

EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
FACILITATORS IN A JOB-EMBEDDED SCHOOL INITIATIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

KAIA MARIAMA MASHARIKI. Experiences and perceptions of professional development facilitators in a job-embedded school initiative. (Under the direction of DR. REBECCA SHORE)

Recent legislation and accountability efforts in K-12 schools have increased the need to support and maintain high-quality teachers through enhanced professional development and teacher training efforts. As districts and schools seek new and innovative ways to provide professional learning opportunities that are real-time and effective, investments in job-embedded professional development models can support teaching and learning in a world of accountability and federal mandates. This qualitative study explores the experiences and perceptions of professional development facilitators (PDFs) implementing job-embedded professional learning in middle and K-8 schools. The study also examines how well professional development practitioners align program design with the actual implementation of school duties; and it also provides insight into the dynamics, influences, and characteristics of providing on-the-job training in schools to educators real-time and at the point of instructional delivery. Study results are designed to inform districts and schools on the successes, challenges, and program structures needed to effectively design job-embedded activities that yield increases in teacher quality and ultimately student achievement.

Keywords: job-embedded, professional development, facilitator, accountability instructional support, coaching, teacher quality, teacher growth, student achievement

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I want to thank God for getting me through this journey and for giving me such phenomenal family and friends, without whom this would not be possible. This dissertation is dedicated to my children for all their love, encouragement, and advice since the first day I started this journey. To my parents, Akilah Mashariki, Job Mashariki, and Muslimah Mashariki, for your love, guidance, and support. You taught me to be strong and courageous, and to reach for the stars. You were always there when I needed a reminder, or words of encouragement. Most importantly you removed any barriers that may have stood in my way so that I could succeed. To my sisters, brothers, and the entire Mashariki Family, thank you for believing in me and supporting me on my journey, and for keeping the laughs and family time consistent so I always had a place to go when I needed a break. To the many extended family and dear friends who were constantly in my corner, my cheerleaders, my babysitters, and my advisors; I cherish everything you did for me to support this journey. I am blessed to have so many awesome people in my life. Through the will of god, belief in yourself, and perseverance, all things are possible. Forward ever, Backward Never.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
JEPD	Job-Embedded Professional Development
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NSDC	National Staff Development Council
PD	Professional Development
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Today's teachers are expected to deliver high quality instruction, know their content areas and profession, and teach a variety of learners using a vast array of teaching strategies. Expectations and duties shift throughout the academic year, but teachers are still expected to remain abreast of changes in educational reform. They are required to master new developments in teaching practices, advances in technology, and the ongoing challenges of educating children in America. Society expects a lot of teachers, and federal legislation formalizes those expectations by imposing strict systems of accountability and success measures for our students, our schools, and ultimately our teachers (Barnard, 2004).

Over the last two decades, two major pieces of legislation set and raised accountability standards. The first, in 2001, was the adoption of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), signed into law by then-President George W. Bush. This reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 dramatically increased the role of the federal government in holding schools accountable for student achievement. Known for its increase in testing as a mechanism for demonstrating school proficiency and student achievement, NCLB was a collaboration between businesses, civil rights organizations, Democrats, Republicans, and the Bush administration (Klein, 2015). The act's goals were to increase America's global competitiveness, close the achievement gap between poor students of color and their highly advantaged peers, and strengthen teaching, learning, and school improvement efforts.

While states did not have to comply with NCLB, they would receive additional funding if they did, and they would lose Title I funding if they did not; demonstrating some of the only power the federal government has in public school accountability, reform, and funding efforts. Under NCLB, guidelines for establishing school success increased and end-of-year tests were used to measure student and school performance. NCLB provided sanctions and accountability measures for districts and schools that did not meet these new standards of progress and proficiency. In addition, NCLB required that all districts receiving Title I funds ensure that teachers be deemed “highly qualified” in order to be paid with Title I federal funds. Title I funds represent a large portion of underperforming schools’ budgets (Klein, 2015).

NCLB defines “highly qualified” teachers as those who are certified and demonstrate proficiency in their content areas (Weaver, 2003). “Highly qualified” became a new label to classify effective teachers and those using effective teaching practices. NCLB also standardized the requirements for hiring and retaining teachers as “highly qualified,” and required that districts ensure that “highly qualified” teachers were distributed throughout high poverty schools within a district. For the first time in public education’s history, district accountability, school improvement efforts, teacher quality, and student success were directly tied to federal legislation and funding, and put in writing for the nation to see and review when the test scores were published (Klein, 2015). NCLB created more pressure for districts and schools to recruit, retain, train, and support teacher’s year round in order to establish, maintain, and demonstrate their “highly qualified” status (Barnard, 2004).

This was the first introduction of teacher quality and training accountability in federal legislation used as a factor in school accountability, reaching proficiency status, and increasing student achievement (Barnard, 2004). Schools and districts recognized a growing need to maintain high teacher quality with increased criteria and accountability in order to secure federal funding. As a result, schools and districts were forced to examine longstanding professional development practices, and began to seek more effective and innovative ways of providing teacher training that would increase teacher quality and improve student achievement.

In 2015 Congress, under the administration of President Barack Obama reauthorized the ESEA, created the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). This is currently the most recent reauthorization of ESEA. Prior to ESSA, and during the fourteen years that NCLB was in effect, communities experienced growing opposition to high-stakes testing, increased pressure to provide professional development that yielded results, an expanded reach of the federal government in K-12 education, and the strict demands of the legislation on schools that fell short of the new requirements. The *Every Student Succeeds Act* was created to decrease the federal government's role in K-12 education, but it did not decrease the demands for educator professional development reform (Klein, 2015). ESSA updated NCLB on big issues such as teacher quality, testing, and low-performing schools. It also gave the states more power to determine the future of educational reform and improvement efforts. ESSA established a myriad of guidelines to counter the harsh and stringent requirements of NCLB, yet maintained high levels of accountability in areas of teacher quality and student achievement.

In addition, ESSA separated teacher quality and student outcomes as previously enacted under NCLB. ESSA placed emphasis on designing professional development experiences that were more innovative and creative to counter the negative view of professional development efforts that arose from the pressures of NCLB, and the push by districts and schools to use professional development to improve teacher performance. The legislation created new programs such as the School Leader Innovation Program, a grant for trying out performance pay programs and other teacher quality development initiatives in an effort to maximize teacher effectiveness (Klein, 2015). ESSA also provided funding directly to train teachers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and Literacy. A renewed emphasis emerged to re-energize teacher training programs and support improving teacher quality. States, districts, and schools were being provided additional federal funding, while also being required to develop and submit school reform plans that addressed improving and maintaining high teacher quality. This new legislation set teacher training as a priority for states, districts, and K-12 schools. It also pushed districts and schools to expend funds in creative ways that ensured high teacher quality in order to meet the expectations of improvements throughout K-12 education, including teacher training (Klein, 2015). For the second time, and in response to criticism of NCLB, federal legislation began to include direct links between school improvement efforts, student achievement, teacher quality, and teacher training.

From the limited local involvement and guidelines of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) of 1965 to its 2001 reauthorization with *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), and the most current authorization of NCLB with the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) in 2015, federal involvement and accountability has stimulated

increased scrutiny of public schools in America and encouraged increased measures to monitor student achievement (Barnard, 2004). These policies and accountability measures often leave local districts and schools with the challenges of implementing ideas, strategies, and educational practices that will meet the expectations and results set forth by federal laws (Barnard, 2004). Educational reform today is focused on ensuring that students receive high quality instruction, and that teachers are supported and held accountable for student achievement as measured by state standards, state testing and achievement results. These reform efforts force modern educators to be more prepared than ever before, and to be able to meet the challenges of individual student needs, preparing for state tests, student discipline, teaching state standards in a set amount of time (often a minimum), and providing students with engaged instructional experiences each day.

Based on federal education guidelines and state achievement requirements, the role of local districts and public schools in educating children has expanded. There is a growing amount of pressure and expectation that educators will ensure all children are meeting high academic and learning standards, regardless of any social barriers to learning. Under pressure from federal and local standards and reform efforts, local districts struggle to improve teacher quality in order to increase student achievement (Weaver, 2003). This is a complicated task because teachers face challenges to student learning that affect classroom outcomes. These challenges include large differences in student populations and experiences, diverse socio-economic backgrounds, multiple ethnicities, cultural diversity, and differences in family dynamics. As a result, teachers struggle to balance teaching and learning efforts (Barnard, 2004). These efforts also are

affected by many other factors such as mental illness, health and social welfare issues, as well as issues of attendance, behavior, increasing class sizes, problems with the law, and diminishing financial resources. Today's school communities deal with a myriad of issues that affect teaching and learning each day, yet the standards of accountability are set and expected to be reached in spite of these daily classroom challenges (Guskey, 2003). Today's teachers require new approaches to professional development models that will provide effective and renewed strategies for overcoming teaching and learning issues, improving teacher quality, and increasing student success.

Since increases in teacher quality has been shown to affect student performance, the pressures of accountability and student performance have increased the need for the education profession to transform its professional development practices and approaches. NCLB 2001 and ESSA 2015 include standards, measures, and educational reform that cite and include improved teacher training, strengthening teacher learning and professional growth, as well as increasing teacher quality and practice through professional development efforts. Increases in student learning are being directly connected to improving teacher effectiveness, which reinforces this trend. The *No Child Left Behind Act* describes staff development as being “high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom focused in order to have a positive impact on classroom instruction and the teacher’s performance (United States, 2001).” The legislation also clarifies the expectations of staff development activities as well by stating they are not “one-day or short-term workshops or conferences” (Barnard, 2004). Some districts are exploring professional development designs that place professional development (PD) practitioners

directly in schools to provide job-embedded PD in order to meet this legislative description.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive research study is to investigate the roles of professional development facilitators in providing job-embedded professional development in schools. It is also to examine how they perceive their roles as educational leaders responsible for implementing useful, sustainable, and effective school-based professional development opportunities that increase teacher effectiveness and ultimately student achievement. In particular, this study intends to identify and describe the major internal, external, and environmental influences that shape how professional development facilitators work and implement job-embedded PD in their schools. This study will be conducted to describe and document the daily work experiences of job-embedded professional development facilitators, while informing the educational profession, districts, and schools on the potential of incorporating this new and emerging practice in school-reform efforts in order to meet the high quality teaching demands and student-achievement goals of modern educational reform efforts, accountability, and legislation.

Federal legislation now mandates that professional development programs in districts and schools should be ongoing, sustainable, and tied to school reform efforts and increased student achievement. This research is designed to gain more insight on an emerging and fast-growing approach to delivering sustainable and effective professional development (PD) for educators by closely investigating the perceptions of selected PD facilitators. It is also designed to inform the decision-making of districts, schools,

professional development practitioners, school-based administrators, and educators who plan, design, and implement professional development activities in concert with federal and state legislation guidelines. In addition, the perceptions of practicing professional development facilitators in identifying factors that shape job-embedded professional development (JEPD) in their schools should be beneficial to modern educators as they chart the future of professional development learning opportunities in their schools that can withstand the challenges, changes, and scrutiny, and accountability measures of educational legislation. The study will help to inform district and school reform efforts and funding accountability decisions when designing staff development programs that seek to maintain high quality teachers, meet educational reform standards, and ultimately increase student achievement.

Previous and emerging research suggests that today's teachers need real-time, contemporary, and creative approaches to professional development in order to meet performance and accountability requirements as outlined in NCLB (2001), ESSA (2015), state mandates, and district-level initiatives. Enhanced professional development and learning opportunities have become crucial for teacher-improvement efforts, maintenance of "highly qualified teachers," and ultimately for student, teacher, and school success (Guskey, 2003). This makes current educator professional development (PD) activities and delivery an essential aspect of teaching and learning and it places professional development practitioners at the core of school- and district-based reform efforts.

The demand for increases in teacher quality gives rise to new demands on professional development practitioners. Districts and schools are responsible for creating, designing, and delivering training for educators that supports high quality

teaching practices, considers present-day challenges of schools, incorporates new accountability expectations and ultimately increases teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Croft, A., Coggshall, J. G., Dolan, M., Powers, E., & Killion, J., 2010). This requires a shift from all-too-familiar approaches to educator professional development such as “sit and get” or “go to a workshop outside of school.” New approaches in professional development for educators seek models and designs that develop and enhance instructional practice in a real-time and rapid pace, as well as reflect changes in the delivery to ignore previous standards for staff development as isolated workshops, and one-time experiences. In addition, school systems have invested millions of dollars in funding for teacher professional development that has not been shown to benefit achievement or school improvement efforts (Klein, 2015).

As teachers evolve and attempt to meet existing social needs for students and sustained achievement, professional development practitioners will need to engage in effective, ongoing, collaborative professional learning activities that help them acquire new skills and strategies for use in their classrooms (West, 2002). If this is the state of teacher training and professional development efforts today, then school systems need to use professional development practitioners in ways that develop, train, and retain highly qualified teachers and ultimately an increase in student achievement. Professional development opportunities should model effective training strategies and activities that are designed and implemented in such a way that the achievement of the student is a result of the teachers’ participation in the professional learning (Hirsh & Sparks, 2000). Student achievement should therefore be at the heart of designing and implementing school-based professional development that is effective and successful. The investment

of schools and districts in professional development for teachers is one of the best ways to develop and sustain teacher quality (Wong, 2002). By establishing and implementing effective professional development models, K-12 education can begin to rise to the mandates and accountability standards of high quality teaching as described in federal legislation, as well as see return on investments in teacher professional development through increased learning.

There are a variety of characteristics and models essential to creating, sustaining, and evaluating effective professional learning programs that have strong influences on producing “highly qualified teachers” and improvements in student learning as called for in recent legislation (Guskey, 2003). One characteristic emerging and being explored more is school-based PD. School-based PD is a teacher in-service model designed to provide professional learning through on-the-job training (job-embedded) and teacher coaching in-schools and classrooms by a site-based professional development facilitator. As Showers (1984) points out, training alone is not enough; high-quality training must be followed by on-the-job coaching linked to classroom transfer and implementation, if the new learning is to be firmly incorporated into classroom practice and influence student achievement.

Over the last decade, job-embedded professional development (JEPD) has emerged as a term in federal education regulations and education-based professional usage to describe the practice of linking training and coaching in an on-the-job design embedded in direct classroom practice (Croft, et al., 2010). Identified as a critical attribute of effective PD because it supports the school- or site-based implementation, job-embedded professional development experiences provide a crucial basis for ensuring

PD is effective (Guskey, 2003), and ensuring an increase in the role of transfer of learning to the classroom, and a decrease in the attrition of teachers in schools (Showers, 1984). The emergence of on-the-job training programs (JEPD) in schools creates a new niche in teacher professional learning opportunities and must be defined, created, and implemented with the collaboration of school leaders in order to be effective (Croft et al., 2010).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Throughout the history of teacher development, teacher-learning experiences have often been plagued with criticism and disparagement (Guskey, 1986). The delivery of teacher professional development sessions can often be met with varying teacher perceptions, from being viewed as unproductive, not engaging, and ineffective, to being considered helpful and informative. Teacher perceptions often affect attitudes towards professional development and teachers' ability to transfer professional learning into their classrooms to support student achievement (Burstein and Sears, 1998). Often, teachers don't see actual benefits of professional development in their work or simply relate it to in-service days primarily used for introducing broad new concepts, ideas, or trends (Burke, 2000). This often leads to little or no transfer into classroom performance. Teachers often believe that the material presented by experts or companies had very little impact on their teaching strategies or pedagogical practices. In addition, many teachers feel frustrated from having to attend workshops that may not apply to them or their students (Burke, 2000). Professional development has morphed into mandatory educator attendance at meetings linked to district and school leadership visions, but often times having no direct impact on teaching or student learning outcomes. Effective professional

development practices are aimed at reversing this and ultimately supporting teachers' retention and transfer of professional learning in order to impact student learning (Showers, 1984).

Teacher professional development must change in order to meet the new accountability and funding demands of districts and schools. Professional development models must be designed and implemented in ways that promote teacher engagement, synthesis, retention, and transfer in order to yield results (Showers, 1984). Based on current accountability demands for improved and sustained teacher quality, this is more crucial than ever. When teachers participate in engaging, effective, and "real-time" job-related learning activities, learning and application often carry over to the classroom (Showers, 1984).

In order to develop and enhance instructional practice to support student learning, teachers must engage in ongoing, collaborative professional activities. It is important that schools provide effective, adequate, and sustainable professional development opportunities. Districts and schools have become increasingly responsible for designing and implementing professional development that engages and differentiates for diverse teaching needs. A variety of characteristics define how professional development leaders can create, sustain, and evaluate effective professional learning programs that have strong influences on student learning (Guskey, 2003). Guskey (1986) proposes that change in teacher practice become an ongoing process, so learning should be followed by additional sessions after the initial one, and Croft, et al. (2010) suggest that teacher training be at the point of delivery and be implemented on the job, utilizing professional development

practitioners in job-embedded activities, in order to meet modern professional development demands.

Placing job-embedded professional development facilitators (staff developers) directly in schools is a developing practice. It is being used to better stimulate teacher growth, high-quality instructional practices, and ultimately student achievement in order to satisfy rapidly growing accountability measures and expectations for immediate school improvement efforts (Croft et al, 2010). Job-embedded professional development is not a new method of delivering training to professionals. In 1955, W. Edwards Deming issued his fourteen points of management in the workplace. The eighth point highlighted instituting training on the job as a mechanism for supporting high quality job performance. Deming's (1955) work at the time was applied to management and training in corporations and businesses. Deming (1955) encouraged experimentation and training within the system as a means for developing and strengthening employee skills and abilities. Doing this on the job means that the training process is a direct function of the management system in which it occurs. Over the past few years, this same concept of on-the-job training, or job-embedded training, has been applied in the educational arena to support school reform and teacher training efforts.

In an effort to focus the training of educational professionals directly in the place in which they work, teach, and enact their skills, job-embedded training is being emphasized in educational arenas as the way to improve teacher quality. However, job-embedded professional development is not being widely supported by many states, districts, and schools due to financial costs associated with its implementation. There is also little evidence that systems, structures, practices, activities, protocols, and school-

based environments can ultimately establish job-embedded professional development (JEPD) as an effective practice in developing high-quality teachers, in the retention of professional learning, and in increasing student achievement. As an emerging and modern concept of delivering teacher professional development, more information is needed to determine if the costs of providing school-based professional development facilitators is supported by the teacher and student gains.

By studying this phenomenon of job-embedded PD, schools and districts will be better able to design, support, and implement job-embedded PD programs in schools, meet modern accountability requirements, and justify the funding and expenditures (Guskey, 2003). Schools and districts will also be better prepared for any challenges that arise when professional development experiences for teachers are moved from an external school activity to a more intimate and internal experience (Showers, 1984).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are perceived roles and responsibilities of job-embedded PD facilitators?
- (2) What are perceptions of PD facilitators on their ability to impact teacher quality and student achievement in their school?
- (3) What types of school-based internal, external, and environmental factors influence job-embedded professional learning opportunities in schools?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Over the last 15 years professional development efforts have been grounded in an assumption that improving teachers' knowledge of subject matter and their ability to

implement teaching strategies in the classroom will also increase student learning (Hirsh and Sparks, 2000).

With the emergence of on-the-job training or job-embedded professional development (JEPD) models, it is vital that state agencies, school boards, district offices, and schools understand how to implement job-embedded PD in schools and the roles PD facilitators play in insuring job-embedded PD is implemented with fidelity and in accordance with emerging standards for JEPD. When professional development is implemented at the school-house, in real-time, and in conjunction with classroom practice and follow-up, significant gains in teacher quality and student achievement can be realized (Croft et al, 2012). When teacher training programs and learning are followed by practice in the classroom with the assistance of a coach or facilitator, then retention, transfer, and changes in practice may be realized at increased levels. District and school investments in teacher professional development may be maximized when modern, innovative, adult learning practices are implemented and by using professional development practitioners in school-based roles that support job-embedded PD activities. Districts and schools can use the results of the study to determine funding allocations, structures, supports, and environments that support effective JEPD models and ultimately teacher and student achievement.

This study adds to the available literature on the emerging practice of placing job-embedded professional development facilitators in schools, and offers insight into the variables necessary to sustain and implement effective JEPD models in schools. The study also spotlights relevant issues that may hinder districts and schools from successfully engaging in JEPD, as seen through the eyes of PDFs, and offers potential

ways to design effective school-based professional development activities for teachers. If done successfully, JEPD provided by skilled practitioners may support positive influences on teacher perceptions of professional development and revitalize an area of teaching and learning that has long been viewed as ineffective and unsuccessful in changing teacher practice and transfer rates (Croft et al., 2012, Showers, 1984). The results of the study will assist districts, school leaders, and professional development practitioners in designing effective learning opportunities that may lead to high teacher quality and ultimately increase student performance.

PLAN OF THE STUDY

As a former professional development practitioner and facilitator, I want to explore how PD facilitators define their reality and whether it is aligned with the defined roles and responsibilities of the position. I am also interested in understanding how the implementation of JEPD is described and constructed through the experiences of professional development facilitators assigned to various schools. I will conduct a qualitative research study to explore how the experiences of PD facilitators are implemented within their school environments, job settings, and relationships with teachers and administrators in order to improve teacher quality and ultimately student achievement. Through the use of interviews, I interpret and understand how PD facilitators perceive their roles, interpret their contributions to the schools in which they work, and facilitate the expectations of their school-based environments and the influences they have on teachers.

Using insights as a practitioner, the researcher can better understand and interpret the implementation and design of JEPD as reported by professional development

facilitators. Each facilitator's experience in the school will differ based on their understanding of their roles, school culture towards PDFs, and district expectations. Their experiences are also influenced by internal, external, and other environmental factors that influence and impact the work of PDFs in providing job-embedded PD. Individuals also create their own context and add meaning as the situation relates to them (Crotty, 1998). What connects each participant is that all were selected and hired as professional development facilitators (PDFs) by going through the same screening and selection process, and were given the same job descriptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of professional development facilitators (PDFs). They were then placed in different schools. This study seeks to describe and examine each participant's view of their situation, and how objective realities are produced within natural contexts, and how this may or may not affect the quality and effectiveness of school-based professional development.

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in phenomenology, using first-hand experiences of participants to understand the structure of the experience through each facilitator's "lived experience," and searching for patterns among them (Gephart, 1999). Through the exploration of the school-based facilitators' experiences, other educational professionals will be better able to understand and describe the phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants (Glesne, 2011). The data in this study will be obtained from participant interviews and used to understand and describe the essence of what PDFs have experienced and how they have experienced it as school-based job-embedded professional development practitioners.

Participants were selected from a pool of established educators, within a district implementing JEPD, who were also hired as professional development facilitators in K-8 and middle schools. Each of the PDFs were screened and hired through the district's selection process, and then placed in one of the district's middle or K-8 schools. Seven facilitators participated in in-depth interviews, using an open interview design that consists of an interview protocol with semi-structured and open-ended questions. The interviews were transcribed and coded in order to gather and analyze participant perceptions and viewpoints through the responses. The data was then analyzed and reported in order to answer the research questions and inform educational practice. The researcher maintained focus and openness throughout the interview and analysis process and reflected regularly to ensure objectivity throughout the study.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter includes an introduction, a problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations, delimitations, and definition sections. Chapter two provides a review of the relevant literature supporting the purpose and research questions of the study. Chapter three outlines the research methodology and data collection methods utilized to effectively conduct the study, and chapter four reports the findings after analyzing the data. Chapter five presents a summary of the study, conclusions, implications, and a comprehensive discussion of the findings, as well as recommendations and future implications for educational practice and research.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study is limited to educators hired as professional development facilitators (PDFs) in an urban school district that strategically developed a process for selecting and hiring PDFs, developed a job description, and developed evaluation standards.
2. The study is limited to participants working in middle schools and K-8 schools only.
3. The sample is limited to 35 PDFs who participated as a professional learning community all year long together and attended monthly meetings as scheduled.
4. The sample size was limited to participants who had been PDFs in a school and who may or may not still be in that role and were hired through the district's selection process.
5. Participant criteria included only that they have served between one and five years as a PDF in a middle or K-8 school.
6. Other than participants having experience as a PDF, no additional background, skills, or experiences were required or discussed unless it emerged in the interview or responses.
7. As a former PDF, the researcher had some insight into the lives of the PDFs being studied from prior meetings and collaborations. The researcher, also acknowledged that all schools are different and so interest in studying and describing PDF roles in schools emerged from an understanding that each experience may be different and ultimately provide some insight into successful implementations and unsuccessful implementations, thus allowing all educators to benefit from learning about this new model of professional development.

8. By choosing an open interview format, participants are allowed to speak freely and reveal as much as they want without feeling pressure to have a “right answer.” The study is limited to the answers provided by participants.
9. The criteria used to select and hire PDFs was already determined prior to the study.

LIMITATIONS

1. The researcher had no control over the selection and criteria used to identify and hire PDFs.
2. Findings were limited only to the participants in the study.
3. Participants in the sample were not representative of all PDFs and did not represent all school grades and levels (elementary, middle, and high school). They only worked in schools that are classified as middle (grades 6-8) and/or K-8.
4. School demographics were not considered in this study beyond what emerged from participant interviews and responses.
5. It may not be possible to generalize from the study results. This is a problem that can be overcome by replication in different geographic and school grade level samples with more participants.
6. The response rate was due to a small sample size and the interest level of targeted PDFs in responding and describing their perceptions.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. It is assumed that all participants were open and truthful.
2. It is assumed that PDFs were highly qualified and skilled in delivering professional development due to the fact that they were selected and hired by a selection committee after a strategically designed screening process.

3. It is assumed that one to three years as a PDF is enough time to provide detailed insight into and understanding of the roles and responsibilities within a given school.

DEFINITION OF RELEVANT TERMS

- Accountability- The responsibilities and obligations of states, districts, schools, teachers, and students based on federal legislation requirements in order to reach goals or outlined expectations in return for federal funding.
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – U.S. law passed in 1965 as a portion of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty that focused on equal access to K-12 education and establishing high standards of accountability. It established an increased role by the federal government in funding public education. ESEA has gone through eight reauthorizations, including No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001 and the most recent, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 2015 under President Obama.
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – U.S. law passed in 2015 that governs K-12 education policy. It modified federal involvement in public education policy by decreasing restrictions, redefining the provisions for standardized tests, and maintaining accountability in funding for public education. It was created in order to combat the dissent and unpopular view of education policy emerging from the No Child Left Behind Act. Like NCLB, it was a reauthorization of ESEA.
- Highly qualified – an educational term referring to a well-prepared, effective teacher. Identified as one of the goals of the NCLB Act, the term highly qualified teachers (HQT) comes from the original language of the Title II section

(Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals) of the No Child Left Behind Act. Title II of NCLB assigns federal funds to educational agencies for the purpose of improving student achievement through the professional development of highly qualified teachers and principals. To qualify for this funding, states must comply with a series of conditions stipulated in NCLB, and track their progress toward goals set by each state. The sections of NCLB designated to HQTs allocates the majority of the funds to the states and does not clearly define at the federal level what is and what is not a highly qualified teacher. By allowing for a more local definition of this term by each state, the disparities and inconsistencies in determining what is or what is not highly qualified has created heavy scrutiny and controversy.

- Job-embedded – in this study refers to on-the-job training, or the practice of linking training and coaching in an on-the-job design applied in direct classroom practice with a facilitator (Croft, et al., 2010).
- No Child Left Behind Act – a 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 by Congress under President Bush which supported standards-based education reform focused on high accountability, increased presence of government in educational policy, and an increase in annual testing. In order to receive funding, states had to administer these tests to all students. It also standardized expectations for annual academic progress, report cards, teacher qualifications, and critical changes in funding for states, districts, and schools.

- Professional Development – in this study, professional development is used synonymously with staff development, teacher training, and professional learning; "a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement" (Hirsh, 2009), p.12. In this study it most often refers to teacher training.
- School-based professional development – in this study refers to professional development practitioners who are experts in a specific content or a variety of instructional strategies and who work closely with teachers within a school and in classrooms to improve classroom practice and ultimately student achievement (Russo, 2004).

SUMMARY

Job-embedded professional development reform is central to the push for increases in teacher growth and quality and ultimately in student achievement. In an effort to find real solutions to increases in educational accountability standards tied to receipt of federal school funds, this study investigated the participation of PDFs in the implementation of job-embedded PD as designed by one school district. An examination of the experiences of PDFs offers districts and schools opportunities to design and implement successful professional development reform with fidelity. By maximizing the alignment between the perspectives of PDFs on their roles, program design, and actual implementation of the role in schools, there can be a natural alignment between stakeholder's which could better lead to intended outcomes. Viewed as one of the key ways to improve the quality of school districts (Desimone, 2009), strong professional

development initiatives and design can maximize influence on teaching and learning goals and return on investment.

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Professional development (PD) is an essential aspect of teaching and learning. As we develop and enhance instructional practice to support student learning and achievement, teachers need to engage in ongoing, collaborative professional activities (Darling-Hammond, 2012). School environments are changing quickly based on new curriculum, content changes, instructional strategies, research, and accountability. Teachers often need real-time professional development experiences to stay current. It is important then, for districts and schools to provide adequate and sustainable professional development opportunities (Guskey, 1986).

