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Principal Professional Development and Professional Learning Communities

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Francisco Joel Serrato

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Principal Professional Development and Professional Learning Communities

by

Francisco Joel Serrato

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Eugene Tucker, Co-chair

Professor Wellford Wilms, Co-chair

This paper presents the results of a study that explored the effects of an action research team approach to examine the perceptions of experienced principals on current models of professional development to make recommendations for change. This study also explored the perceptions of principal participants as they worked within professional learning communities to determine what benefits could come from teams of principals working together. Data were collected through the documentation of the action research process, interviews, and written reflections of participants. Findings suggest that current models of professional development for principals are not meeting their needs for personal growth and leadership development. Findings also suggest that principals prefer to participate in professional learning communities where their needs as participants are actively taken into consideration, and in which they work actively to solve problems related to their daily work.

The dissertation of Francisco Joel Serrato is approved.

Mark Kevin Eagan

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University of California, Los Angeles

2015

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Rodolfo and Guadalupe Serrato, who have always supported me and encouraged me to do my best. My parents taught me that there are never excuses to be made, only obstacles to overcome. I also dedicate this dissertation to my siblings, Irene Fink, Norma Serrato, Nancy Mouton, Christopher Serrato, and Michelle Serrato. I could not have asked for a more critical or supportive set of siblings.

Thank you to my family for being my rock, my sanctuary, and my happy place.
I love you all!

This dissertation is also dedicated to principals everywhere who make a difference in the lives of their students. Our work may not always be appreciated, but we can sleep at night knowing that we have done the right things for kids. Thank you for your countless hours of commitment and dedication to the children and communities you serve!!

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my Utah Street family for always encouraging me and reminding me that I had the ability to get this work done. To all my students at Utah Street School who did more to encourage and support me than they will ever know; your smiling faces and positive attitudes kept me going even when I thought there was no more left to give.

I would also like to thank some amazing people in Cohort 20, my Heathers (Chris, Deb, Laura), Dar, Emma, Lynn, Piper, Rachel, and the fabulous Ms. Jessica Camacho for always being there for me and for keeping me focused on the prize. Thanks for being amazing in every single way!!

To my committee, Dr. Tucker, Dr. Wilms, Dr. McDonough, and Dr. Eagan, thank you for your support and encouragement and for challenging me to think deeper about my study. I appreciate the time and support that you have given me. None of this would have been possible without you.

VITA

Francisco J. Serrato

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2005	M.S.	
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Professional Experience

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2005 – 2011	Assistant Principal
	Belvedere Elementary School
	Bridge Street School
	Selma Street School
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Summer 2006	Principal
	Charles Kim Elementary School

2003 – 2005	Mentor Teacher
	Tenth Street Elementary School

1996 – 1998	District Intern Instructor
	Los Angeles Unified School District

1994 – 2003	Teacher and Categorical Programs Coordinator
	Tenth Street Elementary School

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The current notion of the principal as the instructional leader in educational

reform is a shift from the 1980s when a principal's main responsibility was to improve

teacher quality at the school site in order to improve achievement school-wide

(Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Kersten & Israel, 2005; K. D. Peterson, 2004; Ponticell &

Zepeda, 2004). With this shift from a focus on teacher performance and quality to a

focus on student achievement, the role of principals has also shifted significantly as they

are expected to dedicate time and focus on improving instructional programs at the

school site (Camburn, Spillane, & Sebastian, 2010; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003;

Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Ponticell & Zepeda, 2004; Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, &

Anderson, 2010).

When principals dedicate time to the school's instructional programs, it is spent

primarily on teacher preparation and classroom observation. The majority of time a

principal dedicates to the school's instructional program is spent in teacher preparation,

specifically in developing professional development for teachers (J. A. Grissom &

Harrington, 2010a). While a large number of studies have been dedicated to the

importance of teacher professional development, there has been limited research

focused on professional development for principals (2010a). In fact, research conducted

on principal in-service and professional development has focused on the fact that

current models of principal professional development are not meeting the needs of the

principal practitioners (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Spanneut, Tobin, & Ayers, 2012). This

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is mostly attributed to the fact that principals perceive current models of professional development as lacking in consistency, not timely, and not differentiated to meet the issues that practicing principals face at their school sites (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Current models of principal professional development do not often take into consideration the needs of school-based administrators or the manner in which this professional development is delivered (Spanneut et al., 2012). High quality and engaging PD is imperative to the improvement of quality of instruction and leadership within school systems in order to improve efficacy at the school site (J. A. Grissom & Harrington, 2010b; Spanneut et al., 2012). In fact, principal professional development has been criticized for being fragmented and composed of too many programs to be beneficial to practitioners (K. Peterson, 2002). Currently, principals are not actively included in assessing, identifying, or determining their PD needs, however, in order for PD to be meaningful, principals should be active participants in assessing, identifying, and determining their own learning (J. A. Grissom & Harrington, 2010b; Spanneut et al., 2012; Terosky, 2013).

According to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium's Educational Leadership Policy Standards (ISLCC) (National Policy Board for Educational Administrators, 2008), quality professional development for school administrators should address the following in order to promote success for all students:

1. Setting a widely shared vision for learning
2. Developing a school instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth;

3. Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;

4. Collaboration with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interest and needs, and mobilizing community resources;

5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and

6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts (Spanneut et al., 2012).

In addition, the preferred methods of professional development as identified by the elementary school (Grades PK – 6th) principals in the study, in descending order, were Mentoring/Coaching at 84.3%, Workshop at 81.4%, Small Study Groups at 80.0%, and State and/or National Conferences at 62.3%. No matter what the preferences, principals clearly expressed an interest in identifying their own professional needs based on the ISLCC Standards as well as their preferred method for the delivery of this professional development (Spanneut et al., 2012). According to Spanneut, principals provide almost no input in their preferred method of professional development and even less say in identifying their professional development needs.

The professional learning and development of principals should be long-term, meaningful, and should always have at its core; student achievement, practitioner support, opportunities for reflection, and should include the use of peer study groups, journal and portfolio keeping, and support networks (National Staff Development Council, 2000). Ongoing and sustained professional development of principals is essential to developing and supporting experienced principals in order for them to

sustain growth throughout their careers (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007).

Principal learning is a complex process, and most of what principals learn is determined

by the school's needs and occurs while they are in the job (Darling-Hammond &

Orphanos, 2007). As a result, principal PD should include leadership as a learning

construct and should always allow principals to shape and determine their PD needs as

practitioners (J. A. Grissom & Harrington, 2010b; K. Peterson, 2002; Spanneut et al.,

2012).

Piggot-Irvine recommends the use of Principal Professional Learning

Communities (PLCs), which regularly meet in order to focus on the real, daily issues in

order for fellow principals to support one another; to research school leadership

practice; to reflect critically; to engage in regular dialogue with peers who can help

provide guidance and support; to further develop thoughtful interactions; and to reflect

on leadership practice such as teaching and learning (National Staff Development

Council, 2000; Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Spanneut et al., 2012). In reality, however, the

majority of principals' work time is spent in professional isolation and the job is one that

is so great that it is difficult for even the best of principals to survive working alone

(Piggot-Irvine, 2004). The majority of principals in several studies have indicated a

strong desire to work with other principals in collaborative communities such as

coaching and mentoring relationships, direct collaboration with other principals, and

professional networks in order to further their learning (Darling-Hammond, 2010; J. A.

Grissom & Harrington, 2010b; National Staff Development Council, 2000),

Statement of the Problem

The primary role of principals has shifted from an emphasis on managerial to instructional responsibilities. As educational reform measures have been undertaken to improve the academic performance at the school site, so have principal responsibilities shifted. With this shift in responsibilities, principals not only need to be versed in handling instructional demands, but in allocating time to handle managerial tasks expeditiously so they have additional time to focus effectively on serving as the school's instructional leader (Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010; Walker, 2009). However, principals' time is not always heavily directed toward instruction, nor are they active participants in developing their own professional learning that adequately prepares them to handle the increased instructional leadership demands of the position (J. Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Horng et al., 2010; Walker, 2009) . A lack of meaningful and relevant professional development of principals has exacerbated the problem of principal retention, particularly in urban areas, as inadequate preparation, meaningful professional development, and a lack of support for the principal position contribute significantly to the challenge of principal recruitment and retention (Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness, & Duffy, 2007; Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

Professional development is essential to improving principal practices at school sites and to improve principal retention (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). According to the ISLCC's standards, a competent principal must effectively work with all stakeholders in a productive manner that takes students' needs into full consideration in order to promote student achievement and create an instructional program that leads to student

academic gains and staff professional growth (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], 2008). In order for principals to grow professionally and to successfully continue in their roles, they must actively be involved in the development of their own professional development and engaged in a process such as Professional Learning Communities where they can deal with the real issues affecting schools and offer one another the support and guidance that will further develop their leadership skills (Piggot-Irvine, 2004).

Research Questions

This study was aimed at examining principal professional development and preparation to gain an understanding of similarities and differences between what principals feel they need for professional development compared to the professional development they receive from the school district. I also wanted to determine if participating in a principals' Professional Learning Community (PLC) for professional development might address principals' perceived needs for personal growth and support. Additionally, I wanted to gain an understanding of the effects of the principal professional learning communities to identify challenges, if any, encountered throughout the process by principals. My research sought to address the following research questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences between what principals say they need for professional development and the PD they actually receive from their school district?

2. How does participating in a PLC model for principal professional development address principals' perceived needs for their own growth and support?

3. What challenges are experienced when implementing a PLC model for principal professional development?

The Research Site

The study took place in the Estos Diablos Unified School District (EDUSD) that spreads across 720 square miles in Estos Diablos, as well as in all or portions of 31 smaller cities in Southern California. The Estos Diablos Unified School District is one of the largest district in the United States and as a large, extremely diverse, urban public school district, serves approximately 670,000 students in 20 primary school centers, 448 elementary schools, 85 middle school, 94 senior high schools, 56 option schools, 28 magnet schools, 15 multi-level schools and 17 special education school. The district additionally includes 148 magnet centers, 187 public charter schools, 24 community adult schools, 6 regional occupations centers/programs, 5 skills centers, and 102 early education centers.

The Estos Diablos Unified School District is divided into five Educational Institute Command Centers (EICCs); EICC1, EICC2, EICC3, EICC4 and EISIC (Educational Institute Support and Innovation Center). This study will take place within Educational Institute Command Center 4, which consists of approximately 150 K-12 schools, 126 of which are considered elementary schools (K-5 or K-6) or span schools (K-8). When the district reorganized in 2012 from eight local districts to five Educational Institute Command

Service Centers, the number of schools that the former Local District serviced nearly doubled. This proved to be a problem, as no longer could all principals be accommodated at the same professional development sessions. The EICC is divided into ten networks, with ten instructional directors working to develop and implement professional development for principals based on the EICC 4's strategic plan.

The strategic plan for EICC4 is focused around all students being 100% college-prepared and career-ready. In order to get students to be 100% college-prepared and career-ready, principals are expected to work at their individual school sites to promote student proficiency and teacher preparation in the Common Core State Standards, with an emphasis on text complexity for English Language Arts, an emphasis on focus, coherence and access to core for English Leaners in Math, and the development of proficiency for English Leaners. In order to do achieve those goals, principals need to engage in professional development that helps them grow professionally while also meeting their instructional and management development needs.

As a current principal at a K-8 school within EICC4, I have participated in the EICC4 principal professional development for the past four years. I find that though I have found the professional development helpful, it has not sufficiently offered me the level of support necessary to meet all the constraints of the job. I have often turned to a trusted group of colleagues in order to further grow in my capacity as an instructional leader. In doing so, I have developed a self-selected network of support principals to whom I turn whenever I need support, guidance and feedback. As a result, I proposed designing a professional development model with 10– 12 elementary school principals

within EICC4 that could be characterized as a Principal Professional Learning Community (PPLC). We worked as a group to create a self-selected and directed model of professional development for principals that was in addition to the district-selected network-grouping model of professional development offered by the EICC4. The research, undertaken as an action group, would help us to determine whether the district provided model or our self-selected model, was most effectively meeting our professional development needs.

Through my research, I hoped to help form awareness of how school districts can support principals to be effective instructional leaders and perhaps improve principal retention. Particularly important is the role of principal professional development in preparing and supporting principals for the challenges faced on a daily basis as managerial tasks are balanced with the focus on instructional leadership priorities. This awareness is important as the position has a high rate of turnover caused by an increase in work hours resulting from having to complete more managerial tasks rather than instructional leadership tasks (Walker, 2009) and a lack of adequate and appropriate principal preparation (Darling-Hammond et al, 2007). This is significant because in spite of the fact that the principal's primary role is that of instructional leader, the average principal spends less than one third of his/her workweek focused on "curriculum and instructional activities" (Walker, 2009, p. 214).

Design and Methods

My study was undertaken as a qualitative action research model with 11 principal participants. Action research was utilized to conduct my study because the action research cycle lends itself readily to a group of individuals working together to identify a problem and actively participate in bringing about a desired change to their school while participating in the research. Action research stresses the importance of problem solving by working with an organizational team to bring about a desired change to an existing problem (Creswell, 2014). In this particular case, the identified problem was that principals were not actively engaged in developing their own professional development cycles and activities, nor were principals actively developing self-selected Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) around common needs and topics identified by principals.

Additionally, I also investigated the effectiveness of current professional development models for principals, particularly the components that were determined by the practitioners to be most effective. These results were gleaned through qualitative research as the written and spoken narratives of qualitative action research are more likely to provide insightful and provocative answers to the research questions. The research questions were designed to determine the current state of professional development for principals, as well as provide a deeper understanding of the current professional development practice within the Educational Institute Command Center 4 of the Estos Diablitos Unified School District (EDUSD). As a follow up, the results of the

self-selected Principal Professional Learning Communities (PPLCs) were compared to the district's provided PD in order to determine the efficacy of both models of PD.

The primary methods of collecting data were interviews, data review, reflective journals that were maintained during the action research team sessions and participant interviews. The self-selected PLC met twice a month and was an organic model of professional development with topics coming from the participants. The initial meeting focused on analyzing current topics in principal PD in order to have the participants determine those essential to the development and improvement of their instructional and managerial performance at the school site. Ongoing meeting topics were determined by the action research team and are discussed in detail in chapter 4. All participants had fluid roles and responsibilities, with shared responsibilities in leading the group learning. The data gathered from these interviews and reflective journals helped determine whether or not principals perceive that self-selected PLCs are an effective means of developing as a professional and a leader at the school site. In addition, the PLCs focused on developing a model agenda for principal professional development, including the most essential topics determined by the group to engage principals in effective practices of leadership learning and team building. The challenges of participating in self-selected PLCs were also addressed.

Significance of the Study

I hope that these changes in practice, particularly better and more effective professional development for principals, will assist principals in shifting more of their

time to instructional leadership. I hope to inform others about my findings and recommendations by sharing them with the local EICC4 staff members and Central EDUSD staffers in the hope that they will lead to a more effective method of professional development process for principals that includes collaboration, and principal district and school site support to improve principal practice.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Literature Review

As educational reform measures have been undertaken to improve the academic performance at the school site, principal responsibilities have also shifted.   With this shift in responsibilities, principals not only need to be versed in handling the demands of managing the school rather but also in serving as the school's instructional leader (Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Horng et al., 2010; Walker, 2009). Thus, the primary role of principals needs to shift from managerial to instructional (Walker, 2009). Effective principals must work with all stakeholders in order to promote student achievement and create an instructional program that leads to student academic gains and staff professional growth (Spanneut et al., 2012). In order for principals to grow professionally and effectively in their roles, they must actively be involved in the expansion of their own knowledge and engaged in a process of meaningful collaboration such as is achieved through Professional Learning Communities (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Piggot-Irvine, 2004). However, principals do not generally actively participate in developing a personal professional development plan that adequately prepares them to handle the increased demands of the position (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the issues faced by principals as their roles shift from managerial to instructional and the issues related to principal professional development that must be addressed for them to become effective

instructional leaders.   I begin with a brief history of the shift of the role of the principal

from manager to instructional leader.   This history includes the time constraints that

principals work under and describes the need for principals to focus more on

instructional tasks than managerial tasks (Walker, 2009). Next, the review focuses on

qualities of effective principals, emphasizing the direct influence that effective principals

have on school and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2010; J. A. Grissom &

Harrington, 2010a; Horng et al., 2010; Jackson & McDermott, 2012; LaPointe & Davis,

2006; Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008). I then discuss principal professional

development and describe how essential it is to the growth and development of effective

instructional leaders (J. A. Grissom & Harrington, 2010a; Spanneut et al., 2012). Finally,

I explore the research on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and how the

implementation of PLCs can foster professional development amongst principals

(DuFour et al., 2005; Fahey, 2012; Piggot-Irvine, 2004) which allows them to develop as

effective learners and instructional leaders.

Principals as Instructional Leaders

Principals have countless responsibilities at the school site. In recent years, the

principal has been called upon to a far greater degree than in the past to lead schools in

educational reform and school improvement (LaPointe & Davis, 2006). Effective

principals are considered essential to effective schools and held responsible for a

school's success or failure (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb,

2010). Current research indicates that the principal's primary responsibility is that of

instructional leader (Camburn et al., 2010; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Walker, 2009). This notion of the principal as the instructional leader in educational reform is a shift from the 1980s when the principal's main responsibility was to improve teacher quality at the school site in order to improve achievement school-wide (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Kersten & Israel, 2005; K. D. Peterson, 2004; Ponticell & Zepeda, 2004). In fact, the importance of principal leadership, as connected to the overall success of a school, has caused policymakers to place increasingly greater responsibility on principals (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Researchers have described the responsibilities of the principals in many different ways, but their roles are primarily categorized into six broad areas: school management, instructional leadership, personnel, building operations, professional growth, and finances (Camburn et al., 2010; Horng et al., 2010).

Principal Responsibilities

Effective school principals are considered vital in the successful functioning of a school, and an effective principal is thought to be essential for a successful school (Marzano, 2005). Of the many responsibilities principals have at the school site, researchers have determined that serving as the instructional leader is the most important (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Ponticell & Zepeda, 2004; Stronge et al., 2008). Since the most critical role of principals is that of instructional leader, they must spend a considerable amount of time in classrooms observing the teaching and learning process while also balancing other demands,

particularly those related to student safety and parent relationships (Stronge et al.,

2008). In spite of the fact that serving as the school's instructional leader is their

primary responsibility, principals do not spend the majority of their time involved in the

instructional programs at the school site (Camburn et al., 2010; Walker, 2009). In fact,

the average principal spends approximately less than one third of his or her time

focused on curriculum and instructional activities (Horng et al., 2010; Pounder & Merrill,

2001; Walker, 2009).

Time Demands and Allocation of Time

Effective principals directly influence student achievement and should dedicate

time to that responsibility on a daily basis (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Stronge

et al., 2008). The two major ways in which they influence student achievement are

through the support and professional development and growth opportunities provided

to teachers (LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Simkins, 2005). Camburn, Spillane and Sebastian

(2010) conducted research in a midsized urban school district in which they utilized a

web-based self-administered daily log to have principals record their daily activities.

Research findings indicated that principals spent approximately 24% of their time

dealing with student affairs; 19% engaged in activities centered on instructional

leadership; 14% of their time dealing with personnel issues; 8% dealing with building

operations; and 6% engaged in professional growth activities and school finances. In

spite of the fact that the principal's involvement in instructional leadership has the

greatest impact on student achievement, the principals in this study spent less than 20%

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of their time engaged in activities related to instructional leadership (Camburn et al., 2010).

In another study with similar findings, 65 principals were observed, and their actions were recorded every five minutes. The study found that approximately 27% of a principal's daily time was spent on administrative tasks, 21% on organizational management, 15% on dealing with internal relations, 6% was involved in day-to-day instruction and another 6% on instructional programs. The remaining 18% was spent on other activities that include transition, emailing or faxing, interacting with the researcher, personal time, and engaging in self-improvement/professional development (Horng et al., 2010). Both the Horng and Camburn studies, demonstrated that principals spend far less time engaged in instructional leadership (12% total), in spite of the fact that effective school research indicates that successful schools have effective leaders whose main responsibility at the school site is instruction and instructional leadership (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Horng et al., 2010; Walker, 2009).

Additional research by Walker (2009) shed similar light on the matter of the distribution of a principal's time. According to Walker, principals were working an average of ten hours per day and distributed their time between managerial tasks (67%) and instructional issues (29%). However, distribution of principals' allocation of time can be changed as demonstrated in a 2005 study by Shellinger. Principals, in that study, were provided guidance on shifting their tasks from managerial to instructional. After three years of work adopting an alternative study program, the principals involved in

the study spent more than 70% of their time involved in matters pertaining to instruction (Shellinger, 2005).

Measuring the amount of time that principals spend on daily tasks has been conducted primarily by self-assessment surveys and direct observations. These tasks vary greatly on a day-to-day basis, however, the research clearly identifies that a principal's most important role is that of instructional leader and that as the school leader the principal is a key figure in the improvement of school improvement and academic achievement (Camburn et al., 2010; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Walker, 2009). In order for the principal to improve his or her instructional role at the school, he or she must also be actively engaged in his or her own professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2010; National Staff Development Council, 2000).

Effective Schools

Many organizational factors in effective schools contribute to students learning and academic achievement. As early as the late 1970s and continuing through the 1980s, effective schools research was undertaken by prominent researchers such as Ronald Edmonds, Wilbur Brookover and Lawrence Lezotte (Brookover et al., 1982; Edmonds, 1979, 1982; Lezotte, 1991, 2005). These researchers and others who have followed them have conducted studies where low-achieving and high-achieving schools with similar demographics were examined in order to determine what differences there were between them, if any, and what accounted for those differences.

