We've done group conferences by phone at this time. Because of this daily contact we can stay on top of what kids are up to and what they need. We pull students in sometimes. We can rearrange our schedule if we have a change in the day like we did today. So we can still meet with all our students every day.

The following are testimonials to the impact of the new schedule from a variety of perspectives, a guidance counselor, teacher, and the superintendent:

Because of the new schedule the teachers have become more empowered. They have the ability to alter their schedule on a daily basis in order to facilitate instruction. Our teachers are no longer teaching their subjects in isolation but are working together to provide a more well rounded education for our students -- Guidance Counselor

As a member of the eighth grade team, I have seen this new structure materialize, change, regroup and blossom to provide a positive and forceful educational setting for our student body. As a result there has been dramatic improvement in attendance, academic scores have risen, and disciplinary problems have decreased -- Teacher

Before restructuring, junior high students were on the same schedule as the high school. Our staff didn't think this met the needs of our kids, so we sent a team to the best junior highs in the state to review their program. Now our students spend one hour instead of fifty minutes in the core classes of language arts, math, social studies, and science -- District Superintendent

Physical building changes have also been necessary due to restructuring efforts. A planning room, in addition to a teachers' lounge shared with high school staff, was needed for staff to use during common planning time and a large project room was needed for instruction. The new
conference room is equipped with a conference phone and a computer station.

Prime-Time has allowed for ongoing, sustained time at the building level, however because of variation in starting times in buildings across the district there has been little time for collaboration between schools across the district. This year for the first time the district is initiating a district wide common planning period each day. The start of the school day has been adjusted to allow all staff time from 7:05 a.m.-7:40 a.m. each morning. A committee at each building is addressing specifically how this time will be utilized. One possible use will be to coordinate a district-wide initiative to introduce distance learning.

Community Based Restructuring

Community members and parents along with teachers, students and administrators, have been involved in every aspect of this restructuring initiative. A community wide effort was initiated from the outset of applying for a Venture Capital grant. Committees comprised of staff, board members, parents, students and community members collaborated to discuss and establish a "vision of learning" for the district. Together these groups identified concerns related to scheduling and curriculum practices; staffing practices; textbooks, teaching materials and grading practices; staff roles in decision making and staff development. These concerns were used to focus the Venture grant proposal. From the accounts shared by school personnel and documentation of grant applications which required evidence of
community support, it appears that community members were not only informed along the way, they were involved.

Fostering a close relationship with the community has been a goal the school has been working toward for some time:

We've been trying to involve our community and make our school a focal point in the community for a long time. In a rural area, it is easy to be a focal point. Schools are often the biggest, most visible buildings in the district. We want parents to know they are part of the school and the school is part of the community and that is real easy to say, but to actually have people believe that and feel that is a different story. So, we have done a lot of different things. The building has been open in the evening for walkers for the last four or five years. Up until this year we offered transportation to senior citizens in the community. We used one of our school buses and a driver to pick up senior citizens and take them shopping on various days. Those kind of activities I think help build a relationship with the community. We are now looking at using the school facilities as a learning facility. We want parents and the community to feel free to access the building and the services.

In order to provide services to the community, the school is in the process of developing a Community Learning Center (CLC) that began operation this school year. This effort is being funded through the Network for Systemic Change grant received by the school. During a visit to the school I observed two community members come into the office to enroll in one of a variety of computer classes currently being offered in the evening. Recently a Community Learning Center Coordinator was hired to develop services and market the CLC. Among the offerings planned for the Center are health screenings, proficiency intervention programs for parents

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and students, courses for university credit, access to the computer lab and technology training and a parent lending library.

A Partner in Education (PIE) Board is being established to find innovative ways to work together to support students, parents, and community members as life long learners. This action board is chaired by the CLC coordinator and makes recommendations to the Board of Education. With regard to the CLC I was told, "we see this as a positive way for the community to take ownership in their school, to share understandings of problematic issues in schools, encourage innovation and foster collaboration."

Clearly, a genuine partnership exists between this school and its community. The school's media specialist shared with me that 106 parents of junior high students have been trained to utilize technology to work at home with their children and neighbor children as part of the Raising the Bar initiative to increase science proficiency scores. This effort along with the support shown for major shifts in the school schedule by delaying starting times are powerful examples of the close and supportive relationship this school has fostered with the community. Such a relationship has been instrumental in making change happen.

**NSDC Self-Assessment of Context Characteristics**

The results of the self-assessment of the NSDC's ten context statements revealed varying levels of agreement with all five standards. The focus group indicated strong agreement with these statements from the self-
assessment: staff development is ongoing and job-embedded; staff development activities result in changes in classroom practice for most teachers on staff; the budget allocation supports ongoing professional development; there is widespread support for professional development among administration, teachers, school board members, and other influential members of the community; staff development is viewed as an essential component for achieving the purposes of the organization and is valued as an integral part of the strategic plan; central administration supports the work necessary to support school improvement goals and provides an adequate budget; and strategies for facilitating planning and learning during the school day exist.

The group identified these two statements for which they indicated they "somewhat agree": the school staff is organized into study groups to learn about the change process and/or about particular innovations and teachers are observed randomly to determine their use of an innovation and the innovation's effect on students. Because of these responses, the standard regarding staff development as an innovation was pinpointed as an area of need.

These teachers view their current efforts to be consistent with the standards directed toward continuous improvement, which addresses job-embedded staff development; leadership/advocacy; and organizational alignment and support. It is fairly easy to see why teachers view their staff development efforts as job-embedded given the amount of time that has
been structured to allow teachers to work together on the job. It is interesting that these teachers agreed that the budget allocation supports staff development since the district and school report cards indicated spending 1% and 0% respectively. Likely teachers are unaware of how little the district supports staff development because they have been so successful in writing for and receiving external sources of funding.

Process Characteristics

The Process Characteristics outlined below describe "how" decisions are made related to determining the content and context of professional growth among staff at this school. The existence of a coherent plan for systemic change as well as a constituent-based, data driven decision making structure were found to be key to the process of designing and implementing professional development activities at this school and are discussed below.

A Plan for Systemic Change

"How" professional development gets focused and delivered is directly tied to a plan which was developed during the writing of a proposal for a Systemic Networking grant. This plan, for which Venture Capital provided the basis, clearly identifies the school's mission, vision, goals, and action plan for attaining goals and performance indicators for evaluating success. This plan serves as a blueprint for ongoing restructuring and professional development efforts.

The school plan for systemic change is grounded in the district's vision of guiding students into the future. The mission of the school is
simple yet powerful: *making school ready for kids*. The mission and the plan are based entirely on increasing student learning. To achieve their mission, the school has focused on continually asking the following questions: Are ALL students learning?; What are they learning?; How do we know?; What changes need to occur in the system to enhance student learning; What is learning?; What does effective learning look like?; What learning strategies work well?; In what context and With which students? Their plan states, "we promise to adjust teaching and learning, assessment, governance, organizational structures, and professional development any way we have to in order to demonstrate our commitment to honoring and respecting the student as a competent learner who comes to us having already learned a tremendous number of concepts, skills and strategies from which continued learning can be nurtured."

Three goals emanate from this mission. The first goal is to increase student achievement. The performance indicators for this goal are all related to increasing proficiency scores, attendance rates and graduation rates. Two strategies are identified to address increasing student achievement. The first strategy is referred to as "school within a school" and focuses on the development and implementation of five initiatives, each requiring extensive professional development. The initiatives include developing and implementing looping, an alternative program for unruly non-compliant youth, "same sex" Algebra I class; evening classes for students and student learning centers (intervention-ACT/SAT preparation) centers. The second
set of strategies identified to increase student achievement are aimed at preparing teachers to identify, understand, and adapt to meet the needs of their students. Activities include conducting home visits, developing alternative assessments, and utilizing student involved conferencing.

The second goal outlined in the plan is to enhance the learning environment. Performance indicators are again targeted to increasing proficiency test scores and curriculum based assessments. Two strategies, distance learning and lesson crafting are identified to address this goal. Distance learning activities are designed to initially connect schools, teachers and students within the district. Lesson crafting involves teacher developing thematic, integrated, learning units that "are more like interlocking pieces rather than isolated islands in the curriculum."

The third and final goal is to expand the number of school-community relationships. Performance indicators are targeted at increasing satisfaction on survey results and tracking the level of utilization of the services available in the Community Learning Center. The primary strategy for meeting this goal is the establishment of the Community Center.

This school district’s plan for systemic change provides clear direction and represents the interests of all stakeholders in the community. The plan and well defined vision, mission, goals, performance indicators, and action plans makes it easy to target professional development activities. Fortunately, many structures such as common planning time, previously established teams and committees (staff development team, academic
progress committee), and financial resources via grant funding and local board support are in place to address the professional development needs in order to implement all aspects of the plan.

The plan for systematic change not only provides the direction for ongoing staff development but the process of crafting and monitoring the plan is a professional development activity in itself. All staff members share some part in creating or monitoring the strategies developed to address the plan. A single sex math class is but one example. A group of teachers interested in increasing student achievement in math did their research and proposed an all female Algebra I class. This proposal became part of the plan and its success will be monitored by the math teachers and guidance counselor.

Data Driven Decision Making

Since restructuring efforts began at this school five years ago there has been a greater understanding of and acknowledgment for basing decisions on data. Venture Capital required indicators of success and other grant opportunities have required indicators of success. "The need for a clear "vision" coupled with data-based decision making was underestimated at the beginning of our restructuring process. Once we realized how essential both of these were, it helped us focus our efforts, save valuable time, and give the stakeholders the evidence needed to embrace the continuous improvement initiatives." These experiences have helped staff to see the importance and
usefulness of data driven decisions. The principal had this to say about data-driven decision making:

When we first started planning for staff development we asked for teacher input and it would be like, I like this or I think this is important in schools, or we have a need here or a need there, because people just felt it or thought it. And maybe there was a little bit of data that was looked at, but not to the extent that it is looked at now. Now, what happens is we have our continuous improvement plan goals and we really want to focus staff development toward those goals in some way. We still have teacher input, but based on those goals. So that we could have, for example, someone who thinks we need something on discipline and if that really doesn't have something to do with one of our goals and there isn't data to support it we don't do it. We may address it some other way. We do have a committee that meets frequently and regularly and looks at the data, as well as help plan Prime-Time.

There was acknowledgment on the part of some of the staff that examining and monitoring data can be time consuming, which is probably part of why it didn't happen in the past. However, there was agreement that this process is worth the time and is in the end extremely valuable.

All grant applications examined had clearly written indicators of success targeting specific increases in proficiency outcomes and evaluation measures. Timelines for initiating strategies and persons responsible were in place, however, it was not evident as to how and when progress toward performance indicators would be monitored over time.

NSDC Self-Assessment of Process Characteristics

The self-assessment results related to the NSDC's eleven process standards indicated agreement among focus group members that their efforts are consistent with all eleven process standards, however the group
indicated a high level of agreement with three process statements in particular: recognition of a need to seek improvement exists; staff development includes activities other than "training workshops"; and desired changes in on-the-job behavior are supported and result in improved student learning.

The results of the self-assessment revealed these statements for which the group indicated they "somewhat agree": an instructional framework that describes how selected innovations collectively address school priorities exists; program evaluation assesses participants' reactions to the program and measures participants' learning; all staff development training activities include theory, demonstration, practice with feedback and coaching; consensus decision making is used to increase staff ownership; school teams/groups are models of effective interpersonal and group skills; and training and development in collaborative skills occur regularly, especially for new teams or committees.

In general, the focus group, through the self-assessment, identified data driven decision making, models of staff development, and follow up as areas of strength. Based on these results the standards which might need to be addressed are integration of innovations, evaluation of staff development, collaborative skills, and group development. Once again integration of innovations is identified by teachers as a weakness. While a very good framework for integrating innovations exists in the form of the systemic change plan, teachers somehow do not see the bigger picture. It may be that
teachers are so focused on delivering their part that they fail to see how it relates to the other strategies and the entire plan. This inability to see or to integrate innovations may in some way be related to the needs identified in the self-assessment to address collaborative skills and group development.

Content Characteristics

The content of most staff development seems to be driven by initiatives identified in the systemic change plan and in the Raising the Bar Grant. The staff development team is charged with determining and planning for the content to be delivered during the Prime-Time. The team is currently in the process of soliciting feedback from teachers as to which of the identified initiatives should be addressed, and how they want to use the common planning now in place during the first 35 minutes of each morning. With the number of initiatives identified there is no shortage of content for professional growth. In fact the principal expressed some concern that "we might have bitten off more than we can chew."

When the focus group was asked about what specific professional development activities have been especially beneficial, they mentioned "curriculum on the wall." The teachers explained how they engaged in a process of laying out their curriculum on chart paper covering the walls. "We are able to look month by month, subject by subject, and determine at what point people are accountable for teaching what." The process included aligning the curriculum with proficiency outcomes. One teacher commented, "it makes it real easy to realign things when you need to, you
just shuffle this here or move this up, move this back, put more importance on this and less importance on that. It's an ongoing process that helps us reevaluate and integrate what we are doing." I was informed that the media specialist in the building is currently in the process of transferring the "curriculum on the wall" to an electronic format.

Technology is another area in which professional development activities have occurred. It was reported in a grant application that 75% of teachers have attended regional computer trainings as well as in-house instruction in computer use called Carton to Classroom. A group of teachers along with the district media specialist are currently involved in learning to use distance learning technology to access School-Net Lesson Labs and to allow students to collaborate with students in other schools.

**NSDC Self-Assessment of Content Characteristics**

The self-assessment of the NSDC's eleven content standards revealed at least some agreement that the school was addressing each standard. The focus group identified the highest level of agreement with these statements from the assessment: teachers and administrators are knowledgeable regarding young adolescent development; through the use of a variety of instructional strategies administrators and teachers demonstrate a belief that all students can learn; there is regular communication between the school staff and parents/families about individual student's academic progress; open communication exists between student, family, and advisor; service learning activities are included in the curriculum and service learning
activities involve meaningful application of knowledge and/or skills in real world settings.

While the focus group identified agreement with every content standard, a lower level of agreement was noted with these two statements: student performance assessments include interviews, observations, portfolios, projects and demonstrations and teacher teams engage in frequent and in-depth professional discussions about instruction and curriculum practices. The content standard areas related to student performance assessment and interdisciplinary teams appear to be possible target areas. The awareness that student performance assessment needs to be addressed is evidenced in the systemic change plan which includes a strategy to develop and implement alternative assessments. It is interesting that interdisciplinary teams would surface as a possible target area since the school is organized by interdisciplinary grade level teams. This should be considered along with the need for group development and collaborative skills suggested under the process standards.

The results of the self-assessment indicate that the content areas related to adolescent development, high expectations, family involvement, advisement/guidance, and service learning appear to be strengths. It is obvious that, in general, this focus group identified the content standards as the strongest dimension of professional development present in their school.
How have external standards and initiatives influenced the development and implementation of best practices in professional development in this school?

The following section addresses the influence external initiatives and standards have had on the development and implementation of best practices in professional development in this high performing school. The impact Venture Capital, BEST Practices and other grant opportunities are discussed. As well, reactions to new accountability standards are presented.

