PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS:

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE DISTINGUISHING COMPONENTS

IN SMALL NEBRASKA SCHOOLS

by

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

"Continuous learning is not an option for educators; it is a mandatory and professional responsibility."

Adam Urbanski
Vice President
American Federation of
Teachers
July 28, 1988

Context of the Problem

Professional development, defined by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL, 1999), "is the process of improving staff skills and competencies needed to produce outstanding educational results for students." While it is clear that professional development is essential, the actual implementation of strong, sustainable programs that drive achievement of student learning goals is a huge endeavor. Few educators would deny that professional development in most school districts has had a small, ineffective role in the professional lives of teachers and little impact on student learning (Hawyley & Rosenholtz, 1984). Determining the most productive and humane means for continued school renewal at the local level requires forethought, clarity, and planning.

Many would agree with Michael Fullan, who maintained, "the greatest problem faced by school districts and schools is not resistance to innovation, but the fragmentation, overload, and incoherence resulting from the uncritical acceptance of too many different innovations" (Sparks & Hirsch, 1997). As increasing demands are put upon teachers and schools by state departments of education, school boards, and parents, we must continue to ask how the needs of students can be met most efficiently and

effectively (Lieberman, 1995). Darling-Hammond (1999) supported this belief by stating the clear and essential need for rethinking teacher education in the twenty-first century. Her stance is that the capacities today's teachers "need in order to succeed at teaching more challenging content to more diverse students" will only be achieved by greater investments in teacher development (p. 221). The past fifteen years have seen a steady movement toward increased accountability through standards-based education in twenty-first century schools. Sparks noted that pressure for higher test scores and other accountability measures have greatly increased in this era (2002). Teachers play a greater role in designing assessments and differentiated instructional strategies in today's classroom, than ever before (Yinger, 1999). Roth characterized the 1990s as the "age of standards" in the educational forum, thus pushing educational leaders to rethink traditional staff development practices (1996).

According to Killion (1999), there is great recognition today that sustained, high-quality staff development is essential if all students are to achieve at high levels. Professional development is necessary for teachers and administrators at all levels so that they can learn new roles and succeed in them. Like practitioners in other professional fields, educators must keep abreast of their field's emerging knowledge and be prepared to use it to continually redefine their conceptual and craft skills (Guskey, 2000). Darling-Hammond and Ball (1997) reported on several studies that concluded teacher expertise was the most important factor in determining student achievement. In this period of increased accountability in schools, professional development must affect the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of individual teachers, administrators, and other school employees. It must also alter the cultures and structures of the organizations in which

those individuals work. Research confirms what educators have always known, the better the teacher, the more successful the student (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

Many large school districts rely on curriculum directors and other administrators to identify professional development priorities and opportunities for staff members. There is frequently a well-designed and organized professional growth plan for their teachers. Often times, the school calendar and policies will even reflect the staff development activities within the district. Conversely, small districts may not have such a well-developed or focused approach to assist teachers in improving their instructional expertise. Supporting ongoing professional learning in rural schools provides particular challenges (Chow, Tyner, Estrin, & Koelsch, 1994). As King (1988) stated, "Rural staff development offers isolated teachers a unique opportunity for necessary professional growth and interaction" (p. 10).

In Nebraska, all school districts must fulfill the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) Rule 10 accreditation requirements for instructional improvement. Yet, it is unclear how many school districts provide systematic, results-based professional development to their staffs. The delivery model or type of training is not encompassed within this rule. The current NDE Rule 10 requires that "each teacher participate in at least ten hours of staff development activities each year" (NE Title 92, Rule 10, Section 004.03B, p. 7). With present societal and technological changes alone, this requirement is clearly inadequate. The traditional staff development model inhibits authentic professional growth (Robb, 2000). One-day teacher trainings with a one-size-fits-all approach are most generally inadequate and ineffective. Traditional staff development

delivery typically provides minimal administrator participation and lack of follow-up

support. Robb challenged the adequacy of this model in promoting real and meaningful

teacher growth. Constructivists such as Gordon Wells (1986), Donald Graves (1994), and

Ellin Keene and Susan Zimmermann (1998) agreed that "learning is not an event, but a

process, during which learners reinvent, reorganize, and construct knowledge through

active learning and by linking new information to what they already know" (p. 14). The

critical need for ongoing, individualized professional development cannot be fulfilled by

a mere ten-hour requirement during the school year.

While it is probable that many districts may provide more than the minimum ten-

hour requirement, the purpose of this study was to identify the distinguishing components

that Nebraska teachers and administrators in small schools found most prevalent in their

professional development activities.

Purpose of the Study

The educational enterprise is largely a helping profession, in which it seems the

majority of those who enter the field tend to do so for altruistic reasons (Orlich, 1989).