Effective schools research has identified key characteristics and practices called "correlates" that, when implemented in schools, have a significant and positive effect on student achievement and school success (Marzano, 2003; McEwan-Adkins, 2003; Snyder, 2010; Stronge et al., 2008). The primary five correlates were identified as such because of their significant correlation with school success and student achievement, and they became central to school reform (Marzano, 2003). These five correlates include: (a) strong instructional principal leadership; (b) a prevalent and understood instructional focus; (c) a safe and orderly school climate; (d) high expectations for student achievement; and (e) the use of student achievement data to evaluate school and program success (Cotton, 2003).

Principal Leadership

Principal leadership has been identified as one of the most important correlates in effective school research (Edmonds, 1979). Leadership matters (Seashore et al., 2010), and it matters most in schools where the needs are greatest (Jackson & McDermott, 2012). Edmonds asserted that there was a clear difference in the role of the principal in an improving school versus a school in decline. In an improving school, with greater needs, the principal is more likely to be an instructional leader and spend more time focused on evaluating the successful achievement of basic objectives (Edmonds, 1979).

The effect of principal leadership is second only to the effects of teachers and effective classroom instruction in facilitating student learning (Jackson & McDermott,

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2012; LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Stronge et al., 2008). Highly effective principals are key

to sustained school success and high student achievement (Anthes, 2005; Tucker &

Codding, 2002). Strong principals motivate, develop, and lead teachers, all of which

enable teacher success (Ouchi & Segal, 2003). Effective principals establish and put

systems in place that positively influence student achievement, and at the elementary

school level are able to lead concerted efforts to overcome the barriers that impede

student achievement. This is particularly true in urban areas where effective leadership

is essential to overcoming demographic variables such as poverty and language

deficiencies in order to generate positive conditions in which students can achieve

academic benchmarks as well as meet district and statewide proficiency goals (Horwitz

et al., 2009; LaPointe & Davis, 2006; National Staff Development Council, 2000).

Furthermore, principals of effective schools were more likely to place instruction

as their primary concern and are more likely to communicate their views about it

(Cotton, 2003). Principals of effective schools are also more likely to assume

responsibility for instructional programs, make better and more informed instructional

decisions, and emphasize the importance of academic standards (K. D. Peterson &

Peterson, 2005; Stronge et al., 2008).

Principal Professional Development

Successful schools require effective principals to grow and improve. A key factor

in the success of effective principals is that they continue to learn and grow as leaders

and continue to learn about leading as well as their own leadership (Fahey, 2012;

Mitgang & Maerhoff, 2008). Principals, as school leaders, must continue to improve their leadership skills as their leadership is key for increased student academic achievement (National Staff Development Council, 2000). Instructional leadership is essential to effective schools and principals must be actively engaged in the process of assessing, learning about, and developing their own leadership (National Staff Development Council, 2000; Simkins, 2005; Waters & Grubb, 2004).

Professional development for principals is an involved process and should include "insightfully designed structures and value-driven cultural elements" (K. Peterson, 2002, p. 214). The structural elements include mission and vision, curriculum as well curricular and instructional approaches. Cultural elements include rituals, routines, community building, and the preservation of symbols and values (Bolman & Deal, 2008; K. Peterson, 2002). In addition, it should include leadership training and should continue well beyond principal preparation programs. New principals should receive quality mentoring and experienced principals should continue to receive career-long growth opportunities that are aligned with school and district needs as well as focused on student achievement (Mitgang & Maerhoff, 2008; K. Peterson, 2002; Waters & Grubb, 2004).

Effective standards for principals should be adopted by policymakers that address what is essential to the job, such as leadership responsibilities and practices that improve student achievement (Waters & Grubb, 2004). It is the responsibility of those who prepare principals to develop principal professional development that helps them gain a deeper understanding of the exact responsibilities needed to succeed in

their positions (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). The different types of knowledge that principals need to effectively develop are (1) contextual knowledge; (2) experiential knowledge; (3) declarative knowledge and; (4) procedural knowledge (Waters & Grubb, 2004; Waters et al., 2003).

Contextual knowledge focuses on tasks and responsibilities and when to apply the appropriate leadership practice for optimum success. Experiential knowledge entails gaining a deeper understanding of the importance of specific responsibilities. Declarative knowledge is about knowing what leadership responsibilities need to be fulfilled, and the practices used to do so. Procedural knowledge is about knowing how specific leadership responsibilities need to be fulfilled through the use of research-based practices. (Waters & Grubb, 2004; Waters et al., 2003). When principals are provided with professional development which addresses all four types of knowledge, they can apply research based strategies to their practice; and this will, in turn, provide them with necessary support to learn and lead effectively (Waters & Grubb, 2004; Waters et al., 2003).

The primary methods of professional development for principals throughout the United States as self-reported by principals are primarily through traditional methods such as workshops and conferences (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Spanneut et al., 2012). In addition, principals reported participating in networks for principals, research on topics of interest, and visitations to other schools as the methods most used for principal professional development.

Interstate Leadership Licensure Consortium

In 1996 the Interstate Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) developed a set of standards for principal preparation as a result of increased leadership expectations for principals (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], 2008; Knuth & Banks, 2006). The majority of states have since adopted the ISLLC standards for guiding principal preparation programs and, as a result, principal professional development and training have achieved a greater sense of focus (Darling-Hammond, 2010).   The meaningful use of these standards is essential to change in the professional development of principals (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], 2008). The ISLLC standards are indicative of a shift toward a better understanding of the importance of the principalship as well as a guided structure for principal professional development based on educational research (Knuth & Banks, 2006)*.*

The ISLLC Standards directly connect principal leadership with effective schools and link focused learning about leadership with school-based educational outcomes (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010; Spanneut et al., 2012). The Leadership Initiative, a Board Regents of New York leadership improvement effort, identified school leadership as crucial to student achievement and further required school administrators to engage in professional development steeped in the ISLLC standards and geared toward leadership as a skill for administrators (Mills, 2009; Spanneut et al., 2012). This alignment of standards with the work principals do in order to raise student achievement indicates a greater need to implement measurable leadership standards (Spanneut et al., 2012;

Waters & Grubb, 2004). In fact, programs that were considered exemplary in principal

preparation included: working collaboratively with others to build teamwork, a strong

network of peer support, a focus on instructional leadership and alignment with

professional learning standards such as the ISLLC (LaPointe & Davis, 2006). Any

principal preparation program that is going to effectively prepare principals must

include the knowledge base that is delineated in the ISLLC standards and must include

collaboration with peers with a focus on changing school culture (DuFour et al., 2005;

Fullan, 2008; Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

[ISLLC], 2008).

Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities (PLCs) have specific characteristics that

precisely define them so they are not merely viewed as any "loose coupling of

individuals who share a common interest in education" (DuFour, 2010, p. 2). PLCs are

defined to have the following characteristics: (1) a focus on learning; (2) a collaborative

culture with a focus on learning for all; (3) a collective inquiry into best practice and

current reality; (4) action orientation that is defined as learning by doing; (5) a

commitment to continuous improvement; and (6) an orientation towards results

(DuFour, 2004, 2010). PLCs foster collaboration to bring about desired changes to the

organization and build on the strengths of all the participants (DuFour, 2004; DuFour et

al., 2005).

Collaboration is essential to changing school culture and building instructional leadership at schools (Blase, 2004; DuFour, 2010; Kanold, 2012). Culture within an organization refers to the things that the people within the organization agree are true and right with the organization. This culture can be changed through capacity-building and training that embraces professional learning communities (DuFour et al., 2005; Fullan, Hill, & Crévola, 2006). A professional learning community (PLC) facilitates the building of a collaborative infrastructure that redefines and designs a reculturing of schools through processes and protocols that support the organization's shared mission, vision and values (DuFour, 2010; DuFour et al., 2005). Within a PLC, the focus shifts toward learning rather than teaching, working in collaboration with others, and an inner-directed sense of accountability for the results achieved (DuFour, 2004).

School communities are structured around teaching and learning and the organizational tools that go into teaching and learning, therefore, principals must focus their time and energy around instruction (Stronge et al., 2008). If a school's focus is on instruction, principals also need to be active and collaborative participants in learning rather than simply arranging for the learning of others (Stronge et al., 2008). Effective principals further promote collaboration because they are aware that collaborative learning communities build trust, a sense of collective responsibility, and a school wide focus on creating learning environments for student learning and achievement with an emphasis on collegial inquiry (Eleanor Drago-Severson, 2004; Prestine & Nelson, 2005; Stronge et al., 2008). Powerful learning environments are established when principals' leadership skills are combined with the skills required to establish a learning

community (Blase, 2004). PLCs are comprised of collaborative teams dependent on each other to achieve school wide goals that are linked directly to the learning of all (DuFour, 2010).

Principal Professional Learning Communities

There are many reasons that principals leave the principalship. Principals have reported suffering from emotional exhaustion to depersonalization of the profession and professional isolation (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Whitaker, 1995). Principals report that they feel isolated at their school site and do not often have local school support, causing many principals to feel disconnected, overwhelmed, and with a strong desire to leave the profession (Piggot-Irvine, 2004). Given that principals are entrusted with building collaboration at the school site, it is interesting to note that many principals report suffering from isolation (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010; Whitaker, 1995).

Principals are also entrusted with building life-long learning in students and adults, especially in successful schools (Blase, 2004; K. Peterson, 2002; Stronge et al., 2008). As a result, when instructional leadership skills are combined with the skills needed to develop strong learning communities, effective leading and learning environments are created (Blase, 2004). Although the tenets of Professional Learning Communities are most often attributed to teaching communities created at specific school sites, these same tenets of professional communities also contain elements that would benefit principals in the work that they do every day (Blase, 2004; Fahey, 2012; Piggot-Irvine, 2004). Among the most important elements of professional development

as outlined in the ISLLC standards, collaboration is highlighted in order to meet the goals of the organization while also providing a focus for the needs of the individual (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], 2008). Additionally, effective professional development for principals should also include opportunities to work collaboratively with other principals in order to discuss and problem solve with peers (National Staff Development Council, 2000).

Exemplary principal preparation programs utilize cohort groups in order to allow principals and aspiring principals with opportunities to create collaborative peer groups that build on one another's knowledge in order to reflect on and strengthen their leadership skills (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Developing and strengthening principal leadership skills through the use of a PLC is important because principals should have opportunities to reflect on collaborative practice as well as lead their own learning in an intentional manner focused on, and embedded in, the work that principals do every day (Fahey, 2012; National Staff Development Council, 2000; Piggot-Irvine, 2004).   Principal PLCs allow participants to engage in dialogue in a safe forum and in a manner that allows participants to deepen their understanding through meaningful group interactions grounded in trust and honest collaboration (Piggot-Irvine, 2004).

Leadership learning communities of practice provide opportunities for principals to engage in meaningful dialogue with other principals who are facing similar issues and further allow principals to engage in creating their own learning (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The second initiative of the ISLLC which outlines a Collaborative Professional Development Process for School Leaders also designates that principals be guided in

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professional development activities with the understanding that collaboration between school leaders and others is essential in order to allow for personal and professional leadership growth (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], 2008). Principals are expected to work collaboratively with all stakeholders, but there should also exist opportunities for principals to work together in order to build emotional support for one another in a reflective and collaborative professional learning community (Fahey, 2012; Piggot-Irvine, 2004).

Summary and Conclusion

The current role of the principal as the school site's instructional leader is a shift from the principal's previous managerial role. Principals have faced many issues as they have made this adjustment, particularly as related to their professional learning and development.   Principals must now focus more on instructional tasks and less on managerial tasks (Walker, 2009). Meaningful professional development for principals is essential for the growth and development of effective leaders (Darling-Hammond, 2010; J. A. Grissom & Harrington, 2010b; Horng et al., 2010; Jackson & McDermott, 2012; LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Stronge et al., 2008). Research in principal learning has explored the desire of principals to work in collaboration with fellow principals to further their learning and this can be achieved through the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) which can foster professional development amongst principals (DuFour et al., 2005; Fahey, 2012; Piggot-Irvine, 2004).

Using qualitative action research to explore the findings in the literature review will provide principals with opportunities to engage in and dialogue about best practices connected to principal professional development. Working in a PLC will further allow principals to reflect on and make recommendations to existing professional development in order to ensure that their growth and professional development needs are taken into consideration when planning future professional development.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The purpose of my research was to gain an understanding of similarities and differences between what principals felt they need for professional development compared to the professional development they receive from the school district. I also wanted to determine if participating in a principals' Professional Learning Community (PLC) for professional development would address principals' perceived needs for personal growth and support. Additionally, I wanted to gain an understanding of the effects of the principal PLC in order to identify challenges, if any, which were encountered throughout the process as principals worked to develop a model of professional development that might best serve their needs.

I engaged a group of twelve principals in an action research cycle that assessed their level of satisfaction with professional development practices offered by their district as well as created an action plan for improving professional development for the group members. In order for principals to grow professionally and effectively in their roles, they must be actively involved in the development of their professional learning and expansion of their own knowledge and be engaged in a process of meaningful collaboration such as Professional Learning Communities (DuFour et al., 2005; Piggot-Irvine, 2004). However, principals do not generally actively participate in developing a personal professional development plan that they perceive adequately prepares them to handle the increased demands of the position (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). By involving principals in qualitative action research based on a PLC model, I hoped to increase the alignment between what

principals perceived they need for professional development and the PD they actually

receive from the district. The following research questions guided my study.

1. What are the similarities and differences between what principals say they need

   for professional development and the PD they actually receive from their school

   district?

2. How does participating in a PLC for principal professional development address

   principals' perceived needs for their own growth and support?

3. What challenges are experienced when implementing a PLC for principal

   professional development?

Overview of the Research Design

This study employed a qualitative action research design model that allowed

principals to address their professional development needs in the Estos Diablos Unified

School District (EDUSD), specifically the Educational Institute Command Center 4

(EICC4).[1] Through action research, I was able to work with a group of principals

concerned with current professional development opportunities for principals. As an

action research team, we identified the problems addressed in the literature, our current

models of professional development, and our daily work to create a plan of action to

develop a model of principal professional development to address the needs of

experienced principals. The use of action research allowed all participants to share their

beliefs about principal professional development as well as their perceptions of the

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[1] The Educational Institute Command Center 4 is one of five Educational Institute Command
Centers within the Estos Diablos Unified School District (EDUSD).

process, which lent itself not only to the purpose of PLCs, but to the constructivist tradition of learning as well. The constructivist tradition maintains that learners construct knowledge by layering new learning, through interpretation, selection, and organization of newly acquired knowledge onto already existing prior knowledge (Mangin, 2007).

A qualitative action research design allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the concerns that principals had related to the current model of professional development provided for them by the district. It further helped me gain a deeper understanding of their experiences in both the current PD provided by the district and their experiences in the action research model of PD developed by them as part of the Principal Professional Learning Community. As part of an iterative cycle of inquiry and reflection, we not only studied the process of determining the professional development needs of principals, but we also studied the process of collaboration. This collaboration resulted in helping participants solve a problem in the daily work at their school (Merriam, 2009). In addition, the process allowed us to determine perceived changes in practice while involved in the action research process (Creswell, 2014).

This study was best undertaken as qualitative action research because it afforded experienced elementary principals with opportunities for extensive collaboration and dialogue focused around creating a model of professional development to meet their self-identified needs. Additionally, we were able to discuss and understand the strengths and limitations of the current district model of principal professional

development. A qualitative design was also most appropriate because the collaborative cycle that is an inherent component of the PLC model of PD provided many different opportunities to dialogue, create, reflect, revise, and make decisions connected to more effective practices related to the PD process; all of these critical elements were best captured and reported upon using a qualitative action research design (Parsons & Brown, 2002).

Rationale for Selecting the Specific Site

This study was undertaken in the Educational Institute Command Center (EICC4), one of five similar centers located within the Estos Diablos Unified School District (EDUSD). The EDUSD spreads across 720 square miles in the metropolis of Estos Diablos as well as all or portions of 31 smaller cities in Southern California. The Estos Diablos Unified School District is the second largest district in the United States and as a large, extremely diverse, urban public school district, serves approximately 670,000 students. This study took place within EICC4, which consists of approximately 150 K-12 schools, 126 of which are elementary schools (K-5 or K-6) or span schools (K-8).

The strategic plan for EICC4 is focused around all students being 100% college-prepared and career-ready upon graduation. In order to get students to be 100% college-prepared and career-ready, principals are expected to work at their individual school sites to promote student proficiency and teacher preparation in the Common Core State Standards, with an emphasis on text complexity for English Language Arts, an emphasis on focus, coherence and rigor and access to core for English Learners in Math,

and the development of proficiency for English Learners. To achieve those goals,

principals need to be engaged in professional development that supports their

professional growth while also meeting their instructional and management

development needs.

 After the reorganization of the district, there was a clear division between

instructional/academic and operational management. Each EICC now has an

instructional superintendent and an operational director. This change solidified the

perception that the job of the principal is clearly divided into two major components;

instruction and operations. In terms of instruction, EICC4 has always expected that

principals participate and be trained in Professional Learning Communities, Habits of

Mind, Adaptive Schooling, and Cognitive Coaching to meet district expectations for all

learners. As an Educational Instructional Command Center, EICC4 is a representative

sample of the district as a whole and any study undertaken within the EICC4 can

certainly be expanded and applied to the larger district, particularly since EICC4's goals

are directly aligned to the District Superintendent's Strategic Plan and his Performance

Meter.[2]

Rationale for Selecting a Particular Sample

For my study, I selected to work with principals with a minimum of three years

experience because they were beyond the induction phase of their principalship. While

true that novice, as well as experienced principals and administrators, should have

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[2] The Strategic Plan and Performance Meter include 100% graduation for all, proficiency for all, 100% attendance, parent and community engagement, and school safety.

access to high-quality professional development, effective professional development for principals should be differentiated based on need, years of experience, and level of expertise (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Davis et al., 2005). I chose to work with experienced principals with three or more years of experience as they had moved beyond their induction phase and had more experience than new principals who have different needs. In addition, I engaged principals who have worked for at least three years in EICC4, as this commonality ensured that they had all participated in the current models of PD for at least the last three years of their principalship.

The sample size started with twelve principals and fluctuated between eight and twelve principals, depending on the meeting. This sample size allowed for meaningful interaction between participants while still allowing for a broad and varied experience and knowledge base. The sample size also allowed group meetings to be manageable and meaningful, especially for a researcher who was also fully employed as a school site principal. Also, participation was completely voluntary. This was particularly important because it implied that the participants were actively seeking to enhance their knowledge base while learning, collaborating, and participating in meaningful dialogue. This dialogue allowed participants to use their voices and perspectives to articulate their experiences and judgment. All activities involved a group of professionals willing to take the same risks in order to address an organizational problem with the hopes of reaching a practical solution (Merriam, 2009).

Participants were selected from volunteers who agreed to participate after I had explained the study, and they had an opportunity to listen to the scope and sequence of

the research. I walked them through the intent of the study and explained the research questions and the methodology. I then asked willing participants to sign a consent form (Appendix D), which emphasized that their participation was voluntary. Principals who were willing to participate then completed a demographic questionnaire (Appendix A), a PD questionnaire (Appendix B), and an open-ended qualitative survey (Appendix C) as part of the study. Voluntary participation was essential to the process as this group of principals would work and challenge one another to improve their own professional development while working in collaboration with one another in an environment that would ideally foster growth and trust for all involved. Participants were also informed that they were free to leave the study if they felt that their participation was no longer meaningful, or they felt that there was no longer trust within the group. Specific demographics are described in detail in the table on page 37.

In order for our action research team to be able to take risks and participate in open dialogue and discussion, our district superintendent, instructional directors, and district experts were intentionally excluded from this study. The participants were more willing to take risks in active participation with their peers, rather than having to worry about the perceptions of their direct supervisors and evaluators. All the participants in the group were in agreement that this exclusion apply as they felt that they might not be as open and honest if a direct supervisor were present.

Table 3.1: Participant Demographic Data[3]

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Years as Principal	Type of School	Title 1 School	Highest Degree Obtained
Frida	F	Hispanic	4	K-6	Yes	Masters
Edgar	M	Hispanic	4	K-8	Yes	Masters
Diana	F	Hispanic	4	K-6	Yes	Masters
Korola	F	White	6	K-6	Yes	Masters
Urbina	F	Hispanic	6	2-6	Yes	Masters
Paola	F	Hispanic	9	K-5	Yes	Masters
Gonzalo	M	Hispanic	9	K-5	Yes	Masters
Rowena	F	Hispanic	10	K-6	Yes	Masters
Valerie	F	Hispanic	11	K-6	Yes	Masters
Nazar	M	Hispanic	12	K-6	Yes	Masters
Marcia	F	Hispanic	13	K-8	Yes	Masters
Borita	F	Hispanic	15	K-8	Yes	JD

Access

As a principal in EICC4, I had direct access to the site and shared findings from a Spring 2013 action research group that I participated in with eight principals from EICC4 with my former instructional director. My former instructional director is now the director of Common Core for EICC4. I continued to collaborate with her as she worked with her team to coordinate professional development for principals. My new instructional director also supported my ongoing research, and I worked closely with her while providing EICC4's Superintendent with updates on the project as well as the

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[3] Table 3.1 is sorted by years as principal. Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of all participants.

findings. In addition, the Superintendent offered to fully support my study by informing

all principals in the EICC that he not only supported the study, but encouraged

participation because of the benefits that it might bring to the current model of principal

professional development.

In addition to the support of the superintendent and instructional director, I also

sent out an email (Appendix E) and a Google Survey asking participants for their

voluntary participation in this research project. This initial email served to introduce

myself as well as invite possible participants. I included a link to an online qualitative

survey that asked participants their contact information as well as to note whether they

were willing to participate in this action research project. Once I ascertained who was

willing to participate, I followed up with a visit to their school sites. I ensured their

confidentiality by assuring them that all findings would be published under

pseudonyms. I also assured them that they could choose to opt out at any time if they

felt that their confidentiality threatened in any way.