There are many characteristics essential to creating, sustaining, and evaluating effective professional-development models that have strong influences on student learning (Guskey, 2003). One characteristic being explored currently is schools-based professional development models. These are models of delivering effective professional learning through training on the job and coaching in the classroom. Over the last decade, job-embedded professional development has emerged as a term in federal education regulations and in education-based professional usage (Croft et al., 2010) as a way of defining on-the-job training provided to teachers. Identified as a critical attribute of effective PD because it supports the school- or site-based implementation, job-embedded professional development provides a foundation for ensuring quality teaching (Guskey, 2003).

Job-embedded professional development is a professional learning experience within the school that focuses on improving teacher practice and student outcomes (Croft et al., 2010). The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) suggests that there is a consensus among practitioners that instead of one-shot trainings and traveling to workshops and conferences, teachers should be able to learn on the job with an abundance of activities that support collaboration and individualized support (NIET, 2012). The advancement of a comprehensive and effective job-embedded professional development program should yield gains in teacher growth and student learning outcomes adequate to meet current accountability and achievement requirements in education (Croft, et al., 2010). The literature on professional development and job-embedded PD, reveals that job-embedded coaching, models, and structures can be highly effective when they are well designed and occur in schools with adequate structures and supports to improve teacher quality (NIET, 2012).

As districts and schools attempt to increase teacher quality and student achievement, there is a growing need to provide high quality professional development (DeMonte, 2013). For more than 20 years, teacher support and professional development have been changing significantly. Traditional “one-size-fits-all” trainings and workshops are not always designed to meet the needs of participants. They often require teachers to leave their classrooms and schools. This ultimately separates teachers from practice, which is becoming less desirable, and pushes practitioners to change their interests to professional development opportunities that are job-embedded, collaborative, and individualized (DeMonte, 2013).

Effective professional development is described by NIET (2012) as having a “focus on curriculum and shared instructional challenges; collective participation; opportunities for active learning; sustained duration; and coherence with student achievement goals” (p. 4). In addition, recent federal education legislation highlights the term “job-embedded professional development” and offers it as a strategy for school improvement and reform efforts (Croft et al. 2010). The term “job-embedded” is becoming more commonly used and according to Croft et al. (2010), is also being featured in several federal requirements, such as the School Improvement Fund regulations and the Race to the Top grant application, as an effective form of professional development. In addition, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds which support the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Part B, as well as Title I Activity funds, highlight the “implementation of job-embedded professional development in high-need schools” (Croft et al., 2010, p.1). According to Croft et al. (2010), in the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) guidelines, the U.S. Department of Education explained its rationale for requiring job-embedded professional development by stating:

We believe that the requirement to provide on-going, high quality, job-embedded professional development to staff in a school is clearly tied to improving instruction in multiple ways. First, the requirement that professional development be “job-embedded” connotes a direct connection between a teacher’s work in the classroom and the professional development the teacher receives. (p. 1)

Current usage of the term job-embedded professional development in legislation is setting the tone for defining and refining staff development efforts to meet the requirements of federal school-reform legislation and secure federal funding (DeMonte, 2013). By using federal legislative mandates and descriptors to define job-embedded PD, schools and districts can leverage available federal funds to support high quality teaching

efforts and increased student achievement goals. In this way, the implementation of job-embedded PD models and formats in districts and schools will support legislative requirements for increases in high quality teachers and in student achievement outcomes (Croft et al., 2010). The No Child Left Behind Act supports this by stating that professional development should be “high-quality, sustained, intensive and classroom-focused,” while the Elementary and Secondary Education Act also supports this by stating “not one day or short-term workshops or conferences” (NIET, 2012, p. 2). The use of these descriptors as indicators of professional development standards in federal legislation leads districts and schools to job-embedded professional development as a way of providing high quality professional development that impacts quality teaching and student learning (DeMonte, 2013).

Job-embedded professional development refers to teacher learning that occurs within the school and classroom setting, is grounded in current instructional practice and school initiatives (Croft et al., 2010), and, as stated by the National Staff Development Council (currently known as Learning Forward), is designed to enhance teachers’ practices in order to increase student learning (NSDC, 2012). Many factors contribute to student learning and achievement. These factors include student characteristics such as socio-economic status, limited English proficiency, per-pupil spending; pupil teacher ratios; class sizes; and teacher quality (Valente & Tinoca, 2015). Darling-Hammond (2011) suggests that of all the factors affecting achievement, teacher quality has been shown to be the most highly correlated with student learning. The National Research Council (NRC) states “as noted in the extensive body of evidence cited throughout this report, research is confirming that good teaching does matter” (NRC, 2011) (p. 4). In

addition, Valente & Tinoca (2015), state that a report produced by the Committee on Science and Math Teacher Preparation suggests many ways to improve teacher education through professional development because of its impact on student learning.

By studying professional development practices and designs, districts, schools, and practitioners can make more informed decisions on how to support high quality teaching. The support and PD that is provided parallel to teachers while they are working in the field is ultimately the most highly determinative of their continuous growth and development (Valente & Tinoca, 2015). In addition, any study focused on improving teacher quality should be focused on examining the kind of PD being implemented, and evaluating the impact of the PD design on student achievement (Valente & Tinoca, 2015). This review of literature discusses school reform and PD, a theoretical framework for professional development, the definition of professional development, effective professional development characteristics, and various models of job-embedded professional development as a form of effective professional development linked to increases in quality teaching and student achievement.

School Reform and Professional Development

Professional development has been tied to educational reform for decades. From the passage of the National Defense Act by Congress (1958) which prompted an increase of math and science teacher jobs, to the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, in which teacher PD was linked to improvements in school and educational change, there has always been a need for increases in professional learning opportunities (Giwa, 2012). Later, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) required that all students be taught by highly qualified teachers, creating a mandate for all schools to implement professional

development programs that develop teacher learning communities (Ivey, 2008). Federal legislation regarding educational accountability efforts has moved from recognizing the need for teacher growth to naming and mandating targeted teacher development efforts tied to federal funding sources (Croft et al., 2010).

Current national school reform efforts embody a vision of developing educational practices in a way that sits at the heart of teaching and learning and that requires districts and schools to design and transform teaching. By connecting instruction and student outcomes, the primary goal of school reform is to achieve high quality instruction for all students (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 2011). In order to create quality schools with quality teachers given new accountability standards and mandates, districts and schools must use time, effort, and money strategically to affect student achievement. Federal, state, and local policy creators have made a “sizable bet on the power of professional support to change teaching and learning” (DeMonte, 2013, p. 1). Many reform efforts include a reference to teacher training and support as a key piece of the goal to make high-quality teaching realized in all classrooms (DeMonte, 2013). DeMonte (2013) also suggests that professional development is the link between the design and implementation of school-based reforms and the success of the reform. New school reform efforts are placing key emphasis on professional development to connect the teaching and learning gap by insisting that educator learning be integrated in the day-to-day work of quality teaching (DeMonte, 2013). As a result, districts, schools and administrators need to be knowledgeable and informed about quality staff development programs that work and yield the best results for teachers and students (Linn, Gill, Sherman, Vaughn, and Mixon, 2010).

For decades, federal education legislation has gradually increased support and requirements for changes in teacher training efforts. The Title I provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act mandated that low performing schools set aside at least 10% of their Title I allocations for school-wide professional development (Hirsh, 2009). The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) called for every classroom to have a qualified teacher in conjunction with raising testing requirements (Weaver, 2003). In 2012, the Every Student Succeeds Act granted flexibility to some of the mandated NCLB requirements if states developed comprehensive plans to close student achievement gaps, increase equity, improve the quality of teaching, and improve the outcomes for all students (ESSA, 2015). DeMonte (2013) reports that “almost every presentation or speech or conversation about educational reform inevitably includes some reference to the amount of support and training teachers and administrators will need in order to make key reforms real and effective in classrooms” (p. 1).

It seems a natural progression that educational reform is highlighting teacher professional development as a key to improvements and change. As a nation, we spend approximately \$20 billion annually in federal, state, and local funds for educational professional development (DeMonte, 2013, p.19). The investment should be leveraged with accountability, standards, and structures that require school districts to design their own plans tied to obtaining these funds since there are no specific, agreed-upon set of professional learning activities and resources readily available for the variety of schools that exists (DeMonte, 2013). Gaps in the knowledge about exactly which PD strategies yield the most results make it important to study and utilize research-based models on what influences effective PD (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). As a result, districts and schools

required to submit these PD designs and programs should be knowledgeable and informed about PD models that have demonstrated evidence of effectiveness and will yield the highest results (DeMonte, 2013). Thus, there is a need to utilize carefully designed PD studies to better inform educator learning activities that affect student achievement and leverage PD funding sources attached to mandates and high accountability standards (Guskey & Yoon, 2009).

Many states have adopted professional development standards targeting improvement of student learning. Hirsh (2009) found that several national studies on what distinguishes high-performing, high poverty schools from lower performing schools has been consistently identified as collaborative school-wide professional development. A school's plan for professional development is most effective when it is differentiated to meet the needs of the teachers and it relates directly to what teachers are doing every day (DeMonte, 2013). District and school support is important to the success of any professional-development initiative. Teacher PD is identified as a key component of school reform because as teachers increase their professional capacities, students will increase their learning (Guskey, 1986). Teacher professional development can be seen as a key component of school reform because at the center of the reform are the transformations taking place in every classroom across the nation. By supporting teachers in every classroom, we are realizing the importance of teachers in reform efforts, and the importance of professional development designs and programs (Giwa, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Over the last three decades, professional development programs were not designed as activities to impact student learning, but were focused on teacher outcomes

and imparting knowledge about a given topic. Modern professional development researchers and practitioners advocate the importance of designing and implementing professional development based on its ultimate impact on student learning (Valente & Tinoca, 2015). As a foundation for useful professional development, programs and models should emphasize active-teaching, evaluation and assessment, and observation and reflection activities (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009). Teacher professional development should be grounded in learning that focuses on the student and helps the teacher change and develop pedagogical practices and skills. In this way, professional learning opportunities will engage teachers in specific types of content development that has positive effects on teaching practice (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009). The framework for guiding successful professional development programs relies on a basic theory that “better instruction will lead to better student achievement” (DeMonte, 2013; p. 9).

In a model presented by Guskey (1986) of the teacher change process (Figure 1) which occurs when teachers participate in professional development programs, there is a direct link between staff development and changes in teacher practice which leads to changes in student learning outcomes, and ultimately a change in teachers’ beliefs and attitudes regarding teaching and learning. Guskey’s (1986) model of the process of teacher change introduces professional development programs as the foundation of the change process. It also suggests that increased student achievement, which can be seen by teachers after they have transformed their classroom practices, will ultimately support changes in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs.

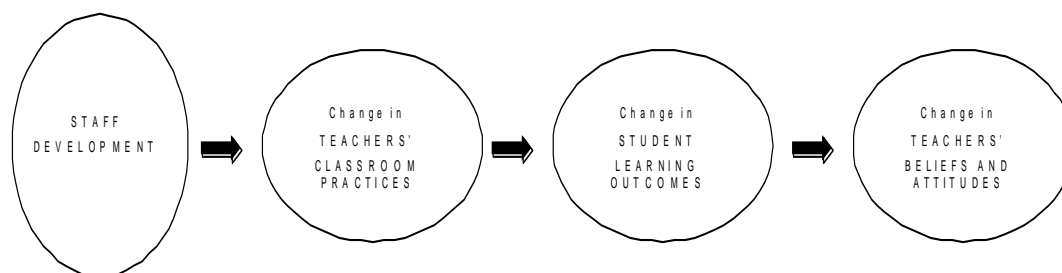


Figure 1: A Model of the Process of Teacher Change (Guskey, 1986)

There are several frameworks for professional development present in the literature. One of the most evolved ones is by Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, and Stiles (1998) as cited by Valente and Tinoca (2015). It represents the design of professional development programs for teachers of science and mathematics. The framework includes a clear emphasis on “the continuous and circular design permeating the implementation of professional development programs” (Valente & Tinoca, 2015). Professional development frameworks of this design should be linked to continuous reflection and examine program outcomes as a mechanism to reevaluate and improve them (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos, 2009).

Valente and Tinoca (2015) also discuss another framework in which student learning is the ultimate goal and the teachers represent the step just before the students by which the goal can be achieved. This framework suggests that practitioners must focus on evaluating teacher growth and development in terms of observable outcomes for teachers so that the research that links teacher growth and student learning will be adequate. Professional development efforts should place student learning at the center of the educational reform, and create initiatives that influence teacher professional growth and development since the teachers are situated next to students in this framework and

have the greatest influence on student achievement (Valente & Tinoca, 2015). The synthesis of these two frameworks prompted Valente & Tinoca (2015) to present a third theoretical framework for professional development (Figure 2). It combines the idea that the structure of professional development, its impact on teacher change, and its focus on student learning should be at the center of all professional learning. This framework reflects their research and values based on designing professional development programs and sets a foundation for investigating professional development as a means for promoting high-quality teaching. By examining this emergent framework for professional development, influenced by two other frameworks where teacher growth is directly linked to student improvement, we can better understand the effect of professional development activities on teacher change and growth, and ultimately on student learning.

There are essentially three domains within the framework; a professional development domain, a student learning domain, and a teacher change/evolution domain. The professional development domain has four main stages (Valente & Tinoca, 2015), specifically: Set goals, Plan, Do, and Reflect. The first stage, the goal-setting phase, is where teachers should begin formulating PD goals in terms of student learning outcomes. The second stage is the Plan Phase where the teacher develops an action plan. This action plan is then enacted in the Doing Phase based on the PD program. The final phase is the Reflection Phase which is based on the outcomes of the implemented PD program on student learning and teacher's beliefs.

The heart of this framework suggests the ultimate goal of the PD framework as the student learning domain which is grounded in the theory of teacher change (Valente & Tinoca, 2015). When the PD program or model in use establishes student learning as

the primary goal, and engages teachers in “doing the work,” it ultimately recognizes visible changes in student learning as a foundation for changes in teacher practice and beliefs. As a result, the PD program becomes the catalyst for improving teacher practice and the root cause for improvements in student achievement (Valente & Tinoca, 2015).

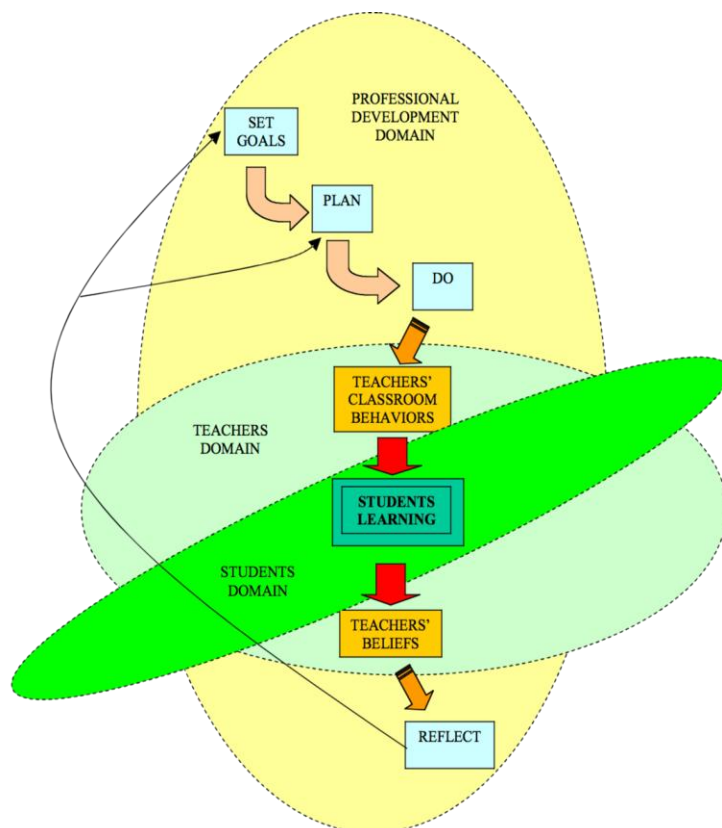


Figure 2: Professional Development Theoretical Framework (Valente & Tinoca, 2015)

The Doing Phase of the framework is where we examine the models of PD that have the greatest influence on changes in teacher practice. It is also where we acknowledge that professional development programs by design can only address some of the issues that affect quality teaching (Valente & Tinoca, 2015). They suggest that

conditions such as school climate and culture, the administrative environment, mandated standardized tests, and teachers' salaries may not be addressed by PD programs; however, they have just as much influence on teacher practice. In addition, there are significant influences on the student domain that affect learning, such as number of students per class, family environment, mental health, and student behavior. These heavily influence student learning, but are rarely addressed by professional developers leading teacher change and growth. In addition, other external factors like politics, economy, or mandated curriculum, have an impact on any professional development framework implemented and must be acknowledged, although very little can be done about them in the Doing Phase (Valente and Tinoca, 2015). What can be done, however, is an evaluation of the professional development program to identify the characteristics that have a greater impact on student achievement and work despite the challenges on teacher growth and student learning, and then continue these. According to Valente and Tinoca (2015),

“research should be conducted at a cross-cultural level comparing professional development programs from different states, countries, and cultures. Assessing as many and as different professional development programs as possible may be a fruitful avenue of further investigations. Different cultures and countries have promoted professional development programs with different degrees of success. Learning from their strengths and weaknesses is imperative. There is much to be gained by comparing a variety of professional development programs.” (p. 5)

Professional learning activities can have a powerful effect on teacher skills and knowledge, and on student learning if it is sustained over time and embedded in the work of the PD model (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). As the foundation of the framework suggests, professional development efforts worth studying should place student learning

at the center of the educational system, and ultimately place influence and action on the closest people to it -- teachers -- because they will have the greatest influence on student learning. By accepting and utilizing this framework as an understanding for effecting teacher change, we can establish a foundation for examining and researching professional development programs that will yield success in the “Doing Phase.” in spite of the negative influences on teaching and learning that may not be affected by professional learning activities.

Traditional Professional Development

Since the introduction of formal education, professional development practices have evolved as means of helping educators succeed in schools. Practitioners, researchers, and critics have argued about what kind of experiences it takes to develop effective teachers. For many years, professional development for teachers was primarily viewed as teacher training or in-service. From the introduction of formal education to around the 1970s, training for teachers was known as teacher in-service, or teacher education. Throughout the 1980s, education came under scrutiny by the public, and it evolved to being called “staff development.” As education continued to evolve, the 1990s created a demand for more professionalism in education, and thus the term “professional development” emerged (Trehearn, 2010). While the terminology evolved, and is used interchangeably, the view of teachers and critics on the development of teachers remained the same. Teacher attendees have also referred to it as “training,” “presenters,” and “a waste of time” (Barnard, 2004).

Traditional PD was also often viewed as the ineffective and “drive-by” workshops of the past (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009). These teacher-training programs

often consisted of outside speakers providing information to teachers on educational policies, requirements, new educational theories, or motivational exercises for teachers, who dropped in and never returned to the school or district (DeMonte, 2013; Barnard, 2004). They were often one-size-fits-all, one-shot experiences that did not consider teacher subject-matter or alignment with best teaching practices (Barnard, 2004).

DeMonte (2013) describes traditional PD as “short-term, episodic, and disconnected professional learning,” the kind that does not have positive influences on improving teachers or students. (p.1). Complaints about traditional professional development experiences often included being disconnected from everyday classroom practice, unrelated and generic, not connecting to specific instructional problems, and infrequent (DeMonte, 2013). Guskey (1986) suggests that traditional staff development dates back to 19th-century “teacher institutes.” This is where PD was unfocused, fragmented, and not aligned with any school improvement efforts, very ineffective, and focused more on informing about state and local administrative items (Linn et al., 2010).

Traditional PD was also known as “in-service” and was theoretically designed to “pour content” into teacher’s heads that they were expected to instantly utilize, with no time to practice or refine (DeMonte, 2013). Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) discovered that traditional professional development activities, such as providing teacher learning activities outside the classroom, did not show a significant positive effect on student learning. In their research studies, Darling- Hammond et al. (2009) found that while more than 90% of teachers participate in professional learning in their schools or districts, many of the teachers stated that what they learned was ineffective and/or could not be applied to their classroom practice. Valente and Tinoca, (2015) also suggest that teachers

view traditional professional development as short, after-school initiatives, generally conducted in the school library or cafeteria, and one-time initiatives, where attendance is mandated and enforced by school leaders. PD topics are general, broad, and often too vague for the teachers to apply to their classroom contexts. Teachers are often lectured to in these kinds of settings, leading to low participation and lack of desire to implement due to the ineffective results of lecturing on adult learning (Valente and Tinoca, 2015). Valente and Tinoca (2015) identify some key shortcomings of traditional in-service programs (p.7) as:

- fragmented, short-term, and lack follow up activities
- lacking a message and relevance to what actually happens in the teachers' classrooms
- being insufficient in intensity and duration to make a positive impact on teacher's performance and students' achievement
- lacking incentives and not responding to teachers' needs and concerns
- not having built-in release time for teachers to plan new strategies and to interact with other teachers and professional development experts
- being driven by mandated requirements rather than by student learning
- being too theoretical and lacking practical classroom applications and developmentally appropriate instruction
- not being aligned with recent developments in curriculum, assessment, and methodology, or with technological advances
- not having specific content rigor and are not taught by credible professionals in the field based on content and methodology

- not utilizing business and industry expertise and resources
- not being coordinated with pre-service teacher preparation programs

The traditional approach to PD simply was not rigorous enough to stimulate cumulative learning and deep reflection of instructional practices (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009). Traditional staff development efforts sustained over the last three decades have been plagued by criticism, conflict, disorder, and mundane experiences, many of which were deemed ineffective (Guskey, 1986). As a result of these ineffective practices for implementing traditional PD, educational leaders viewed these workshops as a waste of time and money; particularly because they were one-shot experiences and offered no genuine follow-up or sustained support (Guskey and Yoon, 2009). This leads to frustration for teachers, increased public criticism, and wasted investments of federal, state, and local funding for schools (Guskey, 2012). The Mirage Report (2015) also confirms that districts are spending more than \$8 billion a year on teacher improvement, yet very little improvement is seen, pushing school systems to “explore and test alternative approaches to development” (Anderson, 2015, p. 3). It has become important to reevaluate our professional development programs in an effort to provide teachers with adequate time and experiences that will increase their instructional impact and leverage federal, state, and local funds that support our schools.

Professional Development

Although the name has evolved over time, in-service, educational training, staff development, and professional development, these each refer to opportunities for educators to grow and participate as learners (Zepeda, 2012). Learning Forward (2011) (formerly the National Staff Development Council) defines professional development as

“a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (p.16). It further describes the characteristics of professional development as fostering collective responsibility, primarily occurring several times per week, a continuous cycle of improvement, providing job-embedded coaching, and supported by external assistance (Learning Forward, 2011). Desimone (2009) describes professional development as a process of acquiring new information to increase knowledge and efficacy. While many researchers and practitioners describe the nature of professional development in different ways, what is certain is that the goal of professional development for teachers is to increase the quality of instruction through an increase in knowledge, and in turn improve student achievement by imparting that knowledge to others (Sun, Penuel, Frank, Gallagher, and Youngs, 2013). The National Staff Development Council (2012) provided a comprehensive outline of professional development standards (Appendix A) that has been widely accepted and sets a backdrop for the standards for designing and delivering high quality professional development.

Professional development is a complex endeavor and involves examining assumptions about teaching and learning, examining subject-matter deeply, and transferring research-based knowledge into classroom practice (Barnard, 2004). It is a process in which the training experiences provide new techniques, strategies, methods, and approaches to teaching with feedback and allow educators to practice in a supportive and nurturing environment. Improved teacher learning will result in students receiving the benefits of the new knowledge when applied in the classroom (Barnard, 2004). Guskey (2003) asserts that there are three major results tied to successful professional

development efforts; a change in teachers' instructional practices, changes in student learning results, and a change in teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Successful implementation of effective PD programs can result in a change in practice and in improved achievements of students (Guskey, 2003).

Professional development programs and models vary extensively amongst practitioners. Exact structures of PD depend on the needs of the teacher, school, and district. Desimone (2009) suggests professional development comes in many forms: co-teaching, mentoring, reflecting on lessons, group discussions of student work artifacts, book clubs, teacher study groups, self-examination of practice, classroom observations of practices, and inquiry/action research. An important aspect of professional learning is understanding that it occurs all the time. Each time a lesson is delivered, curriculum materials are reviewed, or professional literature is read, educators are engaging in the dynamic nature of professional development that is embedded in the lives of teachers (Desimone, 2009). Staff development programs and models should be an integral part of school and district programs because they affect the lives of teachers (Barnard, 2004). Finally, the National Staff Development Council (2012), now known as Learning Forward, described staff development "as including high-quality training programs with intensive follow-up and support, but also other growth-promoting processes such as study groups, action-research, and peer coaching." (p. 1) In reviewing the literature, the most common definition of professional development is a continuous, in-depth, intensive program designed to increase teacher knowledge to spark sufficient changes in practice that will translate to increases in student learning and achievement.

Emerging from traditional structures of the past, professional development opportunities today must offer more powerful experiences, tied directly to teaching and learning if we want to see results (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009). Educators should engage in new ways to improve their skills by participating in professional development opportunities that share best practices, collaborate with colleagues, and provide follow-up activities. These experiences should be intensive and sustained over time (DeMonte, 2013). Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) conducted a review of nine research studies on professional learning and student achievement and found that the ones with the most significant positive effects were programs offering 30-100 hours of PD spread out over six to twelve months. They also found that programs lasting less than 14 hours showed no positive effects on student achievement. DeMonte (2013) also highlights many other studies that show the positive effects of PD on student achievement, including a coaching model called “MyTeachingPartner” which “showed that the students of teachers who received specific feedback to videotaped teaching shared with an instructional coach had higher achievement gains than students of teachers not receiving coaching” (p.5).

Current research also suggests that it can take between 20-60 times for teachers to become acclimated to new information and skills before they will become experts in it, and it should be followed up with coaching to reinforce the skill (DeMonte, 2013; Joyce and Showers, 1980). DeMonte (2013) continues to suggest that recent studies on professional learning confirm that PD can change the way teachers teach and increase student learning. This indicates that professional development with follow-up coaching

does matter, and that there is a clear potential to improve the quality of teaching through the use of quality and sustained professional learning programs (DeMonte, 2013).

In an effort to support the need for high-quality professional learning programs, researchers are beginning to create a consensus around the content, context, and design of professional learning activities that establish high-quality experiences in order for teachers to develop richer ways to teach their content (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009). The goal of high-quality professional development is to increase the level of expectations for teachers, serve as a bridge between the curriculum and reform expectations, and improve the quality of learning for students (DeMonte, 2013). Professional development today is very different from PD of the past; there is more accountability, higher stakes, and a focus on finding methods that work quickly (Zepeda, 2012). Research further shows that certain features of professional development programs yield greater increases in teaching and learning than others, making some professional development models more effective than others. These include coaching and mentoring, collaboration, observation and discussion, and providing sufficient time for teachers to learn and improve (DeMonte, 2013). By examining effective PD efforts, researchers and practitioners are better able to design and implement school-based PD that will meet the expectations for funding and financial support.

Effective Professional Development

Darling-Hammond (2012) defines teaching quality as “strong instruction that enables a wide range of students to learn” (p. 3) and references teacher quality as the strongest school-related factor that impacts student learning and achievement. Given the current educational focus on increasing developing, measuring, increasing, and

maintaining quality teaching and teacher effectiveness, it is important to understand the characteristics of high quality teaching, and distinguishing between teacher quality and teaching quality in order to provide professional support (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Darling-Hammond (2012) discusses teacher quality as the personal traits, skills, and understanding a person brings to the teaching profession, including specific frameworks for how teachers behave. Quality teaching is defined as “strong instructional practices that enable a wide range of students to learn. Such instruction meets the demands of the discipline, the goals of instruction, and the needs of students in a particular context” (Darling-Hammond, 2012, p. 3).

By using the standards of teacher quality which encompass quality teaching (a function of teacher quality influenced by the context of instruction), professional development efforts and funding must provide teachers with tools to maintain and develop these qualities over time to keep up with the changing needs of students. In order for quality teaching to be at its highest, effective professional development strategies must be employed (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Professional development efforts must focus on implementing research-based activities and active learning experiences that facilitate opportunities for teachers to adapt “the practice of their unique classroom situations” (Guskey and Yoon, 2009; p. 496).

Based on the literature on effective development, it is increasingly clear that there is very little consensus on the definition of “effective” (Guskey, 2003, p.749). In a review of several studies on effective PD, Guskey and Yoon (2009) provide some insight into developing a working framework for understanding the characteristics of effective PD. These characteristics include results that practitioners believed to be important

(Guskey, 2003), and a synthesis of research studies that provided clear and distinct evidence of the relationship between factors of effective PD and improving student learning (Guskey and Yoon, 2009). Guskey (2003), establishes the acceptance of translating professional development activities into increases in student achievement based on the “intuitive and logical connection (Guskey, 2003, p.495),” however, the research also confirms there are very few studies that provide evidence of the connection. Guskey (2003) found that “only a National Institute for Science Education (NISE) analysis and an Educational Testing Service (ETS) study show a direct link between their identified characteristics and specific measures of student achievement (Guskey, 2003, p.749).”

While Guskey (2003) found inconsistencies in agreement among researchers and practitioners regarding specific criteria for effectiveness, the literature highlights essential elements emerging from the various studies reviewed and accepted as credible. The studies provided understanding of the need to clearly define effective PD and develop a commonly accepted, research-based criteria grounded in the logical connection between effective professional development and student learning (Guskey and Yoon, 2009). The synthesis of the research, suggests that time, resources, collaboration, evaluation, alignment, and being school- or site-based, all contribute to effective PD (Guskey, 2003). Findings of the research also determined that PD effectiveness is contingent on ensuring proper environment, utilization of research-based programs, and integration of activities that “positively affect learning and learners,” and use adequate evaluation tools. (Guskey, 2003).