Regardless of how dedicated and prepared one is at the onset, no one in the teaching field

will ever be adequately prepared to remain current for their entire career. Gone are the

days when newly graduated teachers expect to be permanently equipped with all the

knowledge and skills they needed in the classroom. In a 1996 landmark report, the

bipartisan National Commission on Teaching and America's Future noted, "a competent

and qualified teacher for every child is the most important ingredient in education

reform" (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). The report

listed barriers, including inadequate professional development, that stand in the way of

maximizing teacher quality. According to former U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard
W. Riley:

> Schools and students have changed significantly in recent years, but
> teachers are still at the heart of instruction. If, as a nation, we expect
> to prepare all students for the 21st century, we must provide teachers
> with ongoing opportunities to be the most informed, the most capable,
> and the most inspiring classroom leaders possible (United States
> Department of Education, 1995).

Continuous school improvement is based on the premise that professional
development is strongly tied to teacher quality, which in turn is crucial to student success
(Bernhardt, 1999). Traditional in-service programs, where teachers were released a few
times a year to attend sessions that focus on a variety of topics with little follow-up, are
no longer considered adequate. It is also apparent that the one-day workshop, evening
session, or motivational keynote speaker do little to positively impact or sustain teacher
competency, which promotes student learning. Bernhardt (1999) maintained that schools
that are committed to improvement must reculture themselves for change. This new
culture requires increased communication, collaboration, trust, and respect among all
teachers, administrators, and staff in the school. This finding fits well with the
perspectives of Holly and Mcloughlin (1989) that suggested school administrators
actively assist teachers to uncover meaning in what they do on a daily basis. In particular,
teachers need ways of opening the dialogue with one another and their administrators
about their professional growth (Smyth, 1987). Effective professional development
addresses the flaws of these traditional approaches, which are often criticized for being

fragmented, unproductive, inefficient, unrelated to practice, and lacking in intensity and follow-up (Corcoran, 1995).

Research clearly indicates the need for administrators to provide highly effective staff development opportunities for teachers to improve their instructional delivery and effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to identify the distinguishing components that Nebraska teachers and administrators in small schools found most prevalent in their professional development activities. Many Nebraska school districts are currently facing reduced state funding and increased accountability for student achievement, which will compel superintendents to make the most efficient use of all available resources.

Professional development often requires financial compensation from a district in terms of substitute pay, teacher stipends, registration fees, consultation, or facilitation costs. Effective staff development for school districts will require fiscal and time commitments on the part of administration. In *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* (NASSP, 1996) a recommendation called for adequate funding, time, and other resources to assist staff members in fulfilling their potential. Schools are charged to "formulate a comprehensive, long-range strategy for the growth of its staff," rather than a "loose collection of unconnected in-service meetings" (NASSP, 1996). It is imperative that school administrators provide their teachers with the most effective and affordable types of professional development opportunities available.

Traditional in-service programs and delivery are no longer adequate to assist today's teachers. A good deal of money is currently being spent on professional development, but as most teachers would attest, traditional in-service activities tend to be disconnected from issues of curriculum and learning, fragmented, and noncumulative

(Cohen & Ball, 1999). Careful design and implementation of appropriate professional development programs can have a positive impact on improved teacher practice.

In this era of accountability, districts must develop improved staff development programs that clearly lead to improved student learning and performance. This shift has led to questions about how schools and districts can better develop comprehensive, effective professional development programs that clearly lead to increased student achievement.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

It is important for the school administration and staff to mutually determine which components are integral to an effective professional development plan (Robb, 2000). Educators and school policymakers must continually examine current professional development practices and policies. NCREL (1999) maintained school administrators should carefully consider the successful characteristics common to those practices and determine how they can be a gateway to meet higher standards in classrooms. The purpose of this study was to identify the distinguishing components that Nebraska teachers and administrators in small schools found most prevalent in their professional development activities. Specifically, the research questions in this study investigated the following:

1. Do teachers, principals, and superintendents have similar perceptions about the context, content, and processes of professional development?

2. Do administrators and teachers in small Nebraska school districts perceive that professional development opportunities are reflective of current educational research and best professional practice?

3. Are professional development opportunities for Nebraska educators perceived to focus on learning?

4. Are staff development offerings perceived by staff to be largely data-driven in small Nebraska schools?

5. Do educators' perceptions of professional development opportunities differ according to their familiarity with school improvement plans?

6. Do current professional development programs in small schools provide opportunities for collaboration among educators through the development of professional learning communities?

7. Do teachers and administrators perceive there are adequate local resources for staff development activities in small Nebraska school districts?

8. Do Nebraska educators perceive the current professional development in small schools is tied to student achievement data (such as: assessment or testing results)?

9. Does position, age, gender, years in education, or grade level impact Nebraska educators' perceptions about professional development?