Management of My Role

As a principal within the EICC4 of EDUSD I had direct access to current models of

PD offered by the district, as well as regular interactions with the majority of principals

within the EICC4. I had also forged both personal and professional relationships with

fellow principals and often sought their advice and looked to their professional

judgment when making decisions affecting my school site. I explained to all participants

that I was not only a graduate student researcher but also a principal who understood

the work that they do on a daily basis. I further stressed to the participants that the study was about making improvements to our already busy and intense roles at the school site as district principals. I reminded them that the study was about identifying their perceived professional development needs versus what the district currently provides in order to improve professional development for sitting principals with three or more years of experience.

I stressed to the participants that the study was about taking an active role in developing professional development that would align with, and meet, our needs as learners and active principals at the school site. I further stressed that our role was not to criticize the school district or to complain about current practice. Our goal, rather, was to bring about a desired change to elements that we felt might be lacking in current models of PD. As a PLC and action research group, we would work on creating a desired change to our model of PD. I continually reiterated this sentiment throughout the process, especially if we ever lost sight of the work at hand and reverted to complaining about PD rather than working actively to change it to meet our needs.

Data Collection Methods

This study was a qualitative action research study, and as such, all data collected were substantiated through a qualitative approach. Qualitative action research provided a framework by which the process of creating a model of PD needs was shaped by the participants with our needs in mind. The research questions were answered

through the use of open-ended qualitative surveys, individual and group interviews, the documentation of group meetings, and reflective journals (Appendix Q).

Data were collected through different methods to fully answer the research questions. Once I emailed the preliminary, online, self-administered qualitative survey (Appendix A), which served to identify principals who meet the requirements for participation in the study, I determined who might be interested in participating in the action research group. This qualitative survey was made available to all K – 6th grade principals, approximately 160, within EEIC4 via Google documents. This was around the time of the third principals' meeting, which took place on the second Wednesday of October 2014. For principals not comfortable answering questionnaires or surveys online, all questionnaires and surveys were also made available in a paper-pencil format during principal network meetings. The questionnaire was composed of demographic questions that assisted me in assembling a team of participants willing to collaborate as an action research group to inform professional development and principal professional growth. The initial qualitative survey allowed me to gather baseline data, as well as develop an understanding connected to the perceptions of principals and the professional development they have received as well as the professional development they feel would best meet their needs as principals and learners.

Data were further collected through an open-ended qualitative survey intended to determine the degree to which principals had participated in different professional development activities. These data helped me to determine the similarities and differences between what principals say they needed for professional development and

the PD they received from the school district. By administering this survey, I was able to develop an understanding of the degree to which principals felt that the professional development offered to them as part of EICC4 principal meetings was aligned to their perceived needs of professional development. The questionnaire and survey included some minimal demographic data but focused primarily on the similarities and differences in the models of professional development that principals received as compared to the professional development that they felt they should participate in. These similarities and differences were analyzed in order to determine important themes, desired topics of professional development, and principals' perceptions about the current level of PD they receive from the district.

The process of collecting data continued through individual interviews with the twelve participants who had self-selected to participate in the process. Each interview took between 15 – 20 minutes and these individual interviews took place between February and April 2015. These interviews consisted of open-ended questions regarding the participant's perceptions of district-provided PD as well as questions directly related to their understandings and perceptions of the PLC process and our group meetings. These interviews allowed me to collect baseline data as well as develop an awareness of the group's perception of PD they had received and their understanding of the PLC cycle of collaboration and reflection. These meetings took place at each participating principal's school so that they were at ease and in a setting that allowed him or her to feel comfortable and at ease with the process.

At our first action research group meeting in February 2015, we reviewed the

data that had been collected and began to analyze and construct the themes that

emerged from data analysis. It was our first collaborative action research group

meeting. We will carefully analyzed the data in order to begin to answer the first

research question, which asked about the similarities and differences between what

principals say they actually need and the PD they actually receive from the district. This

was an important part of the action research process as it helped frame the current state

of professional development that principals receive and it was particularly important as

effective PD is essential to the continued growth and development of the effective

instructional leaders (J. A. Grissom & Harrington, 2010b; Spanneut et al., 2012).

At this initial group meeting, the participants engaged in several introductory

activities designed to develop a sense of teamwork and collaboration. We established

norms and engaged in an overview of action research. After establishing the purpose for

our work together, we reviewed the literature on principal professional development in

order to establish a shared baseline understanding of research connected to principal

PD. We then engaged in a lengthy dialogue focused around the preliminary findings of

the qualitative surveys that had been received prior to our meeting. In addition, we

reviewed the process of documenting our perceptions of PD and the action research in

the reflective journal that was introduced (Attachment Q). Each participant was

provided with information regarding the online Google Document journal where they

could post their thoughts on the process after every meeting and/or as often as they felt

inclined.   At this initial meeting, we also established that each of our meetings would

include an agenda setting component in order to prepare for our ongoing learning and action research. It was also established that our PLC would work as an action research team to help identify solutions as well as to determine how these problems can be addressed through specific inquiry groups or models of professional development.

Our second, third, fourth, and fifth action research group meetings focused on reviews of literature connected to PLCs, needs assessments, Adult Learning Theory, and Standards for School Administrators. The participants in the action research team determined these topics based on the work that we were engaged in. All follow-up topics were determined to be important based on the work that had taken place at the previous meetings. We selected these topics in order to gain a better understanding of where we are as a group in our collective understanding of the work that we do as principals as well as the work that we were doing as a PLC. These four meetings allowed us to focus on the second research question that asks how participating in a PLC model for principal professional development address principals' perceived needs for their growth and support. We reviewed the literature and began to reflect individually on where each team member is not only in their understanding of the work of a PLC, but their perceptions of the value of the a PLC for addressing their perceived needs for their growth and support. At the end of our meetings, we defined the parameters of a model principal PLC that we would include in subsequent meetings in order to allow the PLC process to also be part of the action research group structure.

All participants continued to document the process in their reflective journals. The reflective journaling allowed participants to maintain a written reflection of the

process of engaging in a Principal PLC and further allowed them with opportunities to make meaningful connections not only to the process itself, but also to their salient learning. In addition, the reflective journaling allowed participants to remain connected to past learning by layering previous learning and deeper embedding new learning. The reflective journal provided an opportunity for participants to make note of any thoughts that they wanted to maintain confidential and not part of the group interaction. All participants' written reflections were analyzed by me in order to develop a deeper understanding of whether or not participants feel that their involvement and connection to the process was meaningful to their work at the school site. These reflective journals were kept as individual working Google documents to which only the researcher and the participants had access. The participants were asked to write in their reflective journals after every meeting, with the researcher accessing them regularly in order to determine common themes.

The sixth action research group meeting continued to focus on the PLC process with each individual principal being asked to reflect on the previous five action research group meetings with the third research question in mind. The third research question asks about the challenges experienced when implementing a PLC model for principal professional development. As a group, we had already developed parameters for, and held meeting as a PLC, so all participants were able to make connections to the research question. All these data points were analyzed in order to determine what the challenges might be when implementing a PLC so that they can be resolved before this model of a

PLC is presented to the district as a viable model of principal PD that district leaders can both endorse and support.

The development of the self-selected and self-initiated PLC of twelve principals took place in the form of action research focus groups where the participants reflected on their current model of PD, their perceived PD needs, and the necessary components of a model of a professional learning community that would best meet their needs. These action group meetings were also treated as focus groups and PLCs as they involved the analysis of the current model of principal professional development and focused on collaborative group work in order to bring about a change within the organization to meet the needs of the practitioners. The purpose of these group meetings was to create a living history of each principal's interactions with one another and with the process itself in order to develop an understanding of whether the PLC model was meeting their needs. In addition, these meeting notes were analyzed in order to determine the challenges involved in a PLC model of professional development. These meetings were recorded using a Sony IC recorder, model ICD-AX412, as well as my iPhone and iPad and later transcribed and coded for analysis.

In order to best understand and analyze this process, I also conducted individual interviews throughout the process with all participants. These interviews were also recorded using the Sony IC recorder, model ICD-AX412, my iPhone and iPad and were transcribed and coded for analysis. These interviews allowed me to capture thoughts that were not captured in an action group setting and also allowed me an opportunity to ask probing questions to further clarify participants' feelings, something that they may

not have done in their reflective journals.   Although the reflective journals allowed participants to reflect on the process, the interviews allowed me to probe deeper into their thinking as well as to develop a more intimate understating of their thoughts throughout the process.   Through the interview process, I hoped to develop a deeper insight into the feelings and involvement of the participants.

Data Analysis

I analyzed all data as described above through a coding process that focused on establishing broad themes in order to make meaningful connection between the research questions, the responses and the methods. In addition to the themes that arose through analysis, I also had in mind certain themes that I pre-determined in advance based on themes found in the body of literature and research. Each group meeting, as well as individual interviews and reflective journals, were transcribed and coded for establishing, and emerging themes related to the research questions. In coding the data I was able to determine what common themes emerged as related to current models of principal PD and what the similarities and differences were in relation to the PD principals felt they needed and the PD they received.   These themes were then used to determine a course of action for participating in a PLC model for principal PD as determined by the principals and their perceived need for their own growth and support.   This ongoing process of coding data continued with the resulting data and themes coming from the active participation in a PLC model for ongoing professional development.

Ethical Issues

Though I do not feel that any critical ethical issues arose from my study, I certainly took measures to ensure that that they did not. I made participants aware on an ongoing basis of the scope, sequence, and intent of the study. In addition, the participants had regular and ongoing access to the findings through our collective group inquiry and reflection as well as through strategic reflective journals entries that were shared anonymously with the group so that there were no questions as to their authenticity. In addition, all participants had an equal voice so any concerns could and would be shared with the entire group in order to ensure we were on course and maintaining a focus that was aligned to the research base and not based on individual (including my own) agendas. Conducting group sessions and individual interviews at school sites and not EICC4 also safeguarded participant confidentiality. In addition, participants created their own pseudonyms so as to not infringe on any individual's confidentiality. These pseudonyms were utilized for every interview and group meeting as well as for all transcriptions. All files were also password protected and saved in encrypted external hard drives that could only connect to my password-protected laptops and desktop computer. Files that contained any actual names were destroyed once the data had been transcribed under a pseudonym and stored on the encrypted external hard drives.

Additionally, the ESC East Superintendent and the Instructional Directors not attend any of the PLC meetings and did not have access to the topics discussed during the meetings. Although these findings will be shared with the superintendent and the

directors after the fact, they will also be discussed in aggregate as part of the overall findings. This was particularly important in order to ensure that participants felt that they could speak freely and not feel pressured to speak only favorably of the district and our professional development. This was done purposely in order to ensure that people spoke honestly and without fear of disciplinary action.

Summary

The role of principal as a school site's instructional leader is a demanding one. Principals are called upon to manage all aspects of a school but are particularly charged with being transformative instructional leaders who are held accountable for student achievement. Research in the current models of principal professional development has determined that current models of PD are not taking their needs into consideration. As a result, PD is not meeting their daily needs. Principals have expressed a desire to work collaboratively with their peers in coaching mentoring relationships, professional networks, or Professional Learning Communities in order to gain the most from their professional development (J. Grissom et al., 2013; Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Spanneut et al., 2012). The Principal Professional Learning Community helped form an action research group, with the qualitative findings highlighting the outcomes of the team into findings that can be utilized to develop a model of professional development for principals. The outcomes from this study can be utilized to improve principal professional development within the EICC4, as well as the EDUSD.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of principals with three

or more years of experience on their satisfaction with the professional development

they receive from their school district. In order to do so, I established an action research

team of 12 principals who met to gather, analyze and interpret data to determine what

elements of professional development they required to further their growth and to

support them as principals and learners.   The participating principals all work for

ESUSD and volunteered to participate after I explained the study and its possible

benefits to them and their professional growth. All of the principal participants work at

Title 1[4] schools and agreed to participate because they wanted to work collaboratively

with an action research team to improve professional development for principals. As a

group, we examined whether a Professional Learning Community (PLC)[5] would address

principals' professional development needs and we also analyzed findings from the

study to determine the benefits and the challenges, and to make recommendations to

the District based on their experiences as participants in a PLC.

The team and I used action research to discuss, develop, and plan a model of

professional development that principals said would better meet their needs. The team

started with twelve members and fluctuated between seven and twelve depending on

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[4] Title 1 schools receive supplemental Federal Title 1 funds aimed to bridge the gap
between low-income students and other students
[5] For the purposes of this study, the action research team constitutes the Professional
Learning Community (PLC).

participants' availability. The group of principals met every two weeks from February to April of 2015 to reflect on current principal professional development, study best practices, and share their perceptions and beliefs to define and develop a model of PD that would best meet their needs as learners and principals. Sources of data included qualitative surveys, action group meetings, interviews, and personal reflections.

This chapter describes how the action research team assessed current professional development and then developed, and planned a more effective model of professional development for experienced principals. At the same time, the team identified emerging themes as part of the process with intent to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences between what principals say they need for professional development and the PD they actually receive from their school district?

2. How does participating in a PLC for principal professional development address principals' perceived needs for their own growth and support?

3. What challenges are experienced when implementing a PLC for principal professional development?

In this chapter, I present the findings of the action research team through the lens of the action research cycle. Action research is an iterative cycle of inquiry initiated by a team to solve a problem that the team identifies. Through the action research cycle, the team participated in a progressive problem-solving inquiry cycle designed to address and uncover solutions to problems faced by the participants.

The action research cycle played a critical role in answering each research question. Answers to the research questions were determined by analyzing the perceptions of the team as we engaged in the action research process.   Throughout the chapter, I connect the team's learning from meeting to meeting. In addition, I explore the beliefs of the participants as they connect to components of professional development they feel are meaningful to them. I also discuss the perceptions of the team members connected to their participation in the action research team and the challenges they experienced as participants in a PLC for principal professional development.

Table 4.1: Timeline of Events Connected to the Action Research Cycle

Stage	Date(s)	Action Research Cycle Step(s)
Pre-Meeting	February 1- 12, 2015	Diagnosing
Meeting 1	February 12, 2015	Diagnosing
Meeting 2	February 26, 2015	Action Planning and Taking Action
Meeting 3	March 12, 2015	Action Planning and Taking Action
	March 16, 2015	
Meeting 4	March 26, 2015	Action Planning and Taking Action
Meeting 5	April 9, 2015	Evaluating
Meeting 6	April 23, 2015	Specifying and Learning

Research Question 1

What are the similarities and differences between what principals say they need for

professional development and the PD they actually receive from their school district?

I engaged the participants in a series of activities to gain insight into their

perceptions of the professional development they receive from the district. These

activities included discussing and analyzing their perceptions of current District

professional development models, working together to identify and plan alternate

professional development activities, and reflecting on new learning.

Pre-Meeting Action Steps and Preliminary Findings

Before any action research team meetings took place, I sent an online

questionnaire to all 12 of the principals.   At the first meeting I shared the results with

the participants that helped to identify and highlight principals' perception of the most

discussed PD topics in our district over the last three years.

The questionnaire (Appendix C) consisted of 24 open-ended questions. I asked

the respondents if they had participated in any of the 24 PD topics. They were also

asked if their participation was part of the overall PD required by the district of

principals, or if they had volunteered to participate. If participants attended the PD on

the identified topic, they were asked to write a detailed description of whether or not it

had enhanced their professional growth. If they had not attended a PD on the topic, they

were asked to indicate whether they believed the PD might enhance their professional

growth if they were to participate in PD on that topic.

By asking participants about the degree to which the PD had contributed to their

professional growth, the team and I were then be able to determine if the PD was

aligned to what they believed they needed to grow as principals and leaders. After a

preliminary analysis of the data gleaned from this questionnaire, it was clear that all of

the participants had similar perceptions and concerns about the professional

development they had received from the district. The participants would continue to

refer to their perceptions and concerns during our action research team meetings. One

of the primary concerns of the participants was that current models of professional

development were not meeting their needs as leaders or learners. These identified

perceptions and concerns are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

FINDING 1:   *Professional development for principals that is connected to instructional*

shifts from Standards-Based instruction to the Common Core State Standards is valuable,

but the format is not ideal because it does not engage principals in active participation and

does not take participants' learning needs into consideration

All of the participants reported that they saw the value of most PD topics and

agreed that they added to their learning; however, they reported that the method

(Power Point presentations) dulled their interests. One principal, Diana, elaborated:

> The PD that we have attended on instructional shifts has been among the best
> that we have had, but even then there are times when the manner in which it's

delivered simply doesn't work. Our group is too big, and there's only so much PowerPoint I can sit through.

Paola shared a similar sentiment:

We have had some of our most important learning in the last three years with all these instructional shifts such as the Common Core, English Language Development, and A-G requirements. Our PD has been timely and essential, but I feel that they have not engaged us effectively as a group to get to our maximum level of learning and applying our learning.

None of the principals said that PD on managerial tasks and/or operational issues met their needs or enhanced their learning. These managerial/operational topics were primarily informational sessions and in spite of the fact that the district devoted a lot of time to them, the principals believed these PD topics were not very valuable and that the time they took could have been better spent in their daily work at their schools.

One instructional director in the district explained that her staff was under pressure to present this information that highlighted performance quality indicators because of directives from the central district superintendent. She also shared that all the PD topics were aligned with instructional shifts that the district is currently implementing and promoting as the Common Core State Standards replaced the California State Standards.

The 24 topics in the survey were the topics covered with the most frequency in PD sessions held over the last three years. All participating principals have been principals at EICC4 for the last three years, so all had been exposed to the same professional development topics during that time. This was important because it ensured that all participants had the same point of reference and reflected on the same model of professional development.

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Action Research Team Meeting 1 – Introductions, Norms, Action Research,

Principal PD, Qualitative Survey Findings

The agenda for the first meeting consisted of introductions of the twelve

participants, establishment of norms, an overview of the action-research cycle, a brief

review of the literature connected with principal professional development, a review of

the qualitative survey findings, and an agenda setting session for the subsequent

meeting. Although all the participants knew each other, it was important to the research

process that all the team members get to know each other at a deeper level in order to

connect with one another and the work that we would undertake as a team. This was

important to the team dynamic as all team members had indicated in their surveys that

they felt that group learning and PD would better meet their needs if they felt connected

to the team.

The introductory activity at this first meeting was called "Getting to the Core of

It" (Appendix M). It consisted of a worksheet with a list of 30 different core values. In

the first minute, participants had to read the core values listed and then circle the top

ten values that drive their daily work. This was followed by a minute of quiet reflection

about why each participant had selected his or her top ten values. The participants were

then given another minute to narrow their top ten down to their top five values,

followed by a minute of quiet reflection. The participants then narrowed them down to

their top three, top two and finally down to the top core value that drives their daily

work. Each time they narrowed down their top value(s) they participated in a minute of

quiet reflection.

The introductory activity culminated in each participant sharing the core value that drives his or her daily work. Each participant shared in one sentence why he or she selected that particular value. This activity allowed every member of the team to develop an understanding of their individual core values as well as the core values that would drive the group. Following the activity, we debriefed the process as a group. The participants articulated that this activity helped them gain insight into the top core value(s) of each team member. In addition, they found value in reflecting on their core values in connection to their daily work. Edgar shared, "It's important to reflect on the values that drive the work that we do on the daily because it helps keep us connected to our work." Paola added, "I really feel that knowing why we do what we do, I mean really knowing what drives us, is important because we always need to be grounded in our work and why we do it."

Other members of the team agreed that it was interesting to see how many other members selected the same core value that they selected. Borita shared, "It's interesting to me because in listening to others share in one sentence why they selected their core value, I found myself thinking either, that's why I chose it too, or that I should have selected that one too." Marcia added, "Addressing the core values that drive our work is important because we can then start to identify and reflect on why we make certain decisions and how that drives us to improve our work."

We then reviewed the purpose of the study, the research questions guiding the study, and clarified the role of the action research team members. We agreed that we were all equal voices in the process and that we were there to support one another in

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our learning. The group agreed to use the norms of collaboration that we currently use as part of our district's model of professional development to have the group function as a cohesive and focused group. These norms, which are taken from the Adaptive Schools Foundation, are part of a series of strategies intended to develop teams with a sense of collective identity and capacity in order to allow each team member to be an active collaborator in the team process ("About Adaptive Schools® Seminars," n.d.; Garmston & Wellman, 2009). The seven norms are Pausing; Paraphrasing; Posing Questions; Putting Ideas on the Table; Providing Data; Paying Attention to Self and Others; and Presuming Positive Intentions. They are used in our current model of Professional Development. The participants thought that these norms were crucial to establishing a cohesive team. Eleven of the twelve participants shared that they actively use them within their models of PD at their school sites.

Once we had established that we would use norms and core values to drive our work, we moved into an overview of the action research cycle and how it connected to the research questions that the study would investigate. I used an action research cycle visual adapted from the work of G. Susman (Appendix K) to review the iterative process of action research.   In this particular model of action research, there are five recursive steps that define the process. The first step is to diagnose, which results in identifying or defining the problem. Once the problem has been defined, the team moves into action planning and considers alternative courses of action. The team then moves on to taking action, after which the team selects a course of action. Then the team evaluates the

consequences of any actions that have been taken. The last step is specifying and learning. In this step the team identifies general findings.

Several members of the team connected the steps in the action research cycle to the problem-solving model that we have used for several years in the district. Borita noted, "That's exactly what we have been doing in our district, except that your process has more steps. So all we have to do is identify the problem and come up with a course of action. That's not so bad." Diana agreed and added, "That's just good pedagogical practice. Isn't that what we always do? We deal with problems all day long, and we must solve them. We are involved in the action research process all day long."