**Venture Capital Initiative**

Venture Capital seems to have provided the impetus for the restructuring efforts that have taken place in this community. Venture Capital also seems to have meant more than just having money to send people places or bring experts into the school. In this case it appears the Venture Capital laid the foundation for restructuring. This, perhaps, says it best:

We selected the Coalition of Essential Schools as the model for our Venture Capital grant in this building. In terms of context that gave us a model to follow. I think it really had a direct influence on our restructuring initiative and staff development because we could take from the Essential Schools model and do what we needed to do. So once we had that Venture Capital money, I think it wasn't just the money, it was the concept of Venture Capital itself, the whole idea of restructuring, and the state encouraging innovative practices, it gave, I think, teachers confidence, it gave administrators confidence, and probably superintendents confidence to go ahead with some of the initiatives they had been dreaming of to push schools forward. So I think it (Venture Capital) did have a lot of influence here.

Venture Capital's positive influence on moving the school forward is echoed by the principal:
We wanted to improve and we wanted to grow but the budget was always a stumbling block and I think the opportunities Venture Capital provided helped us grow in our efforts here. I think we would have gone this way regardless, but I don't think we would have made the progress we have made without the support we received from Venture Capital.

A recent grant proposal identified several outcomes which are direct results of the Venture Capital efforts made toward restructuring. These include more collaborative staff planning; greater parent and community involvement; K-12 curriculum alignment; implementation of proficiency intervention strategies during the summer and school year; improvements in student achievement; flexible use of time and collaboration beyond the local district. It is said that success breeds success. Certainly the success this school has experienced through the Venture Capital initiative has led to success in securing outside funding for continuing the work of restructuring.

BEST Practice Recognition

The ingenuity and hard work of the junior high staff paid off when their restructuring program was awarded an Ohio’s BEST Practice award. The terra-cotta bust of children is proudly displayed in the junior high wing and serves as a reminder of the accomplishments of their restructuring program thus far. Curriculum and instructional strategies are being changed to enhance learning. Staff development is no longer a one-shot program. Teams of teachers work at every grade level. Staff roles have changed to allow decision making at all levels. A technology plan has been implemented and a junior high summer school program has been initiated.
for intervention purposes. These changes evolved from a collaboration of parents, students, teachers, board of education members and many others who established a "vision of learning" for the district.

State Mandated Report Cards

The teachers with whom I spoke seemed to be either unaware of or unconcerned about the building report card requirement. The principal on the other hand was well aware of this new mandate and was willing to share her feelings:

...so I think we can waste a lot of energy being hostile and being upset about the report card issue. I think those things, the issues, are being addressed by people, and I think there are things as educators we should be doing and taking responsibility for, and making our views known, and at the same time there can be a lot of energy wasted on complaining and not doing what we need to do. So, it is a matter of us saying, if the report card is here to stay, what are we going to do, work to get rid of the report card or work to get kids to where they need to be. So, I think the report card has been an influence but at the same time I try to just keep it in perspective and that is not easy to do but I think that is part of my job.

It is fairly obvious in this case that the performance indicators the staff has established for themselves in their systemic change plan are the same ones being required on the report card. It is no wonder then that there is not much excitement over the report card. It appears that these folks have their nose down, their eyes set on improving student outcomes and are ready and willing to hold themselves accountable.
What are seen as contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining ongoing, high quality professional development efforts?

This section focuses on identifying the contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining high quality professional development efforts. Major contributors identified in this case are the leadership provided by the building principal and the high degree of support demonstrated by parents, the community and the school board. Growing pains related to restructuring were identified as constraints.

Contributors

The Principal

It was obvious from my observations and informal conversations with staff and the superintendent that this principal is well respected and viewed as the instructional leader of both the junior high and high school. There is no question of her commitment and ability to lead. The superintendent shared his concern that he (the district) will lose her. He commented, "I know she has had opportunities to leave. People are after her every year. I just hope we can keep her."

When I asked the principal what role she saw herself playing in staff development, I got this rather drawn out, yet revealing response:

My essential role in the school comes down to kids and making decisions that will be in their best interest and I think our staff development has centered around making changes in the classroom, which I think is where it happens. But I think you have to have an administrative team that not only makes decisions but takes on the work... as far as my staff, I wouldn't ask them to do anything I wouldn't personally do myself. If there is a banquet and people are serving then I am there
cleaning tables and washing up the floor like anyone else. And I feel the same way whether it's our classified or non-classified staff. I do not see myself better than any teacher, I just have a different role. I hope what comes out to staff is that they know I am willing to socialize and work professionally with people and that has to grow, that confidence and trust, and I think over a period of time that has occurred and that is very important, then when I speak professionally, they (staff) listen and respect what I am saying and they are willing even if they don't agree with me, they are at least willing to look at it.

As part of this study the principal completed a PeopleSmarts Behavioral Profile. This profile utilizes a unique combination of Open (Supporting) and Self-Contained (Controlling) and Direct and Indirect behaviors to represent four distinct behavioral styles. This profile is based solely on the principal’s own perception of these behaviors. The results reflect only a generalized character type rather than a complete or accurate description of any individual. As well, the results indicate behavioral types and are not intended to describe leadership styles.

In this case the principal identified with the style known as the Socializer. Socializers are Direct and Open (Supporting) and exhibit characteristics such as intuitiveness and liveliness. Socializers keep a fast pace and their primary strengths are enthusiasm, persuasiveness, and sociability. Their primary weakness is the tendency to get involved in too many things. Socializers are stimulating talkative, gregarious and have the dynamic ability to think quickly on their feet. They tend to operate on intuition and like to take risks and work with others who take risks and act quickly.
Socializers are idea people and because of their persuasive skills are able to get others caught up in their dreams. They influence others and shape their environment by bringing others into alliance to accomplish results. This seems to be telling of the principal in this case. By all evidence, she is the primary mover and shaker in these restructuring efforts. This fact was acknowledged by one staff member in this way: "And Jill (not real name), as our leader, is very progressive and interested in growth and promotion of innovative ideas and encourages us, and I think she is a big factor in the directions that we go."

Community Support

There is no question that the dramatic changes which have occurred in this school could not have happened without the support of the entire community. The support shown by the board of education has gone a long way in building teacher confidence and professional knowledge. Once the board began seeing changes they became convinced of the importance of staff development. They began paying teachers for time spent after school and to attend conferences which were ways of showing their support and appreciation for how teachers were growing on their own. The principal pointed out that:

those things have helped develop a trust and confidence that the administration and board believe that teachers are professional and need to be supported to grow professionally and that does not happen by attending a workshop once every two years or three.
In addition to this the board also provides teachers with tuition reimbursement for up to nine hours of coursework at ninety dollars an hour per year.

Parental support of the delayed start of school once a month for Prime-Time and, for adjusting arrival and dismissal times to allow for a district-wide common planning each day have been instrumental in support ongoing professional development efforts. This is a real nod of confidence in the school from the community. Finally, as a testament to the support of this community, this district enjoyed a 65.2% approval of an 8.4 mill levy in 1996. This was the highest passage margin in fifteen campaigns.

Constraints

The responses I received in an attempt to uncover barriers to professional development turned out to sound more like growing pains than barriers. One teacher mentioned:

I think working as a team you are always going to have personality conflicts, so that is probably the biggest thing (barrier). You know, what I see as right isn't always what the other person sees as effective, so you have to learn to work and deal as a team.

Another teacher added:

The time factor. Two hours is sometimes way too long for the person we are listening to and some times it is way to short for the knowledge they have to give us. So I think time can be a roadblock.

And, yet another teacher responded:

I think parents can be a roadblock. They don't like school starting late.
This comment was met with:

    I can understand it. It's difficult for many parents to arrange child care and with delayed dismissal the elementaries don't start until 11:00 and are dismissed at 3:00.

What I heard were teachers wrestling with the issues related to collaborating with parents and peers and effectively using newly found time to collaborate. Interestingly, no one mentioned lack of financial resources.

    The principal identified what she termed as stumbling blocks. The first is the difficulty securing substitute teachers. Now teacher participation in professional development opportunities is not limited by lack of money but rather lack of classroom coverage. The second stumbling block is the difficulty keeping parents well informed "so that they realize that we are using our time wisely." These new initiatives and collaborative relationships require a whole new level of marketing and communication.

    Early in their restructuring some challenges and obstacles to the process were identified by school staff. Among these were: not all staff members were in favor of change; some students, parents and school board members questioned the need for change; school space and scheduling problems; finances; and staffing considerations. I would venture to bet however, that these challenges and others will be ever present in an organization which is always redefining itself to meet the needs of its students. It's the nature of the beast.
Summary

Restructuring of time has been the hallmark of the school improvement efforts and has provided the context for much of the professional learning at this school. Time for teachers to learn and work together on the job has been crafted and supported by both school personnel and the community. Professional learning on the part of teachers is viewed as a necessary and valued ingredient in school improvement efforts and is reflected in a plan for systemic change. A professional development approach utilized during the initiation of the Venture Capital grant, which brought in outside experts in areas such as curriculum alignment and technology, has evolved into the development and recognition of resident experts.

A Venture Capital grant was essential in assisting school and community members examine time structures in other schools, as well as in supporting professional development activities occurring during the restructured time. Professional learning opportunities have been expanded to include the development of a Community Learning Center. The Center, which provides a variety of opportunities for staff, students and community members to learn, is one example of how school improvement efforts have evolved into the creation of a learning community.

Among the contributors to successful professional development efforts is the instructional leadership provided by the building principal. Her
knowledge of the change process and commitment to the district's vision and mission have been instrumental in bringing about improved learning for both teachers and students. Community involvement and support of restructuring has contributed greatly to the context and process of teacher professional development.

Lack of substitute teachers was mentioned as a constraint to professional learning opportunities. Growing pains associated with collaboration, such as reaching consensus on issues before moving ahead, were mentioned by teachers as potential constraints. Interestingly, a similar, reoccurring problem was revealed through the self-assessment data regarding the nature of teams and the ability of individuals to function as team members. Teachers cited the need for professional development to address group development, collaborative skills, and interdisciplinary teaming. While no observation data indicated problems related to effective team functioning, the teachers themselves seem to be unsure of their ability to function effectively as a team.

THE CASE OF THE URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

District Profile

This district serves some 64,000 students and is situated in an urban center of approximately 685,000 residents. The district enjoys affiliation with
a major research institution and relationships with teacher education programs in a several small colleges. *Expect Results* defines the district’s mission which outlines three goals. Goal One is to increase student achievement with emphasis on: students will read at or above grade level by third grade; students will be prepared for algebra by the ninth grade; graduates will have participated in a meaningful internship; and graduates will know how to use technology for lifelong learning. The second goal is to operate the district more efficiently and effectively and the third goal to raise hope, trust, and confidence in the school system.

It is reported in the district report card developed by the Ohio Department of Education that the average median household income in the district is $21,857.00 and 40.4% of students are economically disadvantaged. The average number of students per teacher is 19.1 and the teacher attendance is 94.6%. The district spends $6,668 per pupil compared with the state average of $5,939. The district reports that 2.5% of the annual budget is spent on staff support, which includes teacher training.

School Profile

This alternative elementary school has been offering a literature-based/language arts program for grades kindergarten through five since 1987. During that first year of literature-based curricular emphasis, student enrollment, representative of both an assigned residential population and the lottery increased to 400 students. The school’s current enrollment of 580,
which mirrors the city's diversity, is being served by a teaching staff of 28. In 1994, a four room modular was erected near the south end of the building to accommodate increased enrollment. The school's mission statement is visible upon entering the school and states, Each parent, teacher and staff member at (school's name) believes that all students can learn... our goal is to develop life long learners by stimulating all students to explore the world beyond the textbook through literature and self-expression.

The building has enjoyed the leadership of the same principal for the past eight years. School staff are organized into grade level teams that utilize language arts based thematic units as the primary instructional method. The school has distinguished itself in a variety of ways. A Venture Capital grant was awarded in 1994. In addition the school has been the recipient of a BEST Practice award for the incorporation of a resource teacher to coordinate professional development that is ongoing, job-embedded and supports the school's literature based philosophy. In recent years the school has averaged about 100 visitors a year, from school districts around the state, who are wishing to see a literature based/language arts school in action.

What characterizes the context, process and content of professional development best practices in this school?

The characteristics of the context, process and content of professional development efforts in this school are described below. It should be noted that while these characteristics are described categorically they are dynamic
and are not meant to be viewed as mutually exclusive. Focus group members were asked to complete a self-assessment of the context, process and content of staff development in their school based on the National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development.

**Context Characteristics**

The context characteristics that follow outline the nature of the environment in which professional learning takes place. Both the literature based curricular emphasis and the designation as an alternative school are discussed as they impact the context in which professional development is organized and delivered. The impact made by the incorporation of a resource teacher to the staff and the creation of a teacher resource room is also discussed.

**A Literature Based Alternative**

This school is committed to the philosophy of "whole language teaching" which means that from the very beginning, children are taught that the purpose of reading is to find meaning. This philosophy is based on these beliefs:

1. Children learn to read by reading a wide variety of literature.
2. Children learn to write by writing for a variety of personal and academic purposes.
3. Children learn to think by applying their knowledge to real problem-solving situations.
The goal is to create an atmosphere that integrates reading, writing, listening, viewing, and speaking across the curriculum. Such an atmosphere is obvious upon entering the building. The hallways are filled with remnants of artifacts and original works created by students and staff to commemorate visits to the school by renown children's authors. This is a yearly event sponsored by the PTA that serves as a focus and provides a theme for teacher and student learning throughout the year.

The primary instructional method in this literature based environment is the use of thematic units. The on-going development and implementation of thematic units is, in and of itself, an ongoing, job-embedded professional development activity. The creation of thematic units requires teachers to be continually reevaluating student needs as well as devising creative ways to integrate all aspects of the curriculum. One teacher describes it this way:

I think there's a saying around here that everybody reinvents the wheel all the time, you know, because if you develop a thematic unit, you want it to fit the needs of the kids you are teaching right now, so it's not like what you did before. So every year you're trying to refine or regroup or do something different based on interest, so we really are professionals at creating and pulling all this curriculum in and making a new one. So we certainly spend a lot of time making our curriculum but trying very hard at the same time to fit within the course of study that the district gives us.

The advent of the proficiency testing has had an impact on the creation of and use of thematic units. Proficiency outcomes, especially in the areas of math and science, have caused these teachers to reexamine the
integration of these content areas throughout instructional units. This exchange between teachers makes that evident. A teacher points out:

We used to just be able to say well, you know if our student want to study this we weren't so careful about making sure it would match up with all items in the curriculum or course of study like we have to now because of the fact that we are made accountable at each grade level to teach certain things that are going to lead up to the proficiency test.

Another teacher responds:

...in the last two years I think it has been made very clear science and math are where we'd better start to put some more emphasis. Its time to rethink thematic unit topics. So this summer when we were working on units we sort of forced the issue that they better be around science topics. That probably would not have happened if we were doing our own thing.

Thematic units, as an instructional strategy, provide a natural means for teachers to learn together on the job. They require careful collaboration among colleagues, as well as on-going evaluation of content and student learning.