Guskey and Yoon (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of one of the largest, comprehensive research studies on effective PD, titled *Reviewing the Evidence on How Teacher Professional Development Affects Student Achievement*, a study designed to provide insight on the intricate relationship between professional development and student achievement. After analyzing the findings from the study, which examined over 1,300 studies focused on the effects of professional development on student learning outcomes, Guskey and Yoon (2009) highlight workshops, summer institutes, and outside expert advice as crucial to creating effective PD programs. The design and implementation of effective workshops and summer institutes should focus on “research-based instructional practices, involved active-learning experiences for participants, and providing teachers with opportunities to adapt the practices to their unique classrooms situations (Guskey and Yoon, 2009).”

Although the meta-analysis conducted by Guskey and Yoon (2009) did not confirm that effective PD should be “strictly be site-based, and build on combined expertise of in-house staff members (p. 496),” they did acknowledge that this method of PD is a currently a trending method for providing professional development although the evidence of this particular study did not support it. Guskey and Yoon (2009), however, do suggest that when teachers regularly meet and explore common problems and collaborate to find solutions, they are better able to utilize their collective knowledge and expertise. In addition, Guskey (2003) suggests that using and analyzing student learning data can provide valuable insight for understanding the variances of instructional practices between classrooms in a given school, something unlikely to be seen between schools or within districts, given the unique cultures and environments of schools.

“Identifying the practices and strategies of these teachers and sharing them with their colleagues might provide a basis for highly-effective professional development within that context (Guskey, 2003, p. 750)”. The literature claims that effective PD should occur at the school-house. It also elevates professional learning to an “inquiry-based” model where teaching and learning is studied among educators with a common interest. School-based activities should also be geared toward PD strategies that are unique to the context of the school and educators within (Guskey and Yoon, 2009).

The role of professional development is to increase teacher quality, quality teaching, and student learning in a coherent and effective manner. Professional learning that occurs as a part of the workday and the school community provides a structured and comprehensive process for reaching this goal. Many practitioners who have researched and studied professional development models offer a variety of strategies that provide teacher learning activities that enable them to effectively change their instructional practice and impact student learning. These types of effective learning activities include characteristics such as being of sufficient duration, carefully structured, well-organized, purposeful, clearly directed, and focused on both content and pedagogy (Guskey and Yoon, 2009). It is critical that teachers be involved in learning activities that are integrated in their day-to-day work, and include the standards which guide their work. In this way, teachers need a variety of supports or activities that improve their practice and are applicable to what will work in their school, and that meet the level of accountability for high quality teaching, given the different external and internal impacts on teaching in each school (DeMonte, 2013).

Teacher knowledge and skills improve over time when professional development is a viable part of school-reform efforts (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009). Effective professional development efforts should also include learning that can be implemented immediately and highlights collaborative and collegial learning environments as a primary method of developing teachers and changing practices within the classroom (Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009). Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) suggests the research on effective PD does not support or rely on one-shot workshops, is not related to teachers' specific contexts and curriculums, is episodic or fragmented, expects teachers to make the changes in isolation and with no support or follow-up, and does not provide sustained learning opportunities and practice over multiple days and weeks.

The research on effective PD suggests that traditional methods of professional development programs and implementation models will no longer meet the needs of modern quality teaching efforts and expectations. By implementing collaborative, job-embedded activities that provide practice and follow-up in the classroom, quality teaching will be affected and ultimately student learning will be impacted (Darling-Hammond, 2012). As districts and school administrators design professional development programs, the integration of professional development practitioners in schools will support a move from traditional professional learning outside the classroom to school-based, day-to-day professional development facilitated by practitioners who can continuously engage in the learning and practice long after the content or strategy has been learned by the teacher. These are considered job-embedded activities and support effective PD characteristics (Darling-Hammond and

McLaughlin, 2011). Learning Forward also continues to highlight the role of school-based learning and job-embedded coaching as requirements of effective professional development (Croft et al., 2010).

Job-Embedded Professional Development

Job-embedded professional development is active learning by teachers that is rooted in day-to-day instructional practice. It occurs regularly, is linked to classrooms, and aligned with current educational standards and school improvement goals (Croft et al., 2010). The range of job-embedded learning opportunities can be implemented alone, with one-on-one guidance, and in teams. It can be implemented in a variety of locations within the school building and may vary to the extent that it is situated inside a classroom or elsewhere in a school (Croft et al., 2010). PDFs are located and housed at the school and create schedules based on their roles and responsibilities. They provided job-embedded activities for teachers daily and are immersed in the on-going professional learning models of the school.

The term “job-embedded professional development” has been used as a part of the language of many federal regulation funding initiatives distributed by the U.S. Department of Education. These include the School Improvement Grant fund regulations, the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund guidelines, and the Race to the Top grant, all of which directly reference “job-embedded professional development” as an essential element in describing efforts to design high-quality professional development. The School Improvement Grant (SIG) program goes so far as to require that a system of job-embedded professional development be developed that is linked to the school’s comprehensive instructional program and in collaboration with school staff in schools

where the turnaround and transformation model of reform and are implemented and funded by federal funds (Croft et al., 2010).

On-site and school-based professional development as presented in the literature is also a key factor in facilitating effective PD. This style of PD is rapidly advancing as a viable way to connect teacher learning and student achievement. An important quality of effective PD, the job-embedded professional development (JEPD) model offers participants the opportunity to collaborate and apply learned teaching strategies “just in time” to assist in adapting and navigating instructional practices within their unique teaching environments (Guskey, 2009).

JEPD is described as “teacher learning grounded in day-to-day teaching practices designed to grow teachers in content-specific instructional practices with the intent to improve student learning” (Croft, et. al., 2010). It is school- or classroom-based in order to integrate and connect teacher learning and the instructional workday. JEPD is delivered in multiple forms. Teachers can learn alone, one-on-one, or in teams. There are a variety of learning experiences determined by the contextual delivery of the JEPD: in class/real-time/with current students/based on actual issues of practice, in class/nearly real-time/away from student/based on actual issues of practice, or in school/before or after instruction/away from students/based on actual issues of practice.

JEPD is not delivered in or out of school/removed from instructional practice/away from students/centered on “possible” issues of practice (Croft et al., 2010). The learner’s experience is tailored to the structure selected but for each, knowledge and learning are derived from the expertise of school members and among

colleagues in the same school environment. JEPD provides teacher learning nestled in the unique attributes and issues of a specific school and not generalized practice. JEPD is often additionally informed by PD opportunities that support learning research-based practices that can be applied real-time (Croft et al., 2010).

The literature suggests a variety of formats for JEPD. Activities such as action research, case discussions, coaching, data teams, looking at student work, critical friends groups, lesson study, mentoring, portfolios, professional learning communities, study groups, and implementing professional growth plans all serve as key formats of JEPD (Croft et al., 2010).

In a high school teacher training program, mentoring was studied as “a vital, yet often underutilized strategy that local, regional and national professional development initiatives should include” (West, 2002, p. 72). This critical look at how a mentoring program was created, designed, and implemented provides support for this JEPD format as a method to provide support for teachers that is crucial to teacher growth and student learning. The literature outlines the need, structures, and provisions for implementing a successful mentoring program. The author concludes that while mentoring programs are timely and difficult to arrange and implement; they can be executed for little to no cost, in the school, and with site-based staff (West, 2002). This format of JEPD is a meaningful way to utilize the expertise in a school to develop teacher practice and student achievement (Croft et al., 2010).

Another study examines the effectiveness of a program that provides support for preparing and retaining on-the-job teachers who serve students with mild-moderate disabilities in urban schools. Teachers participated in a two-year program intended to

provide an “experiential and reflective experience that linked coursework and classroom practices” (Burstein and Sears, 2015, p. 59). The program was administered to teachers currently learning to teach while on the job. The participants completed activities (practica) in their individual classrooms under the leadership and supervision of university faculty and on-site district teachers. The program also included weekly seminars and coursework based on program initiatives and goals. This model of teacher preparation, coursework, seminars, and practice supports the implementation of JEPD. The study concludes the on-the-job mentoring program results in teachers enhancing and developing their teaching competencies over time, and viewing the seminars and on-site assistance as crucial sources of support (Burstein and Sears, 2015).

The literature depicts an understanding that JEPD supports effective professional learning opportunities while promoting collaboration, communication, accountability, and the transfer of learning to practice and student achievement. Croft et. al. (2010) suggest that “learning to do a complicated job well requires constant scholarship, taking place both in academic classrooms as well as through guided, on-the-job practice” (p. 13). When job-embedded PD is implemented in a strategic and skillful way, and supported by schools and districts, teacher professional learning opportunities become a meaningful way to further teacher growth and student learning.

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2012) continues to remind us that by including this connection of professional learning to classroom instruction, we can acknowledge the linkage of high quality instruction to student achievement (Croft et al., 2010). Teachers need to be provided the time, structures,

environment, and support to participate in a multitude of job-embedded professional development activities that are known to increase quality teaching (Croft et al., 2010). In their evaluation of teacher and leader perceptions of job-embedded professional development, the Boston Consulting Group (2014) concluded that in order to be effective, modern professional development initiatives must be relevant, hands-on, and sustained over time. According to Blank, de las Alas, and Smith (2014), job-embedded professional development was found to be positively connected to changes in teacher practice in both mathematics and science instruction when developing content-specific knowledge and pedagogical techniques that lead to effective instruction. In addition, increased teacher knowledge leads to changes in instructional techniques that result in increased student achievement (Parise and Spillane, 2012).

Formats of Job-Embedded Professional Development

In a 2012 Issue Brief co-authored by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality and National Staff Development Council, formats for job-embedded professional development were defined as: Action Research, Case Discussions, Instructional Coaching, Critical Friends Groups, Data Teams/Assessment Development, Examining Student Work/Tuning Protocol, Implementing Individual Professional Growth/Learning Plans, Lesson Study, Mentoring, Portfolios, Professional Learning Communities, Study Groups (Croft et al., 2012). These descriptions (Table 1) as taken from the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2012), currently working as the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, are as listed by Croft et al., (2012).

Table 1. Formats for Job-Embedded Professional Development and Related Research Findings. (as Cited in Croft et al., 2012).

<p>Action research. Teachers select an aspect of their teaching to systematically investigate, such as their wait time during questioning. They record data and consider theories from the research literature, drawing conclusions about how teaching is influencing learning and vice versa, and informing future instructional decisions. The teaching; secondarily, if applicable, the intent is to generalize it across other contexts in the school or beyond.</p>
<p>Case discussions. Case discussions allow teachers to have a more critical analysis of teaching because they are not in the act itself (LeFevre, 2014). Formats vary from written to video to multimedia, with varying controls over content to match the purpose of the case study – for example, an exemplar of teaching decisions – or to reveal student thinking or missed opportunity. One strength of video case discussions, in particular, is the opportunity to analyze student thinking at a deep level (Sherin & Han, 2014; van Es & Sherin, 2014). Case discussions, when they take place among a school’s faculty and are situated in actual practice, are a process for JEPD.</p>
<p>Instructional coaching. Coaching differs from mentoring in its focus on the technical aspects of instruction, rather than the larger personal and nonacademic features of teaching (Rowley, 2013). An instructional coach provides ongoing consistent follow up by way of demonstrations, observations, and conversations with teachers as they implement new strategies and knowledge. Typically, instructional coaches have expertise in the applicable subject area and related teaching strategies. Some coaches continue to teach part-time; some come from the school; and others travel throughout the district, working with teachers.</p>
<p>Critical Friends groups. Teachers meet and analyze each other’s work, including artifacts such as student work, a lesson plan, or assessment. They also may discuss challenges they are facing with presenting the subject matter or with meeting a particular student’s needs. (See Norman, Golian, and Hooker (2013) for illustrative examples.)</p>
<p>Data Teams/Assessment development. Teachers meet together and analyze results from standardized tests or teacher-created assessments. Together, they formulate what the evidence from the data tells them about student learning and discuss teaching approaches to improve student achievement. Teachers also may work on refining assessments to gather more useful student data.</p>
<p>Examining student work/Tuning protocol. Examining student work enables teachers to develop a common understanding of good work, identify student misconceptions, and evaluate their teaching methods. Through the tuning protocol, teachers share student work (or their assignments and rubrics), describing the context in which the work is used; other teachers ask questions and then provide feedback on how the work may be fine-tuned to improve student learning. (See Blythe, Allen, and Powell (2013) and Brown-Easton (2013) for more details.)</p>
<p>Implementing individual professional growth/Learning plans (Appraisal). Alongside an instructional leader such as a master teacher or the principal, or as members of a professional learning community, teachers develop their own professional growth plans in order to understand what professional development</p>

<p>opportunities they should engage in, as well as to track their growth in a competency area. They can choose to participate in job-embedded professional development to ensure their progress.</p>
<p>Lesson study. During sessions known as “research lessons,” teachers alternate in preparing a lesson to demonstrate a specific teaching and learning goal (e.g., help a student master a mathematics concept, conduct a peer review of writing within groups). Other teachers observe and document what they see through video, a word processor, or alongside an instructional leader such as a master teacher or the principal, or as members of a professional learning community, teachers develop their own professional growth plans in order to understand what professional development opportunities they should engage in, as well as to track their growth in a competency area. They can choose to participate in job-embedded professional development to ensure their progress.</p>
<p>Mentoring. Increasingly implemented as part of the induction phase for new teachers, mentoring may develop into coaching or peer support relationships as teachers gain experience. Best practice includes matching teachers of the same content area, establishing common planning time, and structuring time for further collaboration. Mutual observance of classroom teaching is usually included.</p>
<p>Portfolios. Teachers assemble lesson plans, student work, reflective writing, and other materials that are used to prepare for teaching or are used directly in the classroom. This body of work can be used to track a teacher’s development in a competency area, or for reference by other teachers. Teachers also report that developing a portfolio is a powerful learning activity as they reflect on their teaching practice in light of standards (Gearhart & Osmundson, 2016).</p>
<p>Professional learning communities. Teachers collaborate to analyze their practice and discuss new strategies and tactics, testing them in the classroom and reporting the results to each other. Hord (2013) lists five attributes of effective professional learning communities: supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice. Professional learning communities redress teacher isolation, create shared teacher responsibility for all students, and expose teachers to instructional strategies or knowledge they did not have access to previously. Such communities can be a venue for JEPD as well as other forms of reform-based professional development.</p>
<p>Study groups. In small groups or as a faculty, teachers generate topics for study related to school improvement goals or student data and then read and react to educational research or other literature on teaching and student learning. They engage in structured dialogue or discussion that explores issues deeply and considers the implications for school or classroom practices.</p>

These research-based formats or models of job-embedded PD can offer options for school-based PD that are tailored to the needs of each teacher. They allow the teacher to engage in PD opportunities that reflect train-the-trainer, peer-coaching, and

collaborative problem-solving as needed for high-quality PD (Guskey and Yoon, 2009). Research suggests that it is important that job-embedded activities be thoughtfully planned and implemented, and include follow-up activities that support improving and adapting teacher practices to individual and unique classroom contexts to maximize effectiveness. The application of these formats for job-embedded PD offer on the job assistance as teachers struggle to adapt their pedagogical practices (Guskey and Yoon, 2009). This situates and confirms the crucial importance of follow-up activities when implementing professional development formats, so that teachers have time to refine, retain, and apply what they learned in the classroom setting, unlike traditional models of PD (Guskey and Yoon, 2009). Finally, due to the complex nature of teaching and learning, it is important that opportunities for change and growth be offered in the same place as the instruction: the school and the classroom, to maximize effect. This idea is further supported by a study conducted by the NSDC (2001) which maintains that the most effective professional development comes “from the careful adaptation of varied practices to specific content, process, and context elements” of the instructional practice as cited by Guskey and Yoon (2009), (p.497).

CHAPTER 3 – METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline and describe the research methodology and design that was used in this study. This chapter will also provide a detailed synopsis of the specific methods and procedures used to explore the perceptions of professional development facilitators on their roles as educational leaders impacting teacher quality and student achievement. Based on a constructivist philosophy, the study was conducted using qualitative research methodology. This approach is most concerned with understanding social interactions and how they shape and influence participants' perspectives and reality within the context of job-embedded professional development in schools (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive research study was to investigate the roles of professional development facilitators in providing job-embedded PD for teachers. It was also to examine how they perceive their roles as educational leaders responsible for implementing useful, sustainable, and effective school-based professional development opportunities that increase teacher effectiveness and ultimately student achievement. In particular, this study intended to identify and describe the major internal, external, and environmental factors that shape how professional development facilitators work and implement job-embedded PD in their schools.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are perceived roles and responsibilities of job-embedded PD facilitators?
- (2) What are perceptions of PD facilitators on their ability to impact teacher quality and student achievement in their school?
- (3) What types of school-based internal, external, and environmental factors influence job-embedded professional learning opportunities in schools?

Research Design

In this study, the literature showed that the use of job-embedded professional development is a growing model for delivering teacher professional development based on current education policy requiring increases in teacher quality tied to accountability and K-12 funding. In order to discern the perceptions of professional development facilitators in job-embedded roles and assigned to the primary role of supporting and increasing teacher quality, the study focused on gathering data through use of the three most common techniques of qualitative methodology: interviews, observation, and document analysis (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative methodology was appropriate for this study because it supports the examination of the perceptions of one's reality, and it allowed the researcher to identify the factors that influence specific outcomes when testing a theory (Creswell, 1998). This is particularly true when the topic being explored is not easily quantifiable, and descriptions and discussions are the most accurate and reliable method for uncovering a phenomenon (Creswell, 1998).

The study also focused on the phenomenological aspect of qualitative descriptive research which allowed the researcher to examine the facilitators' perceptions from their

own experiences in their schools, and helped to describe the essence of each experience. Creswell (1998) described phenomenological research as a method of understanding a phenomenon from those who experience it and uncovering the experience through in-depth, open interviews with each participant.

By having prior knowledge and experience of the topic, this researcher was better able to gather and analyze the responses generated by investigating the phenomena, and connect with the phenomena under investigation, in which the methodology selected helps provide “thick-rich” descriptive interviews. “Thick-rich” descriptions are possible when the researcher knows enough about the topic to read and understand the interviews in a way that better interprets the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This research used appropriate qualitative research methodologies so that these types of rich and descriptive interviews were conducted. Deep knowledge of the research topic helped the researcher better interpret and understand the findings and reveal the phenomena in a valuable and informative way (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The researcher also selected to engage in a qualitative study to collect and report the perceptions of job-embedded professional development practitioners so that the findings can inform educational decision-making and practices, as well as provide insight on how to create professional learning for PDFs to strengthen delivery of job-embedded PD. This can also be understood by the readers from emotional, intellectual, and analytical perspectives. This study also supports the evaluation of current district and school staff development programs to determine if changes should be made to maximize funding and increase or improve high teacher quality status.

Setting

Due to the nature of this study, there was no one specific site for the research. The study was centered on middle schools and K-8 schools in a large urban school district which employs professional development facilitators. K-8 schools were included because they incorporate middle schools (grades 6-8) and received district funding to support middle school achievement and teacher growth. For the purposes of this study, all participants came from K-8 or middle schools with grades 6-8. To put participants at ease and create a willingness to speak openly about events related to the phenomena, participants were not interviewed at their school sites. Instead, a more neutral location was selected.

The school district selected was targeted because of its intentional incorporation of professional development initiatives in the district's 4-year strategic plan for school reform and accountability measures. Included in the district's strategic plan was the creation of professional development facilitators to support increasing middle school student achievement. The creation of these job-embedded positions was directly tied to accountability measures, school reform, and federal funding efforts. As an intentional district initiative, the professional development facilitator role was created and implemented and a large budget was dedicated to the initiative.

Participants

Following university and the school district's IRB approval guidelines, this study involved conducting interviews with former or current Professional Development Facilitators (PDF) hired through the PDF Selection and Talent Pool process (Appendix G) of the identified school district. The interviews were led in a one-on-one format,

often taking place at a coffee shop, in a school after work hours, or for some over the phone due to participant availability. This setting allowed the participants to be comfortable and secure in their chosen surroundings. Each interview lasted for approximately 45 minutes to one hour. Prior to the interview all participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were provided a copy of the interview questions along with a list of job-embedded professional development models for reference during the interview.

The criteria used for this study was based on a pre-existing description of the qualifications of Professional Development Facilitators (PDFs), the district job description, and ultimate placement for at least one year in a middle school or K-8 school. The sample was purposeful and only included PDFs who either currently work, or have worked, in a K-8 or middle school for at least one year. The researcher solicited random participation by sending an email (Appendix D) to a pool of approximately 35 former or current professional development facilitators identified from school websites or knowledge of former PDFs. From this pool of potential participants, 10 responded and were each identified as having met all criteria based on response level and agreement to voluntarily participate. From the ten responding participants, seven participants completed and submitted their signed consent forms.

The research project was fully explained to all participants and they were asked to sign consent forms as outlined by approved research-study expectations. As a former PDF, the researcher ensured that participant selection was well rounded and inclusive of any variations that may affect PDFs in their schools, such as length of time in the position, inclusion of K-8 schools since they include grades 6-8 (middle schools), and

hiring from within the school or from the PDF pool of approved applicants. The researcher also attempted to ensure representation across gender, race, and experience when possible, even though gender was not considered as important for this study.

Data Collection Methods

For this qualitative study, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with selected participants and analyzed documentation outlining the roles and expectations of professional development facilitators in schools. These interviews allowed the researcher to record and analyze the perspective of a growing field of professional development practitioners under current education policies and high accountability efforts to raise teacher quality and student success.

The interview process was designed to gain a comprehensive description and understanding of PDFs' perception of their roles and job-embedded coaches. The interview process had different parts, each designed to gather information related to the research questions of this study. Data collection for this study consisted of interviews conducted separately in a single session of approximately 45 minutes and documentation and analysis of related materials from the district's initiative, selection process, and criteria. Data collection also consisted of document analysis of related materials from the district's initiative, selection process, and criteria such as the PDF Job Posting, the PDF Talent Pool Selection Criteria, and the teacher leader characteristics used by the district to define PDF roles and responsibilities. The researcher used both semi-structured and open-ended interview techniques and consulted with several educators with a variety of backgrounds and experience levels on the interview protocol (Appendix C) prior to the interviews in order to assess the validity of the interview questions.

Each semi-structured interview was captured on an audio recorder. The researcher also informed each participant about the selection process and guaranteed confidentiality. As Glesne (2006) suggests, analytic notes were taken during the interview to document the researcher's thoughts, follow-up questions, and any other observed facial expressions or interview specifics not captured by the audio recorder. Participants were asked to respond to open-ended questions, with the possibility of follow-up or clarifying questions. The interview questions were shared with the participant beforehand so that the participant would know what to expect and have some time to think deeply about what experiences to share. At the end of the interview process, member checking was used to establish the credibility of the data collected. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this process of member checking as a technique which allows the interviewee the opportunity to review intentions, correct errors, and volunteer any additional information. This was critical for establishing credibility within the study.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were read the statement provided on the interview protocol (Appendix C) and agreed to participate as documented in each transcript. The interview protocol directly posed the research questions to participants, and widened the scope of responses by scaffolding questions to give participants ample time and opportunity to recall and explain their perceptions from their experiences and PDFs. To ensure their confidentiality each participant was given a pseudonym at the end of each interview. These pseudonyms were in no way connected to the participant's race, sex, given name, or school system. The pseudonyms were randomly created by using a capital P (for participant) and a number, with no attachment to the names of the participants.

The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription company, and use of the services included a clear confidentiality agreement provided by the company. The researcher reviewed each transcript and then sent it to the individual participant for “member checking.” Participants reviewed the transcript for accuracy, content, missing info, and any additional information they wanted to add. Only one participant added additional information to their transcript. All others approved the transcript. The seven transcripts were then analyzed.

Data Analysis Methods

The use of audio recording ensured participants’ words were accurately captured. The data collected was read to get a sense of each description. Significant statements, quotes, and words were placed into categories by research question and interview question responses. Close attention was paid to the data to discern the meaning of each sentence and idea while interpreting patterns, connections, and implications (Creswell, 1998). Redundancies within individual transcripts were eliminated. Each statement was placed into an already identified category. Creswell (1998) refers to this as “reducing codes to themes” and also suggests counting the frequency of the codes as an analytical strategy. This allowed the researcher to interpret the data and determine any salient themes or patterns within the interview that explains PDFs’ perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in increasing teacher growth and student achievement in schools. Categorizing and interpreting the data was also helpful in determining if any correlations existed between the individual experiences and how they may or may not have answered the research questions. The researcher was mindful of managing knowledge of the topic

in order to make an informed analysis without any increased influence or heightened interpretations.

Risks, Benefits, and Ethical Consideration

The risks for this study were minimal, but may exist if interview responses are disclosed and report negative information about school leaders or the school environment. To minimize this risk, pseudonyms were used for participants. In addition, findings were generalized and not linked to any specific school, especially since the criterion only specified that the school was a K-8 or middle school (6-8). In addition, no names or specifics which would expose particulars about the work environment and endanger the participant were revealed; anonymity was ensured and potentially harmful information excluded from the transcript. Participants benefitted from being able to highlight their roles, responsibilities, and other successful aspects of their work in schools. They also benefitted from being able to discuss internal, external, and work-related activities as a way of downloading and being reflective in their practices. Participants may also view the interview process as therapeutic by being able to candidly discuss topics of interest within their job roles. Glesne (2011) refers to this as the “unburdening effect.” It also was a benefit that they viewed the researcher’s knowledge and connection to the topic as empathetic and as a means of connection with the interviewer.

Several ethical considerations as outlined by Creswell (1998) were used, such as respecting the privacy and confidentiality of each participant. This also included insuring proper disclosure of information and informed consent, as well as sharing the results of the study with the participants. The researcher was mindful of the potential of “going

native” or siding with the participants because of the researcher’s knowledge of the topic. This included adding information that may not have emerged in the interviews, as well as omitting or leaving out pertinent information that may have an impact on the findings and validity of the study. It was important to remain impartial and open and allow the phenomena to be experienced from the perspective of each participant with little to no influence in order to accurately analyze and interpret the essence of the events.

Strategies for Quality

The researcher took strategic steps to ensure the quality of the data and findings in this research study. By recording and including the raw data, the readers can be assured of the authenticity of the participants’ words. The methods section was thorough in order to ensure transparency about the process. Objectivity was maintained to ensure that the issues noted were monitored and any biases checked throughout the study, as well as maintaining the quality of relationships with the participants in a way that supported a coherent and valid study. It was also important to situate the researcher’s positionality within the study to ensure high quality. Denzin and Lincoln (2002) advise that positionality or “standpoint epistemology” was a quality criterion essential to qualitative research. They suggest that by recognizing “texts” as partial and incomplete, and as situated within several context and influences they could never reveal the entire truth, so studies that claim to tell the whole truth are in and of themselves “specious, inauthentic, and misleading” (Lincoln and Denzin, 2002). Quality was also maintained by developing a comprehensive, open, and inclusive analysis of the data and meaningful consideration of multiple perspectives. The researcher made the purpose and interest for engaging in the study transparent.

Summary

This chapter was designed to provide a written overview of the methods employed in this study. The qualitative research design allowed for the collection of descriptive data and insight on the perceptions of job-embedded professional development practitioners in supporting improved teacher quality and increased student achievement. By analyzing the data presented in the interview transcripts, the researcher was able to determine themes, patterns, and insights into the phenomena of job-embedded coaching in order to inform educational practitioners of emerging models of providing effective staff development. This analysis can assist with future planning and funding of professional development activities within districts and schools, and can support applications for federal funding while meeting accountability standards for maintaining teacher quality in schools.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The analysis of the interview transcripts provided background information on each participant. All participants were experienced educators, as the district posting required “at least three years of teaching experience.” Participants varied in their years of overall educational experience as well as the number of years as a PDF. The tables below outline the educator and PDF experience of participants as described during each interview.

Table 2. Participant Data

Participant	Years of Educator Experience	Years as a PDF	School Type	Currently a PDF?	Internal or External Hire
P1	13	2	K-8	No	External
P2	10	4	6-8	Yes	External
P3	18	2	6-8	Yes	Internal
P4	N/A	2	6-8	No	External
P5	15	3	K-8	No	External
P6	9	4	6-8	No	Internal
P7	15	4	6-8	Yes	Internal

Interview data shows that all participants except for P4 have at least 9 years of teaching experience. Three were hired from within their schools, however, while P3 was hired internally as the PDF, the position continued to serve as an IB Coordinator for the school; a job held by P3 for ten years, inclusive of the years being funded as a PDF. Participant’s work experience includes being classroom teachers of language arts, math,

and French, academic facilitators, instructional specialists, inclusion teachers, and Deans of Students. The teaching experience was in elementary, middle, and high schools. The time spent as PDFs range from 2 years to 4 years, many participants indicating the change in roles when the district initiative ended in 2016 after 4 years of funding.