FINDING 2: *Effective principal professional development requires active principal participation and topic selection to meet principals' needs of learning through collaboration*

After the group discussed the connections they saw between the action research process and the problem-solving cycle (Appendix L), we reviewed the literature connected to principal PD. After reviewing the PD literature, the team developed a baseline understanding of the research about principal professional development. An initial understanding that the team identified was that principal professional development requires active principal participation and topic selection to meet their needs. Valerie quickly added, "I don't need to read a lot of studies to tell you that we need to have is PD that we decide on. We also need to pick topics that are relevant to our needs." Nazar nodded in agreement and declared, "That's right! You tell him!"

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Another understanding that was identified by the team was that principals have the need, or urgency, to select PD topics that help them meet the demands of the job. Frida shared with the group that even though she had been a principal for four years she still required much support. She articulated that PD designed with the needs of principals in mind could better meet her needs. She shared, "A lot of times I feel so alone at my school and the PD is good, don't get me wrong, but I also feel like it's not timely or focused on what I have going on at school." Gonzalo added, "If the PD is going to work for us, then we need it to be about us and for us. We need to be much more involved in selecting format and topics."

After we reviewed the literature, we analyzed the results of the PD surveys the group had previously taken. The group organized the 24 PD topics of the survey into the following four categories: Most Beneficial; The Content was Beneficial – We Need More; So-So; and Not Beneficial at All (Table 4.2). It took the team very little time to create the category descriptors and sort the PD topics according to the degree to which they thought the PD benefitted them and their learning.

Table 4.2 PD Topics Listed by Level of Benefit

The 24 PD Topics Listed by Level of Benefit to the Participants	
Most Beneficial	Peer Coaching
	Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
	Classroom Walkthroughs
	Common Core State Standards (CCSS) – English Language Arts (ELA)
	Common Core State Standards (CCSS) – Mathematics
	Adaptive Schools
The Content was Beneficial – We Need More	Study Groups
	Critical Friends Groups (CFG)
	Using Data to Lead Change
	Instructional Leadership
	Habits of Mind
	Integrated Curriculum
So-So	Reflecting on Student Work
	English Language Development (ELD) and the Master Plan for English Learners (ELs)
	Operations and Operational Issues (managerial aspects)
	Staff Relations/Staff Discipline
	Teacher Evaluation
	Progressive Discipline
Not Beneficial at All	Having Hard Conversations
	Special Education
	School Finances and Budget Development
	Student Discipline
	Parent Involvement
	Communicating with Stakeholders

FINDING 3:   *Some of the topics provided by the district are essential to the work that principals do; however, principals disagree with the format and feel that PD does not always relevantly address their specific school needs*

One of the major findings made by the group at this initial meeting was the belief that some of the PD topics provided by the district address the work that principals do.

However, there was much disagreement about the format of the PD sessions. One of the

primary concerns was that there are instances when principals are working on an

instructional focus/area of PD at the school site, and the PD they are provided is neither

timely nor relevant for their needs at that moment. Gonzalo expressed that the PD is

fine, but not always about the work that is being done at that time. "Very rarely is there

ever a clear alignment with my work and I know that it's stuff that I can file away and

use later, but that's generally what happens…it gets filed away."

The format of the majority of the PDs is usually geared toward a large group with

multiple small group formats and that approach to learning does not always align with

the work that principals do at smaller schools. In other words, the participants believe

that the format of the PDs provided by the district did not effectively model the PD that

we are expected to deliver at our school sites. Nazar explained, "This kind of large group

format is not authentic because we can't really replicate it at our school sites. So this

whole large group type of PD doesn't work because the format is not easily replicated at

our schools." In terms of the relevance of the PD topics, participants agreed that many of

the PDs took place: "after I've already addressed them with my staff," "so late in the year

that I could not address them," " when I'm not at the place in time in my own school PD

to add them to my PD," and "at the wrong time in order to be valuable learning for me."

FINDING 4: *PD topics are covered at a superficial level, especially operational PD. Fewer*

topics need to be covered in greater depth rather than many topics at a superficial level

The majority of the principals felt that too many PD topics are covered at a superficial

level. Respondents agreed that fewer topics should be covered in greater depth rather

than many topics at a superficial level. Gonzalo expressed:

> We spend too little time on too many topics. How are we supposed to really get a feel for things when they are quickly glossed over? Even though we come back to them, we do it only for minutes at a time before we move on to the next thing. If our school PD plans that we have to submit to the district for approval were written like that, we would probably get them sent back to us for not being in-depth enough.

> Participant principals also agreed that a lot of the topics covered were only

glossed over because they were compliance issues or state mandates. "And it's all about

the district, meeting the needs in general….And let's treat everybody the same."

(Rowena). Paola further added:

> We're so compliance driven and operations driven that even with the best intentions, and even with a great PD from the district, the level of implementation, the direct level of implementation gets, becomes limited depending on what's on your plate and that happens a lot because we don't have the in-depth training, rather we have a lot of a lot of topics, but not the depth that we need to be "experts" (air quotes). We are like the old California standards, too many standards and not enough depth. We need to catch up to the Common Core!

> Another major topic of conversation, at that first meeting, was the belief that PD

connected to operational tasks is superficial, connected to procedures and policies, and

not designed to increase their knowledge base. The participants agreed that several

topics did not provide professional development but instead were presented for the

sake of meeting compliance deadlines. The group cited a recent budget development

and budget process PD. In response, Korola exclaimed that all these PD topics have been

explained without any background learning about the law as it applies to school funding.

She added:

> This is an area that could likely get someone in a lot of trouble if not handled
> according to funding stipulations, however, the budget PD that we receive is not
> about learning it's more about compliance and getting the budget done. I learned
> how to fill out a paper, but I didn't learn anything about school finance or
> working with stakeholders. Those are two essential components of the budget
> development process.

Another operational area raised as a concern was staff progressive discipline and

staff relations. Participants thought it to be an essential topic but did not believe that

the district had provided us with adequate in-depth training on contract and hiring

practice. Rather, the principal participants thought that much PD bordered on training

rather than professional development. This sort of professional development was more

likely to be considered information sharing and not learning.

> I didn't want to say it wasn't beneficial, but it was informational, and that's it, or it
> was compliance. It wasn't anything that I could say I grew as a professional. I
> grew in information, or in some knowledge in terms of deadlines that I had to
> meet, like for student discipline, or progressive discipline for special ed, for
> operations, it's all informational. It really isn't something that's going to help me
> grow as a professional. That's how I feel about that. (Borita)

With Borita's words, the meeting came to a quiet lull. We had worked an hour

more at this initial meeting than we had anticipated, and we still had to plan for the next

meeting. At that time, we planned the agenda for the next meeting. The team agreed

that we had touched on PLCs but not read enough about PLCs or agreed as a team as to

the shape of our own PLC. The team thought we needed to continue to read and learn

about PLCs and that we should review the premise of PLCs. In addition, it would be

important for the team to come to some agreements about how to shape and guide our work as a PLC. Paola indicated that she had a great article on PLCs that she had shared with her team at her school site. She suggested we read it for our next meeting. We agreed that her article would be a great starting point for our next meeting and discussion.

Research Question 2

How does participating in a PLC for principal professional development

address principals' perceived needs for their own growth and support?

Action Research Team Meeting 2 – Professional Learning Communities

At this meeting, we reviewed the professional literature connected to Professional Learning Communities. Though the context of the article dealt specifically with PLCs for teachers, as a group we agreed that our work was about teaching and learning and that it was absolutely appropriate for our needs. We also agreed that given the lack of literature on principal professional development we would have to base our learning on existing research that was connected to teaching and learning for educators in general. The article that we read from Educational Leadership was entitled, *What is a Professional Learning Community*? (DuFour, 2004)

This was our second team meeting, and we had not officially established who would facilitate our meetings. I volunteered to facilitate this meeting and we agreed that

participants could volunteer to facilitate upcoming meetings as our meetings progressed. I provided the team with a series of choices when it came to making recommendations about the use of protocols and the identification of materials that we would use as part of our learning process. We would have to find a way to collaboratively discuss the article that Paola had recommended for us to read at this meeting.   I shared four different protocols as possibilities. We decided on a protocol called Save the Last Word for ME to discuss the article. I knew from their qualitative survey answers that this group of principals was interested in working together to create learning opportunities. Appropriately, I provided them with multiple opportunities to learn from each other and work together.

The Save the Last Word for ME protocol was used so as to develop a collective understanding of the article, and to clarify and deepen the group's thinking about the content. After reading and debriefing the article, we agreed that an ideal PLC would focus on Student Learning and Student Outcomes, A Culture of Collaboration, and have A Focus on Results. We agreed to align our work around these same focus areas.

At this second meeting, we more closely examined the effective use of PLCs. We continued to connect our own personal experiences as participants in PLCs to the ideal intent of PLCs. Moreover, we shared how each team member utilized them at work during professional development for teachers. There were different levels of understanding about the functions of a PLC. Consequently, we dedicated a large percentage of this meeting time to reviewing the tenets of a PLC and arriving at a

common understanding that would help the action group move forward in its thinking and application of PLCs.

After much discussion, the team agreed that a PLC would be the best route to take as a group because in their ideal sense, PLCs address many of the needs that the team members expressed. PLCs offered the group an opportunity to engage in communal inquiry and learning. Even though not everyone had a positive experience with the PD on PLCs, we agreed to adhere to the tenets of a PLC in an effort to learn, grow, and benefit from the collaborative inquiry and solution-based learning that a PLC provides. As the facilitator of this meeting, I knew that the group would need some time to wrap their heads around the concept of using our action research team as a PLC. The team agreed that a PLC, in its true sense, would benefit and honor everyone's contributions. Borita noted that a PLC would help her because she liked to talk things out with her team in order to address a problem and diagnose a solution. She shared,

> When I go to the principals' meetings, I take all this in, and I'm already thinking, okay, this is where I'm at. How am I going to implement this? We're here, we're there, let me meet with them, and they know, my leadership team, I mean. I come back from principal's meeting, and we have a meeting the next morning. All right guys, this is what's coming down. We haven't done this, we need to do this, how are we going to do this? Let's take a look at that. What other research can we use? And pretty much, it's together; let's figure it out ourselves because when we're there at the meeting, that isn't there. That part is missing. It's like, here's everything, go about it and implement it, I guess, however you want. That's why we're all at different stages, yes? That's why I take everything that we do at principal's meeting and turn it into a PLC at work. A PLC helps me make sense of our learning in ways that the PD can't.

The team agreed that a PLC would help meet our needs as learners because it would provide us the opportunity to engage in a process of collective inquiry which would hopefully result in the team identifying and seeking solutions to the problems we

had identified in our current professional development. Particularly important to the group was a team focus on results, especially connected to student learning and outcomes. In addition, the team was eager to work collaboratively to solve problems at their school sites, and make recommendations for a future principal PD.

In order to develop a group understanding of how our team would function, we kept reconnecting to the PLC model outlined by Richard DuFour as well as the action research cycle outlined by Susman. We came to a consensus as to our roles and responsibilities. Our team would not have one leader but would work collaboratively to establish agenda items, gather resources, establish goals, and make recommendations for further study.

At this meeting, we agreed to always begin our work with a "Check In" component. By checking in with one another, we would grow to understand every member's perspective. We also agreed that any effective model of professional development would always include a checking-in component. We agreed to use a protocol called "Check In Circle" from the National School Reform Faculty (Appendix P) that Diana recommended to the team. Checking in allowed us to transition from our outside work to our work as a team.

FINDING 5: *PLCs help deepen principals' learning about their practice through group work and shared problem-solving*

The participating principals stated that one of the outcomes that they wanted from the PLC was to deepen their learning through group work. As principals, the

majority of our days are spent in professional isolation. When we do work and learn

with other principals, district personnel determine our learning. The participants felt

that our learning had traditionally been shallow and not in-depth enough to address the

multiple needs that we have connected to our schools. The team felt that through our

work together we could dig deeper into topics of interest in order to gain insight from

one another that would deepen our learning.

It was their goal that we would develop topics of interest upon which to base

principal PD. Several questions about how the district determined PD topics were

brought to the group. As there was no district representative included in the group,

these questions remained unanswered. The participants thought that the topics covered

during PD should come from participants by including them in the topic selection

process. Rowena felt that principals should have a "think tank" type of PD topic

generating sessions where a group generates thoughts connected to a topic and then

presents it to the entire group have them) determine which topics they'd like covered."

Paola agreed and added:

> That's so true!! They need to give us more time just to have dialog and discussion
> around subjects. Like, if they allowed us to come up with a list answering the
> questions like, what are your burning issues? What are your things that you
> really, like, value from your colleagues, as far as getting input? So they gave us a
> list, and we want to talk more about professional development, we want talk
> more about, you know, whatever else. Anything else. How to deal with all these
> bulletins that are coming up that are in here, and no one tells us...like that
> bullying bulletin, really? Did you see that (rolls eyes sarcastically)?"

FINDING 6:   *A PLC, or a small network of fellow principals, is an ideal format for*

professional development, but there were concerns about the function and the format of

the PLC.

100% of the participants agreed that a PLC, or a small network of fellow

principals, would be an ideal format for professional development, because it could

potentially provide participants with opportunities to create a course for their own

learning. In addition, there were some concerns about the function and the format of

this particular PLC. An expressed concern was about the role of each member as an

action research participant. Participants were apprehensive about participating in a

PLC because they were unclear as to who would lead the work. Their apprehension was

partly attributed to previous unsuccessful experiences where the network leaders

forced collaboration upon them, and they found it to be a waste of time and

counterproductive to their learning. Edgar expressed:

> The PD on PLC would have done a better job if we had been allowed to
> participate actively in the PLC. Though we did learn about PLCs and their
> functions, we never formed self-selected PLCs in order to develop a course for
> our own professional growth. We were forced to collaborate, and that was
> counterproductive. In this work that we are about to do together, I already feel
> much more connected to the learning and I feel that focusing on our needs
> connected to District expectation will allow me to grow as a learner and as a
> leader.

This sentiment was echoed by Urbina who shared:

> We have not done justice to the true intent of the PLCs. For PLCs to work, we
> must first design the work that is to be done. We have not done that at all. We
> have never reached agreements in our district PLCs. With this group, though, I
> really feel like we can grow the process together and that seems much more
> beneficial to me.

As the meeting continued, there was much discussion about the benefits of a PLC

consisting of principals connecting their learning to a group's stated outcomes. In

addition, there was also discussion about including student outcomes as part of the

team's focus. Frida shared:

> No matter what, we have to connect the work we do as a team to student
> outcomes and focus on their success…by learning from and with each other, we
> can connect that learning to student output. But to do that, we must always make
> our work student-centered, and results-driven. In other words, focus on our
> results as learners as it applies to student outcomes. Does that make sense?

Borita quickly agreed and stated that by always checking in during our meetings we

would have opportunities to state what was happening in our schools and directly

connect to student outcomes. "When you think about it, all we ever talk about when we

get together is what's happening and how do we can make it better for our students."

Although the main topic of the meeting was PLCs and their functions, the group spent a

significant amount of time discussing the benefits of a PLC to students, and to each other,

As the meeting came to a close, several team members suggested that our next

meeting should be scheduled in the morning. The group was having a difficult time

scheduling after school meetings because of family and time commitments. We

scheduled our next meeting for a Friday morning and agreed that we would meet from

5:00 a.m. – 7:00 a.m. over breakfast. We worked on the agenda for the next meeting and

decided that establishing a "Needs Assessment" as a group, and having it as a component

of every meeting was important. Valerie shared that her leadership team includes a

"Needs Assessment" component at their meetings on a regular basis, and it has helped

them grow tremendously as a team. She added, "Our needs assessment meetings are the

best because they allow us to put everything on the table, and then we all contribute to

solving whatever needs to be solved. We are no longer flying solo, we now have wing

pilots." Nazar agreed and added that we should always have a needs assessment

component to help us determine our pressing issues to address them as a group, to learn

and grow from one another's expertise. He shared:

> I often reach out to several of you in here anyway when I need something, so
> connecting it together as a group makes sense to me. I think our district PD can
> also be better if we have conversations around assessing our needs as principals
> and learners.

Action Research Team Meeting 3 – Needs Assessment

Our third action team meeting date was challenging to coordinate, as not

everyone was able to commit to the morning meeting. In spite of the fact that we had

agreed to meet on that Friday morning, several members informed me that they would

not be able to attend because of other commitments. Rather than try to find a date/time

that would work for all, I decided that I would hold two meetings with the same agenda

and then merge those findings. Four participants, of the remaining nine, were available

on the original date and the remaining three were available the following Monday.

While people expressed that they were interested in and committed to the study, they all

had pressing issues with which to deal. They explained that they would have attended if

not for these pressing issues. It was frustrating for me as a researcher because I knew I

had a strong team, but I was a struggling with their level of commitment. At my lowest

moments, I wondered if they were interested in the study at all and whether or not they

were honest at our previous group meeting when we set the 5:00 a.m. meeting time. I

decided that I needed to accommodate them as much as I could since I know that our

daily work is demanding and requires a lot of dedication. As such, I scheduled two

meetings and provided the participants the option of attending either one.

The Friday meeting took place as scheduled, and the four participants who

agreed to attend were all present. There was a lot of tension in the room as all five of us

were up against a lot of deadlines. Our budget development sessions were in full swing,

and our budgets were due to our directors in a matter of days. This deadline was a

stressor that was weighing on all the participants. Each participant mentioned a high

level of stress during that morning Check in Circle session. As we had previously agreed

to dedicate this meeting to a needs assessment discussion, the first question asked of the

team was whether or not budget was a high need area for PD. The answer to that

question was a unanimous "No!" I also asked this same question at the following Monday

meeting and was met with the same emphatic answer.

FINDING 7:   *Principals believe that an effective PLC provides time to work with other*

principals in an environment of trust and collaboration to identify problems and solutions

for group identified problems

The consensus of the team at both meetings was that what is needed was time to

brainstorm with other principals to solve shared problems together instead of more PD

on the budget process. In terms of budget, people indicated that they only needed more

time and not more training. Diana captured the essence of the group by sharing her

opinion, "Hello! And this is exactly why we need to have a needs assessment session. On

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the surface, it appears we need more training, but what we need is time to sit and talk. That's what we need, so let's talk!" Valerie then added that while the time to sit and talk and share needs is important, the most important element of having a meaningful needs assessment dialogue as a team is to have trust. "I'm not going to sit here and expose my needs, which I feel can be equated to deficiencies, to just anyone. If I don't trust you, I simply don't share."

The participants agreed that creating an environment of trust had been one of the most difficult characteristics to achieve in their previous experiences with a PLC. This was a high need area for ongoing professional development. Although everyone in the group knew one another and had known each for at least three years, trust was not automatically achieved. Borita expressed, "Trust grows over time. We have to build it. It's not here just because we are meeting as a team. We have to lean into trust slowly. But with this group, I feel like we can get there quickly."

We all agreed that building trust as a team occurred over time and was a defining component of the Adaptive Schools strategies that we agreed to use as a team. The participants thought trust to be an essential part of the PLC process and shared the belief that a team must establish a strong sense of trust and mutual respect to grow and move forward. Rowena summed it up by sharing, "That is not to say that everyone must be in blind agreement with everyone else, but everyone must trust in each other so that open and critical dialogue can take place." Paola added that she learned best when she worked with others in an environment "without fear of ridicule or reprisal...I mean, I

can't work with a group of people that I don't trust. We don't have to agree on

everything, but we have to agree to respect differing opinions without judgment."

Trust was a factor that the team spent a lot of time on during both the Friday and

Monday meetings. Indeed, we identified it as a high area of need for all participants. All

of the participants agreed that principal professional development should consist of a

safe learning environment where people can work together and share openly and

honestly. The team also felt the PLC format to be a viable option for achieving an open

and honest environment of learning and trust for principals.   At our Friday team

meeting, Paola shared, "A PLC is a prefect way to do PD because it helps us grow as a

team by identifying problems and solving them to meet students' needs. This entails

trust, and I feel it growing here." There was an overall consensus that a PLC was a great

way for the team to learn and grow together. The Monday team felt that a PLC was also

a preferred format because it would provide the team with a collaborative format and

setting in which to grow and learn together. Frida shared:

> A PLC is a good format because we can problem-solve and work together. This is
> what I have been looking for since I became a principal. As a principal, I feel
> extremely isolated at work and this format makes me feel like an important
> member of the group."

One of the guiding principles of a PLC discussed at our first meeting was Creating

a Culture of Collaboration. The team felt that for collaboration to exist during group

meetings, me must address trust and collaboration throughout our meetings. Because

this was an impromptu group, the participants felt that the experience was similar to

what we encounter when we ask groups of teachers to work together even though the

only connection they may have is that work at the same school site.

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Borita: I mean, sometimes we put people together and expect them to become a cohesive team...sometimes all they have going is that they work in the same school. We expect people to gel together and collaborate all the time, but it's a real challenge because they are not connected to each other at all and often the trust doesn't exist. I think that by allowing people to select their networks we can get much more out of them as participants.

Marcia: But we didn't select this network in the sense that we chose the participants. I mean we chose to participate, and we are all awesome (chuckles), just kidding...

Borita: I know, right? But even though we didn't select this group we have such an intense desire to change that we really are coming together as a team, and it just feels right.

Diana: But that's a challenge, allowing our teachers to work together on something that intensely interests them knowing full well that we have so many compliance items that we need to take care of.

Marcia: Exactly, so even though it's been a challenge for us, we have rallied together because it's important for us. So a huge challenge is making it so important, and we set the sense of urgency, as a group, so that people will want to participate actively.

Borita: There's a lot that we need to work on, but I feel that the biggest challenge is allowing people to work together so that they can make strong connections to their learning and learn to trust in the work that each other does. I really feel that this can only be achieved when we work in a PLC.