This school is not only identified by its literature based philosophy, but also by its designation as an Alternative School. Schools identified by the district as an Alternative are given latitude to operate in non-traditional ways. One advantage Alternative Schools enjoy is the ability to hand pick their staff. To some degree they have control over maintaining the culture of the school through careful selection of new staff. They clearly have high expectations for themselves and their students. Anyone wishing to join this staff had better be prepared to meet these expectations. The principal describes the staff this way:
We all have a common teaching method or philosophy, not to say that we are all duplicates of one another because we have a lot of versatility and very strong leadership in every teacher. But the given is that we teach through literature, through thematic units, through the whole language approach, phonics is there but not at the forefront and so on. So, we have in effect, I think a strong school because we have been allowed to select people that buy into and are committed to what happens here.

As an Alternative the school enjoys greater flexibility in scheduling. One initiative of the Venture Capital grant was to restructure the day to allow time for team planning. An Integrated Arts block was scheduled into the day which allowed each grade level team one hour once a week for planning. Unfortunately, due to increases in enrollment, the block has been modified which now permits only some members of a team to be together for any extended period of time. Teachers are now back to dedicating their own time after school and in the summer in order to plan and develop units together.

This literature based alternative environment, by its very nature requires, supports and sustains teacher professional growth. It is truly a school where both teachers and students are learners. While the philosophy and approach of the school are unique, they are embedded in the belief that all students can learn. This passage can be found on a poster above the copier:

Within even the reluctant student there is a small part that wants desperately to learn. The strength of the desire is determined by someone's belief in him or her.
Resource Teacher/Resource Room

The incorporation of a special resource teacher on staff has significantly impacted professional development, classroom level support, and individual student support. The resource teacher provides for the professional development needs of experienced teachers and new personnel by organizing and directing grade level inservice meetings, team teaching opportunities, writing proposals, supporting units of study, and by serving as the Adopt a School liaison with the community. At the classroom level, the resource teacher works with teachers in a collaborative framework to support writing process instructional techniques, to design units of study, and to provide reteaching and enrichment materials. At the individual student level, the resource teacher screens new students, assists teachers with beginning-year reading assessments using Reading Recovery diagnostic measures and provides direct services as needed by teachers.

A teacher resource room has been created to provide a place for teachers to work together and have available the materials necessary to craft integrated thematic units. This room is something to see. It is used to house previously developed and taught thematic units at every grade level. Units are packaged and stored in large plastic bags and are now catalogued in the school's library. Teacher workspace is available in the room, but disappearing amid thematic units. The amount of material, much of it teacher made, is overwhelming and provides visible evidence of the level of devotion these teachers have to a literature based approach.
NSDC Self-Assessment of Context Characteristics

With regard to the NSDC's five context standards, the teachers from the focus group agreed with these statements from the self-assessment: staff development is on-going and job-embedded; staff development activities result in changes in classroom practice for most teachers on the staff; central administration supports the work necessary to accomplish school improvement goals and provides an adequate budget; and staff development is viewed as an essential component for achieving the purposes of the organization and is valued as an integral part of the strategic plan.

As a group these teachers disagreed with these statements from the self-assessment: strategies for facilitating planning and learning during the school day exist; and a minimum of twenty percent of the work week is devoted to joint learning and work. In summary, these teachers view their current efforts to be consistent with the standards directed toward continuous improvement and organizational alignment and support. The standard regarding support for time for learning was pinpointed as an area of need. This can certainly be supported by the observation data which noted that teachers had literally no time to meet together as a grade level team. Occasional minutes were captured in the hallway or lunch room with one or two team members. Any joint work was observed occurring after school.

Process Characteristics

The process characteristics outlined below describe "how" decisions are made related to determining the content and context of professional
growth among staff at this school. The existence of a School Continuous Improvement Plan tied to district goals, as well as a School Continuous Improvement Planning Team were found to be key to the process of designing and implementing professional development activities at this school and are described below.

**School Continuous Improvement Planning Team**

The School Continuous Improvement Planning (SCIP) Team developed as an offshoot of the original Venture Capital committee. This committee monitored the goals and indicators of success outlined in the Venture Capital grant and proposed a plan for staff development to appropriately address them. These recommendations were shared with grade level teams for feedback. Plans were adjusted based on grade level team feedback and needs.

The Venture Capital committee was later expanded to include parents and was charged with crafting a district mandated School Continuous Improvement Plan. This group, now known as the SCIP team, continues to operate in a similar fashion, only using the continuous improvement plan as the basis for proposing staff development activities. The SCIP team operates as a review and program development body rather than a decision making body.

In the past the SCIP team has succeeded, with waivers from the state department and the district reform panel, and Venture Capital funding, to secure four full days of non-attendance of students during the year for
professional development. This year the team again requested four days, but because of diminishing Venture Capital funds, were granted two full days during the year. The plan this year includes spending one day in December working on developing alternative assessments and redesigning the building’s student report card. In addition, the entire staff will attend the Children’s Literature Conference sponsored by The Ohio State University in February.

**School Continuous Improvement Plan**

The district provides both the format and specifications for developing the continuous improvement plan. Schools are required to identify and document specific strengths and weaknesses within the building's program. It is expected that the plan will address at least two of the district’s three goals, with at least two academic objectives written for Goal 1 which is to increase student achievement. The plan is expected to detail the objectives, the strategies for meeting the objectives, how to assess each objective, who will be accountable, the projected schedule, and the fiscal resources allocated to support the plan. The instructions given by the district state that, "Staff development must be given high priority when identifying strategies."

This school's School Continuous Improvement Plan (SCIP) is tied to its mission and directly related to the goals of the district as required. Building strengths included a 96% attendance rate, Fourth Grade Proficiency Test (FGPT) scores are above the district average, 86% FGPT scores in writing (district-46%), strong PTA leadership, school-business with local hospital,
and buddy reading mentoring program between primary and intermediate grades. Weaknesses were identified as FGPT scores in science, math, and reading; lack of counselor and Title I services. All grade levels received Title I support services except third grade.

Two goals are identified in the continuous improvement plan: Goal 1-to increase student academic achievement and Goal 2-to operate more efficiently and effectively. The SCIP team targeted two objectives to address increasing student academic achievement. The first objective is "to increase by 2.5%(per state requirement) the number of students who meet the district or state standard in reading." Among the thirteen strategies identified to meet this objective, four in particular address professional in a significant way. Strategies include: have professional development conducted by Language Arts Coordinators to investigate the development of a schoolwide framework for balanced literacy instruction and learning styles; form grade level study groups around Classrooms that Work; develop grade level thematic units focused on math and science; and School-to-Work action team will facilitate the infusion of School-to-Work goals into the curriculum at each grade level.

The second objective targeted to increase student achievement is "to increase Fourth Grade Proficiency scores by 2.5% (per state requirement) by improving K-4 conceptual understanding in math." The plan describes eight strategies, three of which have important implications for professional development. These strategies are: research FGPT scores to determine what
areas our students are doing well in and what they need more help in; third and fifth graders will develop rubrics for class standards following an inservice by Dr. Kennedy (not real name) on student created rubrics; and each teacher will develop an assessment for a content area and share it with grade level team.

The second goal, to operate more efficiently and effectively, has as its objective to increase parent involvement. Of the ten strategies identified, one has implications for teacher professional growth. Teachers will be providing specific feedback on student progress to volunteers offering proficiency intervention. This will provide teachers the opportunity to monitor ongoing progress and collaborate in a meaningful way with community members. The School Continuous Improvement Plan is reviewed in November and February by the SCIP team. Revisions are made at the end of each year by the SCIP team based upon feedback from grade level teams and parent survey data.

NSDC Self-Assessment of Process Characteristics

The self-assessment results related to the NSDC's twenty-two process standards indicated agreement among focus group members that their efforts are consistent to some degree with all the standards, however the group indicated a higher level of agreement with seven statements in particular: the school's improvement plan addresses important aspects of organizational effectiveness, decision making, communication, and team functioning; the principles of adult learning permeate staff development; the
learning climate of staff development activities is collaborative, informal and respectful; staff development decisions are based on data regarding valued student outcomes; recognition of a need to seek improvement exists; staff reading and discussion of educational innovations precede decisions concerning staff development; and staff development includes activities other than "training workshops."

The members of the focus group indicated that they only "somewhat agree" to these seven statements from the self-assessment: staff and administration are aware of the "implementation dip;" research-based content serves as the core of student learning; improvement plans include a carefully designed framework for the integration of innovations; an instructional framework that describes how selected innovations collectively address school priorities exists; program evaluation assesses participants' reactions to the program and measures participants' learning; all staff development training activities include theory, demonstration, practice with feedback and coaching; and staff members regularly analyze and self-correct performance. The results of the self-assessment identified the standards related to the individual change process, data driven decision making, and models of staff development as areas of strength. Based on these results the standards which might need to be addressed are integration of innovations, and evaluation of staff development.
Content Characteristics

The content of professional development in this school seems to have focused on two areas; addressing diversity and improving instructional practices. The need to address issues of diversity is recognized by the staff in response to the changing demographics of the school. The principal describes this demographic shift:

When I first came in 1990, the school population was about 50% minority/50% non-minority. It was right down the middle and everyone was from a similar economic strata. Now, nine years later, that has changed. We are up to about 70% minority/30% non-minority, so it has shifted, in part due to new subsidized public housing. So the needs of the children are very different and we are trying to realign what we're doing. We are doing inservice on how to work with disruptive children and how to communicate differently with parents. We had a whole seminar just this past August on how to deal with children who come from generational poverty which wasn't an issue nine years ago.

The staff has responded by working to focus on and integrate multicultural literature in their thematic units. As well, a Peace Education component has been added to the curriculum. Much of the impetus for this came from a colleague who was completing a Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling. A committee of interested staff members was formed and what resulted was the development of a peer mediation program and the creation of a peace garden. This pledge is posted in the hallways and recited every morning by students and staff:

We the community of (school name) believe it is important to live in a peaceful environment. We:

Promise to commit to lifelong learning,
Encourage kindness,
Improving instructional practices, particularly as it relates to assessment, technology, and integrated teaching methods and supporting thematic units of instruction is another focus of professional development in this school. This year's continuous improvement plan outlines activities aimed at developing and implementing authentic assessments. Student developed rubrics and teacher developed assessment of math concepts are examples. Many teachers spent time this summer learning ClarisWorks software and working with their grade level team developing thematic units carefully integrating science and math concepts. Unfortunately the wiring of this school for computers has been delayed until this school, so technology training activities have been limited.

Team teaching within grade level teams and with the resource teacher serves as another example of professional development that occurs on the job in this school. These opportunities make instructional practices public and provides an immediate feedback mechanism on the effectiveness of the instruction for both teachers.

Being in close proximity to a major university with well respected teacher education programs has had a impact on individual teacher professional development. One teacher shared that the best professional development experience she has had recently was a class taken at the university about a year ago on teaching math. She commented that it was so
valuable because she was able to apply what she was learning on a weekly basis. She signed up for the course because of a need her team had to better integrate math into their thematic units.

NSDC Self-Assessment of Content Characteristics

The self-assessment of the NSDC's eight content standards revealed general agreement that the school was addressing each standard. The focus group identified the highest level of agreement with these statements: teachers and administrators are knowledgeable regarding the needs of children and young adolescents; teachers' classroom management strategies increase academic learning time; the school's staff possess the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to ensure a quality education for all students regardless of culture, race, gender, or ethnicity; teachers offer skills and knowledge to all students in an integrated manner based on essential themes and questions; teachers use a variety of approaches to teaching, know the underlying theories and understand relevant research; teachers use strategies that demonstrate high expectations for all students, and there is regular communication between the school staff and parents/families about individual student's progress.

While the focus group identified agreement with every content standard statement, a lower level of agreement was noted for these two statements: student performance assessments include interviews, observations, portfolios, projects and demonstrations and students can discuss the connection between the various content areas and real life
concerns. The content standards related to student performance assessment and interdisciplinary curriculum appear to be possible target areas. It is no surprise to see interdisciplinary curriculum targeted by these teachers. They talked at length during the focus group interview about the need to take a closer look at the level of integration of math and science content into their literature based thematic units.

The results of the self-assessment indicate that the content standards related to childhood and pre-adolescent development, high expectations, diversity, family involvement, and classroom management appear to be strengths. It is obvious that, in general, this focus group viewed their efforts related to the content standards as the strongest dimension of professional development present in their school.

*How have external standards and initiatives influenced the development and implementation of best practices in professional development in this school?*

The following section addresses the influence external initiatives and standards have had on the development and implementation of best practices in professional development in this high performing school. The impact Venture Capital, BEST Practices and other grant opportunities are discussed. As well, reactions to new accountability standards are presented.

**Venture Capital Initiative**

This school's Venture Capital initiative, School Improvement Through Inquiry, by all accounts has had a positive and lasting influence on
the school. At the very least it has provided the basis for a coherent ongoing plan for teacher learning. One teacher commented:

I think it really did focus our staff development, you know, before that, I think every time we had an early release or anytime we had time for staff development it would be on any topic. This way we kind of planned through the year so we knew exactly what was happening and what the focus would be and I think that Venture Capital, because we knew we were going to be evaluated, kept us in focus.

One of the broad goals of this Venture Capital initiative was to establish a framework for collaboration, through staff development using inquiry and partnership research, to focus directly on instructional practice. This was accomplished through a series of staff presentations of "best practices." Individuals and small groups of staff members researched and delivered instructional practices known to improve student outcomes. While this was valued as a staff development activity, what ultimately resulted was the recognition of and respect for the expertise that exists within the staff. One teacher noted:

I thought the 'Best Practices' was a good thing. Janice did one that had to do with the writing process and another teacher did one on literature. There were a whole lot of people that Jane (not a real name) I guess had seen as experts in the building in various fields and then she asked us to do presentations and I thought that was very beneficial.

Another teacher made a similar observation:

We were all learning new things and didn't have time to share it and that's why Jane (not a real name) made a point that we have so much expertise within our staff, let's make time for them to share their knowledge. They are going to all these other schools, other districts, and they're giving workshops and we don't get the opportunity to see those. So she said, let's do them
right here. So, that's kind of the way it (sharing best practices) came about, which was wonderful.

The principal also speaks to the importance of recognizing and utilizing the expertise that exists within a building as a way of learning and growing together on the job:

When we needed help with the writing process Roberta (not a real name) became the in-house expert. She is. So, we have taught each other. Mentoring might be the right word. We are learning from each other, so now when someone needs to know about the writing process they go to her. Someone else has expertise in multicultural education, so you build in-house expertise. In science there are two or three who are really into pulling resources that are good and others lean on them.

It seems that the Venture Capital experience in this school was an empowering one which set this staff on a course toward continuous improvement. There is evidence that it directed the focus of professional growth and uncovered previously untapped expertise within the building. In addition, staff were given the freedom to guide their own professional learning and reform agenda. This comment says it well:

Before the Venture grant, we did as a staff, engage in activities that the district offered, but it was sort of like, here's the agenda, what do you want to sign up for? And what the Venture grant did for us, it gave us the opportunity to write our own agenda, gave us a lot more freedom to look at things we wanted to know more about, not what the district thought we needed to know.

While Venture Capital may have set this staff on a course of continuous improvement by establishing a plan and uncovering expertise among the staff, it has not resulted in institutionalized changes to support professional learning such as altering the structure of the school day. As the
money has run out, and enrollment increased, much needed planning time has disappeared.