Participant Self -Descriptions/Work Experience

- P1 Educator for 13 years, worked as a middle school science teacher, an academic facilitator, a math facilitator, and a K-5 professional development facilitator.
- P2 Educator for 10 years, worked as a French teacher in middle school and high school.
- P3 Educator for 18 years, only at one school the entire time, teaching science, social studies, and working in various roles in an administration and instructional leadership. My school is an International Baccalaureate school, developed and coordinated the program for the last 10 years.
- P4 Educator of grades 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7. Worked as a reading specialist, a math specialist, and technology specialist and a PD facilitator.
- P5 Educator for 15 years, former general education teacher, inclusion teacher. Worked as a Dean of Students and Professional Development Facilitator. Currently back in the classroom teaching middle school language arts.
- P6 Educator for 9 years ago, worked as a business education teacher in an alternative high school, and then I went to middle school as a CTE teacher and Professional Development Facilitator. Currently an academic facilitator, testing coordinator and principal intern.
- P7 Educator for over 20 years, worked as a Technology Facilitator, then became a PDF. Worked as a social studies teacher in middle school and high school and taught language arts for about five years.

The three research questions in this study provided a basis for each interview question used in the interview protocol. Participants discussed their perceptions of their roles and responsibilities as PDFs before obtaining the position and after being hired, the successes and challenges of providing job-embedded PD, perceptions of their positions as PDFs on their ability to impact teacher quality and student achievement in their schools, and how internal, external, and other environmental factors influenced their ability to provided job-embedded professional learning opportunities in their schools. In addition

to interviews, three district documents related to PDFs were analyzed to provide further insight on the role of the PDFs as intended by the school district. The interview response data and document analysis generated several ideas, insights, connections, and themes regarding each participant's overall perception of their roles as job-embedded professional development facilitators.

Document Analysis

The district PDF Initiative was created to recruit and retain qualified PD practitioners and place them in middle schools and K-8 schools. The documents revealed that the district designed an ideal posting for the PDF role which included a list of roles and responsibilities (Figure 3, Appendix G) and essential duties of PDFs. While the roles established by the district included several models of job-embedded PD, many of them were more closely aligned to teacher leader characteristics, utilized by the district to develop the job posting. The district documents were also very informative regarding the designed ideal expectations of the PDFs roles in implementing job-embedded PD in schools. Table 3 outlines the major components of the three documents analyzed. The Selection process adequately identified the procedures to apply to the PDF Talent Pool and ultimately be viewed as "qualified" to delivery job-embedded PD in schools. In follow up district sessions, the roles and responsibilities were further identified and explained to selected PDFs. These documents were all available to principals. It is still unclear however, if all school administrators were exposed to the documents, were trained to understand the intent of the district in creating the PDF Initiative, and had buy-in to the PDF Initiative. PDF interviews also revealed that it was the expectation of the district that school leaders oversee, supervise, and evaluate the PDF Initiative in their

schools. This disconnect initially contributed to gaps and inconsistencies between PDF perceptions of their roles, ideal district expectations of the role, and actual implementation of the PDF role in schools.

Table 3. Document Analysis of District Initiative

District Job Description Appendix G	PDF Talent Pool Selection Criteria Appendix H	District PDF Roles Appendix B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Member of PDF Pool ▪ Meet Selection Criteria ▪ All participants selected to Pool ▪ Hired by a school Internally (2) or Externally (5) ▪ Roles and Essential Duties were listed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Online application with required documents ▪ Selection activities including a presentation and interview ▪ Meets Qualifications ▪ Submits Required Documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All participants participated in monthly district PDF meetings ▪ District Teacher Leader Role were given to all PDFs. ▪ Adopted for Teacher Leader characteristics (Harrison & Killion, 2007)

PDF Initiative Job Posting and Selection Criteria

The creation of a new school-based position, Professional Development Facilitator (PDF), in one urban school district was part of an initiative to increase teacher quality and support by providing school-based job-embedded professional development for teachers. Identified in the District Strategic Plan, the role of PDFs was a call to include job-embedded professional development on-site to teachers in middle and K-8 Schools. The district conceptualized a PDF Talent Pool of qualified educators from which principals were to select and use to provide professional development opportunities and models in middle and K-8 schools.

The district established a hiring and selection process that identify qualified candidates to apply for and be selected to the PDF Talent Pool. Once in the PDF Talent

Pool, qualified candidates could then be hired by school to serve in the position of Professional Development Facilitator (PDF). In an examination of the districts' job posting criteria for PDFs (Appendix G), two steps were required in order to be hired as a school based PDF. First, all PDFs hired by each school had to be members of the PDF Pool, and secondly, to be selected in to the pool, applicants had to apply and meet all PDF Talent Pool selection criteria (Appendix H). The job posting criteria for the PDF position also provided further insight to the districts commitment to hiring qualified educators to deliver professional development in schools as a school reform initiative.

The three district documents analyzed revealed additional insight into the criteria, roles, and responsibilities of PDFs, as well as utilization of teacher leader characteristics as the standards for district defined roles and responsibilities of PDFs (Appendix B). These handouts were given at the initial meetings for PDFs and provided as resources to support the job-embedded work of each PDF as expected by the district initiative.

Applying to the PDF Talent Pool

The professional development facilitators chosen to participate in this study all confirmed that they were selected to be PDFs by applying to the PDF Talent Pool, completing the application and selection process, and being hired by a school. They also further acknowledged participation in the ongoing monthly district support meetings for PDFs. Each of the PDFs in the study were selected and placed in the PDF Talent Pool as advertised by the district. They were then both interviewed, and hired by a school principal for an open PDF position, or they were selected by their current principal to work under the title of PDF in their current school. While all seven participants state they participated in the PDF talent Pool process and met the criteria, five participants

recalled having to complete interviews at schools needing PDFs to secure a position, and two participants describe already being at the school in a position and simply changing titles within their school. In the case of P1,

I became a PDF by applying through a pretty rigorous application process where I had to provide artifacts to the district once I was able to go through that initial application and then followed up with the interview, then I was directly interviewed by the schools that expressed interest. And once you went through the initial interviews then you were in the pool to be able to be considered a qualified applicant. The principal could pick you for their school. I was successful in my interview and was able to work at a school site for about two years.

P4 shares a similar experience,

The process within the local school district that I became a PDF, included participating in a pool. To get into this pool, you had to go through a strenuous interview that included providing PD for the interview panel. After the application process, which was an online process of resume, demographic information, and past work history, I was invited to an interview. The interview would include acceptance into PDF pool, once you completed the interview questions and did a mock professional development for the interview panel. Once that was complete, then I gained acceptance into the pool and then I had the task of choosing a school to work at once I had an interview with the individual principals. Then they would choose me after their interview process and then I could take a job as a professional development facilitator.

For other participants, they could remain at their school and just switch titles, P3

explains:

It was something that I was doing already because of the many roles that I have, and when the ADM was given to our school it just provided an ADM for me to slide into without taking up one of the academic facilitator positions. I went through the interview process to actually get in the pool, but it was one of those things the current ... the PDF prior to me was moving into a different role, and the position was going to be posted. It was more or less like going through the steps that you had to go through for the PDF, but my principal already had that position for me, if that makes sense. So, we went through the formalities, but it wasn't like there were a lot of people that was applying for the position or people outside of my school that was applying for the position. I went through the process to

get in the pool. I went through the interview with XXX. From there, when I posted, our principal chose and that title then became mine.

P6 also had a similar experience:

It came about there was a pool that talked about coaching and leading and so I applied from there and that's how I got into it. I got into the pool and was selected through different interviews to serve at my current school. I was hired at my current school as a PDF there and then met with a cohort of PDF's at that time as well, to just start this role for the district because it was new.

P7 described her experience being hired internally from being a technology facilitator to being a PDF as “being a little more broad, which I thought was good because although I mostly did tech in my school,” and “liked the umbrella term PD facilitator” She further stated “I liked the idea of what it was called, but I knew that I would be continuing mostly in my current job description just under this new umbrella.”

The Hiring Process

While each participant interviewed was ultimately hired either internally (already had a position in their school under a different title), or externally (worked in a different title in another school), all PDFs confirmed they were first accepted into the PDF Talent Pool, demonstrating evidence of the qualifications required to provide school-based job-embedded professional development. P4 and P6 further explained that while they already worked at their schools as facilitators, they were encouraged by their principals to apply to be PDFs to utilize the strategic and mandatory district funding provided directly to schools to pay for this PDF position. This allowed principals to release the funds currently being utilized to fund the participant's position in order to support the schools in other ways. The initiative lasted for four years. The district informed all schools that

the PDF funding would no longer be restricted to use for hiring PDFs and principals were given the discretion to hire a PDF or utilize the funds in other ways. As described by P7,

My principal requested that I apply to be a professional development facilitator so that the district would pay for my position and so that she could get a media specialist back because she had traded tech facilitator for media. I didn't read the description and then say, "I want to do this." It was more that my principal said, "Hey, will you do it?" Then I was like, "Yeah, sure."

Research Question #1: What are the perceived roles and responsibilities of PD Facilitators?

During the interviews, PDFs discussed their perception of their roles and responsibilities prior to being hired as a PDF as well as their actual roles and responsibilities once in the position and assigned to a school. These findings suggest inconsistent alignment to the approaches for professional development that educational experts have defined as crucial to delivering effective PD Guskey, (2003). While PDFs are engaging in job-embedded PD formats, much of their time is spent undefined, performing general and indirect tasks, or supporting schools in necessary ways, but not aligned to job-embedded PD activities that support teacher quality and growth (Croft, et al., 2012). Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) reminds us that job-embedded professional development can sustain teacher learning, foster collaborative teaching and learning environments, and reveal effective professional development practices. The purpose of educator professional development is to develop teacher knowledge, skills, and practices, and to provide the expertise needed to help students perform at higher levels (Learning Forward, 2013).

Perceptions of PDF roles and responsibilities before being hired as PDFs

Findings revealed that educators interested in the job posting for PDFs applied for a variety of reasons. While being knowledgeable of the requirements for teacher leadership and providing professional development, participants articulated a variety of thoughts describing what they perceived the position would entail before being hired. All participants were aware of the job description outlined in the posting. They used this as a gateway to describe what they envisioned the job would be. They began to reference their knowledge and understanding of instructional support and staff development. They described what they perceived their roles to be, what their roles entailed, and their perception of how teachers, students, and school administration viewed their roles as PDFs within the school.

Lead Professional Development and Be a Change Agent. P1 describes the role as “leading, coordinating, and even delivering professional development at the school site.” P6 recalls that the position called for PDFs to be “a change agent or a resource provider.” She further goes on to describe her perception of the role before being hired,

So, that could mean creating professional development that was school wide or maybe it was individual, one on one, or small group. But basically analyzing the data, analyzing what our needs are, and then going about seeking change through PD within the school. So definitely job embedded whereas we would not have to go outside the school anymore for that professional development. So it could mean bringing in others, coaching, mentoring; doing all those things to make sure the teachers at the school had what they needed to be successful for the students.

Be a Project Manager. P2 perceived the role of PDFs as “multi-fold” She went on to describe some of the characteristics of teacher leaders as outlined in the models of PDF roles (Appendix B). P2 further describes how PDFs wear different hats; project managers, change agents, collaborators, and researchers. P4 adds:

My role and responsibility would be tied directly to the job description. The job description was based on the national standards of professional development. That included me acting as a coach, a consultant, a catalyst for change, as well as a program coordinator. Just pretty much doing what the teachers needed in order to have them move instructionally.

Provide Technology Support. The district initiative to provide a PDF to each middle or K-8 school was also a joint funding project between the Office of Teacher PD and the Office of Technology. Thus, the PDF role emerged as a yearly initiative to support technology initiatives in the school as well as utilize Teacher PD Specialists to provide district resources and support for PDFs. Funding was provided by joint efforts of Curriculum and Instruction, and Technology. Before being hired, P1 recalls “The role of the PDF came based off the district's initiative of embedding technology in the classroom, so I knew that I would be responsible for the technology initiative.” P7 stated that while the job description and title were broader than that of her previous role as tech facilitator, “I mostly did tech in my school and I mostly predicted that I would continue to do tech facilitation of my school” once hired by her principal in the PDF role. She further states “I would be continuing mostly in my current job description just under this new umbrella.”

Turn Key District Programs and Resources. Prior to being selected and hired as a PDF, some participants perceived the role as a position being used to communicate, advance, and train teachers on district initiatives and instructional goals. P1 describes the role as being “responsible for, you know, whatever learning that I received at my PDF meetings and trainings,” and “to be responsible to take that back to the building.” Further explaining that “my role as PDF was to push the district's mission.” P6 perceives the role as aligning the needs of the school and the needs of the district to create school-based

professional development opportunities and stated “What I understood was that I would have to assess the unique needs of the school and the staff and align them to what the needs were to the district.”

Not Being Clear of The Role and Responsibilities. Other participants couldn't remember because it was a few years earlier, or were unclear of the PDF roles and responsibilities at the time they applied. P6 admitted there seemed to be more guidelines provided in the job posting than actual concrete roles and responsibilities. She shared, “part of the guideline of being a PDF was just reporting a lot of the different duties or aspects of the job that we had to do. If I can remember way back when to all those things.” When asked if she was ever provided a job description or posting she replied,

Yes I was provided with one, however I think because the district [position] was so new that it was vague and I think that maybe it was intentionally vague because every school is different; every school has its own unique needs. So it couldn't be something that was standard, here's what you're going to do because it may not be needed at school A versus school B.

P3 asserts that the role was unclear and “job-embedded was based on your school's focus.” During the interview, P5 stated,

I understood that my role would be to provide professional development to middle school staff. I was going to provide the needed professional development. I don't recall the coaches or whatever tell me what it would look like. As a matter of fact, today I still believe that they may have been unclear themselves as to what this would look like in schools that already had staffs of middle school facilitators, reading facilitators and specialized facilitators in the type of school that I was in.

PDF roles and responsibilities after being hired

Once Applicants were admitted to the PD Talent pool, and hired by a school, they could begin their work under the official title of Professional Development Facilitator

(PDF). They were a Professional Learning Community (PLC) of educators hired to provide Job-embedded Professional development (JEPD) at their school sites and supported by the district as a PDF team.

Role Depended on the Principal or School Administrator. Participants described a variety of ways in which they were utilized in schools. Some PDFs stated their roles and responsibilities depended primarily on the school they worked in, or the principal they worked for. P1 described her actual roles as “depending on the principal.” She further explains, “Within my two years as a PDF, I had the opportunity to work under the leadership of two different principals, and each principal had their own philosophy as to what my role was.” While some principals defined the role for their PDFs, P5 a PDF hired from outside of the school, recalls her principal not being clear about what her role would be. When asked “what were your actual roles and responsibilities daily as a PDF,” P5 replied “my title was PDF and my principal respected that, we decided to create it, because principals, as I understood it too, were not clear.” Many PDFs also refer to district PLC meetings that explained the role of PDFs from the district perspective in concert with the initiative expectations and goals. The district aligned the PDF roles and responsibilities with that of the job posting and provided support to PDFs in understanding the roles of PDFs as Teacher Leaders (Appendix B) and in providing Job-embedded professional development in schools.

Whether assigned by a principal, encouraged by the district resources and trainings, or implemented by the PDF based on perceived need, participants described a myriad of roles and responsibilities performed in schools.

Supporting New and Veteran Teachers. Many participants described their experiences as PDFs as providing teacher support where needed. Often this may have come at the direction of the administration, from needs assessments conducted by the PDF or admin team, the PDF directly asked teachers what they needed. Participants describe working with other school team members and facilitators to help teachers implement programs, school-wide interventions, and other initiatives. The PDF role was also described as responsive to teachers' needs. P3 recalls that her job was to provide "what teachers needed at that moment." P5 described her role in supporting teachers as identifying teachers' needs and then providing support in those areas. Teacher support was a general area and role. It was described to generally be broad and vague, while being tailored to the needs of the school and the teacher. All PDFs were clear in identifying their primary role and the reason for being hired as supporting teachers and being responsive to their needs. P2 directly recalls implementing support of the MTSS program in her school for teachers,

When it comes to the multi-tier systems of support, MTSS, myself and the academic facilitator work in tandem to help teachers implement tier two interventions. When we're looking at our core, how many of our students are performing below the 25th percentile? We already, at our school, have designated classes called foundations classes that work to accelerate growth, meet kids where they are and then accelerate growth in those classes. We work with those teachers, we look at the data.

Being a Change Agent for the School. Being a change agent was a role that was described specifically by two PDFs and also identified in the district job description. P2 used her role as change agent to influence her teachers and create changes in the way systems and processes that were carried out to examine school data. Her primary focus

was to “bring about a [data] process that was not formalized at my school, bring about new experiences, and helping teachers understand the processes that are involved in it, and helping them to be a part of it and take it on for themselves.” In the case of P4, her role as a change agent included,

Past and present knowledge and skill set of national standards of professional development for teacher leadership, in order to create first a needs analysis of what was going on in the school. Then to come up with an approach in order to build relationships, trust and rapport in order to show teachers what they are doing correctly, as well as support their tweaking of instructional practices.

In addition, P4 further describes her role as a change agent for teachers, as being able to examine,

Strategies that were hindering or helping their relationship building with their students, as well as the impact of what they chose as their instructional practices; from homework, all the way to lesson planning that supported the student needs. Those needs were identified appropriately using data or observations.

She would then design and create PD based on those identified needs, and implement a protocol for the PD necessary to support teacher change. P4 also discussed how her administration supported her as a change agent,

The administrators perceive me as a change agent. They supported me in being a change agent. I even supported them where processing protocols that would support their development and team building. I would also provide professional development for them as an administration team, because I possess administration licensing and have done principal internships that support how to develop as an administrator. They looked at me for their own professional development, also. I showed them how to analyze data. I did some things with them to show them how to give effective feedback to teachers during their post observation conferences. Then I took the data analysis, and I designed a beginning teacher mentoring program that was outside of just the local school district's mentoring program. I would hold meetings and place the beginning teachers on their own personal continuum. The administrators would use

that information to support their learning, and their own summative evaluations of that teacher.

P2 describes how teachers perceive her role as a change agent,

I would say those who really, really get it perceive me as a change agent. They see that the things that are coming down the pipeline, if you will, are really necessary things to help children just be better, to get what they need to be educationally sound and to have a future. There's a number of people in my building that I think would definitely say that. You have people who would probably say I am the change agent and I work at a school with about 70 to 75% proficiency on math and reading.

Providing Instructional Leadership. Some PDFs reported being members of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) at their school, even though all PDFs were designated by the district as core members of the ILT team. The ILT team is a district initiative which supports school-based instructional teams in every school in the district and provides professional development sessions centrally for one day a week each month. P3 describes her role on the district ILT which met once a month in a central location with other schools in the district,

As an instructional leadership team, on Friday's, when we would have our leadership team meetings, we would utilize that time frame to see who was in need of what for the following week, and that could look like PD for PLC, PD for an individual teacher, whole group PD with a grade level or combined PD for an inter-disciplinary team. So, I didn't service just one particular group, I serviced the school.

The district required that all teams meet monthly for professional development on district lead initiatives and bring them back to the school, using the ILT as an implementation team charged with informing, training, and implementing the initiative at the school-house in accordance with district expectations. All schools attended this monthly meeting and PDFs were expected to participate in them and train teachers as

needed. The ILT was charged with returning to the school and disseminating the district initiative through PD as a way of connecting all schools to the districts goals and objectives. This could be the same as school goals or different. PDFs describe implementing district initiatives and focus as a major part of their duties. P2 refers to her administration and states that,

They definitely perceive me as somebody that is an instructional leader on the school. They know that I am in classrooms, I know what's going on different levels throughout the building. For our foundations classes, standards, standard plus, honors classes, they know that I know what's going on. They reach out to me to say, "Okay, this is our vision. We want you and the academic facilitator to work it out so that this can happen." They definitely see me as a resource to make change occur.

Providing Administrative Support and Being a Member of the Admin Team. Two PDFs describe their duties as participating in school administration meetings, attending School Leadership Team meetings with the principal, and being a member of school-based teams. Often times, this was in concert with school instructional Planning or administrative planning. The school principal would invite the PDF to participate and take part in the meetings, which often occurred during the school day.

Teaching Core Content Classes. Three of the seven participants describe have duties that regularly required that they participate in roles directly assigned to classroom teachers. P4 discussed having to complete peer observations on her teachers. This is a district protocol that has classroom teachers perform "formal" peer observations on each other in order to provide feedback and a collegial view as opposed to a supervisory view in to the classroom practices. P6 recalls covering classes from the time she began her role. She attributes high teacher absence and teacher participation in out of school professional development as a root cause. She describes routinely covering classes as

one of the duties she did often. Two PDFs described their experiences writing lesson plans for teachers. P5 recalls, "I created lesson plans for one of the struggling teachers." P1 describes her experience covering classes and creating lesson plans as one of her roles and responsibilities, and says

covering classes, even if it was just partial because the teacher was out, or coming to school late. I also found spending time creating lessons for teachers who were out. Being out and they didn't prepare for their absence, so therefore oftentimes students were left without work, so I did find myself creating lessons for those students, plans for those students, and activities for those students.

In addition, P1 describes having to write intervention plans and packets for students,

I found myself creating intervention plans and packets for students. We had, especially at the middle school level, an intervention period embedded in the school calendar. So, I found myself oftentimes creating the interventions for many of the teachers. It was more of me creating it and passing off to them [teachers].

Leading PLC Teams. Professional Learning Communities in schools are a fundamental connection to supporting teachers, instructional planning, and providing professional development. PDFs report participating in PLCs regularly and in some cases leading them. In cases where PDFs were not PLC team leads, they utilized the time provided to deliver professional development to the team. P4 describes her PLC responsibilities as,

I worked extensively, also, with the professional learning community leaders to ensure that they understood the mentoring that was necessary for them to do, in order to push or pull in when necessary for their individual staff team members. They had to act as an instructional coach, and I coach them on how to act as an instructional leader because they had a job title of a PLC team leader. I gave them monthly professional development on their attributes of how to be an effective team leader. This instructional coaching that I did with the PLC leaders led to having the teachers on their perspective grade and content levels, be able to speak, be

able to display their trust level about what they knew or didn't know, and how to get a direct line of support either from me or from their individual PLC leader.

Being a Project Manager. In the case of P3, her school was an International Baccalaureate (IB) school with very high achievement scores before she became a PDF. So, the PDF role was not new for her, but the title was. She was the project manager for the IB program at her school. This was assigned as her major responsibility and she continued to be the IB program coordinator as a PDF. When PDF funding became limited to schools, she remains in her school as the IB coordinator. She also coordinated the Title I program in her school. Between the two programs, she would rarely provide PD, but when she did it would be primarily to the IB PLC. Other PLCs would be provided PD when needed.

Facilitating Critical Friends Groups. P4 created and implement a critical friend's protocol where teachers would bring in a problem of practice that was identified as a consensus among the team, they would receive feedback, and then plan action steps to address the problem. She explains,

That look like first designing PD, and creating PD based on the needs that they had identified, that included data analysis, that included certain PLCs acting as a critical friend's protocol where they would bring in their problem of practice that was identified as a consensus amongst them as a team, and receive feedback on what they had determined to be their next action steps. We also study the lesson plans to see if they had the impact that they were designed to do. All along, each teacher had a portfolio of information of how they participated and reflected on their own individual participation in their professional learning communities.

Providing Instructional Coaching. P4 provided PLC leaders monthly professional development on their attributes of how to be an effective team leaders. This could support PLC team leaders with the tools needed to lead their teams and empowered

leadership and responsibility. In the case of P5, she described coaching teachers based on their Professional Development Plans (PDPs),

In my school, my principal allowed me to make it [role] whatever I wanted it to be. What it was, was supporting teachers and so pretty much like a coach. I did some PD. What I did was I created a spreadsheet of the PDPs for all of the teachers in the school to identify where their needs were and where they wanted to receive assistance and support, and I went out to try to create that type of support.

PDPs also describe supporting teachers by conducting classroom walkthroughs and visits.

P6 describes this experience as,

going into teacher's rooms, checking in with them seeing what they needed, watching them in the classroom looking at their instruction, classroom management, classroom organization, all of those different aspects that would make the classroom environment the most optimal place for learning. Then going about doing walkthroughs, doing verbal walkthroughs, feedback, handwritten feedback as well. And meeting with those teachers to again tell them, okay well, or find out what's going on here, what were you doing when, so how can I support you, what do you feel you need, and just trying to really use all those different data points and say okay what can we do to help you improve in the classroom. But, not just saying okay well here's what you need right now. Let's do this together.

Facilitating Case Discussions. P4 described a major part of her actual job responsibilities as leading case discussions. When asked to describe what her actual role and responsibilities were, she stated,

The local school itself was going through individual changes amongst its demographics. In order to prepare for those changes, such as an increased number of English language learners, or an increased number of males, or an increased number of students who were not meeting grade level standard, we used case discussions as a way to give a lens or a view into what that would look like, and how we would have to deal with that, in order to prepare for some of those changes. Those case studies that I utilize with the small teams on each grade level of content area, allowed the staff to come up with action items that they could show as a strength or stretch for themselves. It was like more of a self-identifying of readiness.

Providing Professional Development Sessions. Many participants highlighted PD as being a major part of their job responsibilities. PDFs described providing school-based training to teachers on school-based and district-wide initiatives, as well as providing PD to teachers on an individual or small group basis, and in PLCs. This PD was generally delivered during the school day, during teacher workdays, for individuals, small groups or PLCs. P4 designed and provided PD for her school that was tiered to the needs of the staff based on needs analysis. The tiered PD would provide entry level support, or at the highest tier level, activities such as peer observations or reflections of work in action. Professional development was described as provided primarily in the mornings and after-school, and during PLC planning where needed. P4 describes her work providing professional development,

A typical month, per say, for professional development, looks like me utilizing my needs analysis assessment, in order to work by creating the types of job embedded PD that the teachers need. I would section off the PD by their readiness level. If you look at grade 6, grade 7, grade 8, and then looking at the individual PLCs on those teams. Be it a reading PLC, math PLC, social studies, science, electives and so forth. I would attend their planning, speak with them, and include, they would self-report their readiness level for tweaking and moving forward to pre-determined goals.

Facilitating Action Research. P4 described her work with action research and investigating the “why’s and the what’s behind what we were doing.” She further explains,

Say we were working with English language learners, looking at best practices of how those instructional strategies could support them. The middle, which I call a tier two, I would show them a continuum of what demonstrating mastery of a concept look like, and then what it didn't look like, and ask them where they want to go. Setting action step for themselves, and once their action step was set, then I would design and

implement sometimes individualized professional learning. Or I would pair them with someone who had a mastery level of that concept, so that they would be able to grow. Then everybody, would ultimately would go forward in wherever they began.

Facilitating Parent Support Activities. Host parent tours and meetings as a part of the school program. P5 “My principal would call me in to learn how the parent tours were provided in the school, you know we are a magnet school, and so I would go and listen in on her make presentations to parents who were considering our school and walk around with counselors so that I could do the same thing.” She also describes being assigned to the school PTA and School Leadership Team as a portion of her duties.

Being a Testing Coordinator. Aiding during mandatory state, district, and school testing windows was described by three of the participants as being a major part of their role. P5 stated,

During MAP testing time, I worked with the facilitators as part of a team of testers, and making certain that things were going okay and monitoring classrooms. With elementary, for the myriad of tests that they had, I was a tester. Calling kids in and having them read for me, or do whatever it is I needed to do.

P1 also described her testing experience as “administering tests, end of year assessments, middle of the year assessment, and benchmark assessments.” In the case of P6, she describes of her three years as a PDF, “two years during that role I was doing it, and it’s a lot trying to do testing full time as well as mentoring and being PDF for a school of 73 staff and 1300 students.”

Supporting District Initiatives. District initiatives were supported in the schools by PDFs. Common district goals and programs were presented to PDFs through training or PDF monthly meetings. PDFs were then charged by the district to provide PD to staff

in the schools and support the initiative in the school. They were also expected to train teachers on initiatives from other district based school support groups. In the case of P1, her school was responsible for all district initiatives, as well as the initiatives of a separate cluster of schools that worked together with different goals. P1 states, “Our school was part of a geographical region that had some goals that were set aside from the district goals. My role was to push these goals throughout the school, that being my main responsibility.” P5 states that “a lot of the time, the things that we focused on working on, if it was the district's thing, like they talked about DDI in the very beginning and so that was the focus, but then by the time we were getting that down, the game plan switched to close reading strategies.”

Mentoring Teachers and Providing New Teacher Support. Often PDFs were called on the mentor new teachers. P6 discusses having to mentor new teachers when her school had high-turnover,

one year we had a high teacher turnover, new teachers, so what can we do as a team or what can I do to help retain those teachers too. So providing more mentoring, more coaching, more support for them as well.

On-boarding new teachers and staff who joined due to high turnover rates. P1 described her school as having “a pretty high turnover rate,” thus much of her work was with new teachers and acclimating them to school and district functions.

Being the Data Manager for the School. P2 describes her primary role as managing data and working with school leaders to get teacher “into the process of using data to target areas of need as well as back up what we were saying and what we were doing.” She goes on to explain that this meant “looking at the data and helping teachers to look at data.” P6 recalls how she used data to support her school goals and teachers,

In my school, one of the first things I did and I did this beginning of the year, mid-year, end of year was an assessment for the teachers. A survey to find out okay, what do you feel we need as a school as far as professional development and they received a list on the survey it was a list of different things anywhere from technology integration to lesson planning to classroom management. From there it was do you need it individually, do you need small groups, what is your best time. Then going back and then also looking at our school data as well to see what areas such as the teacher working condition survey, end of year scores, and seeing okay well here's what we need school-wide but then looking at each individual element that okay well this group needs this or maybe based on the end of year scores the math team for seventh grade may have needed a little more support in certain areas, so just going about that. Sometimes it was, one year we had a high teacher turnover, new teachers, so what can we do as a team or what can I do to help retain those teachers too. So, providing more mentoring, more coaching, more support for them as well.