Collaboration is not created simply because people work in groups.

Collaboration results when a focused team works together to support the entire time in developing an understanding of a group identified problem or a group identified area of growth. In order for this to happen, participants must work together to plan for their learning.

FINDING 8: *PLCs allow principals to engage with other principals and advocate for their learning by having them assume a greater role in the planning and learning process.*

Another need that was expressed by every participant was greater input in the planning and preparation of their learning. They believed that the PLC format allowed them to be a greater part of the planning process. The participants at both sessions expressed a need to be more involved in selecting differentiated topics so they would be more relevant to their needs and the needs of their schools. Rowena made the connection that our group was actively engaging in selecting PD topics and that doing so made the learning process more significant. The participants felt the district selected PD topics to be aligned to its core mission and values, and though some of the components of the PD were meeting their needs, they did not feel that the PD in its entirety was meeting their needs. Principals felt a need to provide input into the selection of PD topics to benefit as learners. Diana stated that as principals we should be allowed to "select topics that are applicable and pertinent at the moment so we can better understand and apply the content so it can better be differentiated. This can only happen when we are involved in a PLC like this."

This differentiation of learning opportunities was seen as essential toward having principals forge their own learning and create learning opportunities to meet their needs. Seven of the participants believed it counterproductive to not allow principals a say in shaping their learning. In spite of the fact that the PD topics were informative, they felt that PD was not meeting their needs because many of the topics that were presented were neither timely nor necessary and were not based on the needs of the

participants. Nazar shared, "I often sit at PDs and work on other things because I have

been through that same PD at least three or four times. I even remember the presenter's

silly jokes!" Valerie agreed and added:

> So very true! I know that they are not asking us what we need because we would
> have never asked for that silly PD on Having Hard Conversations or that silly PD
> on Beyond the Bake Sale! Who needs that? Ask me what I need and I will be sure
> to tell you what I need. Don't ask me and I won't tell you. I'll just sit in the back of
> the room and read emails or something.

Another PLC component that the participants felt was needed and that they

wanted more of, was networking. Working with colleagues, especially trusted

colleagues, was significant. Participants wanted to spend time discussing, and problem-

solving the challenges of the job and felt that a PLC would allow them to share strategies

and ideas for dealing with issues that arise at the school site. As a team, we discussed

PLCs as they should function and compared them to the PLCs that we participated in

during district professional development. There were stark differences between the

theoretical ideals of PLCs and the PLCs we experienced. In theory, a PLC always includes

a checking in component and provides the team time to focus on developing a needs

assessment. In our practice, we had not experienced either of these. Through our work

together, and armed with a better understanding of the true intent of a PLC, we

concluded that we had never tapped into the power of PLCs. The participants felt that

the sense of camaraderie and group learning was what was most lacking in the PD that

was provided by the district.

> So in our network, it's better, but again, I feel that I learn from you, from each
> other. We learn from each other. I don't learn from the other principals that are in
> our network. Their needs are totally different than ours. This is why I feel that
> the PLC is a much better fit for us." (Borita)

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The team felt that a PLC would offer a lot more opportunities for the participants

to engage with other principals in reflective dialogue about the work that principals do

on a daily basis. This reflective dialogue would then be used to solve problems faced by

principals, which would ultimately result in improved principal performance and

outcomes at the school site.

> I think the professional development happens at super and higher levels. When you're with a group that either has similar needs, that you have time to meet with, and that you trust. I mean sharing and dialoguing with others is important, right? Trust and dialogue build teams, right?" (Paola)

FINDING 9: *Principals believe that leadership as a construct needs to be a central*

component of principal professional development

Leadership was also an area that the participants felt needed to be discussed and

addressed during PD. The group felt that though we had engaged in professional

development connected to leadership, we had not adequately tackled the fine art of

leadership. Leadership was important because of the roles that all principals fulfill at

their schools and in the community. Marcia summarized the group's thinking by stating:

> I mean after all is said and done, what are we? We are leaders. Shouldn't we then focus on the art of leadership? If we are leaders who are expected to get better, then I think we need to also add a leadership component to our PD. In our current PD we don't collaborate as leaders. I feel like in this PLC model we are more connected to developing our skills and our leadership.

The group agreed that leadership, and leadership styles, are areas that need to be

addressed in professional development in order to have us be more reflective about the

work that we do with teachers, students, and parents. The role of a principal as

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instructional leaders is second only to the role of an effective teacher in student success.

Accordingly, the team felt that current models of PD do not address leadership with

enough frequency. Rowena shared that if she had read more on leadership and the

different styles of leadership she might have struggled less as a new principal.

> I knew that there were different models of leadership, but we never reflected on them as a group. Now I know that I'm a servant leader. I learned that by going to a PD on leadership on my own. Because I am a servant leader I need to think more about how I do things and whether my style of leadership best defines what I do. If not, then I often have to consider different leadership styles. Sometimes I have to slip into distributive leadership mode in order to get the job done.

> The team spent some time discussing leadership styles and how their particular

style of leadership does not always align with all the components of the job. Principals

work with all stakeholders and are expected to be strong leaders capable of

transforming schools. Most of the participants agreed that including an element of

leadership theory to PD would help principals develop as leaders. Borita disagreed:

> I don't think we need to get into that stuff! When I have to make a decision at that moment, I don't have time to stop and think about anything connected to my leadership style. I just need to get the job done, and that's that. I think this is some new age stuff. We need to do what we do for kids, and that's that.

As the lone dissenter, she held steadfast to her beliefs and would not be budged. In spite

of the team member's efforts to convince her, she disagreed. She did, however, agree

that it would be good to reflect and read literature on effective leaders and what their

beliefs were in relationship to the people they served. She agreed that a leadership

component would be beneficial to PD meetings but did not want to read too much on

theoretical constructs of leadership because, "We are all at different points, and we'll

never agree…it's like a personality thing, you can't change it."

Both groups were of the position that the following elements need to be included in PD in order to better meet their needs: setting, group dynamic, differentiation, problem solving, networking, leadership, and goal-setting. The team felt that these elements had not been a regular part of their PD over the last three years. The Monday group agreed that group dynamic, setting, problem-solving, and networking were all components of an effective PLC and that they were lacking in the district's current model of professional development.

Rowena commented that everything the group presented as needs was all linked to Adult Learning Theory. She also shared that she restructured the PD at her school for similar reasons. "When I got to my school the PD was a mess. There was no cohesive anything in place. I started from scratch and having just attended a great PD on Adult Learning Theory, I figured I'd start from there." She then shared that she had an article that we could read on the major highlights of adult learning theory. We agreed to read the article for our next meeting and to discuss adult learning theory and its benefit to professional development. Marcia added that she had also been reading up on adult learning theory and that PD should align with the needs of adults in mind. She added:

> Often our PD is supposed to be something that we should take directly to our schools for our teachers to implement, but as adults we learn differently than children do. I think that reading up on adult learning theory would really help us determine what PD should look like for us and a PLC already incorporates a lot of what adults need. I think my biggest takeaways from what I've read are that adults are more goal-oriented and work best when there is a greater sense of relevance to the work that they do.

Paola added that adults also work better when they get some rest. On that note, the Friday morning meeting came to a close as we planned the agenda for the next

meeting. We agreed that our next meeting would include a time for us to check in, time to read up on adult learning theory, and time to plan a model PD agenda. We established the agenda for the next meeting and set a tentative date knowing that we might have to revisit the date as needed.

An important component of that particular meeting was the individual reflections. During the individual reflection time, there was a noticeable amount of side talk connected to adult learning theory and why this had not ever been reviewed or presented to the principals at their PD.

I shared the agenda that had been decided upon by the Friday morning meeting with the Monday afternoon group, and we discussed the recommended agenda. Even though we had not met as a whole group, the findings and the needs as described were nearly identical. In spite of the fact that both groups had not met as a whole group, we were on similar paths with both groups in agreement as to the agenda and the idea of including elements of adult learning theory in professional development.   The second group agreed that the agenda captured the path that we wanted to take as a collaborative team and the team agreed that we would spend time on adult learning theory at our next meeting. As a member of the second group, Gonzalo shared, "I often wonder why they treat us like little kids when it comes to our learning. We all know that adults and children learn differently, so let's start learning differently. We need adult learning theory to guide us."

Action Research Team Meeting 4 – Adult Learning Theory

For our fourth meeting, our agenda was set as follows:

Agenda
Checking In
Literature Review – Adult Learning Theory
Model PD Planning
Agenda Setting and Planning
Individual Reflections

We started with the Check in Circle. There was much discussion about the reading on

adult learning theory during this check in. The group agreed that our professional

learning development rarely incorporated elements of adult learning theory. The team

was ready to tackle adult learning theory, and all the participants were eager to connect

to the literature that we read in preparation for the meeting. Our focus was on the five

assumptions that inform adult learning theory, or andragogy. From this view, the adult

learner is someone who:

1. Has an independent self-concept and can direct his or her own learning
2. Brings their rich life experiences and can also serve as a learning resource
3. Has learning needs that are relate to his or her changing social role
4. Is problem-centered and interested in the immediate application of new learning
5. Is intrinsically motivated to learn (Knowles, 1984; Knowles, III, & Swanson, 2015; TEAL: Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy, 2011)

After reviewing the article and discussing the five underlying assumptions, the team

identified the elements of adult learning theory we felt were absent in our current model

of PD. We connected the elements of Adult Learning Theory to a typical session from

current model of PD by analyzing and identifying the elements we felt were present or

lacking in our professional development. The group had the most difficulty identifying

intrinsic motivation in our PD. We agreed that we had never been intrinsically motivated

to learn during the district PD, because we had not engaged in preparing our PD sessions nor had we selected the topics. All seven participants felt that intrinsic motivation is hindered when we work in groups that are too large. Marcia shared:

>Okay, you know what's wrong? That we never get to see each other. And that when we're there, we're excited to see each other. And we don't have any time to talk to each other again, or catch up on, or talk about what's happening in your network. What's happening in your district? And then people just ... it's too many of us in there. It's not conducive to really in depth learning like we are learning in a PLC. And I'm sorry, but if I'm not intrinsically motivated, then it's hard for me to learn.

Diana added:

>This is why we are doing this work. Only by working with a group that we trust and believe in, can we be more intrinsically involved in our own learning. This is what I am getting out of working with this PLC. I feel like I'm becoming much more involved in my own learning, especially because I am helping to design it.

Frida agreed and further added,

>That is so true. The format we currently have is just not meeting my needs. This can only happen in a smaller group. In a large group we are never going to get it done. I feel more motivated to learn and participate much more meaningfully in learning as a process when I work with a group of people I can connect to and engage in conversation with. This really helps me learn and keeps me motivated and connected to the learning.

The issue of group dynamics was strongly connected to the issue of setting. The participants expressed a need to work with people with the same professional development needs to improve group dynamics. The team agreed that our team had a well-functioning dynamic and that it was an essential component of effective professional development. The participants felt that when the groups were not evenly matched (years of experience, similar school populations, learning styles, and needs) it was difficult to improve group dynamic and this resulted in a loss of time and motivation. Korola expressed:

We are all in different places in terms of our needs and our school needs. Sometimes you are stuck working with a network of people that you just don't gel with and there's not much that you are going to do for their learning or much that they are going to do for your learning. If the learning isn't differentiated, it simply won't work. One size PD does not fit all. I think that if our PD were more self-directed and differentiated and not so directed from above we would get more done. Just like we have done with this team.

This degree of differentiation, particularly connected to participants' needs and experience, was important to the participants because they felt that in order for people to be more accountable they needed to be involved in the planning and delivery of PD. Frida shared:

It's hard to be an active participant when you are working with a group who either does not get it, which happens a lot, or stuck with a group that thinks they know it all. It's like what we just talked about with adult learning theory – if it's imposed on me, I'll resist.

FINDING 10: *Principals believe that active, research-based PD delivered in a small PLC is beneficial to their learning and addresses necessary elements of adult learning theory*

The team felt that PD delivered in a small PLC and connected to the needs of principals at their school sites would be beneficial. The group members felt that after participating in this action research group, which was like a small PLC, they were better able to connect to their learning. One of the most important reasons cited was the level of social interaction and learning that helped solidify content. Another important aspect was the fact that we treated our learning as a true PLC with all the necessary elements. The team member's views shifted during this process because they were able to see firsthand the power of the social learning in a PLC.

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The group also believed that more quality, research-based, hands-on, differentiated and self-selected PD would better meet their needs. The most consistent commentary from participants was that PD should be more participant-selected in order to meet their personal and school site needs. In addition, the team also agreed PD should be conducted in small groups in order to better engage participants in meaningful, problem-solving discussion trusted colleagues. Urbina added:

> Working in a large group setting, especially when we go to central meetings with 500 other principals is not conducive to group learning. Having 500 principals sitting in one room is so not the way to go. Talk about ignoring all the teachings of adult learning theory. Large groups are out! Small group PLC learning, or a Community of Practice is the way to go! I mean come on, when we talk about adult learning, this large group PowerPoint presentation kind of learning is not what adult learning theory espouses. Adults do not like to learn in that way. At least I feel that a totally different format would better prepare us to go back to our schools and lead. If all they did was give us choices of attending breakout rooms for our specific needs…that would improve things drastically.

At that moment in the discussion Valerie stated that our action research team was in fact an excellent model of how PLCs work and enhance participant learning. She stated:

> I get that we are talking about principal PD and what's good about it as well as what needs to improve. I think the answers we are looking for are right here. I have gained so much from the work that we have done together. It has helped me to become a more reflective practitioner.

The participants absolutely agreed with Valerie. We were in fact learning through social interaction and dialectical conversation with one another. Marcia shared, "This is the kind of learning I appreciate. Even if we don't agree on everything, we agree that learning about it is important. In this group I feel completely engaged and we have not once used a PowerPoint.

Team members expressed that PowerPoint PD presentations did not engage

them actively as adult learners in the learning process. In spite of the fact that some of

the PD was well designed or effectively orchestrated, Edgar expressed that it could have

been better if, "maybe we had been allowed to work in a PLC focusing on certain

components of the Common Core State Standards instead of just PowerPoint after

PowerPoint on the standards." The group felt that the information was relevant and

necessary, but that the format of the PD needed to include more discussion and real-

world application in order to deepen their understanding of the topics. Marcia echoed

this sentiment:

> When you are "sitting and getting" (indicated air quotes), which is how our PD is usually presented, you are just not that into it as a learner. What we really need is more time to deepen our theoretical understanding, and in order to do that we need much more discussion and problem-solving type of PD. We rarely get that kind of PD. We can only real get that in a small group setting like we are doing here.

This meeting, like the others before it, ran much longer than anticipated and the

participants were eager to continue working. However, in order to honor our work and

our time together, we decided to wrap up the conversation. After a quick debrief we

switched to agenda planning and planned the agenda for the following meeting. The

topic of standards for administrators came up at this agenda planning session and the

team decided to focus on the Standards for School Administrators at our next meeting.

Edgar shared that he had recently finished his tier two administrative credential and

that he had some material that we might find useful in discussing the standards. We set

the agenda for our next meeting as follows:

Agenda
Checking In
Literature Review – Standards for School Administrators
Connecting the Standards to our Work
Agenda Setting and Planning
Individual Reflections

Participants took six minutes to write in their reflective journals. It was

interesting how many of them wrote about the process of their work as a PLC. It seemed

the team had finally experienced a true PLC process and this caused a significant shift in

the members' perception of a PLC. It was a team "A-HA" moment and this was a

significant shift from where the team had started. The team was finally beginning to

function like an effective PLC. The benefits were recognized during the reflection time.

The guiding question at the end of every meeting was: What was valuable for you in

today's process? Please reflect on the process as well as your learning.

It was clear from their reflections that they found the PLC format to be beneficial

to their learning. One of the participants noted:

> I feel that today I finally started to connect to the benefits of a PLC. I now see that
> process much more clearly and I feel like we are staring to create a collaborative
> sense of learning that feels good to me as a learner. The PLC format finally
> clicked in for me and now I see the benefits, but it's also because we are doing it
> right. We are learning from each other and designing our learning based on what
> we need. This is a great process!

Another participant noted:

> Now that we have grown this PLC organically, I see the benefits. We are
> diagnosing, prescribing, checking in, and synthesizing our learning in ways that
> we have never done during our regular PD. This learning is so valuable because
> it's about us and we are all invested in the learning. This is how I think all our
> learning should take place.

Action Research Team Meeting 5 – Standards for School Administrators

Our fifth action research team meeting was also extremely difficult to coordinate. After the Check in Circle, the conversation turned to the standards for school administrators that we had reviewed prior to the meeting. We started our conversation by discussing the fact that we had never connected our work to these standards. Valerie volunteered to lead our learning that morning, and it was the first time that another member of the team took on the role of facilitator. She shared that it was almost impossible to believe that we had never once reviewed the standards or connected our work to any standards. She stated, "I'm shocked that we've never connected to these standards. Everything nowadays is standards-based. How are we as leaders not leading by connecting our work to standards?" Paola had a different take and added, "But when you really think about it, isn't all we do every day connected to these standards? I mean, by the nature of our work we naturally handle all those standards on a daily basis, right?" "Yes," responded Valerie, "but we are not actually learning about these standards and connecting them to our learning or our work. Any connection we make is purely accidental because of the job." We agreed that we had not ever made any deliberate connections to these standards in our professional development. The standards were treated more as incidental when highlighting specific topics. They were never treated as part of the learning.

FINDING 11: *The standards for administrators are important and they should be an*

important component of principal professional development

Every member of the action research team agreed that we had never touched

upon the standards. Our conversation turned to what the standards should mean to us

as educational leaders. The consensus within the team was that the standards are

important and that we should connect them to our PD and our learning. Marcia added:

> I mean, a lot of our PD is connected to the standards, but the connection is not
> immediately made clear to us as learners. But I do think that it should be. Don't
> we expect teachers to explicitly share the standards they are teaching? Our
> learning should be the same. Shouldn't it?

Paola agreed and shared that her school-based PD team had connected their entire

teacher PD for the last two years to the standards in the new evaluation system. She

shared:

> At every PD meeting we highlight a focus standard and that standard guides our
> learning and our reflection. It's especially important for those teachers who are
> going through the evaluation this year and for whom the standards are extremely
> important. I mean, we go through the standards, the rubrics; all of it, and it has
> made our PD much better. Our PD would be better if we connected it to a
> standard and its corresponding rubric for administrators.

Although there were many groans throughout the room at the mention of standards and

rubrics, the team agreed that it would be important to connect our work to the

standards so that we could use the standards to measure our efficacy and growth as

leaders. By measuring our efficacy and growth, we could measure our growth as leaders

as well as set new learning goals that would guide or professional growth.

At that point in the meeting we reviewed the California Professional Standards

for Educational Leaders (CPSEL) (Appendix N), and went through each one of the six

standards and their descriptors. After the CPSEL standards, we reviewed the Interstate

School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (Appendix O) Leadership Standards.

Although it had previously been observed and stated, the team kept returning to the fact

that the standards all made sense and were about our every day work. Urbina noted,

"We do all that stuff, we just don't call it by name. These standards are about the work

we do all the time." Rowena added, "Yes, I agree with you absolutely, and I also think we

need to refer to them more often in the work we do." Paola could hardly contain herself

when she stated, "Yes!! I get it, we do the work, we are about the standards, but our

work isn't defined by the standards. It seems more like the standards are defined by the

work. Is that how it should work?"

The team analyzed this question carefully while we contemplated an answer.

Finally Edgar spoke and said:

> That's a great observation, Paola. I think the two are so intertwined that we take them both for granted. I think that they could be more like our silent guiding forces, but we still have to note them and connect our learning to them.

The team nodded in agreement. Gonzalo quickly responded:

> We do absolutely need to take them into consideration. I mean, we all studied them when we did our Tier II credentials, right? I know I did. I had to write a performance task for each standard and how I had met the standard based on a real life scenario. It was a lot of work, but I got to know the CPSEL and the ISLLC standards very well.

Borita added:

> Yes, but remember that some of us have been principals for 15 years or more and that our Tier I and Tier II credentialing experiences were very different. When I did the credentialing program there was no such thing as these standards, and if they existed back then we never used them. So I can honestly say that I have heard of them and know that they exist, but have never connected them to my work.

As a group we discovered that only half of us had reviewed the standards extensively during Tier I and/or Tier II credentialing programs.

After reviewing the CPSEL and ISLLC standards, the group agreed that our current model of PD included a disproportionate amount of time addressing compliance items not connected to any set of standards. The feeling of the group was that some of our PD topics that were connected to legal mandates and either state or federal law or contract (Special Education, Progressive Discipline/Staff, Budget, Operations) were addressed more as informational sharing session rather than PD. The participants consistently commented that these topics appeared to not be PD at all, rather they were information sharing sessions that focused on procedures and policies with no in-depth coverage of the reason/rationale behind the policy. Diana was particularly upset that principals had not received enough in-depth training on compliance items and she expressed,

> A lot of our PD has been straight lecture. This has to stop. We need more in-depth learning to take place if we are to understand and truly grasp this huge undertaking that we have as principals. We need to dig in deeper and have a greater level of understanding of the theoretical framework behind the work that we do if we are to really grow as leaders and as learners. This lecture PD is not getting us there. As a matter of fact, we don't ever connect our learning to any sort of standards or anything! A lot of our compliance items are completely connected to the standards and yet we don't do right by the standards or the PD.

The participants agreed that not enough had been done to thoroughly process the standards CPSEL, or ISLLC. The group collectively agreed that it is difficult for leaders to fully grasp and comprehend the work they do when it is rarely, if ever, connected to standards for administrators. The participants felt that though we have, over the years,

touched on standards for student and standards for teachers, not enough, if any work, had been done connected to standards for school leaders. The participants agreed that it seemed strange that although there are many organizations that focus on standards for principals, we have not connected any set of standards to our PD. Edgar noted:

> We have the CPSEL and then there is that ISLLC, the interstate license consortium thing, which basically outline the standards that we as principals...Since I've been a principal I've never, ever been connected to them in our PD. They've never said, these are principal standards, and you know, this is what we're doing. You know?