BEST Practice Recognition

This school was honored with a BEST Practice award for the development of a curriculum resource model which provides support for teaching and learning through the incorporation of a resource teacher and establishment of a teacher resource room. Receiving a BEST Practice award served as a real affirmation to the staff for their efforts. The terra-cotta bust of children is proudly displayed in the school library which is the hub of much activity in this literature based school.

State Mandated Report Cards

The impact of increased accountability standards in the form of state wide proficiency tests and building/district report cards has created some concerns among the staff at this school. Their concerns do not seem to center on the issue of increased accountability, as they seem to hold themselves accountable to pretty high standards already. The concerns are more philosophical and have to do with the impact these standards will have on children. This concern is expressed here by the principal:

We were very upset at this school four or five years ago when that was laid on us, fourth grade proficiency tests. That's a very structured kind of exam and we had many teachers who said, this doesn't fit with our philosophy. We don't teach that way, we don't do fill in the blank questions, we don't answer multiple choice questions, we do our assessments more open ended. We do a lot of writing and analyze children that way. We're using rubrics instead of its either right or wrong, you can get points for half an answer. We started to see that our way of
teaching did not match the demands that were being made by proficiency tests, so whether we called it lowering our standards or just being smart, we had to shift gears. We have spent a lot of time in our professional development linking our knowledge to how children not only learn but how they are going to demonstrate progress on the proficiency test. So we have done a lot of inservice where we have tried to match the course of study from each of the subject areas to the fourth grade proficiency test and then how do we put our twist on it as we develop thematic units.

Another concern this staff has relates to holding all children to the same standard rather than holding all children to high standards. One teacher shares her frustration:

I would just say that the pressure we feel, we haven't seen a report card for our school, but I think we always have high standards for our students here, so consequently I think that puts just a little more pressure on us because we need to live up to those levels of expectations parents have and the district has for us. I think we do feel some external pressure when I know my first graders will not be passed in fourth grade if they are not reading proficiently at that time. I used to be a first grade teacher who said, gee look at how much they have learned this year and I see the growth they've made and feel successful about it. Now, personally, I feel more like, oh my goodness here are some little kids who have come in with some difficulties and I know they are going to make progress but its not going to be nearly enough to meet what the state has set for those kids and yet they have made a good deal of progress. And I feel torn about that because, sometimes when kids don't start out at the same place, their not going to end up in fourth grade at the same place, and yet we are saying regardless of where you start out you have to be at the same place.

There is clearly a mismatch between the philosophy of teaching and learning embraced by the teaching staff at this school and the standards by which the learning of children will be measured. Their fear is that many of their present practices, which they believe are based on best practice and
current research, may actually put students at-risk of not performing well on these tests. This staff has responded by developing proficiency interventions, and exposing student to standardized testing formats.

What are seen as the contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining ongoing, high quality professional development efforts?

This section focuses on identifying the contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining high quality professional development efforts. Major contributors identified in this case are the leadership provided by the building principal and the strength of the philosophy of the school. Time and the financial resources to support professional development were identified as constraints.

Contributors

The Principal

The principal in this building is a key player in its success. She embraces the mission of the school and is dedicated to seeing it carried out. Her willingness to not only share leadership, but to seek it out, is apparent by the strong teacher leaders she has been responsible for employing over the years. Her recognition of this is evident in this comment:

I feel I am a leader of leaders because we have a strong staff and if you've been in some of our meetings, we have some knock down drag out conversations and people get very, very, vocal and that's okay. Because I have said to them we will agree to disagree.
The principal views herself as just another colleague in the building.

She describes her role as that of facilitator this way:

"Like I said before, I think professional development equals opportunities. I think I need to make teachers aware of the opportunities. I need to lead them to them. Make it happen. Be supportive. Look for funding. I don't think I have been a real leader in the Venture Capital movement here. I have been more of a facilitator. I have not dictated it and it is not my plan. And I really didn't write it. I had staff members that wrote it and I supported it. I offered my opinion. I made no dictatorial givens."

As part of this study the principal completed a PeopleSmarts Behavioral Profile. This profile utilizes a unique combination of Open (Supporting) and Self-Contained (Controlling) and Direct and Indirect behaviors to represent four distinct behavioral styles. This profile is based solely on the principal's own perception of these behaviors. The results reflect only a generalized character type rather than a complete or accurate description of any individual. As well, the results indicate behavioral types and are not intended to describe leadership styles.

In this case the principal identified with the style known as the Socializer. Socializers are Direct and Open (Supporting) and exhibit characteristics such as intuitiveness and liveliness. Socializers keep a fast pace and their primary strengths are enthusiasm, persuasiveness, and sociability. Their primary weakness is the tendency to get involved in too many things. Socializers are stimulating talkative, gregarious and have the dynamic ability to think quickly on their feet. They tend to operate on
intuition and like to take risks and work with others who take risks and act quickly.

Socializers are idea people and because of their persuasive skills are able to get others caught up in their dreams. They influence others and shape their environment by bringing others into alliance to accomplish results. This seems to have been the case with the principal in this school.

Learning Community

The literature based approach, as articulated in the school's mission, and described earlier, provides a clear focus for teaching and learning by both students and teachers. Such a unified approach has everyone aiming at the same target, which is to develop and foster literacy and lifelong learning in students and staff. The learning community that has been established and the daily examples staff provide as literate lifelong learners certainly contribute to increased student learning and professional learning among teachers. The school song sums it up quite simply:

All I really need is a book in my hand,
Words in my head, and a paper to write them on.
All I really need is (school name) and friends.

Then see what I can be.
Then see what I can be.

We believe that readers can write.
We believe that writers can read.
Think and talk our problem out;
That is what we're all about.

Then see what I can be.
Then see what I can be

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Constraints

Time

Time, rather than money, is the one barrier identified by both the teachers and the principal. The development and delivery of integrated, thematic grade level units of instruction cannot occur without close, ongoing collaboration among colleagues. Attempts have been made to restructure the day without much success. Interestingly, when asked how they would address the time issue, both the teachers and the principal suggested expanding the current school calendar. The principal suggested the addition of five to ten days dedicated for professional learning.

If they would extend the school year another five days, and we could afford to pay people, and those five days were dedicated, or ten days, were dedicated to professional development, I don't think people would complain if we had a 195 day school year.

One of the teachers in the focus group went further to suggest year round schooling. From her comments it is clear the pressure teachers feel due to the lack of time.

I personally like the idea of year round schools, as long as they are air conditioned (chuckle). To set it up something like the university, on a quarter system would be neat. It gives you time to do your grading, it gives you time to clean up your room, it give you time to prepare for the next unit, it gives kids a break and you a break. When they came back they would be eager to learn again...because once you get going on something its like boom, boom, boom, like you are on a carousel and you want to jump off because it is just so busy and hectic, and you need more time to do everything. To do everything you need to put in about twelve hours a day. I think for children's learning, it would help for them to come to school year round.
From my own observations, the learning environment in this school is demanding for both students and teachers. Teachers hit the ground running and seem to be "on" throughout the day, with little, if any down time. Certainly, the instructional approach of teaching with thematic units places great demands on teacher time. When asked if they could have anything in the way of support for professional development the response was:

somewhat providing, and I know this costs money, more opportunities for teachers to work together during the school day.

Summary

This urban elementary is committed to school improvement through a literature based approach which focuses on developing literacy as the basis of all learning. Much of the content of professional development is aimed at improving instructional methods and integrated thematic units and addressing issues of diversity. Professional learning takes place in a highly collegial environment in which teachers work together to develop and deliver integrated thematic units of instruction at each grade level. A School Continuous Improvement Planning Team monitors a plan which directs improvement efforts and professional development opportunities.

During the past five years the school has benefited from having had a Venture Capital grant to focus on school improvement using an inquiry method. School staff have been busy examining the best practices that exist
within their school, as well as the ramifications of state mandated accountability measures, as they move forward to expand their school improvement efforts.

The consistent leadership of the building principal over the past eight years has been a major contributor to school improvement and professional development efforts. This principal is committed to the school’s mission and to supporting the teaching staff as they strive to grow professionally to meet the mission. Common beliefs among staff members regarding literacy learning provide a clear focus on teaching and learning. Time for working and learning together on the job was identified as a major constraint to teacher professional development and remains a serious problem to be addressed. Restructuring of the day to accommodate time for collaboration will be a challenge that will likely require the support of the district and should be given serious attention.

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The three cases previously presented in this chapter, the suburban high school, the rural junior high school and the urban elementary school serve to profile the characteristics of and influences on professional development in these high performing schools. This section is intended to provide an analysis across all three cases in order to respond to the research
questions and to identify common approaches which may be considered as best practices in cultivating and sustaining professional development that is job-embedded. This analysis is based on the researcher's interpretations of each case.

*What characterizes the context, process and content of professional development best practices in these schools?*

The analyses of the context, process, and content characteristics across cases are described and discussed categorically. While these may be discussed as separate categories, it is important to note that in practice these characteristics impact on one another in dynamic ways.

**Context Characteristics**

The context characteristics that follow outline the nature of the environment in which professional learning takes place across the cases studied. Three general themes emerged which provide a frame for discussing what characterizes the context of professional development in these high performing schools. These themes are Learning at School, Learning Together, and Leadership for Learning.

**Learning at School**

In all three cases it was interesting to find that valuable space within the school has been dedicated specifically for teachers to work together. These work areas are in addition to the teachers' lounges and are being utilized largely to support collaborative efforts. The professional library at
the high school is arranged to support both individual and group faculty work. The junior high site was created to facilitate daily grade level team meetings. The teacher resource room at the elementary school developed out of the need to provide storage for the thematic units which are continually being developed. Such professional work space provides physical evidence to indicate that the culture within these schools values the professional work of teachers, especially those efforts that are collaborative.

Time to work together at school is another critical factor to teachers learning together on the job. Varying degrees of time for learning together was evident across cases. Clearly, the restructuring efforts at the junior high site have paid off in terms of providing teachers in the building with time everyday for professional work and collaboration. While the teachers at the high school have no common planning periods they seem to craft time to collaborate as needed in order to pull off new initiatives. As integrated, team taught courses were proposed the teachers involved worked with colleagues in their departments to try and arrange regular times together with colleagues from other departments. This occurred in the development of the service learning course and between the English and Science departments in the development of a course that integrated Physics and Contemporary Literature. Teachers at the elementary school have time to learn together only as they teach together. While teachers at both the elementary and high school sites have initiated innovations which require joint work and
learning, they have not been as successful as the junior high site in restructuring time to accommodate their professional learning needs.

Learning Together

Teaching teams which are defined by a high degree of collegiality and collaboration provides the structure for teacher interaction at all sites. The teachers at the high school site are organized by departments and function much like a faculty within a higher education institution. However, each department is represented by a facilitator. Facilitators meet weekly with the building principal. Strong and supportive collegial relationships have developed within and across departments as evidenced by the peer coaching program in the English department and the creation of the many interdisciplinary courses being taught at the school.

Teaching teams are organized by grade level at the junior high and elementary school sites. Both of these team structures represent highly interdependent relationships. The grade level teams at the junior high school are interdisciplinary and the team shares responsibility for all students at their grade level. The elementary grade level teams work closely to develop and implement integrated, thematic, literature based units of instruction. Professional learning is fostered as teachers work together sharing knowledge and feedback. The climate of these schools can be described as collegial and collaborative. Each of the schools studied seems to mirror what the high school identifies as part of their mission, to "strengthen education and build community through collaboration."
Leadership for Learning

Examples of shared leadership and teacher empowerment are present in all three schools. Teachers at the high school describe themselves as risk takers and feel free to initiate innovative practices. Innovative practices are not imposed, but rather are generated out of interests expressed by individual teachers or departments. Many decisions are made and priorities established via the weekly department facilitators meetings.

A staff development team made up of teachers work with the principal to decide and plan for the use of newly restructured time for professional development at the junior high site. The junior high teachers have much to say about the content and context of professional development activities. Many of the current innovations at the school are part of some grant initiative. Teachers are always represented in the development and ongoing monitoring of grant funded initiatives.

At the elementary school teachers not only decide what the content of their professional learning will be, but also, with whom they will learn. The elementary teachers at this school are empowered to select their own staff. The principal commented that she is a "leader of leaders" and that teachers are often promoted out of this school to assume administrative or consultant positions. The result of shared leadership and empowerment of teachers as seen in these schools is the strong buy in or ownership on the part of teachers of school improvement efforts.
The focus groups in all three schools viewed their activities as being consistent with the continuous improvement standards. In particular, they perceive that staff development is ongoing and job-embedded in their school; and that staff development activities result in changes in classroom practice for most teachers on the staff. Both the urban elementary and the rural junior high school viewed their efforts to be consistent with the organizational alignment and support standards. They believe that within the context of their buildings staff development is viewed as an essential component for achieving the purposes of the organization and is valued as an integral part of the strategic plan. Evidence of this was found in an examination of each building's strategic or continuous improvement plan. There is also the belief that central administration supports the work necessary to accomplish school improvement goals and provides an adequate budget. This is interesting due to the fact there is very little district support for staff development in both districts. Teachers probably perceive the budget to be adequate due to the funding that has been available through Venture Capital.

The standards pertaining to time for learning were identified by the suburban high school and the urban elementary as possible target areas. Efforts should focus on developing strategies for facilitating planning and learning during the school day and on increasing the percent of time during the work week for joint learning and work. This is consistent with what
teachers and principals shared during the interviews and was obvious by examining schedules and attempting to meet with teachers during the school day.

**Process Characteristics**

The process characteristics outlined below describe "how" decisions are made related to determining the content and context of professional growth among staff at these schools. In each case the school has a plan for continuous improvement and a structure in place for ongoing monitoring and development of the plan. Each plan included some degree of the following attributes: related to district goals; data driven; results oriented and involvement of parents and community members.

**Plans for Continuous Improvement**

Each school has a plan which is framed a little differently. The high school has a Strategic Plan, the junior high has a Plan for Systemic Change and the elementary school has in place a School Continuous Improvement Plan. All of these plans are tied to the district's mission and have as a primary goal to increase student achievement. The professional development activities outlined in each of these plans to address the goal of increasing student achievement focuses on developing and implementing innovative instructional methods and alternative assessments of student performance. Examples include developing integrated units referred to as lesson crafting at the junior high school, thematic units focused on math and
science at the elementary school, and portfolio development and interdisciplinary courses at the high school.

All three plans are data driven and results oriented to some degree. In each case the goals and objectives for increasing student achievement are based on proficiency test data. The junior high and high school also identify data related to attendance and graduation rates consistent with new state mandates. Results for increasing student achievement are tied to increasing proficiency scores. The elementary school staff specifically aims to increase scores by 2.5 percent on the reading and math portions of the fourth grade proficiency test. This is consistent with new state requirements.

The plans in place at the high school and junior high have parent and community involvement as an explicit goal. Professional development activities related to these goals provide meaningful opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge and perspectives beyond their peer group as well as establish more meaningful relationships with parents and community members. Through the Community Learning Center at the junior high school parents, teachers and community members will have opportunities to learn proficiency intervention strategies together.