Monitoring Student Discipline and Hallway Transitions. The PDF initiative provided schools with an extra person as a support for teachers. In the case of P1, she found herself “supervising hallways during transitions.” In the case of P6, she describes supporting teachers with classroom management issues. In this case, going in to classrooms regularly to work with behavior students or pull-them out to help create a more conducive learning environment for the teacher.

Providing Direct Student Services. Often, the role of PDF was to provide direct support for students. For example, in P2's school, she worked with teachers to examine data in designated foundations classes designed to accelerate student growth, in order to strategically target ways to meet kids where they are and then accelerate them. She states, “There are times where we're seeing that students are not making progress. We work with those students to see if they need a Tier two plan, figure out what are some research-based interventions that we can put into play to help make that student grow.” P6 described her work with direct contact with students as a regular duty. She says,

Yes, absolutely I did work with a lot of students because sometimes, some of those teachers needed support with small groups of they needed support with differentiation. So there were some students that I would just take out of the classroom and take them somewhere else and work with them one-on-one or in a small group and the whole goal of that was again to provide support for that teacher because maybe there was some classroom management issues where I would take some kid. They weren't necessarily all the kids that were let's say, that had issues. Sometimes I would take the kids that didn't have issues out and allow that teacher to kind of have a breather so that as a teacher I just feel that they need to experience, when they struggled a while, they need to experience some relief. Here's what an optimal class would look like so taking the kids that were issues, the kids that were not issues out and working with them.

Collaborating and Working with Other facilitators and School Staff. Schools were given the allotments for PDFs by the district in addition to the school-based budget allotments regularly utilized. Thus, PDFs reported having multiple facilitators in the school and working together to support all programs and collaborate. P1 describes collaborating with the school's academic facilitator as a major portion of her time; "I found myself being charged with supporting the middle school academic facilitator, and just not as much in the classrooms working with teachers as I had intended." P5 describes her experience,

working with other facilitators as a part of a team of testers, making sure that things were okay, and monitoring classrooms. With elementary, for the myriad of tests that they had, I was a tester. Calling kids in and having them read for me.

PDF Perceptions of Successes and Challenges of Implementing Job-embedded PD

Successes

PDFs define success in their roles as concrete events, practices, achievement, initiative, or feedback. They each recall different points of reference that provided them with a sense of accomplishment in the role.

The District Initiative as Designed. Three PDFs discussed success as an initiative.

P1 states,

one thing that I'm proud of is spearheading the one-to-one initiative for the middle school students. Getting it all up and running, not only just with the management piece of it, but the administrative side of it, the protocols behind it, as well as supporting the teachers with how to use their tools, supporting students with how to use their tools, and you know, using them within the classroom.

P2 identified her school has having shown growth and attributing it to the success of the ILT and implementing the work from the district initiative. She explains,

My school grew this past year, it was in the top 10% of middle schools that grew the most. When we go back and look and see, what was the independent variable? The one thing that we did differently was the ILT. The work that we did within the ILT to really promote teacher leadership, where we were scoping out the campus to see which teachers really had a handle on certain literacy practices. Not just having literacy models, but also figuring out, how does close reading look like in a science class, how does it look like in a social studies class? All these different classes. Not just core, we also went into electives. We went in Spanish. We had little sessions where we had teacher leaders leading other teachers on how to do close reading so that it made more sense and it just wasn't teachers saying, "Oh I do close reading." Putting practices like that into place I feel like really changed the game. It also put a common language amongst our staff, and then it fed over into our students. If you move from social studies to science and the teacher says, "All right, we're going to do level one of annotation of this article." Kids knew the expectation, they knew what was going on. In fact I was looking at one teacher's MAP results for language arts or reading it's broken up into informational text, vocabulary and literature. Her informational text part of her class breakdown she had fewer students in the low section as compared to the vocabulary and the literature. We feel like that's really due because the entire school has taken this on and students are showing some growth. That was a proud moment.

Implementation of Technology Support in Schools. P7 describes her success as the implementation of a technology program. She stated,

I think the one-to-one, being a PDF during the one-to-one Chromebook rollout felt like it wasn't a success at the time because there was so much

chaos, but now that the chaos has died down, I feel that it was successful and teachers quickly moved from not knowing the kind of tech tools that you can use with a Chromebook to being really savvy with ways to use the Chromebook in their lessons and still be careful not to just stick the kid in front of a screen too long.

Increased Quality of Professional Development Workshops. Other successes of the PDFs were viewed as increasing in the quality of professional development delivery.

P3 describes her success as being able to utilize PDF support and training resources in her school,

through that training I learned how to effectively deliver PD, to actually achieve the goals that you set out for. So, prior to that, I always thought I did good PD, but there's a difference in being a good presenter and in delivering PD that is impactful and effective. In utilizing that system, because there's a very clear protocol of script that you will find that you begin to use, and then a part of that training, I think my PD got better.

Working Directly with Teachers. P5 considered the ability to be an instructional coach, and working one-on-one with teachers as her greatest success and “love.” Like P2, P4 evidenced success as achievement growth. P4 states,

Student achievement increased. Mathematically as well as in reading, based on the state EOG scores, which is the state test for end of grade proficiency as well as grade level growth towards proficiency. There was an increase of 5-12% in each of those areas. That was something that was one of the greatest things. Also, the greatest thing for the staff was that they reported on their insight survey, things like there was an increase of professional development that supported their needs. They got what they needed when they needed it. That was something that was a success.

Aligning Practices Across the District. One PDF describes success as being able to implement coherent practices and protocols. P6 describes success as a PDF as,

I think some of my greatest successes were in establishing norms for PLC's because originally there wasn't a lot of consistency with how PLC's were being done. Let's say it was sixth grade ELA, they would get

together and okay, I'm doing this I'm doing that or I'm griping and complaining. There was never really a focus on what are we doing with the data, what are we doing with the data to instruct? Nothing like that at all. There was a lot of well, here's my lesson plan and here's what I'm doing. Just definitely no consistency, no collaboration and one of the things that I talked about was again meeting with them and saying okay here are norms, let's just put everything out on the table. Let's talk about what we expect from one another and having those conversations, those crucial conversations with each other and say you know what, here's how I like to listen, here's how I will respond. Just getting the basics out the way first and that took a while for people to really come out their shell and know almost treat is like Vegas, where what happens here stays here.

Support from School Administration. PDFs reported that when administrators and principals supported them, that made their jobs successful. P6 explained,

I think with my particular administrator it was a lot of, she empowered me to do whatever I felt was needed. She gave me some guidelines at the beginning of the year when we would always meet or in the summertime I would always ask her, what do you want us to work on this year, what's the big goal? What do you see is needed for this particular department or this particular teacher? And then from there it was okay, you tell me what it is you're working on. So, it was a lot of free reign, a lot of empowerment

P3 explained that, when professional development is valued in the school, the name and title of the role may change, but the work is consistent and supported.

Challenges

PDFs shared their perceptions of the challenges of their roles. They provided insight into some of the day-to-day duties and expectations that create barriers to implementing their work in providing job-embedded professional development. The challenges varied for PDFs based on school culture, PDF role description and internal design. The challenges reported by PDFs ranged from lack of principal support and knowledge of the role, to having too many other duties outside of job-embedded professional development.

Limited Principal Support. Some principals provided limited support and had little knowledge of the role. A major challenge identified by PDFs interviewed was the limited knowledge and support of principals for the role. The districts' expectations of the PDF roles were not as clearly communicated to principals or supported as PDFs hoped. P1 describes the challenge in having principals that did not fully understand the role as intended or utilized her in different ways within the school. She says,

My first year as a PDF, I found that they perceived you as being just an extra body, for lack of a better term, in the building. You know, someone who could perhaps cover classes if teachers aren't there, help pull lesson plans, help with, you know, class supervision, and just a lot of administrative tasks. It all was based off of leadership. Under the leadership where, in my opinion, the principal had a better understanding of the role and its purpose, I found myself and teachers being more ... wanting to speak to me for their professional learning needs ... especially based off, you know, whatever the school goals were, including using technology. So perception was pretty much based on perceptions of my role were contingent, it seems like, on how the principal charged me with tasks in the building. Under the leadership where, in my opinion, the principal had a better understanding of the role and its purpose, I found myself and teachers being more ... wanting to speak to me for their professional learning needs ... especially based off, you know, whatever the school goals were, including using technology. Perceptions of my role were contingent, it seems like, on how the principal charged me with tasks in the building.

Roles are Not Aligned to Job-embedded Activities. PDFs have roles not directly aligned with job-embedded PD. Job-embedded professional development provides models and guidelines as to what is or what is not considered school-based delivery for teacher support. The PDFs described completing activities and responsibilities in their daily duties that benefitted the school and meet the needs of the school in some ways, but did not necessarily align with the research-based models of JEPD. PDFs discussed the alignment of roles and responsibilities from the district to the school, and within the school based on assigned duties. These other duties often include necessary support in a

school, testing, monitoring hallways for safety, and covering classes for absent teachers.

P1 describes the lack of alignment as,

being responsible for some of those technical troubleshoot issues, or technical issues. So, that was outside of my role, because we did have someone who was responsible for the technology aspect of it, but they weren't meeting the expectations and I was often asked to fulfill their roles. So, with that being said, you know, having other duties that are outside of what you need to be doing, such as being in classrooms, or planning PDF updates. In that role, you just need some time to process information, and organize information, and prepare for your sessions, and that can be time consuming. So, you know, if you're charged with other tasks, then it's kind of hard for you to be able to deliver the session, and work at your fullest capacity.

Other PDFs discussed the providing clear leadership over projects and programs in the school, however running the IB program in a school is not defined as a model of job-embedded professional development although it may be essential to the school's theme or program. Where P3 shared her experience as an IB coordinator and expressed the success of her school, she was assigned the role for budgeting and school financial resource support and continued to maintain her original roles and responsibilities with little regard to the models of job-embedded professional development or the district resources and support for the role. P3 shared that "my school was an IB school, I was manager for the IB program. My role did not necessarily change." P3 also shared that she coordinated the compliance portion of the Title 1 program in her school which did not necessarily include any professional development needs.

Roles are Not Clear to all Stakeholders. PDF roles are not always understood or clear to teacher, students, and administrators. The interview data revealed that PDF perceptions of how teachers, students, and administrators view their roles is not always clear. PDFs communicated that clarity is needed for the role to be successful. When

PDF roles are understood, clearly outlined, and targeted to job-embedded models, PDFs are better able to implement professional development that supports improvements in teacher quality and student achievement. P1 describes her perceptions of teachers on her role as PDF,

I found that they perceived you as being just an extra body, for lack of a better term, in the building. You know, someone who could perhaps cover classes if teachers aren't there, help pull lesson plans, help with, you know, class supervision, and just a lot of administrative tasks.

P4 explains that as a PDF new to her school, there was confusion about who she was and her role. While she meets the needs of the school, her daily duties were not necessarily aligned with models for job-embedded PD. She explained how she perceived the teachers and students viewed her;

Coming into a school environment as a new person to the staff with the role, there was a lot of discussion around, "Why are they here? What are they supposed to do? I don't understand." The understanding that I had to get across to the staff really aligned in my job description. I even posted my job description with "look for's," or "what it looks like," on my door. People would be able to see if I was doing what I was supposed to be doing. That first caused a lot of alarm. That alarm would go directly to my principal. His response to that, would be like, "You'll hate her before you love her, so just go with the process." I kept continuing presenting the process, I kept building relationships. After, the staff would see that I was culturally competent, I had the emotional intelligence, I had the technical competence to do the job and provide support for them. They loosened their reigns and were open to the professional development. That took about three months. The students perceived me first they would title me as the person that's helping teachers. "She's teaching teachers". Then when they saw me do a lot with technology, "Oh, she's a Chromebook lady." Based on whatever task I was doing, was how the students saw me. I started working with students like in the Black History Ball, I started working with students in smaller groups. I would test students, they would see me in their classrooms. They always looked at me as a support. They started asking me just about any kind of question you could possibly think of. From a principal type administration question, down to, "You should ask the students sitting down next to you" type of question.

P7 and internally hired PDF described her perceptions based on confusion from switching her title but not her role in the school. She also admitted that she was not as comfortable providing PD as prescribed by the district, furthering her from the goal of implementing JEPD models. She explained, one of the biggest challenges was that, she was not delivering PD the way the district support meetings and other PDFs were describing. She admits that she was not a traditional teacher so it was very hard to provide instructional PD for most her teachers. She said,

When I did do that [PD], it was unsuccessful and I didn't enjoy it and still to this day I feel a little bit like maybe I should do more PD. Then I realized that what I am doing is serving my school through my own skills and they don't seem to be complaining. I do more grant writing. I've learned in these years of being called a PD facilitator that a lesson that will work for me won't work for every teacher. In fact, it won't work for most teachers. If I say, "Oh, this is a great idea," it has to be a great idea for the five teachers in my building that are like me.

P5 describes her challenges as,

The biggest challenge was trying to have a consistent focus as a "PDF" as I saw it. It was tweaked every time I went to a PDF meeting because somebody was doing something great and I would see how they set up their day, and their charts, but it didn't line up with what I was doing.

Too Many Facilitators/Support People in one school. PDFs reported that they were not the only facilitators in the school. They had to work collaboratively with other teacher leaders called academic facilitators, math facilitators, and literacy facilitators. These were additional instructional support positions funded by the district. PDFs reported this created very large teams providing teacher support to the same people. Roles overlapped, or sometimes were in direct conflict. As P1 describes,

We had a pretty large instructional support team, and so that was a little frustrating and challenging, too, as often times roles got intercepted, and so overlap, I guess, of roles. Because that caused a lot of confusion within our organization, because we weren't sure who was responsible for what.

P5 suggests that allegiance to one facilitator over another caused a challenge for her in her ability to lead, train, and influence teacher growth. She had difficulty working with teachers because they already had a relationship with another facilitator. She said,

Some of them, I think on the middle school side, blew me off because they had a relationship with their facilitator. If I walked through, and caught some things, and tried to talk to them, they would tell me what they're going to do. There was no one that was going to support me on that, and while I already had a supportive principal, she liked that her staff was happy. I was powerless to some degree. I was powerless.

P7 discussed the overlap at her school,

There was some confusion partly because since I had been the one in charge of tech and then our media specialist came back, and prior to my arrival years ago she had been in charge of tech. Now I had this new title, teachers weren't sure could they go to me with tech questions. Then when they did, they weren't sure which tech questions were me, which was the new person. What we and my school and I tried to do is say don't worry about the title, come to me with whatever, and then if it's not me I'll send you to the other person. We kind of divided it that I was more the tech usage person, how to use it in a lesson, and our media specialist became the tech hardware person which is what I was never good at anyway. We became a really good team, but there was definitely confusion amongst teachers. I think that at my school they did not think that I would be evaluative, and I very specifically didn't want to be. I remember that being in our job description or that was definitely taught to us that you are not to be considered an evaluator or an administrator. I was comfortable with that and I think they were because they already knew me. There was definitely some confusion around what will I actually do.

No teacher buy-in and limited accountability for PDF led initiatives. PDFs describe their roles as being change agents or providing teacher support. They also describe a challenge of providing JEPD as little to no teacher buy-in or accountability.

The ability to influence teachers based on district expectations and mandates can be difficult when teachers are unwilling to change their practice or instructional approach.

PDFs view lack of teacher buy-in or accountability for teacher driven changes in instructional practices as a challenge. P2 described her experience in her school,

When you have somebody that comes in and says, "All right, well we've been doing well here, but what changes can we make?" They're not too happy when they have to make a change. They've written all their lesson plans. They've put their feet up on their desk and it's like, "Why are you telling me to try to do something different?" I would say you have people who are progressive, people who are like, "Okay, I'll listen and I'll try it." They try it for themselves and they figure it out for themselves. Then you have tugboats. I would probably say it's a third in each of those areas.

P6 describes teacher buy-in as one of her main challenges. As a teacher leader, PDFs were viewed as colleagues and not administrators or supervisors. This meant working harder with teachers not willing to change their practice. She explained,

Some of my challenges were more of trying to get buy-in for teachers without having to CC the principal on it all the time. You know because you're in the role you're not really admin but people perceive you as that. As you know, sometimes things don't get read unless it had that principal's name on that email so just trying to get people to say hey, I'm here read the email this is something to help you or not even having the principal sit in on the meeting so that things can get done. I guess again, that initial perception of who are you, okay she's just sending an email. That sort of thing.

Limited Authority to Influence Teachers. Another challenge is the limited authority of PDFs as teacher leaders to influence change in teacher practice. P2 identifies her challenge in a high performing school as teacher accountability. She shared,

We rest on the laurels of our high flyers. Like I said, I mean this is not great, but 75%, so we're not one of the schools that the district or the state is looking at to be like, "Get your scores up." No. Like I said, you have those tugboats that when you say, "No. Go back and look at your data." They don't want to. Then we have a very low turnover rate at our school,

and a lot of that is because, in my opinion, because of the data we have awesome kids, but in the same vein if you will, because our data is pretty good I've heard administrators say, "Don't worry about them. Leave them alone." It's like, but what? You know, I'm trying to do my job. You told me to get this done, that's what I'm going to do. Accountability, because teachers, some, excuse me, there's a minority of teachers that get away with just doing whatever they want to and have not been checked.

Research Question 2 - What are perceptions of PD facilitators on their ability to impact teacher quality and student achievement in their school?

Perception of Impact on Teacher Quality

For many PDFs, their perceived impact on teacher quality was absolute. The participants communicated a sense of knowing that they have an impact on teacher quality, and discussed internal and external factors that made their work with teacher most impactful and least impactful, but always expressing they had an impact. In general, participants expressed the need for strong relationships with teachers, heavy influence of their role as PDFs in coaching and providing professional development, increasing school accountability scores, and receiving positive feedback from teachers on district and school based surveys and communications. Other PDFs describe their classroom observations, examination of student data, and providing feedback as essential to insuring that PDFs impact improvements in teacher quality.

While there was no clear measuring tool that any PDFs used, or were expected to use, the perceptions of the PDFs of their impact on teacher quality were tied directly to their roles and responsibilities as assigned in the school, self-evaluation based on multiple points of reference, and the certainty that by being hired as a PDF and meeting the selection criteria, they in fact by nature of their position, had an impact on teachers. None

of the participants shared or acknowledged that they did not have an impact on teacher quality, even though they shared limitations of their roles.

Through the assignments of their roles and participation in the district PDF professional learning community (PLC), participants communicated a tone throughout the interview that implied that by logical conclusion, providing job-embedded PD for teachers, and being deemed qualified to do so, in turn meant teachers would improve. Each participant cited their rationale for being able to impact teacher quality in a variety of ways.

Activities Most Effective at Impacting Teacher Quality

Building Relationships with Teachers. For many PDF's, the core of their work in improving teacher quality was attributed to the relationships they had with teachers and in the school. They described their relationships and being able to support teachers, visiting and observing classrooms, highlighting teacher work, open communication, and access to the PDF during the school day in a variety of capacities. In general, positive teacher relationships were described as teachers and staff communicating pleasure with interacting with the PDF, and verbal feedback of happiness or acceptance of the support. P1 communicated that she could establish strong relationships with teachers who already had a strong interest in growing, and used their best practices, student data, and classroom observations as a way to begin coaching conversations and demonstrate areas of improvement or growth. She says teachers were receptive to this style and open worked with her. P6 describes her relationships with new teachers as a source for having an impact on teacher quality,

I think what was most effective was the relationship that I built with the new teachers because again, constantly telling them like look I'm not

admin, I'm here to help you. If I can help you do your job and make your life easier in the classroom for these kids, that's what I'm here to do. So that was just being a shoulder, sometimes to cry on. Like sometimes just go to my office and scream, go outside, leave early, I got you, get yourself together, being that person who is there for them.

Observed Improvements in Student Data. Increases in student data was a large source of evidence that PDFs were impactful on teacher quality. Several PDFs linked their success and impact on teacher quality directly to the success of the students in the classroom and the school. P2 explains that she does believe she had an impact on teacher in her school, even though they were already a high achieving school. She cites maintenance of those high scores as an overall indicator the she impacts teacher quality. She asserts the nature and overall learning environment of her school as a primary reason teachers are successful, and in turn students are successful as evidence by the school's high achievement scores. P4 states her impact on teacher quality and growth as evidenced by moving student achievement in her school, and by retaining teachers as a result of the student growth. She states,

How I had an impact on teacher growth, was first because they were growing students and having that student data move, we retained them. That would keep this staffing in the school. We went from truly not showing that kind of growth across the school to having 100% growth. I want to say we got about 12, like 11.8 was the number, and when we looked at how we ranked to other schools in the district, we we're sitting at number one we were somewhere between the top five. So, I know we have the top math, the top science scores. We were sitting within the top five, top ten in the district. When you're looking at it out of 160+ schools when prior ... when we really were not ranking like that, but when we changed how we delivered PD to make sure that it actually aligned with our instructional goals, then it ... I would say yes, it did impact our student achievement end score.

P5 indicates teacher communication as how she perceived her impact on teacher growth, Teachers would tell me the things that were helpful for them in the short term or the long term. Hearing from some of my peers, they were saying,

"You've definitely had an impact in working with these teachers because our results were this, that or the other." Some of these teachers frequently make suggestions. Again, my peers would let me know. They did let me know that, at the end, you made a difference.

Classroom Observations, Follow-up, and Feedback. For some PDFs, classroom interactions were their measure of impacting teacher quality. Through observations, conversations, feedback, and follow-up coaching, the PDFs perceived that they had an impact on teacher quality. P1 describes her impact on teacher quality as being most effective when she continued to follow-up with her teachers throughout the school year. By being able to provide this on an on-going basis for teachers and connected to classroom practice, she perceives her impact on teacher quality over time and by informally observing the changes in practice. She states,

What was most effective? I would say what was most effective was continuing to follow up, and following up with observing and providing feedback on the learning that was taking place throughout the school. To follow up with assistance about those practices and reminding them, and understanding that it's a process and not an event. And that, you know, professional development is ongoing. To keep giving them feedback and checkpoints, and kind of like giving that private monitoring as to how they're progressing towards improving their teaching practices.

P6 uses her role as PDF to encourage and provide feedback to teachers. She says,

I'll always tell them I'm the bridge between you and admin so if I see something I want you to work on it before you get that observation. Telling them okay, the observation is this day, are you ready? What do you have? Making sure they have all their ducks in a row so when they do have that observation it's just like okay I've been waiting for you, come on in, that sort of thing. Definitely providing that support and even meeting with them afterwards and trying to get them comfortable with the feedback from the observation, okay well where are some areas of improvement? Well what can we do to work on that? What can you take back?

District Initiatives being Internalized by Teachers. One PDF shared that her school was the first pilot for a district technology program. She polled the teachers to evaluate their level of interest and asked them if they wanted to commit to learning and utilizing the technology initiative. The teachers agreed and she designed the professional development around their implementation needs and supports. She worked with the teachers to learn the instructional tool and thus, her teachers were able to integrate the technology throughout her school successfully. Success for P4 was the integration and use of district initiatives that showed improvements in teaching and learning.

Understanding what her teachers wanted to know and can do in the classroom helped her to successfully plan professional development activities specific and targeted to their needs. P2 also utilized district initiatives as a measure for teacher growth and success.

She shared,

First thing that comes to mind for most impactful thing is that our district is known for things coming and going. I think the fact that I've been there three and a half years, building on what I started out doing. At first it felt very minuscule and now I'm like swamped. Because teachers are taking a hold of the stuff, the initiatives that have been put into place and they're no longer initiatives, they're a part of what we do. I think that mainstay of my position, as well as teachers taking a hold of it, has spoken volumes to teachers.

Style of Professional Development Delivered. Participant P4 discussed her professional development designs and structures as a method of measuring her impact on teacher quality. She asserts that by designing structured and tailored professional development activities, she can provide, monitor, and assess teacher progress and adjust as needed for teacher learning throughout the school year.

I offer things such as 15 minutes of fragmented times throughout the day, or through mornings over a month. If something they needed to learn

would've been, say an hour and a half professional development, instead of doing it all in one day, I would do it in 15 minute fragments over a month. They would be able to practice something, come back, ask questions, try it in their class, talk to me, talk to others. I spent a lot of time outlining steps for processes for administration and staffing. We offer them resources to allow them to do that.

P4 goes on to describe additional professional development delivery that contributed to her perceived impact on teacher quality,

Most effective was my style and delivery of professional development. It was calming, it was simple, it had process and procedure, it had protocols and steps. Some of the most challenging would be when someone didn't know they were ready, or were afraid. Afraid of examining their own protocols because they were, say, stuck in a classroom management style of being, say, authoritative with students. "I can't monitor a Chromebook. I can't see what they're doing." Letting loose of some of the reins was difficult for some staffing, say when we were dealing with technology. Trying a new instructional practice that they weren't familiar with, made them uncomfortable.

P3 also shared how the design and structure in her school allowed for teacher growth.

When asked if her perceived work as a PDF impacted teacher quality, she replied,

The answer is yes, and it impacted it because now our PD and our style of PD aligned with how we expected instruction to be delivered. And it also aligned with our "look fors" and our walk throughs. Now we became aligned across the board, and the coaching then began to change, because this is how we do business. During my two years as PDF we got 100% growth across the board.

Consistency and knowledge of PDFs. Participants P2 and P3 revealed that their personal knowledge and consistency of practice or job position was impactful for teacher growth. Their ability to remain in the position for a length of time to provide on-going and consistent resources and support, allowed the initiatives that were put in place to

become internalized, and the consistent support and resources of the PDF overtime to be invaluable. P3 states:

Consistency of practice and implementing structured and strategic PD aligned to instructional expectations. Inspecting this in the classroom and insuring all teachers moved toward this goal. Being consistent in how we do business. For two years as the PDF, there was 100% growth across the school.

Participating in the Hiring Process. Participant P6 discussed her participation in the hiring process for new staff at the school a major success and a method that impacted teacher growth and quality. She explained that by participating in the hiring process, and being on the interviewing team, she could examine different qualities of prospective teacher and consider if their teaching practices or beliefs were aligned to the school's culture, vision, and goals. In in doing so, she spent many hours interviewing for open teaching positions during the end of the school year, and throughout of there were vacancies, but she viewed this as critical to providing a basis for the work she would do with the teachers throughout the school-year. Being a part of the interview process allowed her the ability to strategically have input into the teachers the school hired and provided professional development. In this way, she knew more about the teachers joining the school and how to best support them.

Teacher Support, Advocacy, and Coaching. Another indicator of success and greatest impact PDFs have on teacher quality was the support, advocacy, and coaching that teacher receive from them. Some PDFs reported that supporting their teachers and advocating for them demonstrated evidence of teacher growth. P6 discusses assisting teachers in also learning how to advocate for themselves in addition to her advocacy as a one of the most impactful influences she had on teacher quality and growth. She shared,

Trying to make sure they are advocating for themselves, but also putting them in positions so that I can highlight them to someone on a district level. For example, there was one teacher who was using rap in her classroom, so I recorded her. I sent it to someone in the district, and next thing you know there's people coming here to look at her and lots of calls. It was good for the school, but highlighting all the great things a new teacher is doing. It put her in a position to go and talk to other people and tell them what she's doing, how she's integrating rap and technology in social studies. Also, it's telling the teachers, here's how you can advocate for yourself and be your biggest cheerleader and not to be afraid of admin because again, no one likes to go to the principal's office no matter how old you get, especially with new teachers.

P6 also talked about support teachers by empowering them,

Well, you know with growth it's hard to measure it with teachers. It's not like a test where it's all quantitative, a lot of it is qualitative; a lot of it is seeing that growth from the written feedback. The constant talking, and looking at their observations, seeing their confidence, as well improvements and how they are positioning themselves in the classroom. How they're relating and collaborating with their colleagues as well. Are they using their voice when they're having the PLC's? Are they feeling empowered to speak up in there? Saying hey, you have a voice you're a professional, you're all licensed, we're all teachers you have a whole say in this. So definitely lots and lots of talking to them and just hey, tell me how it's going some one on one some whole group, and then talking to their mentors as well because their mentors, they are really big here, they are really supportive. In my role, assigning the right mentor to that teacher and everybody just working as a team. Like, okay how is this one doing, what kind of support do they need and just keeping that line of communication open.

P5 chimed in by sharing her experience in coaching her teacher and believing that coaching made a big impact on teacher growth and quality,

I think that the coaching piece helped make a big difference. Staying consistently with the individuals, frequently checking in, checking in further after changes, and answering their questions.

P7 agreed and adds that once PDFs understand that they support all types of teachers, and tailor your support to their needs, content, and skills. She expresses that “as long as you

(PDF) are working on the skills they need consistently, then the teacher will grow.” P5 shared that teacher support was crucial to teacher growth and quality. Her support and observations of teachers in the classroom provided feedback critical to moving teachers in her school. She stated,

For those teachers that, especially elementary, that struggled with classroom management, with lesson planning, and the lesson planning part was on the middle school side. I think that I might've been helpful for them. They would resist me in the beginning but then afterwards come back and say, "I got it. Oh, I see it." I heard from one teacher, since I've been away, she said, "Thank you so much for these things that you brought us in to talk to us about." One PLC, and the teacher was using the strategies. I gave teachers things all the time to work with and showed them how to use them. Sometimes they wouldn't, but after the fact they told me. I don't know if I made a significant degree of help for them, but I know that my work wasn't in vain, and that some people were impacted by it.