Marcia agreed and added,

> I had heard of both the California standards and the ISLLC. I have only ever read or known about them because of my Tier II credential. Isn't it important for us to know what our standard of measure is? Shouldn't we know what standard of measure our own performance is connected to? We have never, ever, ever, been explicitly connected to any standards or path toward self-improvement. If I hadn't read the literature we read for today's meeting I would not know that the ISLLC standards have changed as of 2014.

FINDING 12: *Principals need to adopt a more active, and proactive, role in designing their learning*

It was at this time, ten weeks into our work, that we stopped to reflect on the process that we had started 10 weeks prior. As a team we concluded that we needed a different model of professional development, particularly given the multiple conversations in which we engaged throughout the action research cycle. We all looked at each other and agreed as a group that we needed to take on a more active, and proactive, role in designing our learning. Valerie noted that everything we had done as a group is what is needed for us to design our own learning. We had come together as a team to analyze data, we have developed a course of action for our learning connected to

the data results, we planned for our future learning and we reflected on the process. We

had both connected our learning to the action research cycle and the tenets of a

Professional Learning Community. All the team members nodded in agreement. She

marked that our action research team had outlined a great course of action for principal

PD and that included the use of Principal PLCs:

> Everything we have done is what we need to do. We have engaged in the
> problem solving/action research cycle all along. We have had a lot of great
> conversations and I feel like we have designed our own meetings to best meet
> our needs as learners, but I feel like it, just like with our classroom teachers, it has
> to start with standards. We need to have a baseline understanding to get us
> there.

The team agreed that as a group we had accomplished the following: identified a

need for change, assessed baseline data, established team learning goals and made

adjustments for our own learning as needed. The team also felt that our district

provided PD goals were never clearly established for us. Marcia shared, "At the

beginning of every year we are told that we have district benchmarks and district goals,

but we never establish goals for our own learning." Furthermore, the team noted that

we never established goals during that PD time connected to any set of standards. All of

the team members felt that in order to move forward and grow as professionals we must

establish an agenda for learning. This agenda, it was decided, must include team

participation, group norms, team-determined agendas, and a connection to the

standards for administrators. It should be noted that all of the above components were

included in our action research team meetings.

One of the most important things that we accomplished as a group was engage in

the process of developing an agenda for our own learning. The team felt that we could

only ever shape a vision of academic success for our students if we developed an agenda

for our own learning that took students' academic and social-emotional growth and

success into consideration. The team agreed that a model agenda for a principal PLC

must include the following:

Recommended Meeting Agenda:
Checking In
Needs Assessment
Literature Review
Connection to Standards
Agenda Setting and Planning
Individual Reflection

Throughout the work we did together, there were many conversations connected

to the district's lack of clearly established goals at the beginning of the year that would

set a foundation for principal learning. The participating principals felt that not having a

clear course of action often led to disjointed learning for the year and resulted in a lack

of consistent focus. The following highlights these sentiments,

> Borita: How are we supposed to truly get anything out of PD or a PLC, or anything else for that matter if we don't have any role in designing the agenda, topics or outcome? Even if we just did it at the beginning and established our learning outcomes for the year. Are we even involved in the PD?

> Paola: We're not! It's because we don't have any role in doing any of those things that we are not completely buying into it. I mean, it's hard, you know. You know how hard it is to design PLC PD at the school site. Do you want to do that for a group of principals?

> Borita: No, but if it's going to benefit my long-term learning it would make sense to do that.

> Valerie: Yes, it would, even if we just sat together at the beginning of the year and decided our topics of interest, or picked a few topics of interest. I think the problem is that we want to do what we want to do and the district wants us to do what it wants us to do. Does that make sense?

Marcia: Yes, so our learning is very disjointed because we are only engaging in PD that they want us to engage in. It's not as meaningful because we are not actively involved in the planning. We need to be actively involved.

The active involvement of principal participants in their learning was seen as essential to developing professional development focused on improving learning outcomes for participants. As active planners and developers of their own learning, the participants felt more connected to the learning and created opportunities to engage in rich dialogue that helped address problems within their work and their learning.

FINDING 13: *PLCs effectively allow principals to work with self-selected peers around a topic of interest that furthers their growth*

The component that principals felt was most lacking in previous PLCs that had been incorporated at principal meetings was the ability of groups to form around a topic of interest or the ability to work in a group of self-selected peers. Principals felt that self-selected networks where trust was engendered would be the most beneficial but were not sure that the district would allow principals to self select networks (the group of principals) and leaders (the network director). Korola shared:

> The PLC in its ideal sense is exactly what we need to do as professionals. We need to be able to work with our colleagues in an authentic setting to develop plans and strategies for our own improvement. Exactly like we have done here, but that won' t happen at the district level. They'll never let us do it; they really want to control our learning.

> Paola: Like, I can openly say, you know what? I'm really struggling with this feature of my staff, because I'm not sure how to chunk it. Or I'm not sure how to move a group. We're trying to then replicate what they give us at the district with

our staff. We don't get to share strategies for improvement like we have done in the PLC that we established here. They'll never let us self select our groups.

The alternative was that principals would work with self-selected networks out of their regular PD time if they were to indeed work in these self-selected networks. In spite of this potential obstacle, the group was able to agree that a PLC or small network would work best. The team consensus was that the value of working with a self-selected network or PLC would be beneficial and that many groups of principals were already meeting with other principals in order to support one another. However, they also agreed that because we did not have this as part of our current model of PD we were often forced to create our own external PLCs to help one another get the job done.

> And we're not getting that time that we need. I mean, how many times do we go to principal's meetings, and now you're not part of it (points to principals who are in other networks), but we are. And at least the three of us get to see each other, and we talk about concerns that are pending with us, and what do you do with this? What do you do? Is there even anyone in your network worth talking to? (Borita)

Especially important to the group was that the principals would have more input into planning the PD. As a result , they would likely choose more relevant topics that were more closely connected to the needs of each individual as well as their school sites. Principals felt that actually planning the course of their PD was more beneficial and something that did not happen with district provided PD. "When was the last time they asked us, okay, what is it that you really need? And let's focus on that. What do you want?" (Rowena) Participants knew that providing input would be take time and add an additional layer of work to already busy principals, nonetheless, they felt it important that they be involved in the process.

Regardless of the many struggles that we faced and the fact that it was difficult to get every one of the participants together at one time, it appeared to the members of the group that a self-selected network of participants , or a PLC, would be an extremely benfical format for their ongoing learning.   Of particular importance, the particpapnts felt, was the ability to network and create mentoring relatiosnhips with one another in an authentic cyle of learning. Rowena shared:

> A lot of our own PD needs to be more rooted in working, collaboratively. I think, whether it's on any given topic, but having the time to develop our own leadership sort of around PD, and working together. Working together has been the most important aspect of the work we have done undertaken. This is so beneficial to me as a learner. Working with you all has been such a great learning experience!

Another benefit that the participants identified that was a result of the work we did together was a critique of the format of our PLC meetings in comparison to our current model of PD.   The team felt that connecting to the school site and to each other was a critical step in the PLC because a PLC more closely resembled what the district is expecting us to implement in our own school site PD plans. The district expects that schools undergo a PDRR (Plan, Deliver, Reflect, Revise) PD cycle and the participants felt that the PDRR cycle should also be a part of the PD plan that the district delivers to us. Marcia felt strongly that the format of our PLC would be a more beneficial format for all principal learning. She shared:

> It makes sense that we use a format like this one. In the short time we have done it I have learned to be more reflective and I feel like I have developed more as a learner. That's important for our ongoing growth and development. We have been involved in every part of the process and that's so important for our learning. This would be awesome if we could do it instead of our regular PD.

In addition, the team thought that the PLC format included ongoing problem solving and evaluation that would ensure the process was meaningful.   Even though we regularly complete evaluation forms (via online bit.ly.com surveys), those results are rarely, if ever, made public to the participants and are therefore not completely inclusive of principals' needs. Participants felt that PLCs helped them make more connections to the material being covered and fellow participants. In addition, because planning the PLC meetings was an integral part of the process, the participants felt more connected to the PD and were therefore more active leaders and learners in the process.

Shared Values and Vision

Principals felt that they should be involved in planning the principal PD because the PD would more likely meet their needs. The team felt that when participants decide how they are going to steer a course for their learning they are more connected to their learning. This was case with the PD topics and the participants as well. Participants felt that only when they were involved as participants of professional development, as well as co-planners of that PD, then they were more likely to behave as agents of change and work together to develop a sense of shared leadership that would ultimately lead to a support group that would transform their practice.

Through active participation, principals develop their own shared-sense of leadership. That understanding enabled them to transform their leadership teams at the school site.

> You don't want to micromanage your coaches, or anything like that, but at the same time there has to be some type of alignment to the vision of what...where

the school is headed. I feel comfortable with the PD, but do they take the time to sit there and ask us if we understand? By processing together like we did in this PLC, I was able to help transform the work that my team does at the school. (Paola)

The participants felt that in order to embody a supportive and shared leadership,

they must be in charge and steer their own course in terms of their learning.

If we are to develop a shared vision of academic success for our students we must first see ourselves as learners and develop a course of action for our own success. A PLC, to me, is the only way that we are going to do that. I want to be successful as a leader, but I know that I must first work with a group of people that I trust to develop my own vision of success." (Valerie)

For our sixth and final meeting we established an agenda that would include the

following:

Checking In
Group Reflection and Review – Research Question 3
Individual Interviews

The participants walked away with a sheet of paper with the following:

Research Question 3: What challenges are experienced when implementing a PLC

for principal professional development?

As a group we had undergone quite an intense partnership. We had met over the

course of almost four months. During that time, we established a mutual respect and

understanding of the work that we each undertook at our own school site. As an action

research team we delved into the work of determining what a model PLC would look

like for the participants. Many ideas were presented to the group in order to determine

a PLC course of action that would take everyone's needs into account.

<div align="center">**Research Question 3**</div>

<div align="center">*What challenges are experienced when implementing a*</div>

<div align="center">*PLC model for principal professional development?*</div>

Action Team Meeting 6 – Reflecting and Specifying

At our sixth and final meeting, we set out to discuss the challenges that we faced as we engaged in the action research process. We had spent ten weeks engaged in conversation around professional learning communities, and we had also spent time engaged in a professional learning community. These challenges and constraints were gleaned from data taken from team meetings, qualitative surveys, individual interviews, and reflection journals.

The Challenges

FINDING 14: *Time is one of the biggest constraints when implementing a PLC*

The participants felt time factors to be one of the biggest constraints when implementing a PLC. Although we met on our own and did so outside of work time, it was difficult to find a time where all participants were available. In addition, each participant had a great sense of accountability to the group, and the implication was that each participant would be an active participant in order to comply with that accountability. The small group size and the expected participation in group conversations helped create this sense of accountability. At the onset of our work together, the participants felt that time would be, and it was, the biggest factor. Diana noted, "As principals we are very busy and are principals 24 hours a day. If an emergency comes up we have to stay there until it's over. I can't just pick up and leave, PLC or no PLC." It was also extremely difficult to find a time that all the participants could come together as an action research group. We tried to set up evening meetings, afternoon meetings, lunch meetings and finally discovered that morning meetings over breakfast worked best for the majority of the team. As a result, we spent a lot of time figuring out when we might be able to meet and who might be able to show up. We even had to split the group in two on an occasion to obtain greater participation from the majority of the group members.

Time proved to be a critical piece for all meetings. Although the outcomes were appreciated, and highly desired, the participants claimed that time constraints, both

finding the time to participate, as well as finding the time to get external work done in

order to make the PLC meaningful were a challenge. This added concern of quality

participation added to the stress that principals claimed to already feel as they address

the myriad issues that must be addressed on an ongoing basis. Paola shared:

> Time is our enemy as principals, but we have to make time in order to get better
> at what we do and refine our craft. We provide teachers with time to improve
> their craft at every Tuesday PD, Saturday PDs, and sub days, but we are never
> provided that same time to improve what we do.

> Connected to the issue of time was the challenge of the myriad of responsibilities

that principals already have. The job of a principal is multi-faceted and complex, and as

such the principals is faced with multiple decisions and interactions on an ongoing basis.

The participating principals reported that they struggle with demands placed on their

time in addition to the burden of all the things they already have on their plate. Korola

shared:

> It's difficult to deal with all you have to deal with and then add an additional
> layer, even if it's a good thing, it's still an additional thing that you have to do and
> an additional thing that has to get done. I mean, really, who has the time to take
> on an additional thing...as important as it has been for me, I have struggled with
> the added responsibility and the thought that I had yet another thing to do."

> The team made a connection to the benefits and the importance of dedicating

time to a PLC. However, in spite of the benefits, the responsibility combined with the

time demands made it especially challenging. In spite of the fact that there were clear

benefits to the PLC, the challenge of having an additional responsibility was daunting.

Gonzalo shared:

> In spite of how great the process has been, it has been difficult to plan for it when
> I already have so much going on at the school and at home. I work 10-12 hours a
> day and I don't know that I can keep being part of a PLC that requires my active

participation. As great as the process has been, I don't know that I can make it an additional responsibility that I take on. That for me has been a huge challenge.

Another issue that was a potential challenging to meeting as a PLC was keeping up with the rapid barrage of missives that are received from the district on an ongoing basis.

"We get so much stuff coming at us from every different department and every department feels that the work we need to do for them is the most important. But we have so much going on at our school site and we can't always drop everything we are doing to attend to these tasks. So for me, it's hard to participate in anything above and beyond the school day because I don't have the time and I don't know how one day will be different from the next day." (Korola)

FINDING 15: *Trust must be achieved within a PLC for the team to work effectively*

Several of the participants noted that they had taken the idea of a PLC back to their school sites only to be met with a great amount of resistance because of the trust factor. Nazar noted that his teaching staff was "reluctant to share best practice with each other because they simply don't trust one another. I'm trying to build that trust, but it's difficult." Borita agreed and stated that she had to do a lot of relational building to get her staff to participate in the PLCs she had established at her school site. She shared that her "staff struggled with trusting one another in the early stages, but once we established a sense of purpose for why we were committing to the work of the PLC they started buying into it." She added that she had to stress to the staff that the students "need to be the heart and soul of what the PLCs are about. If we don't put our students at the center of everything we do, we will never move forward."

As a group we had some minor struggles with trust at the onset of the process. We noticed that some of our more reluctant peers stopped coming to the team meetings and several team members felt that it may have been caused by issues of trust. Rowena asked, "Did you notice that those who spoke less dropped the meetings right away? Maybe they didn't have strong enough trust in us as a team." Marcia responded, "Well to be honest, it took me a while to open up to the group, and it wasn't because I didn't know you, it's just that I had to allow myself to both trust and be trusted as a participant." As a group we felt that trust was a challenge. We addressed and overcame that issue by starting all our meetings with the Check in Circle. The Check in Circle allowed us all as participants to check in, share what was going on in our lives and leave it there so that we could then move on to our business. Trusting in the group meant that we could share what we needed to share and release it in order to be connected as learners. The Check in Circle created a sense of trust and that sense of trust then allowed the function of the circle to achieve its intended effect of creating a cohesive team willing to take on risks to further group learning.

FINDING 16: *Effective resources, materials and content expert support are essential to the PLC process, but securing them is seen as a long-term and ongoing challenge.*

The group agreed that participating in a principal PLC should be a positive endeavor and not one that would create an additional, or exorbitant, amount of work for the principals. Additionally, all the participants felt that one of the greatest challenges was coming up with the resources and materials to have an effective PD for our group.

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As we participated in the action research group PLC meetings, the participants felt that

there was pressure to come up with meaningful activities. Rowena expressed, "If all I

had to do was come up with PD topics and activities, I could really be great at this, but

it's a lot of work to plan and then deliver these PD topics to one another. I mean, we

have some great staff in our district and the topics are fine, but this is what they do for a

living, why can't they make our PD more meaningful so we don't have to do it?" Marcia

added:

> The PD is fine, but it's just not that relevant to our work sometimes. Even if they
> provided the resources, but we held our own meeting we would be fine. Or
> maybe we can take a few hours a month to plan for the next meeting. At least
> that way we could look ahead at our calendars and plan something relevant and
> meaningful for the work that we need to do at that time. The district could then
> come in and support us instead of being leaders of our PD. I do think, however,
> that a huge challenge will be us coming up with the resources to have our own
> PD.

The resources that the participants were concerned about were mostly

connected to time and resources. An effective PLC takes time to plan and coordinate.

We found this out as a team when we were scheduling and rescheduling meetings.

Simply finding the time to meet was difficult. In addition, time also became a factor once

the team got started discussing a topic. As a team we could have spent a lot more time

discussing many different topics, but we had to consider our team member's time and

honor their availability so as to not add yet another layer to each person's workload.

The participants also faced some pressure when it came to finding materials such as

articles to read or protocols to use. Even though we were able to figure out what we

needed within the context of our learning, we discussed that the ongoing search for

quality materials could be an issue in maintaining the PLC active.

FINDING 17: *Content expert support must be present in an effective PLC*

Content expert support was another area that principals felt would be a challenge

for principals leading their own learning. As principals, we have directors who have

content area experts at their disposal to assist with planning and delivery of

professional development. A concern that participating principals had was that they

would have to develop their own content knowledge as well as prepare for PD. In

addition, they would be attending to the many responsibilities at the school site. Ana

shared:

> As much as I wish I could consider myself an expert, I am still a learner and while
> I feel that active learning is the only way to become a true learner and expert, I
> also know that I don't have a strong enough knowledge base in all areas to
> consider myself an expert. I have teachers at my school who have more expertise
> in their content areas and I want to be able to support those teachers as well. In
> order to do so, I have to develop this expertise and if we had access to a content
> expert, then we really could develop this model of PD into an ongoing and viable
> model of PD. We need time…time and content expertise or support.

Summary of Findings

The findings in this chapter are organized around the process of identifying

elements of a model of professional development for principals that takes their needs

into consideration. As the research indicates, professional learning communities were

the preferred method of professional development for principals (Ellie Drago-Severson,

2012; Piggot-Irvine, 2004), and this was also the case for the participants in this study.

Participants clearly felt a focus should be placed on PLCs and their role in developing a more effective and relevant method of PD for principals.

The effects of professional learning communities on principal professional development are best understood through the following findings. The participants in this action research study believed that a PLC, or small network of fellow principals, would be an ideal format for principal professional development. Although there were also some concerns connected to the implementation of a PLC for principal professional development, particularly with regards to time, trust, resources and support, and content expert support, the team agreed that a PLC effectively allows principals to work with peers to support their growth. The principals in this action research cycle agreed that a model PD would include self-selected networks and that a model agenda would include: Checking In, Review of Norms, Literature Review (for building of theoretical knowledge), Needs Assessment and Agenda Planning for subsequent meetings, and Individual Reflections.

The principals who participated in this research study also agreed that professional development is most effective when it takes the learner's needs into consideration and provides all participants opportunities to work together in a climate of trust. This professional development should also include learning about leadership as a construct, group work, a connection to standards for leaders. In spite of the fact that there were also challenges associated with the implementation of a PLC, particularly related to time, trust, resources and content expert support, the principals who participated in this study clearly agreed that professional learning communities would

help optimize their learning and provide them with opportunities to grow as learners

and leaders.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Principals influence school performance. They are the guiding force behind school policies, procedures, and practices that contribute to school achievement and student learning (Davis et al., 2005; Waters et al., 2003). Effective principals are considered an essential component of effective schools. In order for principals to continue to grow and develop as professionals, and leaders, they must be exposed to quality professional development that takes their needs into consideration (Blase, 2004; Davis et al., 2005). Although principals actively participate in professional development designed to promote the academic growth of their students and the professional development of their staff members, their needs as learners are not being met with any consistency (J. A. Grissom & Harrington, 2010a; Spanneut et al., 2012).

Statement of the Problem

The primary role of principals has shifted from managerial overseer to instructional leader. With this shift in responsibilities, principals need to develop professionally to handle the increase in instructional responsibilities (Davis et al., 2005; Horng et al., 2010; Walker, 2009). However, principals are not always active participants in developing their professional learning (J. Grissom et al., 2013; Horng et al., 2010; Walker, 2009). As a result, their professional development is not providing them with multiple opportunities to develop and grow as leaders and learners (Spanneut et al., 2012).

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Findings

This chapter contains the most important findings of this study with consideration to the existing body of literature to better understand the effects of professional development for experienced principals. This study also explored how professional development affects principal growth and development, and provides recommendations for effective models of principal professional development. I also discuss the impact that professional learning communities have on principal professional development. I examine the importance of these learning communities and also highlight the challenges and difficulties that principals experience as participants to determine the support they will need to further participate effectively within these learning communities. After discussing the limitations of the study and the implications for ongoing and further research, I provide recommendations for models of effective practice districts can utilize to support their principals as learners and leaders.

The purpose of this study was to bring together a team of experienced principals to work together as an action research team to engage in an iterative action research cycle to determine whether current models of professional development offered by their District were meeting their needs. In order to do so, we examined their professional development experiences and identified gaps in their learning. The team worked to identify any missing elements considered essential in creating a model of professional development that would better meet their identified needs. As an action research team we diagnosed a problem, read professional literature connected to the problem, planned

a course of action, took action, and evaluated our work together.   This evaluation took place in the form of group discussion, journal reflection and individual interviews.