Any plan is only as good as the effort and information that goes into its development and the assurance that the plan will be monitored on an ongoing basis. The high school has in place a School Restructuring Committee composed of 12 teachers, 3 students, 2 parents and a representative from the business community. This committee was initially
charged with approving and monitoring Venture Capital allocations but now serves to monitor the professional development activities identified in the plan and to review and recommend revisions yearly. Another group of twenty school and community members assembled by the principal meets quarterly to review the plan and provide feedback to the restructuring committee.

The junior high school has in place two structures that provide ongoing monitoring of their plan. A staff development team monitors the professional development aspects of the plan while an academic progress committee, with community representation, monitors performance indicators. The School Continuous Improvement Planning Team (SCIP) at the elementary school is composed of teaching staff and parents and is responsible for quarterly review and yearly revision of their plan. This team monitors staff development efforts as well as performance indicators.

**NSDC Self-Assessment of Process Characteristics**

The standards related to data driven decision making and models of staff development were consistently identified by the focus groups across all three sites as areas of strength for their school. With regard to data driven decision making they agreed that there is recognition among the staff of the need to seek improvement and that staff development decisions are based on data regarding valued student outcomes. The focus group members from each school agree that staff development models utilized at their school include activities other than "training workshops" and that staff
development training activities include theory, demonstration, practice with feedback and coaching. One example is the ongoing training and support the critical friends group at the high school receives on peer coaching from their association with the Coalition of Essential Schools group in the area.

The focus groups across all three sites also identified two areas related to the process standards that could be considered as possible target areas. These areas are integration of innovations and evaluation of staff development. There appears to be a need for a carefully designed framework for integrating innovations and relating those innovations to the mission of the organization. This perception on the part of these teachers is interesting in that all of these school have a fairly well integrated written plan. It is likely that this perception is in response to the increasing number of different innovations being introduced in each of these schools. Teachers are often invested in a particular innovation and fail to see how all innovations relate to the overall improvement plan. With regard to the evaluation of staff development, there appears to be the need for an evaluation process that is ongoing, includes multiple sources of information, and focuses on all levels of the organization including the direct impact on student learning.

Content Characteristics

The content of professional development in these schools, as seen in daily practice and reflected in building improvement plans, seems to be focused largely on two areas, the development and implementation of instructional innovations and alternative assessments. A common element
of the instructional innovations in all three school is the collaborative nature of these initiatives. The integrated thematic units developed and utilized by the elementary teachers provides an ongoing forum for professional learning among teachers in this building. Student performance on the math and science portions of the fourth grade proficiency test has these teachers looking critically at the content of their units. Currently these teachers are working together to development units that center on math and science concepts.

Teachers at the junior high school are working together to develop interdisciplinary short courses to be offered during newly restructured time known as Encore periods. An example of such an effort is the popular Retro course which joins music, art, and poetry of the 60s. The teachers have also worked together to develop a single sex Algebra class and are monitoring its effect on math performance.

The initial blocking of English and Science courses at the high school has led to the development of a number of integrated courses that are being team taught across departments, like American Literature and U. S. History. The dynamic nature of such collaborative efforts requires teachers to continually evaluate student performance and needs; share knowledge and expertise; and critique their own practices.

In each of these schools mention was made of efforts to realign the curriculum with proficiency outcomes. This occurred at the high school and elementary school as part of a district wide effort to look at the course of
study and proficiency outcomes by subject and grade level. The junior high staff had someone lead them through a "curriculum on the wall" process. Each grade level team examined and continues to monitor their curriculum in relation to proficiency outcomes. The evidence of their efforts were visible.

The development and implementation of alternative forms of assessment provides another content emphasis at these schools. Both the high school and junior high teachers are working on developing portfolios to showcase student performance, including electronic versions. Teachers at the elementary school are bringing in an expert and dedicating one professional development day to learning how to develop and utilize student generated rubrics.

Content related to technology seemed to vary greatly from the elementary that is yet to be wired, to the junior high who is embarking on a distance learning project, to the Science Lab in the high school where students are developing proficiency intervention software to be used in the lab with at-risk students. Individual teacher interest seems to drive the degree and level of training they have received. Several teachers at each of the sites talked about technology training they received during the summer. Teachers at the high school are struggling with a new computerized management system which will require all teacher to enter student data and grades. Training will be offered throughout the year.
In addition to professional learning directed toward improving instructional practices, efforts made toward improving professional practice were also observed. Certainly the critical friends group that provides a form of peer coaching within the English department at the high school is one good example. Another example is the coaching and feedback provided by mentors sent by the district to the urban elementary school. This year the seven new staff members at the elementary are assigned a mentor teacher who spends approximately a half a day a month with their mentee. Mentors share responsibility for performance with principals.

NSDC Self-Assessment of Content Characteristics

The focus group at each site consistently identified the content standards as the strongest dimension of professional development present in their school. All three focus groups viewed themselves as highly consistent with the content standards related to high expectations for all students. They agreed that through the use of a variety of instructional strategies administrators and teachers demonstrate a belief that all students can learn and that teachers employ strategies that demonstrate high expectations for all students. The focus groups at urban elementary and the rural junior both indicated a high degree of consistency with the standards related to family involvement and child development knowledge base. This is not surprising given the documented level of community involvement in restructuring that occurred at the junior high and the active PTA that functions at the elementary school.

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Keeping in mind that a high degree of consistency with content standards were identified at each site, target areas were identified for those standards where a lower level of agreement was indicated. For the urban elementary and rural junior high, student performance assessment was identified as a possible target area. Interestingly, the suburban high school identified student performance assessment as area of strength and family involvement as their target area.

How have external standards and initiatives influenced the development and implementation of best practices in professional development in this school?

Venture Capital Program

The Venture Capital Program has influenced professional development in these schools in two significant ways. First, school improvement plans initially developed for the Venture Capital program have evolved into continuous improvement plans that specifically address professional development. The high school and junior high school both adopted the Coalition of Essential Schools model to direct their efforts. The junior high principal notes how Venture Capital gave them a starting point for restructuring and focusing on professional development:

We selected the Coalition of Essential Schools as the model for our Venture Capital grant in this building. In terms of context, that gave us a model to follow. I think it really had a direct influence on our restructuring initiative and staff development because we could take from the Essential Schools model and do what we needed to do.
An elementary teacher makes this powerful point regarding the influence of Venture Capital in her building:

I think it really did focus our staff development, you know, before that, I think every time we had an early release or anytime we had time for staff development it would be on any topic. This way we kind of planned through the year so we knew exactly what was happening and what the focus would be and I think that Venture Capital, because we knew we were going to be evaluated, kept us in focus.

Venture Capital initiatives have impacted professional development in these schools by providing opportunities and structures for helping to create a professional community that understands the need for and values learning and working together. Venture Capital afforded teachers opportunities to seek expert knowledge outside the school, which in turn resulted in building and recognizing in-house expertise. This in turn has led to a stronger sense of collegiality and sharing. The following testimonials are telling.

From a high school teacher:

I think what Venture Capital allowed us to do was develop a stronger sense of professional pride. We were able to go to professional meetings together and learn new things and also be validated because sometimes we saw that we were doing more innovative things than the presenters. We were able to form a genuine camaraderie. You know, because we've been together and learned things together and being able to boast about what is going on together.

From an elementary teacher:

We are learning from each other, so now when someone needs to know about the writing process they go to her. Someone else has expertise in multicultural education, so you build in-house
expertise. In science there are two or three who are really into pulling resources that are good and others lean on them.

**BEST Practice Initiative**

All three schools have enjoyed the status associated with receiving a BEST Practice award. Each school was recognized by their Board of Education and received media coverage. These awards represent statewide recognition for best practices which are likely to be replicated. The process of applying for and receiving an award has had a positive impact on the professional development of the teachers involved at each of the schools. The process of applying, itself, requires a critical review of the program in terms of considering the program's effectiveness, the research that supports it and its ability to be replicated. Receiving an award is a real affirmation of teacher learning and commitment to innovation.

The high school just received its second BEST Practice award, as well as a Seeds of Change Award, and is extremely proud of this honor. The Seeds of Change award was received for a school to work initiative that has been replicated across the state. The second BEST Practice award was for an American Sign Language program which is receiving statewide attention. Because of the influence of the BEST program teachers here are excited about the research and development of new practices and programs that will have an impact not only on their school but potentially on others around the state.

A major byproduct of the BEST initiative has been the visitors who have come to these schools to see BEST practices and other school
improvement initiatives. This attention has had an impact on professional development in that it has made teacher practice more public and has afforded teachers the opportunity to share and talk about their practice. All three schools report that they receive many visitors. The elementary school reported over one hundred visitors last year and the junior high principal reported that their school has visitors scheduled almost every week. Through this increased contact teachers are now networking with others around the state and partnerships with other districts are being developed.

State Mandated Report Cards

The reaction to newly mandated and increased accountability standards being disseminated through building report cards was similar across schools. While comments were made questioning the "wisdom" and validity of reporting these kind of measures, there was little debating the issue. There was some frustration and concern expressed by the elementary teachers that their philosophy of instruction in this literature based school may actually put students at risk due to their use of developmentally appropriate practices. They are used to having high standards for all students, not necessarily the same standards.

These increased accountability standards have influenced professional development by requiring teachers to engage in the ongoing analysis and monitoring of student performance. Teachers in all three schools have worked to realign curriculum with proficiency outcomes and have developed proficiency intervention classes and activities. The teachers at the
elementary school have responded to low math and science scores by examining and crafting thematic units that address specific math and science concepts. All in all the report cards have reinforced the fact that schools will be held accountable for improving student outcomes as measured by proficiency test performance. The report card requirement has necessitated a closer look by teachers at student performance data, curriculum content, and instructional practices.

What are seen as the contributors and constraints to cultivating and sustaining ongoing, high quality professional development efforts?

Leadership

The building principal in each of these cases is seen as a direct contributor to the success of the school improvement efforts made by the school. Each of these principals recognizes the pivotal role professional development plays in school improvement. All three, in their own way, have a clear vision of where the school is headed, encourage and support innovation, share leadership and view their role in the school as that of facilitator.

The principals at each site completed a PeopleSmarts Behavioral Profile. The high school principal identified with the style known as the Relater while the principals of the junior high and elementary schools identified themselves as Socializers. Relaters tend to be the most people oriented of all four types and utilize a more Indirect approach. Socializers on
the other hand tend to utilize a more Direct approach. Both behavioral styles, Relaters and Socializers, reflect Open (Supporting) behaviors. Open behaviors described in the behavioral profile and observed among these principals include: being flexible about how time is used by others; showing and sharing feelings freely; preferring to work with others; and being easy to get to know. All three principals exhibited some supporting behaviors which have helped to build relationships with staff and garner support for school improvement efforts.

All three principals to varying degrees have empowered teachers by creating cultures where teachers are involved in decision making regarding both school improvement and professional development efforts. These principals have also created a culture that values the joint work of teachers and attempts to support it with both time and space.

Community Support

Community support exists at varying levels among these schools and is a major contributor to professional development efforts. The restructuring of time at the junior high school to allow ongoing and consistent opportunities for teachers to learn and work together would not be possible with community strong community. To accomplish this changes were made in the length of the school day. Community members are involved in every level of decision making regarding school improvement including the professional development of teachers.
The high school enjoys a close relationship with several community members and businesses as a result of the school-to-work initiative. As well, community members are involved in the quarterly review of the school’s strategic plan and see first hand the needs and activities related to teacher professional development. The elementary school has two business partners, an area hospital and a data analysis company. The data analysis company provides mentors who come into the school each week to work with at-risk students. The elementary school also enjoys the support of a strong PTA.

Time

Lack of time for learning and working together on the job was identified as a major constraint to professional development by staff at both the elementary school and the high school. At both schools the nature of instructional practices is now more collaborative. The development of thematic units at the elementary and interdisciplinary courses at the high school require time for teachers to analyze student data and plan instruction. Time is also required in order for teachers to observe and give feedback to one another regarding new instructional practices as part of peer coaching efforts.
CHAPTER 5

LESSONS LEARNED, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The study was guided by a body of literature that encompassed three major areas. First, recent reform reports were examined and discussed as they establish professional development as a new priority in addressing school improvement. Understanding the new and higher priority given to teacher professional development set the stage for considering new conceptions of how teachers grow and learn professionally. The second major area focused on the literature suggesting how professional development should be reconceptualized in relation to policy making and practice. This section provided a discussion of a major shift in thinking about professional development that is results-driven, employs systems thinking, and utilizes a constructivist perspective and included implications for policy makers and principals. Finally, the growing body of literature regarding best practices in professional development was presented. Characteristics related to the context, process and content of best practices were discussed.
Using this literature to frame a set of research questions, the researcher sought to examine and describe the characteristics of professional development in three different school settings which appeared to be high performing in terms of their commitment to school improvement and student performance. What follows are lessons learned from practices in these schools. This chapter includes a synopsis of the lessons learned in relation to the research questions, a discussion of the implications these lessons hold for informing practice, and recommendations for further research.

Lessons Learned

Characteristics of Professional Development

Professional development practices at these schools were studied by examining the context in which they occur, the process by which they are planned and organized and the content which addresses improved learning for students and teachers. So what was learned about the practices at these three sites? First, a high degree of collaboration among colleagues was noted in each of these schools. Collaboration among teachers in these schools is defined by something more than sharing materials and space with others and serving on committees together. In these schools to collaborate means to share in the joint work of the organization by wrestling with real problems, developing and implementing innovative practices, and supporting one another in growing professionally. Teachers in all three
schools are organized to work together on various forms of teaching teams and committees.

Serious collaborative work requires both time and space. All three of these schools have made space and resources available to those teachers who are serious about working together to improve teaching and learning. Time for teacher professional development has been crafted at the junior high setting but remains a major task for administrators and teachers at both the high school and the elementary school.

Best practices in these schools are also characterized by collaboration efforts which provide learning opportunities for teachers and students out of school. Business partnerships like the one the high school has established with a national cookie company which not only offers student rich opportunities for career exploration, but also provide teachers with another professional perspective regarding what students need to know to be prepared for the world of work.

Shared beliefs regarding teaching and learning and a recognition of the need for improvement seems to be the glue that connects these teachers. At the high school teachers interested in working together for school improvement have found one another within and across departments and have become a powerful force for change. The elementary school has a deeply held belief regarding literacy learning and "grow their own" by hiring teachers with a common philosophy. The teachers at the junior high have
grown together as they have been led by their principal through successful restructuring efforts.

Successful efforts made toward improving professional practice and student outcomes requires a plan which addresses both. Plans are in place in each of these schools that focus, for the most part, on improving student outcomes. Specific plans for professional development are embedded in each plan and drive the content of professional learning. In addition to the continuous improvement plans both the high school and elementary are completing professional development activities outlined in their Venture Capital grants. The junior high has very specific plans in place for professional learning as part of the Systemic Change and Raising the Bar grants they have recently received.

Plans for continuous improvement are only as good as the data they are built upon and the process in place for monitoring their effectiveness. The plans in place in these schools which utilize data from proficiency outcomes are important for focusing efforts toward improving student achievement as measured by proficiency tests. Each school has a representative group of school personnel and community members in place to review and monitor progress toward their goals. This monitoring process also helps to evaluate needs related to professional development on an ongoing basis.