Contributing to Resources to Support Teachers. P7 did not view herself as a traditional PDF or as participating in the roles and responsibilities as outlined in the job posting. She attributes teacher success to her non-traditional implementation of the PDF role in that she focused more on grant writing and securing resources for teachers that ultimately support high quality teaching. Her role in the school did not change when she was hired as the PDF, only her title did. She continued to support technology integration and provide resource support for teachers with very little coaching or professional development sessions. She recalls,

It's sort of the off labeled stuff is what I have been doing. I've been instrumental in grant writing and getting us some big money grants. The most recent big money grant the Jimmy Johnson Foundation for \$75,000 dollar. I know that that helped my media specialist because the grant was specifically for my media specialist. I think when I look at what I've actually done, I've really probably done more of a service to my media specialist than anyone else because she touches the school more than a single classroom teacher could. Where I do most advocating, is when a

teacher wants to go somewhere and trying to get the money if they want. I don't know if it supports all, but it's hit a few people.

In the case of P7, finding resources for teachers to attend trainings, or secure grants and funding for use in technology or by the media specialist was her main role, but also yielded the most teacher growth since they were learning new skills and incorporating technology in their classrooms.

While all participants perceived themselves as impacting teacher quality, they did share some factors of their experiences as PDFS that may have the least impact on teacher quality.

Activities Least Effective at Impacting Teacher Quality

Too many goals and initiatives/Too Many Facilitators. P1 is a PDF who worked in a high needs school. She explains that what was least effective in her role as PDF was having too many goals and initiatives. While she attributes it to being a low performing school, she also having a lot of facilitators to execute and deliver PD in the same school also stifled her ability to impact teacher growth and quality. She explains,

Least effective, I would say, is perhaps too many goals. You know, I worked at a high needs school as a PDF, and low student achievement. So, there were just so many areas for improvement. I mentioned that I had a pretty large instructional support team that I had to work with, so again, each member ... which, it's a good thing ... brought something to the table, but also that made it difficult to agree upon things that we should target and focus on. Also, some people just didn't have the skill set or the understanding, so I would say the least effective is that as a PDF, we get a little bit side-tracked and as far as having new goals, or trying to reset those goals, or add-ons to the goals that we had. Just having another layer of the teachers having to learn this new strategy or skill or practice, and then, classrooms receiving the feedback when they really haven't truly mastered the other skills practiced. Always giving them too many different goals, you know, doing the quality over quantity.

P1 further explains that PDFs should just focus on a few strategic goals, stay focused on supporting improvements and learning in those goals, and prioritize to see true teacher growth.

Inconsistency and Longevity of Initiatives. Other PDFs experienced inconsistency of initiatives and the length of time to implement initiatives as a barrier to impacting teacher quality. P2 voiced that district initiatives come and go. By the time, she could put supports and professional development in place to ensure adequate implementation, the school would lose the initiative, or another would be introduced in its place. She stated, "The first thing that comes out of teachers mouths whenever I say, "All right guys, we're just going to try this." "So, when is this going away?" She asserts that this type of practice of inadequate implementation and practice time, as well as rotating initiatives, does not provide teachers the consistency they need to master and implement effective teaching practices and resources.

Teacher Buy-in/ Knowledge of the PDF Role and Responsibilities. The PDF role was introduced as a district initiative. For many PDFs, this meant that school staff and admin may not have known or understood their roles and responsibilities. For several PDFs, this lack of knowledge and understanding of the role contributed to their ability to have teacher buy-in or a greater impact on teacher growth and quality as they spent more time defining, clarifying, and revealing their roles, then actually performing their responsibilities initially. A few participants cited low levels of trust from teachers in schools where they were new to the school and new to the role. They also revealed that teachers showed little interest in innovation in some schools and low levels of interest

towards changing practices based on the PDFs responsibility to share district initiatives and resources. This was especially true in higher performing schools.

P4 shared her challenges in getting her teachers to trust her, trust that “you are the professional, you are the expert at teaching.” For P4, being hired as a PDF through the selection process meant she was qualified, but her teachers did not initially buy-in and the time it took to win them over and make an impact was reduced. As a result, she spent more trying to convince teachers to enhance their classroom practices in order to see improved student results. She says that fostering teacher buy-in used up a lot of her work time, and left little time to plan professional development or complete other tasks as a PDF. Much of her time throughout the school year was spent building relationships and teacher buy-in of her position and ability to support teacher growth and quality. In the case of P6, she said the teacher buy-in was a barrier for her because she spent much of her time figuring out ways to effectively communicate with her teachers and get them to believe in her ability to support and coach them. She said, “one of the things that I think was least effective for me was, I guess personally I had to change up how I communicated with teachers in the role that I am in.” She continued to express that by changing the way she approached her teachers, she was able to gain their trust and help them consider additional instructional practices and approaches. This was hard initially, but over time, she was able to build connections, however a lot of time was used learning to communicate and approach them because of the new role, position, and lack of teacher buy-in.

Professional Development Delivery. Many PDFs agreed that providing professional development workshops throughout the school day was a major part of their

roles and responsibilities. What varied was the number of hours, the design, topics, evaluation, and presentations. This was so diverse in each school, that while all participants but one agreed that deliver professional development, there was no consistent implementation model, expectation, or guideline provided at each school or from the district. Two PDFs openly admitted that providing teacher professional development simply was not an area of strength. P7 was asked what was least effective in supporting teacher growth and quality and she replied, “My whole faculty meeting professional development lesson.” These were the least effective for her because she did not share topics of interest for her teachers, or they simply were strong teachers who were not interested in changing their instructional practice. Since P7 had been a facilitator at the school for many years, some under the PDF title, she acknowledged that delivery of teacher professional development was not an area of expertise, nor did the teachers in her school want it. In the case of P5, she acknowledges that the least effective impact in her role was “standing up in front of them, to give them PD; probably I just didn't do enough of that, but I found out quickly that I enjoyed one-on-one.” So, while it was acknowledged as a part of her role and responsibility as a PDF to provide professional development for teachers, P5 did not do this often and chose to implement the parts of job-embedded professional development that she felt more comfortable with.

Perception of Impact on Student Achievement

There was a consensus amongst participants that their roles as PDFs did impact student achievement. Some PDFs connected teacher growth and quality to improvements in student achievement, some directly attributed student growth to data interpretation, and other PDFs generalized that if they were supporting teachers, and teachers were showing

improvements in practice, thus, students were impacted as well. In all cases, no true evidence was cited, no clear evaluation systems of measurements used, and no mention or reference to any district or school-based evaluation systems were included in the perceptions shared.

Successes

Direct Work with Students. P2 expressed that she felt that she impacted student achievement because she supported teachers in their classrooms, she ran student intervention groups for several of her teachers inside of their classrooms, she shared:

I'm in your classroom, I get to see how you as the teacher, how your actions impact student reaction. Because I have that fly on the wall view, and because a lot of teachers trust me, I can go to them and say, "You were doing this absolutely fabulously. This is what I noticed as a result from students. What can we do to change this up?" Those small increments of change are what teachers get super excited about because they're like, "Oh my gosh, that worked. Thank you for making my life easier." Yeah, I do feel like I impact change, not just from the very global scale of ILT or MAP, but just those small little things every single day.

Based on Student Data Results. P4 spent time analyzing student data directly and could identify levels of student understanding. She further explained that by knowing student levels, her work as a PDF was impacted as she could further support teachers and monitor student growth. She explained,

I think that aligning what the teachers did in the classroom definitely helped with student achievement especially, and it goes back to the PLC's too. Once they all started collaborating and really looking at what they were doing as far as instruction, curriculum, and assessment then they could see okay, well we need to get this together. Maybe we need to do some flexible grouping. I'll take two of your students because I'm good in this standard and you take three of mine because you're great in this standard. Definitely, for me going back to the PLC's was very helpful for them and just getting them talking more on a page of we're not here to gripe and complain, we're here to be problem solvers and what are the issues, what are we going to do about it.

Providing Student Support Services. P7, a PDF who performed non-traditional roles in her school, shared that she directly supported students by having her office in the media center. During the day, she would actively interface with students and support them in a variety of ways. She suggested that by being available to students, she had a direct impact on supporting their achievement, but she also admitted that she was already working in a high performing school. In her school, access to resources for teachers and students was the major priority to maintain teacher growth and student achievement. She stated,

One way I impact student achievement is being housed in the media center. One part of my job as PDF that's not on the list there is I am a student helper, too. If teachers are doing a project, they can send kids to the media center to work on it and I'll watch them for them. If a kid needs an idea or if a kid needs just how do they upload their movie to Google Drive, they come to me. I do a lot of Chromebook troubleshooting not for hardware but probably the kid added a special extension that's now messing up or something. I have a lot of kids sit in my office that I just help through stuff or they come to me for supplies like art because I have a lot of art supplies and stuff like that in my room.

Implementation of Instructional Materials. P1 shared her impact on student achievement in a very different way. She explained that her school was a low performing school and that allowed the school budget and resources to purchase instructional materials that helped students learn. She said that “we were fortunate enough to have the budget to purchase some pretty solid resources; like Ready and iReady, Level Literacy Intervention, and other STEM education instructional tools.” Her support and training of these types of instructional programs for teachers was critical to ensure they were implemented success fully in the classroom and students were able to use them to

enhance their learning. Her attributed her turn-key training of the material in her school supported changes in teacher practices that lead to her school's student achievement growth each school year. By being hands on and available to teachers each day, she could coach them on using the interventions and materials and use the data obtained to support increased student achievement. She expressed, "I'm pretty confident in how I provided the presence of elements to ensure that the teachers would have to use the program with fidelity. Fortunately, I was trained by the company and then tried to translate the same information I received to the teachers." She added, "I am confident that, we were specific at least, in them knowing how to use the instructional resources in their classroom that contributed to teachers being able to deliver interventions, or use data to support their students to increase student achievement."

Barriers

While participants in the study perceived themselves as impacting student achievement in a variety of ways, they also discussed some barriers that affected their work as PDFs to impact student achievement.

Lack of Skills and Resources of the PDF. P7 examined her own lack of skills in examining student test data as a barrier to increasing student achievement. She said,

I think a barrier is my own lack of skill at analysis and my own motivation toward data analysis. I don't do a lot of "How could I help these students achieve better?" I definitely don't do any of the kind of MAP testing data analysis that other people do that I'm starting to realize it has its place. I'm just not good at it. The data doesn't speak to me, and so I just leave it alone and hope someone else. Luckily, again, because of the scale of my school, my principal is a math teacher and she loves data analysis.

By having an administrator in her school who was able to analyze data and examine student achievement data, P7 admits that she did not have to concentrate on examining

student data or growth directly within her role. Job-embedded professional development does not expressly assign evaluating student data as a primary role or responsibility, however connecting teacher growth and performance to student growth and achievement is a critical aspect of providing teacher professional development.

Inconsistent Follow up and Teacher Support. Another barrier to increasing student achievement in the PDF role as explained by P5, was not to be able to directly link impacting teachers to impacting students. She asserts that PDFs and all other types of “facilitators” can impact student achievement by providing consistent follow up to coaching and other professional development activities. She views consistent follow-up with teachers crucial and that it should be on-going as a part of a school-wide focus on improvements in teaching and learning. She said, “once you deliver something, don't walk away from it until something else new comes along and then you present that. You need to stay school-wide, but then that doesn't rest on the PDF. That has to be a school-wide decision on how we're all going to do this, and how we're going to make certain that all of the teachers and how all of the facilitators are going to work through this.” She also shares that schools and PDFs should do a better job of assessing the needs of the school and planning how to strategically support teachers and students throughout the school-year.

Inconsistent Teacher Support for Students. P2 cites teacher willingness to support student achievement as a barrier to impacting student performance. As the PDF of a low performing school, she experienced doubt and apprehension from some of her teachers regarding student performance and how to impact student learning. She shared,

You can say teacher willingness, like we said before. This is an interesting one, but I feel like this is something that is, this is unfortunately a part of

education. The school that I work at is probably, geez, I don't know if it's 80% free and reduced lunch, I should know that figure. We have a lot of kids who are not free and reduced lunch. Then we have a group of students who come from a very fragile neighborhood into AIG. A lot of teachers have this perception of, "Oh these kids are going to do, these kids are not." When that mindset has already been put into play before really getting to know the student, and realizing that the school year is a process and not just a first day end all be all of my relationship. Like, "We're going to have to work on this. I want to see you grow and progress over this school year." When teachers adopt that particular kind of mindset, it's deadly. I had a teacher one day, we were looking at the data of some students and his class is a foundations class, one of the classes. He said, "I don't know what I'm going to do with these that are falling in the crack. They're probably out there smoking crack." It's like, what? I mean I know that that's not surprising, but it's reality. A lot of these students are also minorities, so I've heard some teachers say, "You're going to make me teach all the black kids today. You're going to leave." It's this idea that minority children are hard to teach, which is, poverty brings about some challenges, agreed, educationally, but when we're looking at children's skin and saying, "Because you're black, you're this you're that, you can't." Or, "I don't have the skill set to meet you where you are." That is debilitating.

No Formal Evaluation and Assessment Methods for PDFs. What was not clear in the discussions on impacting student achievement was the use of any concrete systems and protocols to directly evaluate the delivery of job-embedded coaching and its impact on student achievement. Participants used their daily experiences to provide insight into experiences that logically imply impact on teacher quality and student achievement. Their perceptions of their impact on student achievement ranged from assessing the influence of the school performance and make-up, to availability of resources and support, to examining student data. No formalized evaluation methodology was used.

Research Question 3 - What types of school-based internal, external, and environmental factors influence job-embedded professional learning opportunities in schools?

Throughout participant interviews, many internal, external, and environment factors emerged as influences on job-embedded learning opportunities provided by PDFs in schools. Participants reflected on their perceptions of their roles and positions and presented their experiences of direct influences on their work and practices.

Internal Influences

Limited Planning and Coaching Time. Time to design and plan for professional development workshops and sessions is critical for PDFs. One internal factor that affects their ability to provide job-embedded professional development in schools is not having enough time to design, plan, and deliver professional development during the school day. Participant interviews revealed that other duties required of them by schools, such as testing, covering classes, walkthroughs, interviews, admin team meetings, student interventions, and student discipline limit their time in school during work hours to plan and organize effective PD sessions. Having time to effectively plan and organize professional development workshops and activities, as well as follow-up coaching and providing feedback is essential for the success of job-embedded PD. P4 shared that much of her preparation for coaching, classroom support, and professional development was generally three to six months ahead of delivery time. She stays ahead of her teachers in order to be adequately prepared to schedule and know what is needed. Preparation time is essential to the role and responsibilities of PDFs and having that time available and scheduled within their responsibilities and duties impacts their ability to provide high quality job-embedded PD.

This idea of time also extended to time to plan with teachers. P5 discussed extensively the conflict between the time she spends working with teachers in addition to

PD presentations that would have a significant impact on teaching and learning, such as time to work with teachers directly. She further explained that direct work with teachers should be included as a main role and responsibility of the PDF initiative. As she perceived her role, she did more administrative tasks and activities than providing time to directly work with teachers.

Lack of a Collaborative Voice. Another internal influence for PDFs was having a voice in the school when necessary. Since the district initiative was led and directed by district specialist who prescribed school based programs and resources, the PDFs shared the need to have a voice in the decision-making around what needs and resources were most appropriate for their school dynamic. P5 suggests that also includes school leaders as a part of the decision-making regarding how PDFs work in schools. She shared, “that means that even school leaders need to have a stronger voice about their schools and to the district to say, ‘This is where I’m weak. I’m going to take this tool and when you walk in and see this is what we’re doing.’ You want to follow the vision of the district but it might not be the vision of what’s going to lead your schools, and we see that happening in schools that struggle and schools that are successful.” As a district initiative, many of the resources and professional development support provided by PDFs in schools was attached to the district goals and instructional plan. An internal conflict arises for PDFs where what the district intended and what the school needs may not be aligned. PDFs viewed this as having limited voice in what the school wanted to focus on based on needs assessments. For example, in the case of P3, her school specialized in using a particular model to support teaching a learning. It was introduced by the school and funded by the

school, so it did not tie to any initiatives being presented by the PDF district support. She said,

my only point of reference is what we did at my school, and I saw that it actually worked, it would be our model, so when you know where you are and where your wanting to go, as a school, and you find those best practices that align with it, and if you're 100% aligned from the leadership team to your instructional staff, then that's what you should do. And your PD should be based on those things.

P3 was very participatory in district meetings, however she was also very clear that was what her role was, to align her school's PD to their instructional model and use that as the focus for moving teachers and students. She did not subscribe to any of the other district initiatives or resources as intended. In her perception, she provided job-embedded PD everyday through a variety of formats, but as a PDF selected for the district initiative, she wanted more voice to apply what was best for her school.

Limited Principal Knowledge and Support. Principal knowledge of the initiative and administrative support was also viewed as an internal influence on the role and outcomes of PDFs. P1 who worked in a low proficiency school, describes knowledge and support of her principal and admin team as crucial to her implementation of job-embedded PD. She discussed the differences in having a principal that supported her role and one who did not. When asked, what internal factors influenced her role, she stated,

I think of inside the actual school building I supported, is really based off of the principal. I was able to see that it depended on the leadership that determined your impact. So, with leadership, where they just looked at me as another person in the building, I didn't see as much of an impact for student achievement or changing teacher practices. But, when I was working under leadership, under principals that seemed to have a better understanding of the role and it's use and school purpose, I found that I had a greater impact, contributing to the increase in test scores, and contributing to our school grade increase.

P5 also did not feel support enough by her principal. She felt she expressed that her role was unclear and she would have liked to have had her role defined when she accepted the position, as well as be provided opportunities to give input based on her work as a PDF. She viewed the principals mindset regarding PDFs and the district PDF initiative as an influence on her ability to perform her role. She shared,

the advice that I would give to principals is to listen to your PDF if you have an understanding in the beginning, and that has to set up in the beginning. "This is the way your role is going to be." The PDF may have to ask, "Would you be open to advice from me as I am monitoring the school, and whatever, so that when that time comes, that dialogue can begin right away." If that is not established in the mind of the principal, you can't say anything to them and a lot of people probably were faced with that in the schools where they weren't receiving PDFs so well. That has to largely be an accepting principal's mindset first, to embrace the role and accept the advice from actions observed.

P2 suggests that her administrators understood the PDF role, and viewed administrators as "the support systems" that help her work with teachers and support students. She viewed school administrators as being knowledgeable of district initiatives and able to support teacher teams as needed, as a critical "partners" in navigating and providing job-embedded PD. P4 shared that working with an admin team that aligns that work of the PDF to the school goals is extremely beneficial to the impact of PDFs in schools. She does however suggest that school administrators must be knowledgeable enough about the district initiatives regarding the PDF role and district resources intended for use in schools, in order to make "strategic decisions and utilize some sort of strategic decision making model" for delivering PD and instructional support. She continues on to share that,

The PDF role, or professional development role, or professional development framework, professional development plans within your

school should be in alignment between knowledge and skill. Some people have knowledge, some people have skill. Now, when that knowledge and skill blends, then you can make student achievement. Then you can improve staff performance, because there is a clear direction between what something looks like by showing how to do it, versus why something looks this way because of what you did.

External Influences

Throughout the school community or school district, PDFs reported external factors that influenced their roles and responsibilities within their schools. From district PLC meetings, school finance and budgeting, to overlapping district support for varying types of facilitators within the school building, PDFs reported how these external influences affected their ability to provide job-embedded professional development in their schools.

Networking and Multiple Facilitators. One major expectation of the districts initiative to hire and place PDFs in middle and K-8 schools, was the formation of a district-wide professional learning community (PLC) for PDFs lead by the PD Specialist and overseen by the Office of Teacher PD. As a requirement of hire, after being placed in a school, all PDFs were mandated to attend monthly or regularly scheduled district professional development meetings based directly on the PDF initiatives and goals as set forth in the districts job posting and selection criteria. PDFs met monthly and were introduced to resources and materials organized and presented under district leadership and often associated directly with the district goals and strategic plans. PDFs found these meetings to sometimes be helpful and aligned to the work being done in schools, and sometimes to be a great networking opportunity, but unhelpful if their role as PDF was more tied to school based goals, decisions, and use of the PDF. P6 viewed networking

and collaborating with other PDFs as a beneficial influence on her role as a PDF. She shared,

Some of the resources I used were collaborating with other PDF's, because one of the great things about everyone being at different schools was everyone had their own unique needs however we could share well, what are you doing at your school, well maybe that's something I could take back and implement at my school as well and modify it to make it work.

She adds that another resource that supported her role as PDF was working closely with other facilitators (not PDFs) in her building, like math, literacy, and academic facilitators. She expressed that working with them provided an additional source of knowledge and support for her role, and helped her to further network to district personnel and support she would not have otherwise known were available to her. She could also call on these additional support persons to provide professional development in her school when needed around topics of their expertise. P1 shared that the district support meetings were helpful in providing training for the PDF role. She stated,

The district really tried to equip us with the skills to effectively implement our role. We met monthly and were always made aware of the district goals and initiatives. They provided us with subscriptions to professional journals that they had bought, so I think that contributed to it because it just gave you the opportunity to continue to learn more, and just be well-prepared, and be knowledgeable, and be the first to know, kind of like an expert.

P2 also found the district PDF networks to be helpful. She cites being able to network and discuss a variety of topics as being influential to her work in supporting teachers in her school. She also recalls working closely with other facilitators in her building to identify areas of strength and collaborate to train teachers. She also utilized the

additional facilitators in the building as her mentors to help her learn and grow as a new PDF.

District PLC Support and Resources. The district Office of Teacher PD provided the structure and leadership for PDF meetings. The PD Specialist designed and organized the monthly meetings for PDFs. P2 recalls a protocol used at the meetings called “The Shining Moments Protocol.” It was one of her favorites because it allowed her to experience what other PDFs were doing in their schools and how they were implementing job-embedded PD. She used this to support the PD she designed and delivered to the teachers in her school. She also recalls that the district PD specialist were also instrumental as they would come to her school and support her work, provide resources, or even lead PD for the teachers. P5 recalls being provided a variety of resources and instructional strategies and using them to fill teaching and learning gaps that existed in her school. She stated that she was able to utilize the resources and materials she acquired at the monthly PDF meetings along with her own knowledge and expertise to coach and support teachers. P6 also expressed value in the monthly meetings and in utilizing the expertise of district personnel and specialists who were knowledgeable and able to train her so that she could train her teachers. She shared,

Some of the resources I used were collaborating with other PDF's, because one of the great things about everyone being at different schools was everyone had their own unique needs however we could share well, what are you doing at your school, well maybe that's something I could take back and implement at my school as well and modify it to make it work. We at one point had a math facilitator who had been in the district for a long time and had also worked at Title 1 schools. Title 1 schools, as you know, a lot of time they get more resources, more software, more of everything to support their students as opposed to when you're not at a Title 1 school. So, relying on what she knew about the different software we presented to the PTA, presented to the principal, and was able to get the money because we had the data to support hey, we need this. Then

there were some things from the district that we piloted and that they said "hey, you want to try this?" and if we liked it, they were like okay maybe we'll keep it or maybe the district will use it.

P3 also cited the monthly district meetings as having an impact on her work as a PDF.

She explained a process used by the meeting leaders to submit and document PDF work to an electronic folder.

In those district meetings, I would say, the biggest impact it had for me would be the documentation. The fact that we had to have these folders and upload the document I think it made me more conscious about being able to pull those samples, being able to actually have my PD all in one location. It's kind of like I had a library, that one folder that I could go to and just say, "Hey, this is what I'm doing." Versus prior to that, my organization was probably based on subject or program, so it had everything all in one place. The ability of just being able to have all my documents, my work, my exemplars, everything in one location, would probably be the biggest impact.

P3 also stated that networking with all PDFs expanded her knowledge base and helped her "build her toolbox." She also shared that "the PDF meetings just gave me more exposure to other great things that were happening in the district, and other master facilitators and how they did what they did. Whenever you can learn from the best it always helps."

Environmental Influences

Use of Professional Development Standards. One PDF discussed her prior training and preparation as a staff developer utilizing the National Council of Staff Development Standards (NCSD). She asserts this was critical to her role as a PDF and provided the skills she needed to design and implement professional development effectively in her school. P4 shared her experience in designing and implementing PD in her school,

First I stay abreast of all the local and national research around effective teacher leadership and administrative strategies to affect change. That's the biggest thing. I am part of a lot of national organizations, and I take that learning, and I tweak it to the lens of what the school's needs are. Bumping up that information against the school improvement plans would allow me to create professional environments that were ready for learning. The readiness included things like, I would pull portions of articles that would be an 8-minute read, and then ask reflective questions. Ask questions such as, "Based on this reading today, how could you take what you've learned and put it into your own professional practices? How is it going to change your actions within the next nine days?". I'll come back and look and see, after you tell me what you're going to do. As a PDF I had to also write a framework of professional development for the school. Continuously, as I created and designed it, I had to monitor it and tweak it along the way because it was a livable, breathable document.

She attributes her success as a PDF to her formal training as a staff developer and cites this as one of the major pieces of support missing in the district monthly meetings. She shares that they did not speak to developing her professional development skills in accordance with NSDC standards. She did not benefit from the meetings as she would have liked because they were not in her perception geared towards developing staff development and training skills, but more networking and sharing amongst PDFs. P1 also shared that she participated in the PDF selection process and brought her prior corporate training in adult learning theory and practices to the PDF position. She stated that,

Another external influence would be my experiences working in corporate training and development, and the professional development that I learned there. You know, learning about different frameworks and models used for adult learning, and adult learning practices and theory.

Both participants P1 and P3 perceive knowledge of NCSD standards, professional development and training frameworks, and research-based theories around adult learning critical in being able to provide effective job-embedded PD in schools and see this as an

area for development in district led meetings and PDF trainings. P2 discussed how her connections to social media like LinkedIn, helped her to learn more about leadership models to support professional development delivery. She also worked with TEACH Charlotte for a few years where she explains she learned how to work with adult learners,

I also worked with TEACH Charlotte for a couple of years, and they do a really good job of teaching you how to teach adults, like what are the models behind, and not just the models but what are the things that adults need in order to be successful in order for you to help them grow?

P4 further shared that having experiences that help foster effective adult learning is very influential for PDFs supports utilizing research-based models in providing job-embedded professional development.

Budget and Funding for the PDF Position. Budget and funding of the PDF position was discussed by each PDF. In general, all were aware that the PDF initiative was part of the districts strategic plan under a new Superintendent in 2013. Funding for the position was a collaboration for the Office of Teacher Professional Development and The Technology Department. The district utilized Title II funds to pay for a PDF for each middle school and K-8 school in the district. Each school received funding for the PDF position as a fixed line in their budget and had to interview and select their PDF from the PDF Talent pool created, screened, and selected by leaders of the district initiative. As a result, schools saw a variety of opportunities and ways to use the funds, from hiring internal people, to shifting portions and people within the school, and hiring outside from the pool to fill the additional position. The creation of the PDF position did not affect the district's other initiatives and previously allocated facilitator positions in middle schools and K-8 schools. Some PDF reported that the creation of the PDF role in

schools could result in anywhere from 3 to 5 facilitators in the school, all with different titles and academic specialties. PDFs reported that some principals and administrators were aware of the program and specifications, and others were not. They also reported that some principals supported the program, and others used the position as an additional body in the school.

P7 reported,

my principal requested that I apply to be a professional development facilitator so that the district would pay for my position and so that she could get a media specialist back because she had traded tech facilitator for media. I didn't read the job description and then say, "Ooh, I want to do this." It was more that my principal said, "Hey, will you do it?" Then I was like, "Yeah, sure."

In this school, the principal used the funding for the position as leverage to release other flexible funds and use them for other staff members. P3 shared a similar experience around utilizing the funding in her school, she said, "it was something that I was doing already because of the many roles that I have", and when the funds were given to her school, school it just provided additional funding for her to move into, releasing one of the middle school academic facilitator positions.

Another PDF discussed the impact of having funding for the PDF initiative ended. P5 recalls how direct funding for the PDF initiative ended after the Superintendent left the district. She recalls that funding for the position "is what kept us afloat for three years." She further explained, when the funding ended, "the importance of the role was gone." Once the funding and the initiative was ended by the district, the Office of Teacher PD was restructured, PDFs were told that they would return to teaching positions unless their school or another school wanted to hire them as a PDF through the new school budget. In the case of the PDFs interviewed, 3 out of 7 remained as PDFs in their

school while others returned to teaching. The initial decision to provide job-embedded professional development facilitators in middle and K-8 schools was a strategic decision and now it had been ended and left up to principals to decide if they needed a PDF in their school. P6 recalls that her principal valued her position and said “you know I need you so we’re going to make it happen,” and found a way to exchange positions within the school budget and maintain the PDF role. This was not the case for other facilitators. Since school now had the option to use the funds in a variety of ways, many schools opted not to maintain the PDF position and absorb their current PDF into a classroom teaching position or encouraged them to apply for other facilitator positions across the district. In the case of P1, her school had five facilitators so her principal did not see any reason to retain her, so she left the district and became a PD Specialist for a curriculum company. P7 recalls that,

What I understand, I might be wrong about this, is that they gave the school ... They didn't fund the PDF any longer, but they gave the middle schools another position. They did fund an extra position so they said, “Here, you can use it for PDF, you can keep a PDF if you want, or you can take this position and use it and hire whatever your school needs.” My principal didn't actually lose funding for me, she was able to keep me. It's just she could have gotten rid of me if she didn't think I was of much use.