Qualitative data collected from this study indicated that the current models of professional development in place in EDUSD do not meet the needs of principals. Results from this study showed that principals were not taking an active role in the planning of their professional development. As passive learning recipients, professional development offered by the District is not actively meeting their needs as leaders and learners. Initial findings from our action research team meetings indicated that principals would prefer to be active participants in terms of planning and participating in professional development. The principals in this study reported that they are more involved in their learning when they participate in the planning process of their professional development

Principals have a great responsibility to the schools that they serve, particularly to guide school policies and practices that directly contribute to and impact student learning (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008; Waters et al., 2003). Principals must actively engage in personal learning that prepares them to meet the responsibilities to their schools that they lead.   I hope that the findings of my study will impact the professional development of principals as active participants. The findings and results of the action research team indicated that principals perceive current models of professional development to lack elements they feel would make for stronger and more engaging professional development for them as participants.

Findings from our action research team meetings further suggested that

principals would like to engage models of professional development that cover fewer

topics in greater depth to make their learning and leading meaningful. Additionally,

participants expressed the value of working collaboratively with their peers in a model

of professional development, which includes trust, that identifies problems and works

on solutions to these problems. These findings align with the research, which indicates

that principals should work in collaboration with other principals to determine and

prescribe possible solutions to problems they face on a daily basis.

Implications of the Study

This study provided insight into what principals believe about professional

development provided to them by their Educational Instructional Command Center.

According to the principals who participated in this study, in planning for their learning

they assume active roles in participating in self-selected networks and are motivated to

engage in professional development that supports their self-perceived growth goals.

As the twelve participants who composed the action research team described,

many deficiencies exist in their current model of professional development. This study

sought to understand these shortcomings to determine what elements were missing to

recommend effective practices to include in the professional development of principals.

Existing research in the field of principal professional development supports the

results of this study. Effective PD for principals is a necessary and essential component

of the work that principals do on a daily basis. The results of the action research cycle

undertaken as part of this study indicate that changes and improvement in current models of professional development offered by the District are necessary to meet the numerous needs of principals. Active ongoing professional development for principals helps them connect to the standards for administrators so they can improve their practice, focus on student achievement, and improve school policies for students.

These major findings have significant implications for the future of professional development for school leaders, particularly for principals who are beyond their three-year induction period. With the added responsibility that principals have to serve as instructional leaders at their school sites, it is imperative to develop a greater understanding of what principals believe they need for professional development. Better professional development for principals translates into more effective leadership at the school site. These effects of leadership connect to principal professional growth as well as student academic achievement.

When addressing the effects of leadership on the professional development for educational leaders, the importance of collaboration and of a team-focused approach are essential to increased team efficacy. The development of self-managing teams that calibrate and collaborate to solve problems and make decisions requires a shift in traditional thinking on behalf of the organization in order to change existing organizational structures to better meet the needs of the participants (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2004; Trist, 1951). It is imperative that districts provide principals with opportunities to create self-sustaining and self-managing teams, with the support of district leaders that redefine and break away from traditional top-down management.

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These teams require autonomy to determine and direct their own learning based on their self-assessed needs.

Principals in this study indicated a need to have more local control when it comes to their professional development. Although some of the participants appreciated the professional development offered by the district, the majority felt that maintaining local control over their own learning would best meet their needs. Districts can support principals by allowing them to work as teams to determine their needs and plan for their own professional development. Principals in this study felt that a top-down approach to professional development was limiting their self-efficacy as leaders. In order for principals to develop as leaders, the district must be willing to change existing organizational structures and allow principals to develop self-managed teams that develop their own models of effective professional development.

Effective professional development for principals must provide them with meaningful opportunities to engage in new learning through collaboration and reflective inquiry with colleagues. The collaboration and inquiry provide them with time, follow-up support, and feedback from other successful principals which helps them become more efficient in their work (Lauer, Dean, Martin-Glenn, & Asensio, 2005; Piggot-Irvine, 2004). No longer can the professional development of principals be "the neglected stepchild of state and district professional development efforts. It must be standards-focused, sustained, intellectually rigorous, and embedded in the principal's workday" (Sparks, 2002, pp. 8–5). The importance of effective professional development for principals is evident and was addressed, discussed, and analyzed in the review of the

literature, the action research team meetings, and in all the findings throughout this study.

Limitations

This study provides meaningful insight into the professional development of principals; however, there are also limitations to consider.

Sample Size

Although I opened the opportunity to work as part of this action research group to the 160 principals in EICC4, a limited sample of twelve principals agreed to participate. The findings made by the action research group are limited to the experiences of eleven principals in EICC4 and may not reflect the experiences of principals district-wide or nationwide. The experiences of principals working in other EICCs or districts may be different depending on the models of professional development implemented within their districts. The eleven principals who participated in this study comprise approximately 7% of the principals in EICC4 and approximately 1.5% of the principals in the entire district.

Another limitation is the composition of the participants. All participants were elementary school principals and, as a result, these findings cannot be generalized for principals at the middle or high school level. Although three of the participants were principals at schools that span from Kindergarten to 8th grade, these findings do not necessarily reflect the professional development needs of middle school principals. The

three K-8th grade principal participants attend the district professional development facilitated for elementary (Kinder – 6th grade) school site principals.

Personal Bias

Despite my consistent effort to remove my personal biases throughout the study, it was difficult for me to refrain from including my personal assumptions and experiences as a participant. Although the process was a group endeavor with no established leader, I often felt that I had to step in and take the lead to keep the group moving forward.

Recommendations for Principal Professional Development

Recommendation 1 - *Provide principals with professional development they actively design and participate in via a PLC or study group that agrees on specific focus areas.*

The findings from this research study indicated that districts should provide principals with multiple opportunities to actively design and participate in models of professional development that include group study as an essential component. The participants in this study felt that designing their learning helped them engage in a deeper cycle of learning. In this study, we focused on the use of PLCs, as that is the study group model in use in our district. Studies on the professional development of principals indicate that principals prefer to work in small networks of colleagues where

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they work as a PLC to specify focus areas on which to work (National Staff Development Council, 2000; Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Spanneut et al., 2012). The principals in this study agreed with the research, but also shared that this was not happening in the professional development they have received from their district.

Professional learning communities that are well-implemented result in powerful learning outcomes for all participants (DuFour, 2010; DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005). Many researchers document the power of collaboration in education in their studies. Also, peers are a readily accessible professional group, which makes collaboration easy to accomplish. Throughout this study, the participants noted the power of peer interaction and collaboration. The participants in this study worked seamlessly and shared experiences, ideas, and growth with one another in a learning environment they designed. An additional benefit of a professional learning community is the sense of accountability brought upon by the group as they work on specific focus areas determined by the group (DuFour, 2010; Knowles, III, & Swanson, 2015; National Staff Development Council, 2000).

Recommendation 2 - *Create partnerships between district level administrators and principals, so principals have input in determining PD topics*

District level administrators such as superintendents, directors, and lead principals should work with principals to have them identify the learning they require to grow as leaders. Principals are provided with limited opportunities to engage in

professional development that takes their needs into consideration (Davis et al., 2005; Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Sparks, 2002). The participants in this survey, as well as the evidence gleaned from the research on professional development, agree that participants prefer to participate in professional development in which they provide input in terms of the topic selection (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Huffman & Jacobson, 2003; National Staff Development Council, 2000).

Recommendation 3 - *Have action research teams (PLCs) work on solving problems to share effective practices for solving these problems*

In spite of the fact that principals are often expected to lead collaborative teams of inquiry at their school sites as part of their professional development plans, principals rarely participate in this same cycle of inquiry (Spanneut et al., 2012). Study groups that actively work to identify problems and solutions to specific focus areas established by the group are a viable option for principal professional development. The power of collaboration for educational teams has its origins in Dufour and Eaker's work on Professional Learning Communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; DuFour et al., 2005). Professional communities allow principals to engage in meaningful and active problem-solving. The problem-solving process then allows them to work in collaboration with others to solve important educational problems and enhance their learning (Huffman & Jacobson, 2003; Spanneut et al., 2012; Sparks, 2002).

The power of collaboration is cited as essential to the work of principals

(Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], 2008; Piggot-Irvine, 2004;

Sparks, 2002). Collaborative problem solving, and the sharing of effective strategies are

two essential elements of professional development. Collaboration and sharing provide

learners with opportunities for both individual and group growth (Interstate School

Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], 2008). Effective professional development for

principals should always include opportunities for principals to work collaboratively

with their peers to discuss effective strategies and best practices to solve problems

identified by the team (Lauer et al., 2005; National Staff Development Council, 2000).

Professional learning communities allow participants to develop a communal learning

culture that in turn translates into effective practices affecting participant performance

and student achievement (DuFour, 2010; Lauer et al., 2005).

Recommendation 4 – *Align principal professional development with standards such as the ISLLC or CPSEL to connect personal growth to national standards*

The standards set forth by the School Leaders Licensure Consortium have

defined consistent and uniform expectations and standards for school leaders

throughout the nation. These eleven ISLLC standards address what principals need to

know and should do to lead their school effectively. These standards were designed to

promote the growth of school leaders to elevate the work of professional leaders to

create effective educational leaders (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

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[ISLLC], 2008; Spanneut et al., 2012). These standards set national expectations for school leaders and are recommended for use because they establish what principals should do and what their expectations are as leaders (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], 2008; National Staff Development Council, 2000).

The ISLLC standards are in use by over 40 states, and California has adapted these standards for its school leaders to set high expectations for leaders. These expectations are "attainable over time with quality preparation, induction, and ongoing professional learning" (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014, p. 3). In spite of the fact that the ISLLC standards and the CPSEL standards were designed to promote educational leader excellence, neither of these standards was used consistently in the professional development experienced by the principals in this study. The principals in this study agree with the findings of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing that professional development of principals should align with these standards.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research in the field of principal professional development can build on this study and contribute to its development in the future. Research could be conducted on a larger scale to develop a greater and more global awareness of the needs of principals in different Districts, County Offices of Education, cities and states. Conducting research on a larger scale can help validate the results of this study as well as contribute to the overall effectiveness of principal professional development. Also, a

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task force composed of principals could work with education agencies to create a system of principal evaluation. This evaluation system should take into consideration how well principal training is connecting the professional development of principals to the ISLLC standards for school leaders. In doing so, principals can also work to develop action plans, or improvement plans, connected to these standards.

Further research could also be conducted via quantitative and qualitative methods with principals within larger geographic areas to learn more about the types of professional development they prefer. This research should also consider the preferred professional development method of delivery. Including principals in this study could directly impact and make a difference in principals' work performance, particularly since studies such as this one have determined that principals feel more connected to their professional development and work performance when they provide input about their professional learning, related to both content and format. The results of these types of studies can help identify different models of PD in different districts to determine how other districts are professionally developing their principals. These professional development programs can then be evaluated for best, as well as, effective practices.

Additional research could also be conducted on principal professional development in order to determine if aligning what principals say they need (content) to the manner in which they learn it (format) makes a difference in their professional preparation, student achievement, and school success. By connecting the professional development of principals to student and school achievement, districts can determine

the effectiveness of their professional development models connected to student success.

Conclusion and Summary

The results of this study on the professional development of experienced principals suggest that current models of professional development for principals are not meeting their needs. The principals in this study shared a preference for learning in Professional Learning Communities with other principals to share effective and best practices in order solve problems that arise in their daily work. These principals also stressed the importance of working together with others in self-selected groups to develop better, and more, effective strategies to address issues that affect their schools. They also shared a preference for working with others to learn and grow from their shared collaboration so as to have a greater impact on the teaching and learning at their schools. Whether principals received training from their districts or created opportunities for their learning, they stressed the importance of connecting principal professional development to standards such as the ISLLC or the CPSEL. These standards create consistent expectations for school leaders across the country (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2014; Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC], 2008; Mitgang & Maerhoff, 2008). Attention must be paid to the professional development of principals, especially in light of the fact that the effects of principal leadership are essential to effective teaching practices and the success of students (Jackson & McDermott, 2012; LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Stronge et al., 2008).

APPENDIX A – Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questions – Please answer these demographic questions that will provide information about your educational and professional background:

1. What is your gender?

    a) Male
    b) Female

2. In which school setting do you work?

    a) Elementary
    b) Span School (K-8)
    c) Middle School
    d) High School
    e) Other

3. How many years have you served in the following positions, if at all?

    a) Principal _____ year(s)
    b) Assistant Principal _____ year(s)
    c) Assistant Principal, Elementary Instructional Specialist (APEIS) _____ year(s)
    d) Other District Administrator _____ _____ year(s)

4. What year did you first become a principal? _____

5. What year did you become a principal at your current school site? _____

6. How many years of teaching experience have you had previous to becoming a principal?

    a) Number of years teaching experience in LAUSD _____ year(s)
    b) Number of years teaching experience in other districts _____ year(s)

7. Which of the following advanced degrees have you earned?

     a) Master's Degree in Education?
     b) Master's Degree not in Education?
     c) Additional Degree and additional graduate work?
     d) Doctor of Education (EdD)?
     e) Doctor of Education (PhD)?
     f) Other (please list) _____

8. What is your current school enrollment?

     a) 200 or less
     b) 201 – 400
     c) 401 – 600
     d) 601 – 800
     e) 801 – 1000
     f) 1001 – 1200
     g) 1201 – 1400
     h) 1401 – 1600
     i) 1601 – 1800
     j) 1801 – 2000
     k) 2001 or more

9. Are you interested in participating in an action research group that will serve to reflect on and develop principal professional development practice?

     a) Yes, please contact me so that I can participating in this action research cycle
     b) Maybe, but I'd like more information regarding the process. Please contact me to provide me with more details
     c) Not at this time

APPENDIX B – PD Questionnaire

Name: _____ Date: _____

For the Professional Development topics in which you participated, please indicate whether it was a topic that you felt you needed to enhance your own, specific professional practice or whether it was a general session provided by the District for all principals.

PD Activity		Have you participated in this PD activity?		Was this PD activity district provided?		Did you feel you needed this PD to enhance your practice?	
1.	Peer Coaching	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
2.	Study Groups	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
3.	Critical Friends Group	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
4.	Professional Learning Community (PLC)	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
5.	Classroom Walkthroughs PD	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
6.	Using Data to Lead Change	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
7.	Action Research Projects	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
8.	Reflecting on Student Work	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
9.	ELD and Master Plan for ELs	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
10.	Common Core State Standards – ELA	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
11.	Common Core State Standards – Math	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
12.	Special Education	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
13.	Instructional Leadership	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
14.	Operations and Operational Issues	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
15.	Staff Relations/ Staff Discipline	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
16.	School Finances/ Budget Development	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
17.	Teacher Evaluation	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
18.	Student Discipline	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
19.	Parent Involvement	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
20.	Communicating with Stakeholders	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
21.	Other: Please specify	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

Please reflect on how well you feel your participation in any of the PD activities directly enhanced your professional growth. Please include as much information as possible.

Peer Coaching
 ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
 ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
 ☐ I would like to attend a PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Study Groups
 ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
 ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
 ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Critical Friends Group (CFG)
 ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
 ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
 ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Professional Learning Community (PLC)
   ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
   ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
   ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Classroom Walkthrough PD
   ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
   ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
   ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Using Data to Lead Change
   ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
   ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
   ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Action Research Projects
- ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
- ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
- ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic

Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Reflecting on Student Work
- ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
- ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
- ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic

Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

ELD and Master Plan for ELs
- ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
- ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
- ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic

Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Common Core State Standards – English Language Arts (ELA)
  ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
  ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
  ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Common Core State Standards – Mathematics
  ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
  ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
  ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Special Education
  ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
  ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
  ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Instructional Leadership
- ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
- ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
- ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic

Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Operations and Operational Issues
- ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
- ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
- ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic

Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Staff Relations/Staff Discipline
- ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
- ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
- ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic

Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

School Finances/Budget Development
    ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
    ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
    ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Teacher Evaluation
    ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
    ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
    ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Progressive Discipline
    ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
    ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
    ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Student Discipline
    ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
    ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
    ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Parent Involvement
    ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
    ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
    ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Communicating with Stakeholders
    ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
    ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
    ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

Other: Please specify _____
    ☐ The PD was provided to me by my district
    ☐ I selected to attend the PD on my own
    ☐ I would like to attend PD on this topic
Please write a description of how the PD enhanced your professional growth:

To: Mr. Martin A. Robertson
           Superintendent of Instruction, EICC4
From: Francisco J. Serrato
           UCLA Doctoral Candidate
Date: February 4, 2015
Subject: Research Project at Educational Institute Command Center 4

Statement of the Problem:
Examination of the literature on the professional development of principals concludes that networking and self-selected Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are the most valuable for active principal learning. In spite of these findings, the majority of principal professional development does not take place in networks or self-selected PLCs. Minimal research has been conducted on the outcomes of principal professional development that takes place in these networks or self-selected PLCs.

Purpose, Goals and Need for the Project:
The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of experienced principals (for the purpose of this study, experienced is defined as having three or more years of experience) on current models of principal professional development.   Specifically the project will examine the professional development needs of experienced principals as compared to the current professional development that they receive from the district. I am interested in investigating the use of networks and self-selected Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in developing and driving the professional development of principals. The outcomes of this study will help inform the development of principal professional development best suited to the needs of acting principals.

Research Questions:
This study will attempt to answer the following research questions:
1. What are the similarities and differences between what principals say they need for professional development and the PD they actually receive from their school district?
2. How does participating in a PLC for principal professional development address principals' perceived needs for their own growth and support?
3. What challenges are experienced when implementing a PLC for principal professional development?

Research Methods:
The above goals will be accomplished using the following activities:
- Qualitative survey of principals with three or more years experience
- One-on-one interviews with principals
- Action research group meetings of principals
- Responses to reflective questions by principals participating in the study

Principals from EICC4 agree to work jointly with primary researcher, Francisco J. Serrato, to construct the project, gather data and analyze findings and suggestions.

Timeline for the project:
Winter 2015   Conduct survey, focus groups, interviews and reflective questions

Winter 2015   Begin data analysis and action research group meetings, one-on-one interviews, and reflective questions

Spring 2015   Report on results of study provided to EICC4

This MOU is not intended to create any legally binding obligations on either partner but, rather, is intended to facilitate discussions regarding general areas of cooperation. This MOU is at-will and may be modified by mutual consent of authorized officials from ESUSD. This MOU shall become effective upon signature by Mr. Martin A. Robertson, Instructional Superintendent of EICC4, and will remain in effect until modified or terminated by any one of the partners by mutual consent.

Each party represents that the individuals signing this MOU have the authority to sign on its behalf in the capacity indicated.

SIGNATURES:

Signature: _____, EICC4   Date: _____
            (Martin A. Robertson, Superintendent of Instruction)

Signature: _____, Researcher   Date:_____
            (Francisco J. Serrato)

APPENDIX E – Informed Consent

Informed Consent form for Principals

University of California, Los Angeles,

CONSENT TO PARTICPATE IN RESEARCH

Principal Professional Development and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
_____

You are asked to participate in an action research study conducted by Francisco J. Serrato, Principal Investigator. You were selected to as a possible participant in this study because of your position as a principal with three years experience in Educational Service Center East. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the professional development needs of experienced principals as compared to the current professional development that they receive from the district. I am interested in investigating the use of voluntary Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in developing and driving the professional development of principals.

Please note that they purpose of this study is to investigate the needs of experienced principals and that it will not be evaluative in any way. As a researcher, I am interested in the professional development needs of principals as related to current models of professional development. Your identity will be kept confidential through the entire process.

What will happen if I participate in this study?

For this study, I am asking you to voluntarily participate and contribute to the collection of data related to principal professional development needs. The following research questions will guide the collection and analysis of data:
1. What are the similarities and differences between what principals say they need for professional development and the PD they actually receive from their school district?
2. How does participating in a PLC model for principal professional development address principals' perceived needs for their own growth and support?
3. What challenges are experienced when implementing a PLC model for principal professional development?

As a participant you will participate in four action group meetings designed to: a) establish the process of documenting your perceptions of PD and the action research process in reflective journals; b) identify problems at your school that you feel can be addressed by engaging in an action research cycle of collective inquiry and growth; c) review relevant literature on the PLC process; d) reflect on the process of engaging in a PLC; and e) make recommendations for future principal PD.

The process will include 6 action research group meetings that will run approximately 90 minutes each. In addition, participants will work on their reflective journals outside of the group meetings (approximately one hour per month). In addition, each participant will participate in a two 30-minute one-on-one interviews with the researcher. All action research group work will take place after participant's workdays.

Is my participation voluntary?

As research participant, you will not be compensated for your participation, and your participation is completely voluntary.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts associated with your voluntary participation in this study.

What are the potential benefits if I participate, if any?

The results of this research may contribute to the improvement of professional development models currently implemented within the district. You will also benefit from the support and collaboration of colleagues and peers in a confidential and non-evaluative setting.

The results of this research may also add to the professional body of knowledge on the self-perceived needs of principals as related to their professional growth and development.

Will I receive any payment for participating in this study?

You will not receive any monetary compensation for your participation.

Will my information and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information obtained as a result of this study and that may possible identify you will be kept strictly confidential. It will only be disclosed with your permission or as required by law. All individual identifiers will be destroyed once the data has been coded. Confidentiality will further be maintained by securing all data in a locked and secured file cabinet and on encrypted hard drives until the end of the study.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw your consent at any time discontinue participation at any time without fear of any negative consequences, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

Identification of Investigator
Please contact Francisco J. Serrato, Principal Investigator, if you have any further questions or concerns at 323-945-2133 or at fjserrato@gmail.com.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

I understand the procedures described above. I have been given a copy of this form. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study.

_____
Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   **Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in the research study.