Finally, teachers must be supported by administrators and by each other in assuming responsibility for their own learning. In each of the
schools teachers have direct input into the development and adoption of innovative practices which focuses the content of professional development. Examples of shared leadership and teacher empowerment were found in all three schools, from teachers selecting their own colleagues at the elementary school to teachers serving as critical friends for one another at the high school.

**Influence of External Initiatives and Standards**

The school improvement initiatives investigated in this study, Venture Capital and BEST Practice, along with new state accountability standards reported through a public report card for each school have influenced the professional development of teachers in a variety of ways. Venture Capital, as an initiative to support professional development and school improvement efforts at the building level, has suffered its share of criticism. However, in each of these cases the Venture Capital initiative served to focus professional learning and school improvement by providing a process that required examining current practice and performance, establishing indicators of success and reporting progress. For these schools Venture Capital plans and activities provided a starting point for looking at school improvement and professional development in a systematic way. In each case Venture Capital initiatives have been expanded into plans for continuous improvement.

While the process was important, the financial resources available through Venture Capital provided opportunities that had both direct and
indirect effects on professional development. Teachers were able to go outside and experts were brought in to expand the knowledge base of teachers. These opportunities and new knowledge led to the creation of a more professional culture that recognized and valued the expertise that existed among colleagues in the building. Successes related to receiving and implementing a Venture Capital grant have provided these schools with the confidence, experience and data to seek other sources of external funding to support professional learning.

Venture Capital has provided each of these schools a starting point for initiating school improvement efforts which have continued to some degree, however little institutional change has occurred as a result of Venture Capital. The high school has moved to block scheduling and the junior high school has restructured time to allow for job-embedded teacher development. Both the high school and the elementary school are back to where they started with regard to support for professional development once Venture Capital funds are exhausted.

The BEST Practice initiative has had an impact in two important ways. First, receiving this award provides a high degree of affirmation for the commitment and efforts made toward school improvement and individual professional growth. There is a high level of status associated with BEST Practice awards and these schools are proud to be distinguished in this way. The second effect BEST Practice has had on these schools has been to make the professional practice of individuals and groups more public. Each of
these schools has many visitors. These contacts provide opportunities for teachers to talk about and share knowledge as well as establish links with professionals in other schools.

It appeared that all three schools already hold themselves to high standards tied to improved student performance. The new building report card required by the state seems to have reinforced the expectation that schools will be held publicly accountable for student performance based on statewide proficiency tests. This has led these schools, and especially their administrators, to a close examination of curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment methods.

Contributors and Constraints

There are many factors that can contribute to or constrain the professional learning of teachers. However, the leadership at the building level in each of these cases was identified as a primary contributor. While the principals in each of these buildings clearly had their own unique style, they did share a similar approach by assuming a facilitator role. To varying degrees these principals involved teachers in decision making and sought to establish consensus regarding professional development initiatives.

Leadership that has a clear vision of where the organization is going and understands and supports the ongoing need for professional growth on the part of its providers is key to continuous improvement. The schools in this study also benefited from the longevity of consistent, effective leadership.
The high school principal has served his school for ten years while the elementary and junior high principals have each served eight years.

Community involvement in and ownership of school improvement is essential to creating an organization that values and supports the ongoing professional development of its teachers. The schools in this study have forged valuable partnerships within their communities. The junior high school has been successful in bringing their community along with them in their restructuring efforts. The elementary and high school each have partnerships with area businesses that may represent less systemic support, yet have been very beneficial to the schools in moving toward their improvement goals.

The primary constraint to professional development identified by the teachers and principals at these schools was time for collaborative work and professional learning. There is great frustration in trying to provide instruction; monitor student progress; collaborate with peers to initiate innovative practices; establish and maintain relationships with parents and community members, and continue to grow professionally as an individual all in seven hours a day during a 182 day year. Certainly, as the adage goes, "time is money." Addressing the issue of time will require a close look at financial resources.

Problems that Remain

While various forms of teams are utilized in these schools for planning and teaching, teachers have indicated a need for staff development
in the area of group development, collaborative skills, and establishing interdisciplinary teams. This makes one wonder how effective and supportive these teams are and how they might be improved by providing opportunities to develop collaborative, group skills. Organizing staff into teams does not assure their work together will be productive, rewarding, or make a difference for students. A closer look should be taken at the needs of the teaching teams in these schools. As well, the number and level of participation of individuals on teams and committees should be considered. Some teachers serve on multiple teams, perhaps making it difficult to develop the necessary relationships to be effective on any team.

The teachers in this study also indicated a need to understand the integration of innovations. The junior high principal mentioned that at times she has wondered if they had “bit off more than they could chew.” While each of these schools has a coherent plan on paper which outlines innovations and strategies that address teacher and student learning, it is curious that these teachers don’t seem understand the framework. A close look should be taken at the number on innovations being attempted and their impact on student and teacher learning. Sometimes we may have too many plates in the air and we may be ahead to decide to do a few things well.

Implications for Best Practice

The implications for best practice uncovered in this study should be considered within the context of a new vision for staff development. This
new vision described by Sparks & Hirsh (1997) focuses on professional learning that is results oriented, employs systems thinking, and adheres to a constructivist perspective. The implications discussed in this section consider the interaction of context, process, and content characteristics of professional development as they relate to the following: learning together in and out of school, leadership for learning and learning to improve outcomes and practice.

Learning Together In and Out of School

Lieberman (1995, p. 593) proposes the need for professional development that moves from the traditional inservice training model to what she terms "learning in school." Learning in school offers teachers opportunities to discuss, think about, try out and hone new practices. Learning in school requires new roles for teachers such as peer coach; new structures such as decision making teams; and new tasks such as grant writing and portfolio development. Through these new roles, structures and tasks a culture of inquiry is created wherein professional learning is expected, sought after, and is an ongoing part of teaching and school life. As well new forms for professional development need to offer teachers opportunities to "learn out of school." Participation in collaboratives, networks, coalitions are powerful ways of stimulating interest and assuming leadership.

Best practices often represent those efforts that are collaborative and are couched in relationships that are collegial. The result is the development of interdependent teaching roles which provide genuine and meaningful
opportunities for teachers to grow and work professionally to improve student learning. In this context teachers become teachers of teachers. In each of these cases the school sought outside expertise for professional development. Teachers soon became aware of previously untapped in-house expertise and the need to share new knowledge with one another. This comment by the junior high school principal represents similar experiences regarding the development of local expertise shared by the other two schools:

... you have to start someplace and I think you do need to start with observing or having someone come in to give you some "how to" and then, I think, as the staff grows they become more instrumental, and teachers teaching teachers is kind a the premise that we have been using more recently because they are the experts and I think our staff has learned to believe that.

We know that professional development that is highly collaborative and collegial and is ongoing and embedded in the daily life of school represents best practice. Time for joint work and learning is a critical factor in improving professional practice and student outcomes and is central to developing best practices. Restructuring of time for professional learning must involve all stakeholders in the school. The community must understand and support the connection between staff development and improved student outcomes and be willing to look at the resources and changes that may be necessary to provide the time to support it.
Leadership for Learning

Best practice will require strong leadership that promotes and supports both individual and organizational development. This may be accomplished in what McLaughlin (1994) describes as a "professional community." A professional community requires: active school leadership with vision and commitment to developing a comprehensive community focused on learning, one that integrates rather than separates ideas and practice; time and space to meet and talk; interdependent teaching roles; active attention to renewal of community through symbols and celebration; and structures that encourage the exchange of ideas within and across the organizational unit including schools and school systems. Creating such communities will be a real challenge for building principals.

Best practice also requires leadership that can involve all stakeholders in coordinating a plan for addressing and monitoring continuous improvement at the building level. Senge (1990) describes three leadership roles in learning organizations: leader as designer, leader as teacher and leader as steward. Staff development that emphasizes systems thinking must be embedded in any plan for continuous improvement in order for all stakeholders to understand the nature and power of systems to shape events. Principals will need to be prepared to share leadership and empower teachers in order to create and manage a culture that supports continuous learning.

Community understanding of and support for school improvement and teacher professional development is central to the development and
implementation of best practices. Leadership will be needed to not only broker community support in terms of accessing resources, but to educate and involve community members in the work of the organization. Community support for restructuring will be essential to making the dramatic changes necessary to improve the learning environment for both teachers and students. Improving schools, which requires the ongoing professional development of teachers, is not solely the job of schools but rather a job for the community.

Learning to Improve Outcomes and Practice

Instructional best practices for both teachers and students reflect a constructivist perspective. From a constructivist perspective learners create their own knowledge structures rather than have them imposed by others. Knowledge is not transmitted it is constructed in the mind of the learner. Staff development must model constructivist practices for teachers if they are expected to see the validity of those practices and understand them well enough to effectively integrate them into their classrooms. Opportunities for conversations with peers about the beliefs and assumptions that guide their instruction as well as working together in groups to solve real problems of practice are but two examples.

Just as schools are being held to higher standards of student achievement, best practices in professional development will require professional learning that is results driven. Its success will be judged not by
the number of workshops taken or how good teachers felt about them, but by whether instructional behavior is altered in a way that benefits students.

Recommendations for Further Research

Much was learned about what characterizes professional learning in high performing schools in light of new conceptions of professional development. However, many questions emerged which need to be addressed through further research. Studies that utilize qualitative approaches to study professional practices and their relationship to improved student outcomes over time would be useful. Also interesting would be studies that look at best practices in relation to proficiency outcomes. The following are possible questions for further research in this area:

What role does the continuous improvement planning process play in addressing staff development for improved student outcomes? How are staff development needs determined and tied to the continuous improvement plan? Should staff development be embedded in the continuous improvement plan or developed as a companion?

What impact does the demographics of a community have on building support for school improvement? What strategies are most
effective for building community support in rural, suburban, and urban settings?

How can time be restructured to accommodate "learning in school" and "learning out of school?" What role do policy makers play? What role do principals play? What role do teachers play? What resources are required?

What is the role of the principal in cultivating and sustaining professional development for improved student outcomes? How does the principal directly influence the context, process, and content of professional development at the building level?

What do teachers need to know in order to improve their practice? What is the knowledge base regarding instructional practices that are most effective in improving student outcomes?

How is professional development linked to instructional supervision and teacher evaluation? What role does instructional supervision and teacher evaluation play in the development and implementation of professional development?
How is professional development evaluated? By whom is it evaluated? How are evaluation results utilized?

How do teachers work together to improve student outcomes? How do they organize their work? What are the dynamics or characteristics of effective teaching teams? How do they support one another in growing professionally?

Summary

The bottomline for improving our schools and ultimately student outcomes is spelled out in the National Commission’s report, What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future. The bottomline is this: "what teachers know and can do makes the critical difference in what children learn." At the heart of any and all efforts to improve schools, and ultimately student performance, is the need to improve the professional practice of teachers. The context, process and content of professional learning must be considered in order to cultivate and sustain professional development which represents best practice and improves student outcomes.
APPENDIX A

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE
June 8, 1998

Dear Susanna,

Your school was selected from among all Venture Capital Schools in Ohio as one of the best in the state at cultivating and sustaining professional development for improved student outcomes. Your selection was based on stringent criteria used to identify a small number of cases for study as part of my dissertation at the Ohio State University. Selection criteria included on-going participation in Venture Capital, high proficiency performance by students, and recognition as a BEST Practice award winner. My goal is to complete a comparative case study by December aimed at uncovering some of the "best practices" in professional development which result in improved student outcomes. I am especially interested in the principal's role in professional development efforts.

As part of a select study group of three schools, I would like to invite your participation in this study. Your involvement would include providing me with the opportunity to conduct an interview with you early this summer and a follow-up interview with a focus group in the fall. In addition to the interviews, I will be asking your permission to help develop a behavioral profile for you, utilizing an instrument that is intended to take very little of your time. The profile is descriptive and non-evaluative in nature. This study will also require me to make limited visits to your school in the fall and review documents pertaining to teacher development, BEST Practice and Venture Capital efforts. Throughout the study participants will have the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the collection and analysis of data. All data collected, as well as the identity of participants, will remain confidential and anonymous.

In the next few days I will be contacting you personally to ask you to serve as a participant. As a fellow school administrator, I understand how busy you are this time of year. However, I would appreciate it if you would give serious consideration to participating in this study. I feel there is much to be learned from you and your experiences and I am hopeful that the results of this study will offer all practicing, as well as prospective, school principals strategies for success. If you have any questions prior to my contacting you, please call me at 740 452-4518 (work) or 740 454-7030 (home).

Sincerely,

Donna Adometto

cc  Superintendent
Overview of the Case Study Project

Recent national reform reports (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, September 1996) and proposed standards (Ohio Department of Education, June 1997) in the state of Ohio compel us to establish, as a priority, professional development based on best practice and linked to building performance expectations and student learning outcomes. This study will utilize a comparative case study design to uncover specific "best practices" and the role principals play in promoting professional development for improved student outcomes. The purpose of the study is to describe and analyze the context characteristics, process variables, and content characteristics of professional development aimed at improving student outcomes in high performing schools. In addition, the study will look for enables and/or barriers to these efforts.

Guskey (1997) believes that if we are convinced that professional development can and does make a difference, we must ask how we can better understand its influence (p. 38). He suggests we start by looking at efforts that have produced demonstrable evidence of success. The participants in this study, an urban elementary school, a rural junior high school, and a suburban high school were chosen as cases using the following criteria: has been a Venture Capital school for at least 3 continuous years with no change in the principalship, the school has been the recipient of a BEST Practice
award, this Venture Capital school currently meets or exceeds proposed state proficiency standards of 75% or better on at least two parts of the statewide proficiency test.

This study is predicated on the following four propositions: 1.) improved student learning outcomes should provide the starting point for all school improvement and professional development efforts (Guskey & Sparks, 1996); 2) those principals and their staff members who are committed to school improvement recognize the pivotal role effective professional development plays in any effort made toward the improvement process; 3.) improved teaching and learning through a coherent plan for on-going professional development at the building level is essential to improved student outcomes (Speck, 1996); and 4.) the building principal is the key to any effort to improve professional practice (Speck, 1996).

I. Procedures

A. Gaining Access

1.) The Ohio State University's human subject's review process will be completed as outlined in the guidelines (The Ohio State University, 1992) following approval of the proposal by the dissertation committee.

2.) Securing sites/participants - Each principal selected for the study will be sent a letter of invitation. The letter of invitation will include information regarding how and why they and their school were selected, background of the researcher and the study, and a brief description of the level of their anticipated participation. The invitation will be followed up by a phone call to further explain the study, answer questions and to determine willingness to participate. The superintendent of each district will be contacted for approval to conduct the study. Copies of the researcher's credentials, the case study protocol and informed consent statements will be made available.

3.) Informed Consent - Each participant will sign an informed consent statement (see attached) along with receiving a copy of the researcher's
credentials and a copy of the research protocol. Level of participation and right to anonymity will be outlined. Any and all documents produced during the study, including the dissertation itself, will be made available to each participant.

B. Collecting the Evidence

1.) Documentation - The documents expected to be collected include but are not limited to the following: Venture Capital grant proposals and renewal requests, BEST Practice award applications; long-range and/or continuous improvement plans; brochures or other written evidence outlining school mission, goals, programs; and a demographic profile of the district and building. Each principal will complete a PeopleSmarts Behavioral Profile.