The funding for the PDF initiative ended abruptly for some PDFs and the funds were provided to schools with more flexibility of use. PDFs reported that lack of knowledge and support may have also influenced principal decisions to maintain or absorb the PDF position in their school.

School Culture. School culture has a large impact on the success of job-embedded PD. Overall, participant responses were grounded in the life of the school, from administration and supervision, to daily activities and events. When the school

culture supported professional learning, as described by P3 and P4, PDFs evidence success in growth of teachers and students. At minimum, PDFs described sustaining an environment of high teacher quality and student achievement. School administrators who invest in research-based PD designs and quality PD practitioners may have a better opportunity to implement job-embedded PD with fidelity and recognize school-wide gains in teaching and learning.

Summary

The findings of this study showed that the district designed PDF Initiative created a professional development model for schools that placed PD practitioners at the heart of teaching and learning, and gave PDFs the ability to work directly with teachers daily. The PDFs were interviewed and selected using a job posting and a selection process designed to create a pool of viable PD practitioners to carry out the work of delivering job-embedded PD for teachers. PDF perceptions provided insight on the similarities and differences between PDF perceptions of their roles before being hired, district desired roles, and perception of their actual roles once placed in schools. The findings revealed the successes and challenges of the initiative as experienced by PDFs, and highlighted the inconsistencies in PDF experiences across schools and district training and support. Findings also revealed the lack of appropriate methods to evaluate each PDFs ability to impact teacher quality and student achievement and the lack of training for PDFs to successfully implement job-embedded PD in schools.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Professional Development Facilitators (PDFs) in delivering job-embedded PD in schools. Based on an analysis of this data and findings as presented in chapter 4, school districts and schools should be adequately informed on how to design and implement teacher professional development that meets federal instructional and funding accountability standards for providing job-embedded PD in schools. Districts and schools should also be better able to align job perceptions with ideal job descriptions, and actual job implementation to insure fidelity of implementation and success of the initiative. Presented in this chapter is a discussion of the findings, conclusions based on the discussion, implications for future practice, recommendations for future research, and a study summary.

DISCUSSION

Throughout the study, the perspectives of PDFs varied, however some common themes and understandings emerged. The variance within PDF perspectives were primarily attributed to support of administration, internal school culture and climate towards providing job-embedded professional development, and actual descriptions of daily roles and responsibilities. PDFs shared similar experiences when referring to district supports and resources and participation in the monthly district meetings. The document analysis and interview data provided insight into the design of the district PDF

Initiative and how implementation of the design impacted the perception and experiences of the PDFs. The data acquired was used to describe the phenomenon experienced from being selected as a PDF through a district selection process and placed in a middle school or K-8 school, where sometimes the program details and specifics may not have been known or understood by the school community. The qualitative analysis provided further insight into the importance of school and district alignment on the implementation of district led initiatives, as well as the importance of PDFs in having a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of their position to maximize their impact on teacher support and quality. The data analysis also provided insight into the use of district funding in leveraging federal accountability standards for providing job-embedded professional development in schools as a viable means of increasing teacher quality and impacting student achievement. Each research question is addressed to ensure the effective representation of study findings within this discussion.

Research Question #1 - What are perceived roles and responsibilities of PD facilitators?

One school district attempted to meet the high accountability standards in federal legislation by placing job-embedded Professional Development Facilitators (PDFs) in middle and K-8 schools. District documents showcased a very detailed attempt to meet professional development expectations to improve teacher quality in schools. They also show limited integration of job-embedded PD models as shown in the research on effective job-embedded PD models (Croft et al., 2010). By limiting the integration of job-embedded models in the district PDF Initiative design, job posting, and selection process, gaps were created in the perceptions of PDFs of their roles and inconsistencies in the actual implementation of job-embedded models in schools between PDFs and school

administration. This lack of understanding between stakeholders on implementing job-embedded PD also contributed to the overall successes and barriers of the PDF Initiative in increasing teacher quality (Guskey, 2003).

Perception vs. Ideal vs. Reality. During the study, several descriptions of activities and duties emerged from the voices of PDFs. The duties ranged from general and broad categories, to specific job-embedded responsibilities, to a host of other duties PDFs carried out each day. These were then compared to the districts PDF Initiative and examined for alignment (Figure 3). The findings show that many PDFs perceived their roles as very general, with vague duties and responsibilities. While they could offer examples and instances when and how they performed these types of duties, the researcher categorized daily activities into general themes, of which many PDFs performed with little involvement from the district or the school administration. The themes as presented in Figure 3 and Table 4, are general, job-embedded, district criteria, and other duties as assigned. The data reveals that PDFs could cite some specific job-embedded roles, responsibilities, and formats such as mentoring, critical friend's groups, case discussion leader, action researcher, instructional coach, and professional learning community (PLC) leader as specific job-embedded duties they performed in schools (See Table 1). These as well as others are directly cited in the research on job-embedded PD as clear formats for providing sustained and effective professional development (Croft, et al., 2012).

Interview data revealed that PDFs spent much of their time performing essential school duties, however, these duties were not directly related to providing job-embedded professional development. PDFs reported facilitating a variety of state mandated test

administrations throughout the school year; in K-8 schools, this also extended to the literacy tests given periodically throughout the school year in grades K-5, thus PDFs were used as testing proctors for large amounts of time as needed.

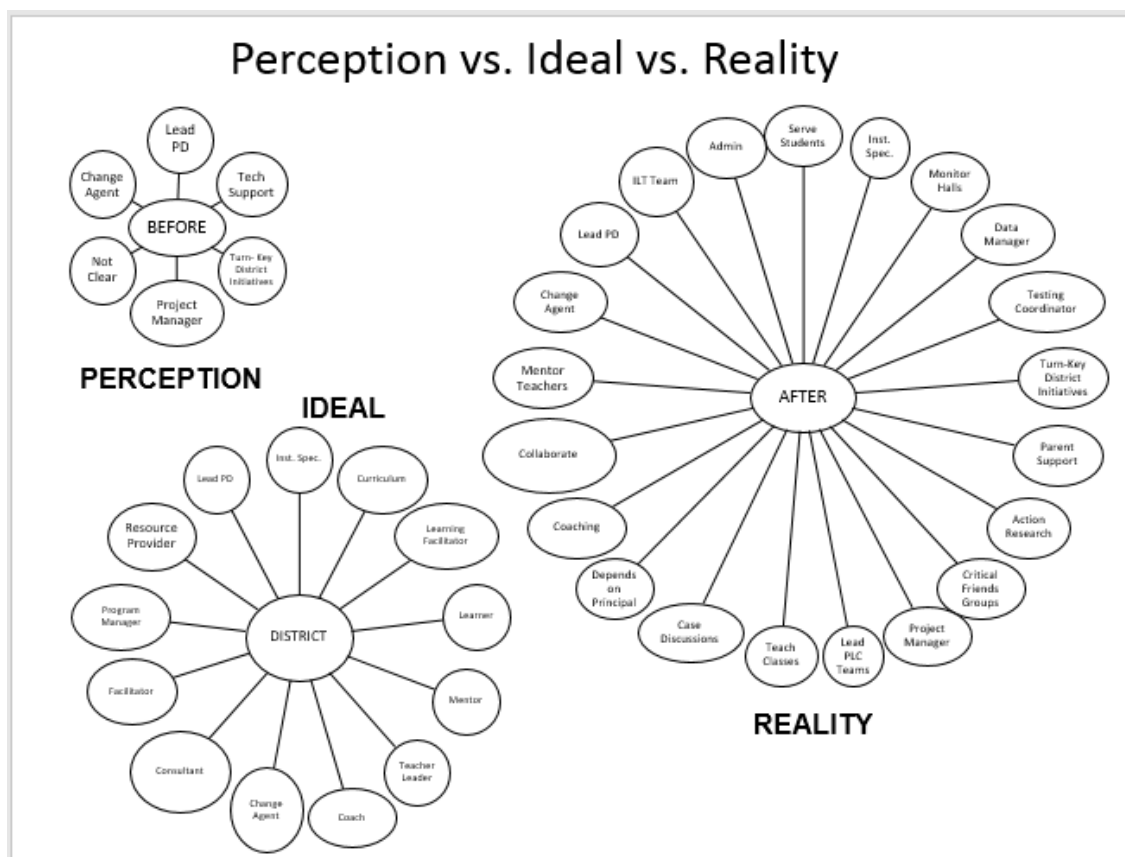


Figure 3: Perception vs. Ideal vs. Reality

Other duties reported included being parent liaisons, providing discipline for students and monitoring hallways throughout the day, covering classes for teachers who were absent, or filling vacancies in schools where there was no teacher. PDFs also reported working directly with students by pulling small teaching groups, monitoring students as they completed classroom assignments, and helping other facilitators in their

schools.

Table 4: Roles and Responsibility Descriptions

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS	PERCEPTIONS OF PDFs		
Job Posting	Job-Embedded	General	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Coach ✓ Mentor • Instructional Specialist • Change Agent • Program Manager • PD Developer Resource Provider Teacher Leader Consultant Curriculum Specialist Learning Facilitator Learner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Instructional Coach ✓ Mentoring ✓ Critical Friends ✓ Case Discussion ✓ PLC Leader ✓ Action Researcher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Specialist • Change Agent • Project Manager • PD Delivery Collaborator Technology Person District Liaison Data Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing Coordinator Parent Support Work with Students Classroom Teacher Teacher Coverage Write Lesson Plans Administrative Support Hall/Discipline Monitor Test Student in Literacy ILT Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Job – Embedded Roles found in both PDF Perceptions and District Ideal Job-Description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Roles found in both PDF Perceptions and District Ideal Job-Descriptions. 		

The role of the PDF was intended to complete such tasks as indicated in district documents, however, the actual application in schools has left gaps in the time PDFs spend engaging in sustained, on-going, and continuous job-embedded models daily (Croft et al., 2010). There is an inconsistent practice and trend amongst the PDFs and in each school, that demonstrates the need to clearly define job-embedded PD for PDFs and principals, as well as monitor the amount of time PDFs are spending each day, month, or school-year performing these tasks. Current educational accountability standards include the notion of job-embedded professional development as the most impactful way to support teachers and increase teacher quality, therefore increasing student learning (Croft, et. al, 2012.)

During the interviews, PDFs were asked to describe their perceptions of the successes and challenges to implementing job-embedded professional development in their schools. The findings indicate that principal knowledge and support served as both a successful influence on the work of PDFs, as well as lack of support and knowledge of principals also being a challenge to implementing job-embedded PD. The summary of findings as shown in Table 5, demonstrate the inability of PDFs to adequately describe and provide evidence of successes in their work leading teachers. The factors that influence the success and challenges of PDFs are reported as a mix of strategies used in their work, and outcomes evidenced from their work as PDFs. The inability of PDFs to clearly articulate factors that influence their work and provide clear tools of measurement, provides insight on the lack of formal evaluation tools and methods that assist PD practitioners in authentic evaluation of their work and impact on teacher quality and student achievement. PDFs did not report or indicate the use of any formal evaluation and assessment methods, leading to self-assessment and mixed responses that do not support accurate insight into clear success and challenges to support program design, development, and fidelity (Efird, 2016).

Table 5: Successes and Challenges of Implementing Job-embedded PD

SUCCESSSES	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Successful Initiatives ▪ Technology Support in Schools ▪ Improved Quality of PD Offered ▪ Work Directly with Teacher ▪ Aligned Practices Across the District ▪ Support from School Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited Principal Support ▪ Roles Not Aligned (School-District-JEPD) ▪ Roles Not Clear to all Stakeholders ▪ Too Many Support Staff in One School ▪ Limited or No Teacher Buy-in for PDF Lead Initiatives ▪ Limited Authority to Influence Change

Research Question #2 - What are perceptions of PD facilitators on their ability to impact teacher quality and student achievement in their school?

Given the strong link between job-embedded professional development activities, teacher improvement, and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Croft et al., 2012) it is important to monitor and assess the work of PDFs in schools. The ability to determine if a staff development session was successful, or if a PDF had an impact on teacher growth and ultimately student growth is a very difficult task (Barnard, 2004). Study findings show that all PDFs self-reported a positive impact on increasing teacher quality as well as impacting student achievement. PDFs based conclusions on classroom walkthroughs, relationships with teachers, examination of student data, and teacher feedback. No PDF reported the use of a district or school based evaluation or measuring tools for assessing the impact of PDFs on teacher quality and growth. The findings did however include admission of PDFs on negative internal and external influences that affected their perceived ability to provide job-embedded PD. These influences included the longevity of the PDF Initiative in providing teachers access to job-embedded PD activities, lack of preparation of PDFs to deliver school-based PD, and the large amount of district instructional programs and goals required by PDFs to turn-key to teachers in short periods of time.

The findings also show that PDFs perceived themselves as having a positive impact on student achievement. The conclusions of all PDFs were self-assessed and based on the examination of student growth data, sometimes in schools where there was evidence of growth by the end of the school year, and sometimes in schools that were

already deemed high performing and maintained achievement levels each year. The findings also revealed that PDFs used direct teaching and student contact through intervention groups and classroom support as methods for evaluating their impact on student achievement. While there is limited research that clearly links evidence of teacher growth and quality with increases in student achievement, most of the current research is descriptive and only very few studies provide empirically determined support for positive increases in student achievement based on teacher professional development (Croft, et al., 2012). In one such study conducted by Darling-Hammond (2000), it was revealed that mathematics teachers engaging and participating in sustained professional development programs had higher levels of student achievement.

PDFs also viewed inconsistent coaching follow-up with teachers, having multiple instructional support staff working with the same teachers and students, and fulfilling roles and responsibilities not directly tied to professional development models that impact teaching, all as barriers to their work in schools. Findings also suggested that PDFs did not utilize any district or school-based evaluation and measuring tools specifically designed to assess the impact of PDFs on student achievement. In a world of increasing educational bureaucracy and accountability, it is important that districts and school invest funds in teacher development, as a method of addressing the learning gaps created by low quality teaching. Building teacher quality leads to student achievement and insuring all teachers have access to on-the job training in schools will provide access to job-embedded PD opportunities that support well-trained teachers with the skills and strategies needed to ensure that all students learn (Darling-Hammond, 1996).

Research Question #3 - What types of school-based internal, external, and environmental factors influence job-embedded professional learning opportunities in schools?

Each PDF offered additional insight into the various external, external, and environmental factors that influenced their work as PDFs in schools. Within the schools, they identified lack of time to plan PD sessions, lack of a voice in the decision-making and interpretation of their role, and lack of direct face-to-face coaching time with teachers, all as influences to their roles within the school. Most participants also, strongly identified the most influential internal characteristic that impacted their role, as the lack of knowledge of the PDF initiative by principals or school staff. They viewed this as a major negative influence on their ability to provide job-embedded PD because understanding their role directly impacted building relationships with teachers, prioritizing daily duties, and securing teacher buy-in of new programs and initiatives. In a qualitative analysis conducted by Efird (2015) on the impact of PDFs, results “heightened the importance of administrators’ support for PDFs and the need for clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the PDF position so that PDFs could maximize their impact on classroom instruction. (p.81).” The interview data also shows that internal influences were mainly areas of challenge for successfully implementing job-embedded PD, however they did not negatively affect the perceptions of all participants that they were successful in implementing job-embedded PD in their school.

Participants collectively described two main external influences as having a positive influence on their work as PDFs. The data revealed that PDFs perceived district meetings and networking opportunities as most helpful in exposing them to creative ideas and best practices regarding the delivery of Job-embedded PD, and district resources and

training led by PD Specialist most helpful in building their repertoire of knowledge and tools. The finding also revealed that PDFs viewed two district influences as negatively impacting their ability to provide job-embedded PD. They collectively shared that limited knowledge of how to implement PD sessions, or limited access to National Standards for Professional Development hindered their ability to increase their learning as PD practitioners, and limited their ability to plan and execute successful activities that engaged adult learners through instructional coaching and other job-embedded PD models. Overall, PDFs viewed district led support and the professional learning community network as helpful, collaborative, and resourceful.

Lastly, findings show that PDFs also viewed school budget and funding as having a significant impact on their work in schools. The PDF initiative was a value-added district program created within the scope of the Strategic Plan. It addressed the need to improve teacher quality based on accountability standards. The model funded a PDF position in every middle school and K-8 school, however, findings show that lack of principal knowledge and investment in the initiative created a disparity in how PDFs were selected and utilized in schools. Findings revealed that some principals successfully leveraged the funding to hire high performing PDFs as instructional leaders to increase teacher quality and impact student achievement, while other principals, used the additional funds to maintain pre-defined roles in the schools and obtain others in accord with school visions and goals. The study findings show a variety of program implementations in schools, influenced by school application of funding. Also, after three years, the mandated program funding was stopped and schools were given the funding as flexible spending funds and could opt to maintain or withdraw from using the

funds for a PDF position. Study results show four of the seven participants are no longer PDFs. They attribute cancellation of funding as the primary reason. They are now either no longer in the district to pursue other PD practitioner roles, or currently back in the classroom as teachers.

It is important to note, that the district provides funds for additional instructional support staff in schools. The findings also suggest that each PDF worked with other facilitators in their buildings, and this may have impacted some principals' decisions to no longer maintain the PDF role in the school or use the funds in alternative ways to support school goals. Darling- Hammond (1996) states, "Betting on teaching as a key strategy for reform means investing in stronger preparation and professional development (p.5)." Principals set a critical role in the decision-making and application of innovative instructional support services that contribute to increases in student achievement (Efird, 2015). They must work in concert with district leaders to ensure that district funding being overseen by school principals is being utilized to impact teacher learning effectively and adequately providing job-embedded PD models that work (Croft, et al., 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

Current legislative reform focuses on new requirements and the desired results. These accountability measures gives states and local districts the power to design how they will meet these requirements, but leaves room for interpretation and creativity in searching for new methods that support modern educational dynamics and environments in which schools and districts may not have previously engaged. School districts must determine the best use of staff development practitioners and funding resources to

demonstrate compliance with federal funding and accountability standards. Once professional learning programs are studied and the phenomenon revealed, we can better understand, dissect, inform, and even replicate effective job-embedded professional development models that work (Barnard, 2004). When a school district invests a substantial amount of funding, time, and resources on an initiative to meet these standards, it is important that they evaluate and assess the fidelity of its implementation, and the ability of the program design to meet the goals as desired.

Closing the gaps between perception, ideal, and reality. There is a clear disparity in the perceived understanding of PDF roles and responsibilities as job-embedded professional development practitioners in schools. Many duties defined were described as general teacher leadership skills and knowledge, or other duties crucial to the school, but not essential to directly supporting teacher growth. PDFs did describe performing duties aligned with some job-embedded models, such as mentoring, leading professional learning communities (PLCs), and being instructional coaches. The chart in Table 4 reveals that while there is some overlap in PDF roles and responsibilities as seen in their perceptions, job-embedded PD models, and the districts job posting, there is more inconsistent alignment when examining the perceptions of the actual daily duties of PDFs. There is inconsistent alignment between the three views, PDFs perception of the job, the PDF role as intended by the district posting (ideal), and the reality of the PDF role as applied in the school.

The district job description posted did not match PDFs perception of the role before being hired. Interview data show that some PDFs knew of the job description, and others were recommended by their principals to apply. Two of the participants could

either recall some of the job description criteria or refer to it, and five PDFs were unable to recall the roles as listed in the district posting and admitted they were often unclear of what the role was. All the participants confirmed they participated in the district PDF Talent Pool selection process, however they each differed and cited very vague and general duties they anticipated they would perform. Most revealing was they each perceived that they would be providing professional development, supporting teachers, and representing the district as their primary roles before being hired.

The district job posting partially aligned with the perception of PDFs actual roles in schools. The data findings in Table 4 shows that PDF perceptions of their roles was aligned directly with four of the districts ideal job expectations, change manager, Coach, program manager, and professional developer. PDF perceptions of their roles continued to further reveal and describe more specific and day-to-day duties. The duties identified corresponded to the district's ideal vision for the PDF position, but showed no alignment of ideal duties and actual duties, such as hallway monitoring, facilitating student discipline, being a testing coordinator, providing teacher coverage for absences, writing substitute lessons, and pulling student groups. While the findings show, inconsistent understanding regarding the perceived, ideal, and actual roles and responsibilities of PDFs, it is important to note that the ideal job description provided general categories and titles for the type of work PDFs can do, for example consultant and resource provider. These job description categories may leave interpretation of daily duties open to incorrect application, vague and loose interpretations of the role, and may not be aligned with the intended outcomes and duties as planned. Increased clarification of specific duties may have helped all stakeholders, PDFs, principals, and district PD support personnel to apply

more specific and targeted decision-making in the application and support of the PDF role in schools. The district job description attempts to address this by including a section titled, “Essential Duties: (These duties represent a sample and may vary by position.)” In this section, they list items such as “serves as coach,” and “performs non-evaluative observations”, which PDFs refer to as “walkthroughs,” as essential to the role of PDFs. Other essential duties include “supports differentiation,” and “promotes integration of technology.” These types of descriptions provide a basis for the work of PDFs, however, when written using such broad terminology, practitioners have difficulty specifically defining how PDFs enact this in daily duties. The use of broad language also limits the ability of PDFs and school administrators to design effective models for executing job-embedded PD utilizing one, or all of the categories as intended in the job description. Based on the interview data and document analysis, this also contributed to the inconsistent understanding of the role of PDFs uncovered when attempting to connect PDFs perceptions of their roles, the districts vision and ideal job description, and the perception of PDFs actual responsibilities in schools.

The researcher adds a personal reflection that in each of her three years as a PDF, the researcher taught in a classroom for four months due to math teachers’ vacancies, and the length of time necessary to find a permanent teacher replacement. While this benefitted both the school and the students, it was not a job-embedded PD function, the primary intention of the role, so no teachers were being supported for four months out of the school year, impacting the PDFs’ overall ability to improve teacher growth and quality. To effectively impact teacher quality and growth and ultimately student achievement, it is essential to ensure that administration is creating educational leaders

trained and prepared for the work, and then implementing their duties with fidelity (Efird, 2015). It is hard to imagine schools with a myriad of needs and not using staff as designed during these critical times. It is more important however to see the bigger picture, jobs like the PDF position are designed to impact teaching and learning effectively. When school-based leaders manipulate the defined job duties of strategically designed professional development roles, they increase the gap between ideal and reality, dilute the impact of job-embedded PD on teaching and learning, and ultimately move further away from the intended goal set by accountability measures for teacher professional development and funding (Efird, 2015).

A collaborative design. The findings reveal one district's attempt at leveraging federal mandates, federal funding, and effective professional development to support teacher growth and student achievement, through a bold and strategically designed job-embedded PD initiative. The findings revealed voices from the field, and connected theory to practice and implementation. In order to meet legislative accountability standards for professional development, districts must clearly invest and design a method for delivering effective teacher professional development that includes principals, teachers, and PD practitioners. Study findings showed that the school district invested a considerable amount of funding, strategic design, leadership, and support in implementing the PDF initiative, however, principals, school communities, and teachers may not have been effectively included in the processes to maximize implementation of the PDF initiative in schools.

The district investment and strategic solution to meeting accountability standards and increasing teacher quality and student achievement is not done in isolation. Efird

(2015) suggests that if PDFs are teacher leaders, then “teacher leadership cannot exist in isolation from the prevailing culture of the school; it thrives in an environment that supports collaboration, empowerment, and innovation (p.82).” Different levels of implementation of the PDF Initiative in schools were revealed in this study. Some principals hired PDFs from within the school, but they continued the same roles and functions they conducted before being hired; the change was in name only as an alternative funding source for the school. Other principals minimized the impact of PDFs by assigning them to other roles and critical functions needed by the school, but greatly removed from the work of providing job-embedded coaching to teachers. Although it was a district created and organized initiative, school principals had the authority to hire and supervise PDFs based on the needs of the school. A disconnect, between program design and school-based implantation, was revealed through study results. This disconnect resulted in varying levels of interpretation, understanding, clarity, and meaningful implantation of the PDF position in schools.

Efird (2015) suggests that collaboration among all stakeholders, district leaders, principal, and PDFs would “close the gap between the ideal and the reality of how PDFs are utilized in schools (p.82)” and support the PDF Initiative in maintaining “fidelity and mutual accountability (p.82).” Efird (2015) also suggests that collaboration is essential to large scale district program implementations. It is important that all stakeholders understand and be knowledgeable of program vision, mission, and goals, as well as understand the design, structure, and underpinnings of how all stakeholders will work together to ensure effective program implementation. More importantly, ensuring that principals are knowledgeable, and invested in the PDF Initiative helps them make

effective decisions regarding the roles and responsibilities of PDFs in providing job-embedded PD to maximize program success. This knowledge includes understanding job-embedded PD models and using them as a guide or framework to strategically hire and utilize PDFs. District initiatives designed to impact schools directly, should include school participation and buy-in before implementation. Top down implementation results in lack of communication, buy-in, and understanding of program components, leading to varying degrees of implementation, multiple perspectives on program success, and inconsistent application of professional development methods with high-yield results.

Use of National Standards for PD practitioners. As society changes and school policy evolves, the need for educational reform and changes becomes critical.

Developing responsive and appropriate models for professional learning will not only support teacher success and student achievement, but it will also support transformational changes in teaching and learning practices that can be effective, sustainable, and systemic. Learning Forward (2013) formerly known as the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) has published a national standard for engaging in the delivery of professional development. Clearly established standards for the work of PD practitioners should be used as the basis for designing, implementing, and evaluating the delivery of teacher professional development by all districts and schools.

Study findings revealed a disparity in the role of district PLC meetings in supporting the work of PDFs. District led trainings and collaboration of PDFs was cited among all PDFs as being an influence on their work in schools. PDFs revealed a positive level of support and resources from the district in providing turn-key activities in schools for district instructional programs. Other PDFs indicated that district support provided a

great amount of collaboration for PDFs with other practitioners in the field. The findings also indicated a lack of support and resources in training PDFs to be high-quality PD practitioners, and limited resources and access to developing their skill set on teaching and developing adult learners.

The review of district artifacts revealed that the PDF Talent Pool selection criteria ensured that hired and selected applicants met the minimum level of experience needed to deliver professional development. District PD Specialist used the PDF job description as a guide for facilitating district led monthly PDF meetings and supporting the work of the PDFs, however, study findings revealed that PDFs did not see district led meetings as influential in supporting them in developing their skills as professional development practitioners. By utilizing a common framework for the standards of delivering professional development, districts and schools can link practices and implementation to current models and trends in educational PD, as well as begin to measure quality of PD delivery and accountability for all stakeholders.

One PDF specifically, communicated her disappointment with not being able to advance her knowledge of professional development delivery as a PDF in the district led meetings. She viewed the PLC collaboration as an opportunity to learn as a PDF. She also expected to engage in new learning experiences designed to enhance her skill set as a high-quality PD practitioner, a major reason she applied to the role. She also based her ability to provide effective PD on her prior training in adult leaning theory and high-quality staff development using Learning Forward's (2013) standards for professional learning. Being trained as a PD practitioner to use these standards effectively was cited as one of the reasons she was able to be successful in her role as a PDF and maintain high

levels of student achievement in her school. She expected the district PD Specialist and Office of Teacher PD (the program supervisors) to provide support that enhanced her role as a PDF and continue to build and develop her skills as a PD practitioner.

It is critical that support for job-embedded professional development practitioners include training, support, and resources aligned with national standards for the effective delivery of professional development. District and school support for PD practitioners should include a clear understanding and alignment of how to train PD practitioners to implement their job effectively and grow as school leaders.

It is important to note that the findings also revealed that the district did commit to a professional educator subscription to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASCD) for all PDFs, indicating an initial interest in utilizing national publications and bodies of work to support PDF growth. Districts could continue to capitalize on this by utilizing Learning Forward (2013) Standards of Professional Learning to enhance, support, and facilitate new learning for PDFs responsible for increasing teacher quality and in turn student achievement. If we accept that job-embedded PD can be implemented using different models in schools, then district and school support for PD practitioners in learning and utilizing a framework for delivering effective PD can be useful in growing and supporting advanced PD delivery and high-quality PD implementation regardless of the job-embedded models applied in schools.

Invest in Job-embedded PD Models. The disparity between perceived roles, ideal roles, and reality was caused by language of general descriptions and broad titles versus specific and targeted essential duties clearly identifying the daily expectations of PDFs. JEPD activities and programs are shown to create sustainable professional development

activities that promote collaboration, mentorship, and an increase in knowledge, transfer, and retention (Croft et al., 2010). The use of these models as a method for implementing job-embedded professional development in schools would serve as a more viable way of defining the roles and responsibilities of PDFs as well as communicating to all stakeholders the expectation and outcomes of the role. JEPD activities provided PD practitioners with real-time activities that they can facilitate that impact teacher growth and quality.

The district job posting states, “The school-based Professional Development Facilitator (PDF) is a teacher leader who helps foster the development and growth of professional learning communities and facilitates job-embedded professional learning with colleagues.” In this study, both, PDF perceptions of their roles and the district job description, utilized more teacher leader standards and skills in the expectation and application of the position. When we consider the expectation of federal educational funding and accountability to increase the responsibility of districts and schools in providing job-embedded PD for teachers, it seems logical then to use job-embedded characteristics and activities a primary basis for the work of PD practitioners in schools.