_____
Name of Investigator

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   **Date**

APPENDIX F – Participant Recruitment Letter

January 26, 2015

Hello Colleagues,

I am sending you this note as a principal colleague and a doctoral student enrolled in the UCLA Educational Leadership Program. I am approaching you having received prior approval from UCLA, EDUSD and our Educational Institute Command Center 4 Superintendent. I first started the doctoral program with the hopes that I would be able to positively contribute to helping principals face the work that we do on an everyday basis and help develop a plan of action that might allow us to more effectively do our jobs. For the past two years, I have studied the educational school system and the problem of principal professional development. Through my studies and research I have found that there needs to be more of a focus on differentiated and self-selected principal professional development. One way this can be achieved is through differentiated learning using a model of self-selected Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This study is not aimed at beginning principals, but at experienced principals, who for the purpose of this study are identified as having three or more years experience in the role of principal.

The nature of this research will involve a commitment from you for the next three months. Should you agree to volunteer to be part of this study, you will be part of a team of accomplished principals, who will:

- reflect on current models of principal professional development and connect that to design an action plan for principal professional development
- participate in an ongoing Principal Professional Learning Community (PPLC) action research group with principals to reflect on our current models of PD and engage in discourse with other principals to determine if alternate models of PD might better meet our needs
- connect the work we do every day with state and national standards in order to determine if a specific model of principal professional development is best suited to meet the needs of principals with three or more years of experience

I have attached a proposed timeline for our project outlining the time commitment. You are under no obligation to accept. However, if you do agree to participate in the study through its entirety, you will receive my undying gratitude, acknowledgment in my dissertation, and a $100 gift card of your choosing. I will be contacting you in the next few days to speak with you specifically about the project. In the meantime, I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration in participating in this action research project.

Thanks a million,

Frank

APPENDIX G – Recruitment Script

Recruitment Script

Hello, this is Frank Serrato, fellow principal in EICC4.

I am currently conducting an action research project to fulfill the requirements for my Doctorate at UCLA. My project examines the professional development of principals, with a particular focus on the principals in EICC4. Research has shown that principals best learn certain skills while working with fellow principals. Your name was randomly selected to participate in the study because you have been a principal with more than three years experience and are no longer considered a novice principal. Our EICC4 superintendent is fully aware of the study but does not know specifically who will be participating. The results of the study will be used by our EICC to help shape the way that principals receive professional development. Please know that your participation in the research is completely voluntary and that you are under no obligation to participate.

The duration of the project will be from February 2015 to April 2015. In that time you will work with a group of principals who will share their professional development needs compared to the professional development offered by the district. In addition we will also meet in groups to discuss specific professional development needs and the structure of Professional Learning Communities and whether or not they promote a greater level of collaborative learning for participants. Additionally we will discuss the challenges in implementing a Professional Learning Community.

You will spend minimal time away from your school site if you participate in this study. Your time commitment would be a few hours a month after work in order to work with the focus group. In these groups we will address concerns, professional development needs of experienced principals, Professional Learning Communities, and your perceptions of all these topics.

If you think that you would like to be a part of this study, I would like to set up a time to meet with you to go over all of the specifics and to get your consent.

APPENDIX H – Proposed Timeline

Action Research – Principal Professional Development and Professional Learning
Communities

Prior to first meeting	Complete a questionnaire that determines how connected we feel to professional development that we have received from the district, or other sources.
February 12, 2015	Participate in an introductory meeting where we will discuss current models of principal professional development and compare those models to a model we feel might best meet our needs. Review data from the initial questionnaire.
February 26, 2015	Review the guiding principles of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and participate in an action research cycle where we connect PLCs to our questionnaire findings in order to determine the effectiveness of PLCs in meeting our professional development needs. Work to develop a PLC cycle connected to models/topics of PD we feel will better meet our needs
March 12, 2015	Conduct a PLC connected to the topics established on February 26, 2015. Work through an actual PLC meeting. Plan as a team for the PLC meeting on March 26, 2015.
March 26, 2015	Conduct a follow up PLC connected to the topics established on March 12, 2015. Work through an actual PLC meeting. Plan as a team for the PLC meeting on April 9, 2015.
April 9, 2015	Conduct a follow up PLC connected to the topics established on March 26, 2015. Work through an actual PLC meeting. Plan as a team for the PLC meeting on April 9, 2015.
April 23, 2015	Reflect on the entire cycle as a group.
Throughout	Throughout the process I will also conduct one-on-one interviews with all participants that will reflect on the process in order to determine the effectiveness of our meetings and gather insight into participants' viewpoints.

*All meetings will last approximately 1½ to 2 hours and will be scheduled after our workday
(probably 5:00 p.m.) at sites that we can determine once the team is formed. We can meet at
one another's schools or we can designate one school where we can meet for the duration of
the cycle.*

Principal Professional Development

Thank you so much for participating in this study. As you know, I am interested in principal professional development and the perceptions of experienced principals connected to their own perceived needs of professional development as compared to the PD they receive from the district. Your willingness to participate in this action research group will provide our group with an incredible amount of learning as we begin to understand the models of principal professional development that better prepare principals for their daily work. Thank you again.

1. Tell me about yourself.
   a. How long have you been a principal?
   b. Is this your first assignment?
   c. Have you worked at different EICCs? Local Districts?
2. In terms of your ongoing professional development as a principal?
   a. What PD topics do you feel have been most helpful for you as a principal?
      i. Were these topics provided to you by your EICC?
      ii. If so, why were they helpful?
      iii. What do you think would have made them more helpful?
      iv. If not, where did you receive the PD?
   b. Do you feel that the district is providing you with PD that you need to help you fulfill your current administrative role?
      i. If so, please explain.
      ii. What do you feel is similar about the PD you feel you need as compared to the actual PD you receive?
      iii. What do you feel is different from the PD you feel as you need as compared to the actual PD you receive?
      iv. What are the major similarities?
      v. What are the major differences
3. I would like to know more about your perceptions of the process we have undertaken as a group.
   a. Were you surprised at some of the topics that were brought up by the other participating principals?
   b. Were you surprised at some of the topics that you brought up/considered after hearing the others?
   c. Do you feel that current models of PD as offered by the district are adequately meeting your needs as an active principal?
   d. Do you feel that there is a disconnect between the PD you receive from the district and the PD that you feel you need to do your job effectively?

APPENDIX J – Interview Protocol 2

Principal Professional Development and PLCs

Thank you so much for your continued participation in this study. As you know, we have been discussing principal professional development and the perceptions of experienced principals connected to their own perceived needs of professional development as compared to the PD they receive from the district. Your willingness to participate in this action research group has provided our group with an incredible amount of learning as we begin to understand the models of principal professional development that better prepare principals for their daily work. Thank you again.

1. I would like to know more about your perceptions of the process we have previously undertaken as a group.
   a. What do you think of Professional Learning Communities?
   b. Did participating in an organic and group driven PLC shift/change your perception of PLCs in any way?
   c. Do you think that the PLC model for principal professional development addressed your perceived needs for your own growth and support as a principal?
   d. If so, why?
   e. If not, is there a model you feel would be most beneficial?

2. In terms of your ongoing growth and support as a principal,
   a. What part of the PLC process most supported you as an active learner?
   b. Did you feel supported by the group?
   c. Do you feel that the PLC model can be effective?
   d. Would you change the composition of the group or the manner in which it is selected?
   e. What would you keep/change about the PLC?

3. As a participant,
   a. As a participant in this action research group, what learning has been most valuable for you as a learner?
   b. Does this affect the manner in which you will shape your future learning?
   c. Does this affect the way in which you will advocate for your own learning in the future?

4. In terms of the challenges,
   a. What do you feel were the biggest challenges you experienced as you developed and implemented a PLC model for principal PD?
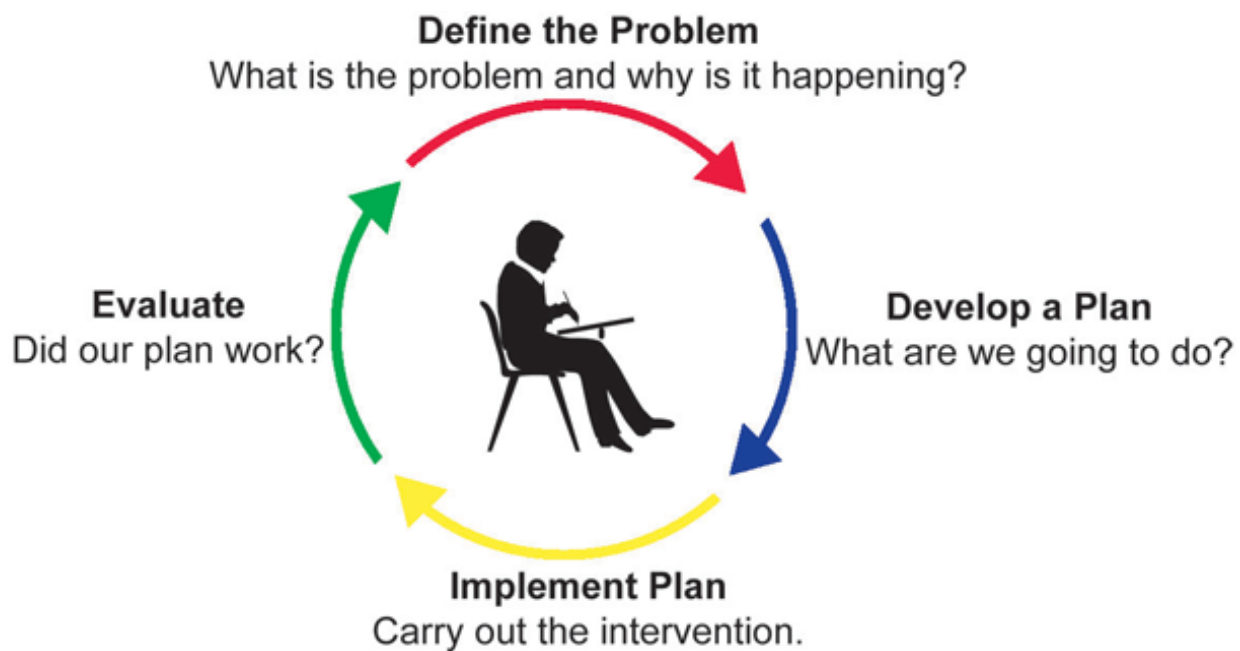   b. Were the challenges mostly related to your personal or more related to the group? Please explain.

5. Reflect on the PLC process
   a. Was the process meaningful to you?
   b. Did it enhance your learning and your ability to do your job effectively?
   c. Did you feel that it applied to you in your current level of expertise?
   d. Are the challenges worth the end product (principal group learning)?
   e. Do you think the process is valuable/meaningful enough to be implemented district wide?
      i. Why?
      ii. Why not?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to share about the principal PLC in which you have participated?

APPENDIX K – Action Research Model

Action Research Model, adapted from G. Susman (Susman, 1983)

APPENDIX L – ESUSD Problem Solving Protocol

Define the Problem
What is the problem and why is it happening?

Evaluate
Did our plan work?

Develop a Plan
What are we going to do?

Implement Plan
Carry out the intervention.

The ESUSD Problem Solving Protocol

APPENDIX M – Getting to the Core of It

Getting to the Core of It

Respect	Family	Collaboration	Integrity	Efficiency
Diversity	Teamwork	Community	Honesty	Consistency
Passion	Risk-Taking	Fun	Safety	Honesty
Integrity	People	Ownership	Balance	Innovation
Commitment	Accountability	Diversity	Purpose	Empowerment
Responsibility	Quality	Leadership	Professionalism	Love

California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders
Inherent in these standards is a strong commitment to cultural diversity and the use of technology as a powerful tool.

Standard 1

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

- Facilitate the development of a shared vision for the achievement of all students based upon data from multiple measures of student learning and relevant qualitative indicators.
- Communicate the shared vision so the entire school community understands and acts on the school's mission to become a standards-based education system.
- Use the influence of diversity to improve teaching and learning.
- Identify and address any barriers to accomplishing the vision.
- Shape school programs, plans, and activities to ensure that they are integrated, articulated through the grades, and consistent with the vision.
- Leverage and marshal sufficient resources, including technology, to implement and attain the vision for all students and all subgroups of students.

Standard 2

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

- Shape a culture in which high expectations are the norm for each student as evident in rigorous academic work.
- Promote equity, fairness, and respect among all members of the school community.
- Facilitate the use of a variety of appropriate content-based learning materials and learning strategies that recognize students as active learners, value reflection and inquiry, emphasize the quality versus the amount of student application and performance, and utilize appropriate and effective technology.
- Guide and support the long-term professional development of all staff consistent with the ongoing effort to improve the learning of all students relative to the content standards.
- Provide opportunities for all members of the school community to develop and use skills in collaboration, distributed leadership, and shared responsibility.
- Create an accountability system grounded in standards-based teaching and learning.
- Utilize multiple assessments to evaluate student learning in an ongoing process focused on improving the academic performance of each student.

Standard 3

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

- Sustain a safe, efficient, clean, well-maintained, and productive school environment that nurtures student learning and supports the professional growth of teachers and support staff.
- Utilize effective and nurturing practices in establishing student behavior management systems.
- Establish school structures and processes that support student learning.
- Utilize effective systems management, organizational development, and problem-solving and decision-making techniques.
- Align fiscal, human, and material resources to support the learning of all subgroups of students.
- Monitor and evaluate the program and staff.
- Manage legal and contractual agreements and records in ways that foster a professional work environment and secure privacy and confidentiality for all students and staff.

California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

Inherent in these standards is a strong commitment to cultural diversity and the use of technology as a powerful tool.

Standard 4

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

- Recognize and respect the goals and aspirations of diverse family and community groups.
- Treat diverse community stakeholder groups with fairness and respect.
- Incorporate information about family and community expectations into school decision-making and activities.
- Strengthen the school through the establishment of community, business, institutional, and civic partnerships.
- Communicate information about the school on a regular and predictable basis through a variety of media.
- Support the equitable success of all students and all subgroups of students by mobilizing and leveraging community support services.

Standard 5

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by modeling a personal code of ethics and developing professional leadership capacity.

- Model personal and professional ethics, integrity, justice, and fairness, and expect the same behaviors from others.
- Protect the rights and confidentiality of students and staff.
- Use the influence of office to enhance the educational program, not personal gain.
- Make and communicate decisions based upon relevant data and research about effective teaching and learning, leadership, management practices, and equity.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the standards-based curriculum and the ability to integrate and articulate programs throughout the grades.
- Demonstrate skills in decision-making, problem solving, change management, planning, conflict management, and evaluation.
- Reflect on personal leadership practices and recognize their impact and influence on the performance of others.
- Engage in professional and personal development.
- Encourage and inspire others to higher levels of performance, commitment, and motivation.
- Sustain personal motivation, commitment, energy, and health by balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

Standard 6

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

- Work with the governing board and district and local leaders to influence policies that benefit students and support the improvement of teaching and learning.
- Influence and support public policies that ensure the equitable distribution of resources and support for all subgroups of students.
- Ensure that the school operates consistently within the parameters of federal, state, and local laws, policies, regulations, and statutory requirements.
- Generate support for the school by two-way communication with key decision-makers in the school community.
- Collect and report accurate records of school performance.
- View oneself as a leader of a team and also as a member of a larger team.
- Open the school to the public and welcome and facilitate constructive conversations about how to improve student learning and achievement.

APPENDIX O – ISLLC Leadership Standards

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Leadership Standards

Standard 1: Vision and Mission

An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

Functions:

A. Collaboratively develops, implements, and promotes a shared vision and mission for quality teaching and learning
B. Collects and uses data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning
C. Creates and implements plans to achieve goals
D. Promotes continuous and sustainable improvement
   Monitors and evaluates progress and revises plans
E. Acts in ways that consistently reflect the school's/district's vision, mission, and values

Standard 2: Instructional Capacity

An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by enhancing instructional capacity.

Functions:

A. Recruits and hires effective teachers and other professional staff
B. Develops individual and collective capacity of staff
C. Ensures on-going and differentiated professional learning
D. Supports staff with human, financial, and technological resources
E. Employs research-anchored and valid systems of performance management
F. Buffers learning and teaching from disruptive forces
G. Provides emotional support to staff teachers and other professional staff

Standard 3: Instruction

An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting instruction that maximizes student learning.

Functions:

A. Maintains a culture of high expectations and challenge
B. Ensures a focus on authenticity and relevance in instruction
C. Ensures that instruction is anchored on best understandings of child development
D. Ensures strengths-based approaches to learning and teaching
E. Ensures the use of effective pedagogy to close learning gaps F. Provides ongoing, salient, informative, and actionable feedback to teachers and other professional staff
F. Ensures the use of pedagogy that treats students as individuals and promotes self-esteem
G. Ensures the presence of culturally congruent pedagogy and assessment
H. Monitors instruction and instructional time
I. Employs technology in the service of teaching and learning

Standard 4: Curriculum and Assessment
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting robust and meaningful curricula and assessment programs.
Functions:
- A. Ensures program rigor
- B. Ensures culturally relevant curricula and assessments
- C. Maximizes opportunity to learn
- D. Ensures authentic learning and assessment experiences
- E. Emphasizes assessment systems congruent with understandings of child development and standards of measurement
- F. Ensures the use of learning experiences that enhance the enjoyment of learning

Standard 5: Community of Care for Students
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting the development of an inclusive school climate characterized by supportive relationships and a personalized culture of care.
Functions:
- A. Ensures the formation of a culture defined by trust
- B. Ensures that each student is known, valued, and respected
- C. Ensures that students are enmeshed in a safe, secure, emotionally protective, and healthy environment
- D. Ensures that each student has an abundance of academic and social support
- E. Ensures that each student is an active member of the school

Standard 6: Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting professionally normed communities for teachers and other professional staff.
Functions:
- A. Develops productive relationships and trust
- B. Nurtures a commitment to shared goals
- C. Provides for collaborative work
- D. Facilitates shared ownership
- E. Develops collaborative leadership skills
- F. Promotes a climate of collective efficacy
- G. Fosters and supports the growth of trust
- H. Nurtures a culture of shared accountability

Standard 7: Communities of Engagement for Families

An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by promoting communities of engagement for families and other stakeholders.
Functions:
- A. Promotes understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources
- B. Nurtures a sense of approachability and sustains positive relationships with families and caregivers
- C. Builds and sustains productive relationships with community partners in the government, non-profit, and private sectors
- D. Advocates for policies and resources for the community
- E. Understands and engages with community needs, priorities, and resources
- F. Communicates regularly and openly with families and stakeholders in the wider community

Standard 8: Operations and Management

An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring effective and efficient management of the school or district to promote student social and academic learning.
Functions:
- A. Develops and demonstrates well-honed interpersonal skills Manages student behavior with a focus on learning
- B. Ensures effective leadership throughout the school or district
- C. Crafts and connects management operations, policies, and resources to the
- D. Vision and values of the school
- E. Monitors and evaluates all aspects of school or district operations for effect and
- F. Impact
- G. Ensures the implementation of data systems that provide actionable information
- H. Uses technology at the school or district to improve operations
- I. Manages organizational politics with an eye on school or district values and mission
- J. Enables others to understand and support relevant laws and policies
- K. Acts as a steward of public funds
- L. Develops and manages relationships with the district office or the school board

Standard 9: Ethical Principles and Professional Norms

An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by adhering to ethical principles and professional norms.
Functions:
- A. Nurtures the development of schools that place children at the heart of education
- B. Acts in an open and transparent manner
- C. Maintains a sense of self-awareness and attends to his or her own learning
- D. Works to create productive relationships with students, staff, parents, and members of the extended school community
- E. Maintains a sense of visibility and is approachable to all stakeholders
- F. Acts as a moral compass for the school or district
- G. Safeguards the values of democracy, equity, justice, community, and diversity

Standard 10: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development of an equitable and culturally responsive school.
Functions:
  A. Ensures equity of access to social capital and institutional support
  B. Fosters schools as affirming and inclusive places
  C. Advocates for children, families, and caregivers
  D. Attacks issues of student marginalization; deficit-based schooling; and limiting assumptions about gender, race, class, and special status
  E. Promotes the ability of students to participate in multiple cultural environments
  F. Promotes understanding, appreciation, and use of diverse cultural, ecological, social, political, and intellectual resources

Standard 11: Continuous School Improvement
An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring the development of a culture of continuous school improvement.
Functions:
  A. Assesses, analyzes, and anticipates emerging trends to shape school or district decision making
  B. Initiates and manages system-wide change
  C. Enables others to engage productively with change experiences
  D. Navigates change in the midst of ambiguity and competing demands and interests
  E. Promotes a culture of data-based inquiry and continuous learning
  F. Maintains a systems perspective and promotes coherence across all dimensions of the school or district
  G. Promotes a culture of collective direction, shared engagement, and mutual accountability

National
School
Reform
Faculty

Harmony
Education
Center   www.nsrfharmony.org

Check In Circle

Developed by JoAnn Dowd

Check In Circle allows folks to transition from life outside to being present at a meeting or CFG.

Process
Sitting in a circle, each person takes a turn sharing "where they are" to whatever degree they feel comfortable, or they can pass. Others do not respond. (1-2 minutes each)

Suggested Adaptations
- Good Thing, Bad Thing: Each person says a good thing going on in their life and then a not so good thing.
- Fill In the Blank: Everyone is asked to respond to a statement, such as "What comes up for me when we start to talk about what equity, diversity and democracy is (blank) "

APPENDIX Q – Reflective Journal Prompt

After every meeting we will reflect on the process and our learning for the day. We will take 5-7 minutes to do a quickwrite via our Google Docs reflective journal at the following URL: http://bit.ly/principalPDandPLCreflection

Principal PD and PLCs – Reflective Journal

Thank you so much for your participation and for the work you do on a daily basis for the students of Estos Diablos Unified. I appreciate your efforts! Thank you for getting out there and making a difference!

Name

Date

What was valuable for you in today's process?

Please reflect on the process as well as your learning.

Do you think the work we did today will help improve your practice?

Is there anything we did not discuss that you would like brought up at our next meeting?

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