2.) Archival Records - Records to be requested include, but are not limited to, proficiency test data and budgetary records related to professional development allocations/expenditures.

3.) Interviews - A series of interviews will be conducted with each principal and a teacher focus group at each site. The first interview will be a focused interview with each principal (see interview guide attached) lasting approximately one hour with questions derived from the those identified in the protocol. Information from this interview will be used to develop a semi-structured open-ended interview guide to be used with a teacher focus group selected at each site by the principal and with the principals during a follow-up interview.

4.) Direct Observations - The first site visit will be for the purpose of meeting the principal, becoming familiar with the physical surroundings of the school and community and to begin collecting documents. A second site visit will be used to conduct the focused interview with the principal and teacher focus group and complete document collection. Attempts will be made to arrange visitations during scheduled professional development activities such as summer inservice opportunities, school year opening activities, regularly scheduled team/grade level meetings, etc.

5.) Physical Artifacts - Observation on site will also be used to uncover physical evidence of best practices. Mission statements and school goals which are posted in the school, credentials documenting advanced learning on the part of staff, and evidence of staff recognition for professional growth are just a few examples that may be found.

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C. Timelines

April • Committee Approval of Proposal
  • Submit Proposal to Human Subject Review

May • Gain Access - Secure participants/sites
  • Conduct first site visit and focused interview, arrange to collect needed documents including the PeopleSmarts Behavioral Profile the first week in June, arrange schedule of follow-up visits and/or possible summer involvement

June/July • Begin analysis of documents and interview transcripts
  • Use data to create semi-structured open-ended interview guide to be used with principal and a selected staff member
  • Complete writing of Chapters 1, 2, & 3

August • Conduct second round of interviews, share analysis of data to date with the participants to check accuracy
  • Confirm schedule of site visits/observations

September • Continue analysis of documents, interview transcripts, and observation logs
  • Conduct scheduled visitations/observations
  • Begin developing case study reports/Chapter 4

Oct/Nov • Complete data collection and analysis of data
  • Complete Chapters 4 & 5

December • Defend

D. Maintaining the Evidence

1.) Case Study Database includes, but is not limited to:

a.) notes - individual logs will be maintained for each: observation log of site visits, researcher log of personal journey, interview notes, document analysis notes

b.) documents - annotated bibliography will be maintained listing all documents collected and analyzed such as building report cards, grant proposals, award applications, marketing brochures
c.) tabular materials - computerized database will be created to maintain demographic, budgetary, proficiency data

d.) narratives - open-ended responses and interviews will be transcribed and maintained in written form

II. Case Study Protocol and Questions

A. Research Question:

*What characterizes the context of professional development in these high performing schools?*

1. How is staff development aligned with the school's and the district's strategic plan and/or continuous improvement plans? How is it connected to improving student outcomes?

2. What resources exist to support professional development efforts? How is it funded? What role do other institutions (i.e., ESCs, RPDCs, higher Ed) play in supporting staff development efforts?

3. What opportunities do teachers have to learn and work together on the job? How is professional job-embedded and ongoing in these schools? When are professional development activities taking place within the day? week? year?

4. In what ways does the culture of the school value school improvement and professional development efforts? How does the culture with your school support your ongoing learning and professional growth?

• How do the teachers and administrators view the context characteristics of staff development efforts in relation to the NSDC Standards for Staff Development?

• How have external standards and initiatives (i.e., Venture Capital, BEST, building report cards) influenced the context of professional development in these schools?

• In what ways does the leadership of these principals influence the context of staff development?

Sources of Data:

__ NSDC Staff Development Self-Assessment__

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B. Research Question:

*What characterizes the process of professional development in these high performing schools?*

1. How are decisions made regarding the content and structures for delivering staff development? Who is involved in decision-making? What data/information are used to inform decisions (i.e., student outcomes, teacher needs)?

2. How are staff development efforts evaluated? Improved student outcomes? How are results used and shared?

3. What approaches (i.e., problem-solving teams, peer coaching, workshops, mentoring) are utilized to promote continuous learning? What approaches represent collaborative efforts?

• How do the teachers and administrators view the process variables of staff development efforts in relation to the NSDC Standards for Staff Development?

• How have external standards and initiatives (i.e., Venture Capital, BEST, building report cards) influenced the process of professional development in these schools?

• In what ways does the leadership of these principals influence the process of staff development?

Sources of Data:

- NSDC Staff Development Self-Assessment
- Interviews with principal and teacher focus group
- Behavioral profiles/PeopleSmarts
- Documents: Venture Capital, school mission, staff development policies, continuous improvement plans, etc.

C. Research Question:

*What characterizes the content of professional development in these high performing schools?*
1. What is the content focus of staff development and what role do teachers, administrators, parents and community members play in its development?

2. What is the nature of the content of professional development related to improving student outcomes? How do staff development efforts address teacher knowledge, skills, and behaviors in areas such as, diversity, school and classroom-based management, developmentally appropriate practices, and alternative assessments?

3. Are professional development activities related to research-based practices?

• How do the teachers and administrators view the content characteristics of staff development efforts in relation to the NSDC Standards for Staff Development?

• How have external standards and initiatives (i.e., Venture Capital, BEST, building report cards) influenced the content of professional development in these schools?

• In what ways does the leadership of these principals influence the content of staff development?

Sources of Data:

__ NSDC Staff Development Self-Assessment
__ interviews with principal and teacher focus group
__ behavioral profiles/PeopleSmarts
__ documents: Venture Capital, school mission, staff development policies, continuous improvement plans, etc.

D. Research Question:

*What are seen as contributors/constraints to cultivating and sustaining on-going high quality professional development efforts?*

1. What is the relationship between financial resources and implementation of effective professional development?

2. What policies, local, state and/or federal influence the successful implementation of quality professional development?

Sources of Data:

__ interview with principal and teacher focus group
__ demographic profile of building & district
budgetary information specific to allocations & expenditures for professional development

III. Analysis Plan and Case Study Reports

A. Outline of analysis plan:

Descriptive information:
Profile of the District
- community population/number of schools
- median household income
- percent of disadvantaged students
- teacher/pupil ratio
- teacher attendance rate
- percent of budget on staff support

Profile of the School
- enrollment
- mission
- staff
- items of interest

Data Sources: EMIS, building/district report cards, brochures, district annual reports

Explanatory information (see tables attached)
Characteristics of Professional Development
- Context - who, where, when, why
- Process - how
- Content - what

Influence of External Standards and Initiatives
- Venture Capital Program
- BEST Practice Initiative
- State Mandated Report Cards

Contributors and Constraints
- The Role of the Principal

Data Sources: NSDC Self-Assessment, interviews, grant applications/reports, People Smarts Behavioral Profile, brochures, annual reports, continuous improvement plans

B. Outline of individual case study reports:

Descriptive information
Profile of the District
Profile of the School

Explanatory information (see tables attached)

Characteristics of Professional Development
  Context
  Process
  Content

Influence of External Standards and Initiatives
  Venture Capital Program
  BEST Practice Initiative
  State Mandated Report Cards

Contributors and Constraints
  The Role of the Principal

C. Outline of cross-case analysis report:

Explanatory information (see tables attached)

Characteristics of Professional Development Across Cases
  Context
  Process
  Content

Influence of External Standards and Initiatives Across Cases
  Venture Capital Program
  BEST Practice Initiative
  State Mandated Report Cards

Contributors and Constraints Across Cases
  The Role of the Principal
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209
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<th>Characteristics (content, context, process)</th>
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<th>Constraints/Contributors (Resources, Principal)</th>
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Uncovering Best Practices in Professional Development  
for Improved Student Outcomes:  
Lessons Learned from Some of Ohio’s BEST  

Teacher Focus Group Interview Guide

1. Could you share what you feel have been the staff development activities that have been the most beneficial to you and/or have had the most impact on improving student outcomes?

2. How would you describe the staff development activities that are currently being used in your school or district? What approaches (mentoring, critical friends groups, curriculum realignment) are utilized to promote continuous learning?

3. What approaches or formats represent collaborative efforts? In what ways are you involved in "team" learning?

4. How are decisions made regarding content/format of staff development or participation in new innovations? How are teachers involved?

5. What opportunities do teachers have to learn and work together on the job? When are professional development activities taking place within the day? week? year?

6. How does the culture of the school support ongoing learning and professional growth? How is teacher development acknowledged? What resources exist to support teacher development?

7. What role does your principal play in promoting and supporting professional development efforts?

8. How have external standards and initiatives (Venture Capital, building report cards) influenced the content, process, and/or context of staff development?

9. What do you see as the roadblocks to ongoing teacher professional development?

10. What has been the greatest asset, support, or opportunity to professional development efforts?
APPENDIX C

NSDC SELF-ASSESSMENT OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT
SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING TOOL

Groups can use this self-assessment tool to determine the current state of implementation of the context, process, and content of effective staff development for elementary schools. The assessment can be used to reveal strengths as well as areas for improvement. A scoring guide and index follow the standards. Because of the value in obtaining multiple perspectives, the self assessment will be most useful if completed by a group rather than individually. We suggest the following steps:

1. Make copies for group members and have each member complete it alone.
2. Have participants compare their individual scores. It is recommended that group members discuss similarities and differences rather than average scores.
3. Have the group discuss why specific scores were given and ask the group to reach consensus on a score which represents the school’s current level of implementation.
4. Prepare an action plan based upon the findings from the assessment.

**Self-Assessment: Elementary School Staff Development**

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staff development activities result in changes in classroom practice for most teachers on the staff.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The budget allocation supports ongoing professional development.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There is widespread support for professional development among administration, teachers, parents, school board members, and other influential members of the community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5. Staff development is viewed as an essential component for achieving the purposes of the organization and is valued as an integral part of the strategic plan.</td>
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<td>6. Central administration supports the work necessary to accomplish school improvement goals and provides an adequate budget.</td>
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<td>7. Strategies for facilitating planning and learning during the school day exist.</td>
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<td>8. A minimum of twenty percent of the work week is devoted to joint learning and work.</td>
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<td>9. The school staff is organized into study groups to learn about the change process and/or about particular innovations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Teachers are observed randomly to determine their use of an innovation and the innovation's effect on students.</td>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>11. The school’s improvement plan addresses important aspects of organizational effectiveness such as decision making, communication, and team functioning.</td>
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<td>12. Information about systems thinking and the change process are used in making school improvement decisions.</td>
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<td>13. The principles of adult learning permeate staff development.</td>
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<td>14. The learning climate of staff development activities is collaborative, informal, and respectful.</td>
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<td>15. The three phases of the change process are initiation, implementation and institutionalization in the planning of programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Staff and administration are aware of the &quot;implementation dip&quot; - things often get worse before they get better.</td>
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<td>17. Staff development decisions are based on data regarding valued student outcomes.</td>
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<td>18. Recognition of a need to seek improvement exists.</td>
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<td>19. Staff reading, study, and discussion of educational innovations precede decisions concerning staff development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Research-based content serves as the core of staff learning.</td>
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<td>21. Improvement plans include a carefully-designed framework for the integration of innovations being implemented.</td>
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<td>22. An instructional framework that describes how selected innovations collectively address school priorities exists.</td>
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<td>23. Program evaluation assesses participants' reactions to the program and measures participants' learning.</td>
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<td>24. Program evaluation assesses participants' use of new knowledge and skills and the impact on student learning.</td>
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<td>25. Staff development includes activities other than &quot;training workshops.&quot;</td>
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<td>26. All staff development training activities include theory, demonstration, practice with feedback, and coaching.</td>
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<td>27. Desired changes in on-the-job behavior are supported and result in improved student learning.</td>
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<td>28. Staff members regularly analyze and self-correct performance.</td>
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<td>29. Site-base management councils focus primarily on instruction and student learning.</td>
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<td>30. Consensus decision making is used to increase staff ownership.</td>
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<td>31. School teams/groups are models of effective interpersonal and group skills.</td>
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<td>32. Training and development in collaborative skills occurs regularly, especially for new teams or committees.</td>
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</table>

Content

33. Teachers and administrators are knowledgeable regarding the needs of children and young adolescents. | 1                 | 2        | 3              | 4     | 5             |
34. Decisions about instruction and new programs are based on how well they reflect developmentally-appropriate practice. | 1                 | 2        | 3              | 4     | 5             |
35. Teachers' classroom management strategies increase academic learning time.      | 1                 | 2        | 3              | 4     | 5             |
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<tr>
<th>Content (continued)</th>
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<tr>
<td>36. Teachers are familiar with and utilize the research-based findings that support a safe and orderly environment.</td>
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<td>37. The school's staff possesses the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to ensure a quality education for all students regardless of culture, race, gender, or ethnicity.</td>
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<td>38. School data confirm that all students have equal access to and participation in the school's programs and activities.</td>
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<td>39. Students can discuss the connection between the various content areas and their real-life concerns.</td>
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<td>40. Teachers offer skills and knowledge to all students in an integrated manner based on essential themes and questions.</td>
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<td>41. Teachers use a variety of approaches to teaching, know underlying instructional theories, and understand relevant research.</td>
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<td>42. There is research to suggest that the content of a school's staff development programs will increase student learning.</td>
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<td>43. Through the use of a variety of instructional strategies, administrators and teachers demonstrate a belief that all students can learn.</td>
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<td>44. Teachers use strategies that demonstrate high expectations for all students.</td>
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<td>45. There is regular communication between the school staff and parent/families about individual student's academic progress.</td>
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<td>46. Parent/staff communication focuses on the school's goals, classes, and curriculum with special attention to in-school and community opportunities to enhance student achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. Student performance assessments include interviews, observations, portfolios, projects, and demonstrations.</td>
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<td>48. Student performance assessments focus on what students can actually do with the knowledge and skills they have acquired.</td>
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SCORING GUIDE

Compare individual, group, and school-wide scores from the self-assessment for each question.

### Context

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Note: Any assessment statement receiving a score of 3 (somewhat agree) or less by a majority of the staff or teams should be considered for improvement.
Self-Assessment: Middle Level Staff Development

Groups can use this self-assessment tool to determine the current state of implementation of the context, process, and content of effective staff development for middle schools. The assessment can be used to reveal strengths as well as areas for improvement. A scoring guide and index follow the standards. Because of the value in obtaining multiple perspectives, the self-assessment will be most useful if completed by a group rather than individually. We suggest the following steps:

1. Make copies for group members and have each member complete it alone.
2. Have participants compare their individual scores. It is recommended that group members discuss similarities and differences rather than average scores.
3. Have the group discuss why specific scores were given and ask the group to reach consensus on a score which represents the school’s current level of implementation.
4. Prepare an action plan based upon the findings from the assessment.