Showers (1984) advised that when job-embedded professional development models are implemented in schools, and when they provide authentic, engaging professional learning opportunities followed by coaching, they will seek to ensure student growth. If districts and schools use job-embedded PD models such as mentoring, leading PLCs, leading case discussions, PD delivery, action research teams, and facilitating Critical Friends Groups, as a viable method of defining the roles and responsibilities of PD practitioners, professional development initiatives would yield increased results in

fidelity and accountability. They would also be better able to monitor and evaluate PDF implementation and outcomes, as well as teacher growth and change. Also, districts and schools can benefit from targeting and leveraging the job-embedded PD model of Instructional Coaching to yield additional increases in teacher growth and quality. Described as an important component of professional development, incorporating coaching as the primary role for PD practitioners would further support successful implementation of job-embedded by directly tying skilled coaching to impacting teacher change. Learning Forward (2013) asserts that coaching is viable connection of the research between professional development and teacher capacity; where the purpose is to increase student productivity. Instructional Coaching is an essential job-embedded PD model and implementing a viable coaching model for PD practitioners would yield positive outcomes for districts and schools.

Effective Program Evaluation Methods. While study findings revealed different levels of program implementation for all PDFs, it also revealed that 100% of participants perceived themselves as successfully implementing job-embedded PD in their roles as PDFs. Findings also revealed 100% of participants perceived themselves as successfully impacting teacher quality and growth, as well as successfully impacting student achievement. The conclusions of this study are based on PDF perceptions of their roles and responsibilities, successes with teachers and students, as well as other internal and external influences on their work in schools. PDFs self-proclaimed that by meeting the districts selection criteria and by being selected into the PDF Talent Pool, they were qualified to deliver job-embedded PD and therefore were successful in their schools.

The self-assessments were primary based on building relationships with teachers,

providing or delivering instructional support to teachers, delivering varying levels of professional development in a myriad of forms, and ultimately completing the tasks assigned to them as PDFs by their principals. Study findings also revealed that even though PDFs perceived themselves as well –prepared for the job and as completing job-embedded tasks, they were very aware of barriers to their work, and job responsibilities that had limited positive outcomes on their expected work as PDFs. Efirid (2015) suggests that establishing and communicating frameworks and service models for PDFs will contribute to being able to provide clarity and transparency for the work of PDFs, which will also allow for effective program evaluation.

It was not surprising that PDFs self-reported that they believed they impacted teaching and learning in their schools. They deemed themselves highly-qualified after being selected into the PDF Talent Pool, and because they delivered an interactive professional development session to the PDF Talent Pool committee as a criterion for selection. PDFs also perceived themselves as participating in a variety of school and district sponsored initiatives and being “there” for teachers every day to support instruction. PDFs used school achievement as a basis for self-reporting impacts on teaching and learning, as well as teacher feedback. These are all positive notions of success, and indicators that we may be on the right track, however it is critical to have a clear, research-based method for adequate program evaluation to accurately measure the work of PDFs. Guskey (2002) suggests that, “by including systematic information gathering and analysis as a central component of all professional development activities, we can enhance the success of professional development efforts everywhere (p.51).”

For districts and schools to replicate and maximize the investment in teacher PD,

it is critical that job descriptions and expectations are aligned with professional standards for PD and a targeted and appropriate tool for evaluating and assessing program implementation. Program evaluation and assessment should be implemented timely and throughout the life of the program. As interview data revealed, this study was conducted four years after the inception of the PDF Initiative. In that time, many PDFs had already left the district, many had changed positions, and others struggled to remember their experiences which may have occurred anywhere from 2 to 4 years before the conclusion of the study. Professional development designs should be followed up by effective evaluation systems so that program successes are replicated and program barriers can be addressed timely to support fidelity of the implementation and maximize return on the investment. Currently, a gap exists in the availability of a standards-based evaluation instrument for measuring the work of PD practitioners.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher suggests the following implications for future practice:

- Districts should establish a clear framework for roles and responsibilities for PDFs and communicate them to all stakeholders. By utilizing job-embedded PD models and NSDC standards as cited in the research, districts and schools can design targeted and cohesive professional development activities that support both district and school goals. Study findings indicated that all stakeholders were not fully aware of PDF roles and responsibilities and therefore school-based implementation was inconsistent, program evaluation minimized, and PDF roles often under-utilized. Also, by tailoring PD designs to job-embedded PD models,

- districts and schools will actively demonstrate investment in effective teacher PD practices.
- Districts and schools must support PDF growth and learning by providing targeted and tailored support for PD practitioners that supports delivery of job-embedded PD models, development of new and sustained learning for adult learners. In-service opportunities and PLC teams for PD practitioners should increase the capacity and quality of PDFs to deliver job-embedded PD and meet national standards. Learning Forward (2013) suggests that professional development focused on improving student achievement must incorporate knowledge of adult learning and development practices.
 - Districts, principals, and PDFs should engage in on-going collaboration, planning, and training to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate high-quality professional development programs for teachers. When districts invest funding in schools to meet accountability and achievement standards, school personnel and stakeholders should be actively and continuously included in the process to ensure alignment, cohesive application, mutual return on investment, and fidelity of implementation. Top-down implementation can lead to low buy-in, lack of fidelity, and inconsistent or unsuccessful program implementation.
 - The district and schools should create and monitor program evaluation instruments that inform districts and schools on best practices and areas of need in supporting teaching and learning. This study was conducted four years after the initial implementation of the program. Districts and schools should utilize clear evaluation protocols and action research activities to assess professional

development delivery and program implementation in a timely and on-going manner to build on successes, address areas of improvement, inform decision-making, ensure ability to meet federal accountability standards for teacher PD, and maximize use of funds and investment. PDF voices and all voices from the field should be critical in connecting perception to the ideal, and both to the reality of implementation of roles and responsibilities in the workplace to ensure fidelity of intended outcomes.

- PDFs need a model for collecting and sharing the work they do in schools. PDFs self-reported successful impact of their work in schools on teachers and students. A clear model for collecting, analyzing, and evaluating data related to the impact of PDFs should be created and utilized. Professional learning frameworks should connect the evaluation of PDF outcomes in schools to current standards for the delivery of effective professional development.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher suggests the following recommendations for future research:

- Replicate this study to examine the perspectives of other instructional support staff responsible for providing teacher PD and support. The study revealed that PDFs were not the only instructional support staff in the school and that often these roles overlapped. Future studies can be conducted to determine the impact of having multiple school-based support staff in one school, and examines the effects on teacher quality with multiple PD practitioners in a school serving the same teachers.
- Conduct a quantitative study that examines the effect of PDFs in a school, based on

teacher growth data. One way to measure the effects of job-embedded PD is to examine the correlation of PD provided to teachers and teacher annual growth data. Some districts utilize a formal system to track teacher growth, results can be studied to examine links to teacher professional development.

- Replicate the study to examine the perceptions of principals on the impact of PDFs in schools. PDF perceived principals as essential to influencing and determining roles and responsibilities of PDFs in schools. They also viewed principals as tantamount to influencing program alignment or mis-alignment based on their knowledge of the initiative. By studying the voices of principals, we can uncover their views on the impact and performance of PDFs.
- Explore the effect of specific content expertise on the experiences of PDFs and achievement in specific content areas. The criteria for PDFs indicated that applicants should have middle school certification, however, but was open to all content areas. Examining how content expertise impacts the work of PDFs and implementation of job-embedded PD may provide further insight on PD designs that foster increases in teacher quality.
- Explore the evaluation system for PDFs within the initiative and examine how district expectations and school implementation impact PDF evaluations and assessment of their ability to implement job-embedded PD effectively in schools. By assessing and evaluating PDFs effectively, districts and school can better prepare to train and support PD practitioners to delivery effective job-embedded PD, while ensuring job-embedded PD models are being implemented with fidelity to reach intended outcomes.

SUMMARY

Desimone (2009) asserts that professional development is one of the keys to improving the quality of school districts, schools, and teachers. When teachers receive PD that is real-time, connected to their classroom practices, and followed by coaching, they are more likely to implement the new learning into their classrooms and increase student achievement. Schools and districts which invest in incorporating JEPD activities and strategies, and utilize school-based professional development facilitators in roles and responsibilities that support JEPD, will experience overall success and achievement. This type of investments in teachers, students, and accountability expectations as measured by current federal legislation standards, current staff development standards, and insights from professional development practitioners, ultimately yield high levels of return on investments.

Based on the findings of this study, the PDF initiative was shown to be a creative and innovative way to address the legislative call to action for increased support and on-the-job training for teachers, however it lacked cohesiveness among stakeholders to ensure program effectiveness and fidelity of implementation. As in most top-down initiatives, many critical understandings of the initiative become lost in translation. PDFs were unable to reconcile their understandings of the role and responsibilities before being hired, to the expectations of the district and the actual daily assignments of the school principal. As a result, PDFs self-reported successful impact of their work on increasing teacher quality and ultimately student achievement, using limited and inconclusive methods of evaluation and no concrete evidence.

For districts and schools to support effective job-embedded PD for teacher

growth, the roles and responsibilities of the practitioners must be defined and outlined, and training on how to implement high-quality job-embedded PD in schools conducted. Program evaluation protocols should be administered timely to address inconsistencies and program mis-alignments immediately to ensure effective implementation and on-going program success. Utilizing the research on job-embedded PD models would provide school and districts the opportunity to design and implement job-embedded PD activities in their schools that can yield increased gains in teacher quality and growth as well as impact student achievement goals.

Districts and schools that are willing to invest the funds and time, and utilize modern designs and approaches to job-embedded professional development can better address the needs of a changing society and ongoing challenges facing educational reform. Districts and schools that maintain this priority will also be better able to meet the needs of teachers and provide opportunities for learning and growth that are effective, sustainable, and replicable.

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APPENDIX A: STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



[Home](#) / [standards-for-professional-learning](#)

Standards for Professional Learning

Standards for Professional Learning outline the characteristics of professional learning that leads to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results. Learning Forward is the only association focused solely on the most critical lever in improving schools - building the knowledge and skills of educators. Through the Standards for Professional Learning, Learning Forward leads the field in understanding what links professional learning to improved student achievement. We assist classroom, school, and system leaders in solving their toughest problems of practice. Learning Forward members experience practical learning opportunities, receive timely publications, and connect to like-minded educators from around the world. [Join us today!](#)



Learning Communities

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.



Leadership

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.



Resources

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.



Data

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.



Learning Designs

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.



Implementation

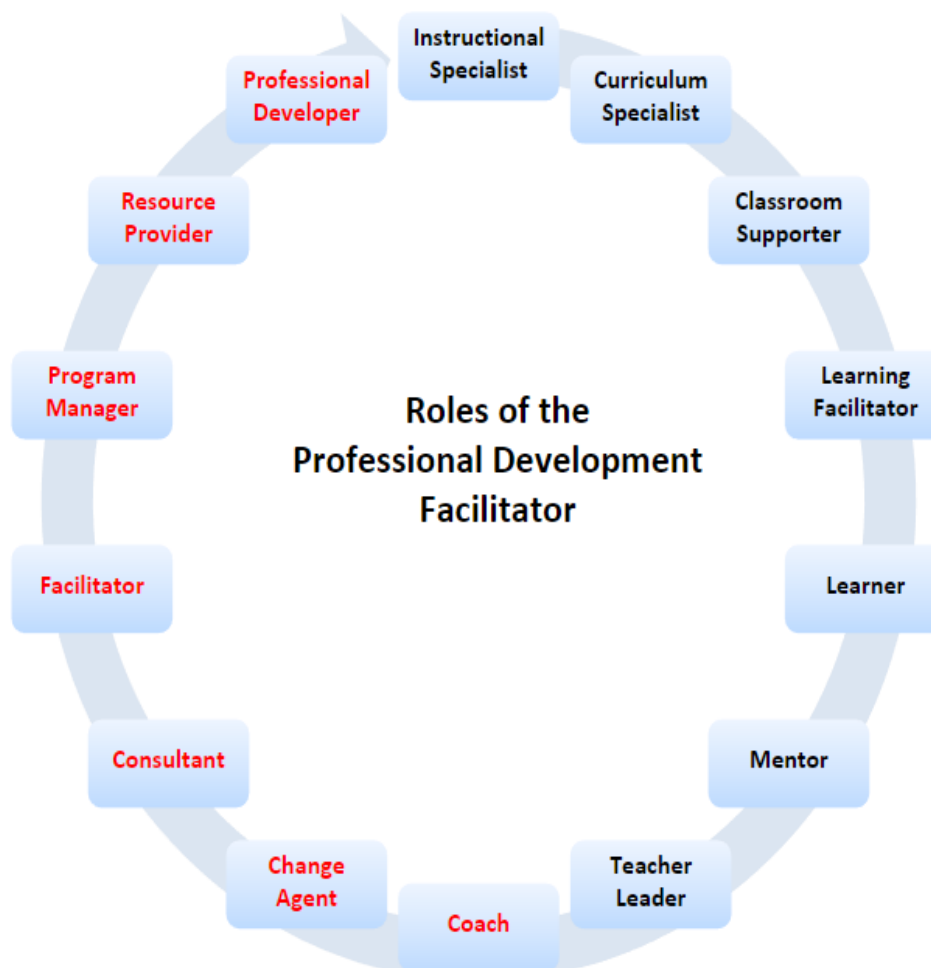
Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.



Outcomes

Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

APPENDIX B: DISTRICT TEACHER LEADER CHARACTERISTICS/PDF ROLES



Adapted from Cindy Harrison & Joellen Killian, 2007

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol for Professional Development Facilitators

Opening Remarks, Consent, and Handout

Thank you for your voluntary participation and willingness to engage in this interview. This interview is anonymous and confidential. I will be using pseudonyms in this study to represent your voice. No information will be shared with anyone without your permission. I will provide you with a copy of the transcript before I analyze it so you may amend any information you find to be inaccurate or in need of clarification. All information will remain with me, the researcher in a password protected file and folder not affiliated with your school or district. This interview will last approximately 45 minutes. You may choose to stop or end the interview at any time, and you may choose not to respond to any question. I will record the interview digitally so I can accurately capture the rich conversation. I will be the only person who listens to the audiotape and it will be transcribed to help me document your voice. Is this ok with you? Our topic today is about your work as a professional development facilitator implementing job-embedded professional development in your school. I would like to provide a simple list of types and models of job-embedded professional development for your reference during our conversation. I may ask follow up questions and ask you to clarify as we converse if needed.

Warm up questions:

Tell me briefly about yourself as an educator.

Work as a professional development facilitator:

Tell me briefly about how you became a PDF.

Are you currently working as a PDF in a school? If not, how many years did you worked as a PDF? If so, how many years have you worked as a PDF?

In what classification of school have you worked as a PDF, K-8 or middle school?

When you were first hired as a PDF, what did you understand would be your roles and responsibilities?

In reality, what were your roles and responsibilities as a PDF?

Perceptions on being a professional development facilitator:

How do teachers perceive you as a PDF? Students? Administrators?

What kind of resources do you use as a PDF?

What are your greatest successes in your role as a PDF?

What are some of the challenges in your role as PDF?

What models of professional development and teacher support, if any, do you have in your school?

If you could design a model for professional development at your school utilizing PDF's, what would you recommend?

Perceived impact on teacher quality and growth:

Do you think you have an impact on teacher quality and growth as a PDF? How?
 What has been most effective in your role as PDF in impacting teacher quality and growth?

What has been less effective in your role as PDF in impacting teacher quality and growth?

Perceived impact on student achievement:

Do you think you impact student achievement as a PDF? How?

What have been some success to impacting student achievement as a PDF?

What have been some barriers to impacting student achievement as a PDF?

Perceptions on internal, external, and environmental factors:

Tell me about major factors, internal or external, that have a significant impact on your work as a PDF.

How does the school community impact your role as a PDF? Administration? Teachers? School support staff?

What kinds of supports and resources exists for PDFs?

How does/did district/school funding for PDFs impact your role as a PDF?

How does the district office/ PD department impact your role as a PDF?

How does the PDF network impact your role as a PDF in your school?

Suggestions:

What would be an ideal situation to provide job-embedded professional development in schools?

Do you have any additional comments or thoughts regarding your work as a PDF in providing professional development in schools to improve quality teaching?

What suggestions do you have for school administrators in supporting job-embedded PD? Teachers? School districts?

List of job-embedded models (Handout)

- Action Research
- Case Discussions
- Instructional Coaching
- Critical Friends Group
- Data Teams/Assessment Development
- Examining Student Work/Tuning Protocol
- Implementing Individual Professional Growth/Learning Plans
- Lesson Study
- Mentoring
- Portfolios
- Professional Learning Communities
- Study Groups

APPENDIX D: EMAIL TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FACILITATORS

Dear _____,

My name is Kaia Mashariki. I am a former professional development facilitator (PDF) and doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I am pursuing my dissertation topic on the experiences of PDFs in schools. My specific interest is in how the placement of job-embedded professional development facilitators in schools helps to meet federal accountability and funding requirements regarding quality teaching and student achievement.

You are invited to take part in this research study titled ***“Perceptions of Professional Development Facilitators Experiences in Schools”*** because you are or have been a professional development facilitator in the past 5 years. As a current or former PDF, you are in a unique position to provide information about your unique experience in your school and offer insight into the emerging practice of placing job-embedded professional development practitioners in schools to support quality teaching and student achievement. The information you provide will offer invaluable information to guide the design and implementation of professional development for districts and schools worldwide.

This study has been approved by the UNCC Institutional Review Board, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. As a participant, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one audio-recorded interview for approximately 45 minutes outside of work time. Your participation, responses, and audio-recording will be confidential and anonymous. The information obtained will only be used for research purposes. There are no known risks involved with this study and your participation is purely voluntary.

I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of my invitation to participate in this study. If you agree to participate please reply to this email and I will send you the Consent Form that you must review and sign to officially begin.

If you have any additional questions as you consider participating, please email me or call me at XXX.XXX.XXXX.

Sincerely,

Kaia Mashariki
kmashari@uncc.edu

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent for Perceptions of Professional Development Facilitators' Experiences in Schools

This Informed Consent will explain about a research project in which I would appreciate your participation. It is important you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to participate. You are not obligated to participate; your participation is purely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Project Purpose:

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to investigate the roles of professional development facilitators in providing job-embedded professional development in schools, and how they contribute to teacher growth and student achievement. This study is designed to gain insight on how to deliver sustainable and effective professional development for teachers by closely investigating the perceptions of professional development facilitators in their schools. The results of this study may inform district and school reform efforts around funding and accountability. The results may also provide a useful tool for use when designing staff development programs that seek to maintain high quality teachers, meet educational reform standards, and ultimately increase student achievement.

Investigator:

The principal investigator is Kaia Mashariki, a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) in the Educational Leadership department. Dr. Rebecca Shore is the project Chair, and an Associate Professor in the Educational Leadership department.

Eligibility:

You are invited to participate in this study if you are a current or former Professional Development Facilitator (PDF) hired in the targeted district through the Professional Development Facilitator program and accepted into the PDF hiring pool. You must also have worked as a PDF for at least one year, and no more than 5 years.

Overall Description of Participation:

There will be approximately 35 participants in this study. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign and complete a consent form, participate in a one-on-one in-person or phone interview and agree to be audiotaped during the interview. To maintain confidentiality, you will not be named on the tape. A pseudonym will be assigned to each participant in this study prior to transcription. A professional typist will transcribe the tapes. The tapes will be kept in a password protected folder in my home. Each participant will be offered a copy of

the digital audio file as well as a copy of the transcription. You will also be asked to member check your transcription for accuracy. The data associated with your interview will be held in a secure, password protected file for three years.

Length of Participation:

Each participant will be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes. Response time may vary with each participant based upon his or her response.

Risks and Benefits of Participation:

There are no risks from participating in this study as pseudonyms selected by the researcher will be used in the transcription of the interview. You will have an opportunity to review the transcription for accuracy, and no identifiable private information will be associated with participants.

The direct benefits to you as a study participant is that it may deepen your knowledge of best practices of professional development facilitators (PDF) as well as factors that may support or inhibit the success of PDFs. Benefits to other educational institutions would be using the data and results to influence professional development models and programs.

Compensation/Payment/Incentives:

You will be provided a \$10 Visa cash card to reimburse the cost of any travel you may incur because of your participation in the interview process. If you choose to withdraw prior to participating in the interview, you will not be reimbursed for any travel associated with the interview. The gift card will be provided at the end of the study.

Volunteer Statement:

You are a volunteer. The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. If you decide to be in the study, you may stop at any time. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to participate in the study or if you stop once you have started.

Confidentiality Statement:

Any identifiable information collected as part of this study will remain confidential to the extent possible and will only be disclosed with your permission or as required by law. Research records will be kept in a locked file in a password protected computer and folder; I am the only person who will have access to the records. The records may be shared with my committee chair and team, but only through password protected files on the Google drive, and will only be shared with pseudonyms and non-identifiable information.

Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the tape/digital recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the tape/digital recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the tape/digital recording as described above. The information from this study may be published in educational journals or presented at educational meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

Statement of Fair Treatment and Respect:

UNC Charlotte wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the Office of Research Compliance at 704-687-1871 or uncc-irb@uncc.edu if you have questions about how you are treated as a study participant. If you have any questions about the actual project or study, please contact Dr. Rebecca Shore (704-687-8976, rshore6@uncc.edu).

Approval Date:

This form was approved for use on *Month, Day, Year* for use for one year.

Participant Consent:

I have read the information in this consent form. I have had the chance to ask questions about this study, and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the principal investigator of this research study.

I agree to participate in the study and interview. _____yes _____no

I agree to audio recording of the interview. _____yes _____no

Participant Name (PRINT)

DATE

Participant Signature

Investigator Signature

DATE

APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL



OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
 9201 University City Boulevard 319
 Cameron Hall
 Charlotte NC 28223-0001
 (704)-687-1871
 Web site: <http://research.uncc.edu/>
 Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #00000649

To: Kaia Mashariki Educational Leadership

From: IRB

Approval Date: 12/22/2016

Expiration Date of Approval: 12/21/2017

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)

Submission Type: Initial

Expedited Category: 6.Voice/image research recordings,7.Surveys/interviews/focus groups

Study #: 16-0044

Study Title: Perceptions of Job-Embedded Professional Development Facilitators' Experiences in Schools

This submission has been approved by the IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal.

Study Description:

The nature of educational professional development is changing. Through current legislation and increased accountability efforts in K-12 schools, the need to support and maintain high-quality teachers through enhanced professional development and teacher training efforts has increased. As districts and schools seek new and innovative ways to provide professional development opportunities that are real-time and effective, job-embedded professional development has become one of the fastest growing innovations in delivering teacher professional development in a world of accountability and federal mandates.

This study seeks to explore the experiences of job-embedded professional development practitioners in an attempt to gain insight into this new wave of teacher professional development delivery and seeks to understand the dynamics, influences, and characteristics of delivering on-the-job training in schools to educators real-time and at the point of instructional delivery.

Investigator's Responsibilities:

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

Your approved consent forms and other documents are available online at

uncc.myresearchonline.org/irb/index.cfm?event=home_dashboard_irbStudyManagement&irb_id=16-0044. You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented. Data security procedures must follow procedures as approved in the protocol and in accordance with ITS [Guidelines for Data Handling](#) and the [End User Checklist](#).

Any unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others (including adverse events) should be reported to the IRB using IRBIS.

Please be aware that additional approvals may still be required from other relevant authorities or "gatekeepers" (e.g., school principals, facility directors, custodians of records).

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule) and 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), where applicable.

CC: Rebecca Shore, Educational Leadership

APPENDIX G: DISTRICT PDF JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB DESCRIPTION: Facilitator, Professional Development

Summary: The school-based Professional Development Facilitator (PDF) is a teacher leader who helps foster the development and growth of professional learning communities and facilitates job-embedded professional learning with colleagues. This position provides vision and leadership for teacher growth by working in close collaboration with the principal, school leadership, central services, and school based staff. Supports the building of staff capacity to meet the goals outlined in the district's strategic plan and school improvement plans, to inspire 21st century learning tools and methods.

The position assumes a variety of roles in supporting school staff, including, but not limited to:

Change Manager: guides school staff in assessing effectiveness of instructional practices and moves staff to implement necessary systemic changes

Coach: helps teachers transfer learning experiences into practice

Consultant: supports individuals or groups in determining the best course of action to carry out specific tasks and meet specific objectives

Facilitator: designs and implements processes to create productive interactions for teachers to improve practice

Program Manager: manages the implementation of a comprehensive professional development plan within the school

Resource Provider: provides resources to help school staff reach desired goals

Professional Developer: helps school staff acquire new skills and knowledge through custom-designed, job-embedded learning activities

Essential Duties: (These duties represent a sample and may vary by position.)

Engages teachers to develop a culture that fosters professional learning communities and promotes all staff as learners acquiring and building a repertoire of skills to meet the needs of every student

Develops, designs, implements, refines and evaluates professional development for teachers related to: evidence of student learning, data analysis, instructional best practices, collaborative team planning, individual professional growth, reflective practices, effective technology integration

Leads the modification and improvement of teaching methods in a culturally responsive school

Promotes integration of technology in teaching strategies for inspired teaching and learning

Collaborates with professional development professionals to foster growth opportunities for self and colleagues

Conducts professional development sessions for teachers on rigorous content area instruction and technology tools

- Supports differentiation of instruction by demonstrating flexibility and creativity in choosing and modifying learning strategies, tools, and resources in various formats to meet all learners' needs
- Participates in non-evaluative observations for professional growth and collaborates with colleagues to mentor and support professional growth throughout the school
- Serves as a coach to teachers learning new strategies and instructional methods Demonstrates high expectations and models effective strategies for continuous school Performs related duties as assigned.

Education and Experience:

Minimum

Bachelor's degree in educational or a related field

Three years of successful teaching or related school based experience

Desirable

Master's degree

Three years of experience providing increasingly more responsible professional development for teachers including experience leading teachers in professional

development.

Licensing / Certification Requirements: State Secondary Content Area Certification

Knowledge / Skills / Abilities:

Knowledge of effective teaching methods and commitment to continuous learning Knowledge of the teacher evaluation process

Knowledge of Common Core Standards for all subject areas and grade levels within the schools and knowledge of Essential Standards

Knowledge of effective teaching, assessment and best practices for inspired learning Knowledge of the challenges facing large, diverse, urban school districts

Knowledge of professional development techniques and adult learner theory Ability to remain current in teaching methodologies and best practices

Ability to use collaborative skills in diverse groups within the school district to realize district student learning goals

Ability to effectively discern the professional development needs of the school and model strategies needed

A clear sense of integrity and professionalism Ability to work as a team player

Ability to lead projects using time management skills, meeting deadlines, prioritizing projects, planning starting and ending deadlines, and successfully bringing closure to projects

Flexibility to adjust priorities and assume new responsibilities based on school needs. Strong organizational skills and attention to details

Proficient in 21st century technology teaching and learning tools

Physical Requirements: The work is primarily sedentary. It requires the ability to communicate effectively using speech, vision and hearing. The work requires the use of hands for simple grasping and fine manipulations. The work at times requires bending, squatting, reaching, with the ability to lift, carry, push or pull light weights. The work requires activities frequently involving driving automotive equipment.

In compliance with Federal Law, XXXX School District Schools administers all education programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination against any person on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age or disability.

APPENDIX H: PDF TALENT POOL SELECTION CRITERIA

Professional Development Facilitator Talent Pool K-8

Overview of the Professional Development Facilitator Talent Pool (Middle School/K-8)

In order to build a reserve of qualified talent, XXXX District maintains a pool of potential candidates who have demonstrated their qualification for facilitator roles through a screening and selection process.

Professional Development Facilitator Talent Pool - Process

The Talent Pool application process includes two rounds of screening – 1) online application including required documentation and 2) selection activities including a presentation and interview. Please see below for the current process timeline.

Timeline for 2015-16 Middle/Pre-K PD Facilitator Positions

Applications for the Professional Development Facilitator Talent Pool will be accepted two times during the school year according to the below selection windows. **Interested candidates are invited to apply once each school year.**

Click here [TipsandResourcesforApplicants](#) to view Tips and Resources for applicants.

Professional Development Facilitator Talent Pool – Application

Please fill out the entire XXXX District [instructional application](#). Once you get to the “Jobs” tab of the application select the Professional Development Facilitator Talent Pool posting. Once you select the appropriate posting you will be prompted to attach the required documentation (described below). Each component must be attached as a single, separate file.

Qualifications

- Three full years of successful classroom experience or related school experience
- State Middle School Certification
- Knowledge of successful middle school instructional strategies
- Knowledge of professional development techniques
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills required
- Knowledge and use of instructional technology

Required Documentation

Candidates are encouraged to submit documentation that reflects their most recent experience and evidence of their potential as XXXX District facilitators. Each component must be attached as a single, separate file.

1. Résumé
2. Example of a presentation you developed and implemented for teachers and/or school personnel
3. Letter from a principal/supervisor supporting application for the Professional Development Facilitator position
4. Licensure documentation

- Internal (current XXXX District employees) candidates: No documentation required
- External candidates: Upload the following documents in the “Attachments” section of the application
 - a. State license
 - b. Degree-conferred transcript of appropriate program if license is out-of-state

Invitations to participate in the selection process will be extended to applicants with complete applications that pass the screening process.

Professional Development Facilitator Talent Pool – Selection

The selection process includes a presentation and interview. These activities may take place in person or remotely. More information will be provided to you once you reach this stage of the process.

Click [here](#) to begin the application process.

If you require technical assistance with your application please email onlineapplication@district.edu.

For questions about the PD facilitator talent pool please email facilitatortalentpool@district.edu.