Self-Assessment: Middle Level Staff Development

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
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<td>1. Staff development is ongoing and job-embedded.</td>
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<td>2. Staff development activities result in changes in classroom practice for most teachers on the staff.</td>
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<td>3. The budget allocation supports ongoing professional development.</td>
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<td>4. There is widespread support for professional development among administration, teachers, parents, school board members, and other influential members of the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Staff development is viewed as an essential component for achieving the purposes of the organization and is valued as an integral part of the strategic plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Central administration supports the work necessary to accomplish school improvement goals and provides an adequate budget.</td>
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<td>7. Strategies for facilitating planning and learning during the school day exist.</td>
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<td>8. A minimum of twenty percent of the work week is devoted to joint learning and work.</td>
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<td>9. The school staff is organized into study groups to learn about the change process and/or about particular innovations.</td>
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<td>10. Teachers are observed randomly to determine their use of an innovation and the innovation’s effect on students.</td>
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Process

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<td>11. The school’s improvement plan addresses important aspects of organizational effectiveness such as decision making, communication, and team functioning.</td>
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<td>12. Information about systems thinking and the change process are used in making school improvement decisions.</td>
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<td>13. The principles of adult learning permeate staff development.</td>
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<td>14. The learning climate of staff development activities is collaborative, informal, and respectful.</td>
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<td>15. All critical phases of the change process (initiation, implementation, and institutionalization) are addressed in the planning and delivery of programs.</td>
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<td>16. Staff and administration are aware of the “implementation dip” (things often get worse before they get better).</td>
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<td>17. Staff development decisions are based on data regarding valued student outcomes.</td>
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<td>18. Recognition of a need to seek improvement exists.</td>
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<td>19. Staff reading, study, and discussion of educational innovations precede decisions concerning staff development.</td>
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<td>20. Research-based content serves as the core of staff learning.</td>
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<td>21. Improvement plans include a carefully-designed framework for the integration of innovations being implemented.</td>
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<td>22. An instructional framework that describes how selected innovations collectively address school priorities exists.</td>
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<td>23. Program evaluation assesses participants’ reactions to the program and measures participants’ learning.</td>
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<td>24. Program evaluation assesses participants’ use of new knowledge and skills and the impact on student learning.</td>
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<td>25. Staff development includes activities other than “training workshops.”</td>
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<td>26. All staff development training activities include theory, demonstration, practice with feedback, and coaching.</td>
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<td>27. Desired changes in on-the-job behavior are supported and result in improved student learning.</td>
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<td>28. Staff members regularly analyze and self-correct performance.</td>
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<td>29. Site-based management councils focus primarily on instruction and student learning.</td>
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<td>30. Consensus decision making is used to increase staff ownership.</td>
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<td>31. School teams/groups are models of effective interpersonal and group skills.</td>
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<td>32. Training and development in collaborative skills occur regularly, especially for new teams or committees.</td>
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<td>33. Teachers and administrators are knowledgeable regarding young adolescent development.</td>
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<td>34. Decisions about instruction and new programs are based on how well they reflect developmentally-appropriate practice.</td>
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<td>35. Teachers’ classroom management strategies increase academic learning time.</td>
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<td>36. Teachers are familiar with and utilize the research-based findings that support a safe and orderly environment.</td>
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<td>37. The school’s staff possesses the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to ensure a quality education for all students.</td>
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<td>38. School data confirm that all students have equal access to and participation in the school’s programs and activities.</td>
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<td>39. Students can discuss the connection between the various content areas and their real-life concerns.</td>
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<td>40. The staff possesses the content knowledge and pedagogy necessary to design and deliver high-quality curriculum.</td>
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<td>41. Teachers use a variety of approaches to teaching, know underlying instructional theories, and understand relevant research.</td>
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<td>42. There is research to suggest that the content of the school's staff development programs will increase student learning.</td>
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<td>43. Through the use of a variety of instructional strategies administrators and teachers demonstrate a belief that all students can learn.</td>
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<td>44. Teachers use strategies that demonstrate high expectations for all students.</td>
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<td>45. There is regular communication between the school staff and parents/families about individual student's academic progress.</td>
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<td>46. Parent/staff communication focuses on the school's goals, classes, and curriculum with special attention to in-school and community opportunities to enhance student achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. Student performance assessments include interviews, observations, portfolios, projects, and demonstrations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. Student performance assessments focus on what students can actually do with the knowledge and skills they have acquired.</td>
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<td>49. Adolescents are known as a complete individual by at least one adult.</td>
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<td>50. Open communication exists between student, family, and advisor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>51. Service learning activities are included in the curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>52. Service learning activities involve a meaningful application of knowledge and/or skills in real-world settings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>53. Teacher teams engage in frequent and in-depth professional discussions about instruction and curriculum practices.</td>
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<td>54. Teachers find working on teams makes teaching more rewarding.</td>
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SCORING GUIDE FOR MIDDLE LEVEL SELF-ASSESSMENT

Compare individual, group, and school-wide scores from the self-assessment for each question.

**Context**

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Note: Any assessment statement receiving a score of 3 (somewhat agree) or less by a majority of the staff or teams should be considered for improvement.
Groups can use this self-assessment tool to determine the current state of implementation of the context, process, and content of effective staff development for high schools. The assessment can be used to reveal strengths as well as areas for improvement. A scoring guide and index follow the standards. Because of the value in obtaining multiple perspectives, the self-assessment will be most useful if completed by a group rather than individually. We suggest the following steps:

1. Make copies for group members and have each member complete it alone.
2. Have participants compare their individual scores. It is recommended that group members discuss similarities and differences rather than average scores.
3. Have the group discuss why specific scores were given and ask the group to reach consensus on a score which represents the school's current level of implementation.
4. Prepare an action plan based upon the findings from the assessment.

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<tr>
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<td>1. Staff development is ongoing and job-embedded.</td>
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<td>2. Staff development activities result in changes in classroom practice for most teachers on the staff.</td>
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<td>3. The budget allocation supports ongoing professional development.</td>
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<td>4. There is widespread support for professional development among administration, teachers, parents, school board members, and other influential members of the community.</td>
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<td>5. Staff development is viewed as an essential component for achieving the purposes of the organization and is valued as an integral part of the strategic plan.</td>
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<td>6. Central administration supports the work necessary to accomplish school improvement goals and provides an adequate budget.</td>
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<td>7. Strategies for facilitating planning and learning during the school day exist.</td>
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<td>8. A minimum of twenty percent of the work week is devoted to joint learning and work.</td>
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<td>9. The school staff is organized into study groups to learn about the change process and/or about particular innovations.</td>
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<td>10. Teachers are observed randomly to determine their use of an innovation and the innovation's effect on students.</td>
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<td>11. The school's improvement plan addresses important aspects of organizational effectiveness such as decision making, communication, and team functioning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Information about systems thinking and the change process are used in making school improvement decisions.</td>
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<td>13. The principles of adult learning permeate staff development.</td>
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<td>14. The learning climate of staff development activities is collaborative, informal, and respectful.</td>
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<td>15. All critical phases of the change process (initiation, implementation, and institutionalization) are addressed in the planning of programs.</td>
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<td>16. Staff and administration are aware of the &quot;implementation dip&quot; (things often get worse before they get better).</td>
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<td>17. Staff development decisions are based on data regarding valued student outcomes.</td>
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<td>18. Recognition of a need to seek improvement exists.</td>
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<td>19. Staff reading, study, and discussion of educational innovations precede decisions concerning staff development.</td>
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<td>20. Research-based content serves as the core of staff learning.</td>
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<td>21. Improvement plans include a carefully-designed framework for the integration of innovations being implemented.</td>
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<td>22. An instructional framework that describes how selected innovations collectively address school priorities exists.</td>
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<td>23. Program evaluation assesses participants' reactions to the program and measures participants' learning.</td>
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<td>24. Program evaluation assesses participants' use of new knowledge and skills and the impact on student learning.</td>
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<td>25. Staff development includes activities other than &quot;training workshops.&quot;</td>
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<td>26. All staff development training activities include theory, demonstration, practice with feedback, and coaching.</td>
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<td>27. Desired changes in on-the-job behavior are supported and result in improved student learning.</td>
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<td>28. Staff members regularly analyze and self-correct performance.</td>
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<td>29. Site-base management councils focus primarily on instruction and student learning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Consensus decision making is used to increase staff ownership.</td>
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<td>31. School teams/groups are models of effective interpersonal and group skills.</td>
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<td>32. Training and development in collaborative skills occur regularly, especially for new teams or committees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Teachers and administrators are knowledgeable regarding adolescent development.</td>
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<td>34. Decisions about instruction and new programs are based on how well they reflect developmentally-appropriate practice.</td>
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<td>35. Teachers' classroom management strategies increase academic learning time.</td>
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<td>36. Teachers are familiar with and utilize the research-based findings that support a safe and orderly environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>37. The school's staff possesses the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to ensure a quality education for all students.</td>
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<td>38. School data confirm that all students have equal access to and participation in the school's programs and activities.</td>
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<td>39. Students can discuss the connection between the various content areas and their real-life concerns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>40. The staff possesses the content knowledge and pedagogy necessary to design and deliver high-quality curriculum.</td>
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<td>41. Teachers use a variety of approaches to teaching, know underlying instructional theories, and understand relevant research.</td>
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<td>42. There is research to suggest that the context of a school’s staff development programs will increase student learning.</td>
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<td>43. Through the use of a variety of instructional strategies administrators and teachers demonstrate a belief that all students can learn.</td>
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<td>44. Teachers use strategies that demonstrate high expectations for all students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45. There is regular communication between the school staff and parents/families about individual student’s academic progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>46. Parent/staff communication focuses on the school’s goals, classes, and curriculum with special attention to in-school and community opportunities to enhance student achievement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>47. Student performance assessments include interviews, observations, portfolios, projects, and demonstrations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>48. Student performance assessments focus on what students can actually do with the knowledge and skills they have acquired.</td>
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<td>49. Adolescents are known as a complete individual by at least one adult.</td>
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<td>50. Open communication exists between student, family, and advisor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>51. Service learning activities are included in the curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>52. Service learning activities involve a meaningful application of knowledge and/or skills in real-world settings.</td>
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225
**Scoring Guide for High School Self-Assessment**

Compare individual, group, and school-wide scores from the self-assessment for each question.

### Context

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Note: Any assessment statement receiving a score of 3 (somewhat agree) or less by a majority of the staff or teams should be considered for improvement.
APPENDIX D

PEOPLESMArts BEHAVIORAL PROFILE
Behavioral Profiles: Self-Assessment

This is an informal survey, designed to determine how you *usually* interact with others in everyday situations. The purpose of this questionnaire is to get a clear description of how you see yourself.

For each pair of statements, you are to distribute three points between the two alternatives (A and B). Base your answers on how you *actually* behave, not on how you think you should behave. Although some pairs of statements may seem equally true for you, assign more points to the alternative that is more representative of your behavior most of the time.

**Key:** If A is very characteristic of you and B is very uncharacteristic, write 3 next to A and 0 next to B.
If A is more characteristic of you than B, write 2 next to A and 1 next to B.
If B is more characteristic of you than A, write 2 next to B and 1 next to A.
If B is very characteristic of you and A is very uncharacteristic, write 3 next to B and 0 next to A.

Be sure that the numbers that you assign to each pair of statements add up to 3.

**Example:** For the first set of statements, if A is more characteristic of you than B, you would mark your responses as follows:

I A  **2** I am usually open to getting to know people personally and establishing relationships with them.

I B  **1** I am usually not open to getting to know people personally and establishing relationships with them.

After you have marked answers to all eighteen pairs of statements, please turn to page 4 and transfer your ratings to the blanks provided.

**Important Note**

If the observations of others are going to be part of your behavioral profile, ask five to ten people to complete the *Behavioral Profiles: Observer Assessment*. Select people with whom you interact on a regular basis, preferably in a business-related capacity. If you prefer, you may select five people who know you through your personal life. It is important to choose people who all know you, either in your professional or your personal life, because your professional style may differ from your personal style. Either way, choose people who will be candid and whose opinions you respect. In some cases, the respondents will remain anonymous; in other cases, it may be advantageous to be able to discuss the responses openly. The respondents must be told whether or not their answers will be anonymous. Also, remember to write your name on all copies of the *Behavioral Profiles: Observer Assessment* before you distribute them.

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**Behavioral Profiles: Self-Assessment**

If A is very characteristic of you and B is very uncharacteristic, write 3 next to A and 0 next to B.  
If A is more characteristic of you than B, write 2 next to A and 1 next to B.  
If B is more characteristic of you than A, write 2 next to B and 1 next to A.  
If B is very characteristic of you and A is very uncharacteristic, write 3 next to B and 0 next to A.  
*Be sure that the numbers that you assign to each pair of statements add up to 3.*

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<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td>I am usually open to getting to know people personally and establishing relationships with them.</td>
<td>1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A</td>
<td>I usually react slowly and deliberately.</td>
<td>2B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A</td>
<td>I am usually guarded about other people’s use of my time.</td>
<td>3B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4A</td>
<td>I usually introduce myself at social gatherings.</td>
<td>4B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5A</td>
<td>I usually focus my conversations on the interests of the parties involved, even if this means that the conversations stray from the business or subject at hand.</td>
<td>5B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6A</td>
<td>I am usually not assertive, and I can be patient with a slow pace.</td>
<td>6B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7A</td>
<td>I usually make decisions based on facts or evidence.</td>
<td>7B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8A</td>
<td>I usually contribute frequently to group conversations.</td>
<td>8B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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9A _____ I usually prefer to work with and through others, providing support when possible.
9B _____ I usually prefer to work independently or dictate the conditions in terms of how others are involved.

10A _____ I usually ask questions or speak more tentatively and indirectly.
10B _____ I usually make emphatic statements or directly express opinions.

11A _____ I usually focus primarily on the idea, concept, or results.
11B _____ I usually focus primarily on the person, interaction, and feelings.

12A _____ I usually use gestures, facial expressions, and voice intonation to emphasize points.
12B _____ I usually do not use gestures, facial expressions, and voice intonation to emphasize points.

13A _____ I usually accept others' points of view (ideas, feelings, and concerns).
13B _____ I usually do not accept others' points of view (ideas, feelings, and concerns).

14A _____ I usually respond to risk and change in a cautious or predictable manner.
14B _____ I usually respond to risk and change in a dynamic or unpredictable manner.

15A _____ I usually prefer to keep my personal feelings and thoughts to myself, sharing only when I wish to do so.
15B _____ I usually find it natural and easy to share and discuss my feelings with others.

16A _____ I usually seek out new or different experiences and situations.
16B _____ I usually choose known or similar situations and relationships.

17A _____ I usually am responsive to others' agendas, interests, and concerns.
17B _____ I usually am directed toward my own agendas, interests, and concerns.

18A _____ I usually respond to conflict slowly and indirectly.
18B _____ I usually respond to conflict quickly and directly.
**Behavioral Profiles: Scoring Sheet**

Transfer your scores from each of the blanks on the instrument to the table that follows. *Note that sometimes the “A” response appears first and other times the “B” response appears first.* When you are finished, total each column.

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<th></th>
<th>O</th>
<th>S</th>
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Compare the O and S scores. Which is higher? Write the higher score in the blank below and circle the corresponding letter:

_____ O  S

Compare the D and I scores. Which is higher? Write the higher score in the blank below and circle the corresponding letter:

_____ D  I
LIST OF REFERENCES


The Ohio State University. (1992, June). *Human subjects program guidelines.* Columbus, OH.


development, supervision, and teacher-evaluation. *Journal of Staff
Development* Vol. 8, No. 1: 52-55.

development based on research and best practices. *Journal of Staff
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