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

Professional development-the terms professional development, staff development, and in-service education will be used interchangeably throughout this study. The broad definition of professional development is any organized effort to improve the performance of personnel. This is the process of improving staff skills and competencies needed to produce outstanding educational results for students (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1999). Professional development may include, but is not limited

to, workshops, college courses, seminars, conferences, learning teams, or in-service
opportunities.

Small schools-are defined by the researcher as any Nebraska school district with less than
fifty faculty members.

Class III school districts-include any Nebraska school district embracing territory having
a population of more than one thousand and less than one hundred fifty thousand
inhabitants that maintain both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a
single school board (State of Nebraska School Laws, Section 79-102).

Staff/peer collaboration-the interaction of teachers with one another to improve the
instructional process in learning communities (National Staff Development Council,
2001).

Results-based professional development-educators largely determine activities that focus
on professional growth. This type of professional development centers on outcomes
achieved through the professional growth of the educator and involves small groups of
teachers to promote ownership and is contextual in nature (Burke, 2000).

Job-embedded staff development-refers to ongoing professional growth opportunities and
applications within the regular school day and routine (National Staff Development
Council, 1998).

Context of professional development standards-address the organization, system, or
culture in which the new learning will be implemented. The context is the environment
that positively supports staff development (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

Professional development content standards-refers to the actual skills and knowledge being taught in the staff development activity; it is the substance of what the educators learn in their professional development (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

Process standards of professional development-refer to the procedures and means promoting the acquisition of the desired skills that effect educational change (National Staff Development Council, 1998).

Assumptions

Several underlying assumptions were taken into consideration when gathering and analyzing data for this study. The findings were based on these assumptions.

1. The indicators of effective professional development gathered from the literature were valid and appropriate.

2. The survey instrument designed and used was a valid means of capturing opinions and perceptions to gather data about actual practices related to professional development within each district.

3. The participants were truthful in responding.

4. Sample size was adequate to genuinely reflect the attitudes and practices of the target population.

Limitations

The researcher acknowledged various limitations, or potential weaknesses, of this research study.

1. This study was confined to surveying a systematic random sample of small Nebraska Class III school districts with less than fifty K-12 teachers. Since only

schools in Nebraska were included in this study, the results cannot be generalized beyond the state's parameters.

2. The generalizability of the findings from this study was limited to the characteristics inherent solely to small Class III school districts within the state of Nebraska.

Delimitations

The focus of this study was narrowed in scope by several delimitations.

1. All data collected were uniquely reflective of small school staff perceptions and practices about professional development opportunities available to subjects surveyed.

2. The findings related only to Nebraska Class III school districts, excluding Class I, II, and VI districts, which may have also been generally small and rural in nature.

3. School district personnel from large school districts were not included in the study, therefore limiting the findings to teachers and administrators from districts with fifty or fewer staff members.

4. It may be likely the respondents had increased responsibilities within their job descriptions. Rural schools lack the luxury of a variety of professional staff specialists (Storer and Crosswait, 1995). Interest and adequate time available for rural professional development opportunities may have been limited compared to urban districts. Many respondents may have served on all curriculum and school improvement committees with additional extra-curricular responsibilities, compared to larger school district personnel.

5. Financial resources in smaller school districts may have reduced the availability and quality of staff development activities.

6. This study was descriptive in nature and relied solely on individual teacher and administrator opinions and perceptions.

7. Respondents varied in their years of experience in education, thus influencing their individual perceptions of personal needs in terms of professional development activities.

8. The Likert-type items in the survey forced all participants to choose one of four categories, providing no opportunity for undecided or no opinion responses. Data was reflected of only those four choices, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

9. The use of a mailed questionnaire to gather data did not guarantee the participants were personally invested in the study, thus resulting in a lower response rate.

10. Mailed surveys did not provide any means for explaining questions or concepts to the participants, which may have led to misinterpretation of some items.

<u>Significance of the Study</u>

The need for strengthening schools is highlighted by recent data suggesting that students need a more rigorous curricular program. Teachers need more support and practical training in content knowledge and instruction and classroom practices must be more consistent with reform recommendations (Killion, 1999). Teachers can best improve through well-designed, comprehensive professional development systems. A recent study that asked teachers about their worst professional development experience revealed an overwhelming 70 percent of respondents described traditional school or

district in-service sessions (Sandholtz, 1999). According to Reeves (2001), the reality is "that precious time and resources are frequently squandered on ineffective and unfocused staff development efforts." Leadership energies must not be wasted on 'flavor-of-the-month' professional development. Both principals and teachers complain that implementation and follow-up are frequently doomed as a result of inconsistent central office initiatives. Research on teacher attitudes toward staff development activities has uncovered a high degree of teacher frustration (Riley, 1991).

The traditional "fix-it" model used in traditional professional development does not work (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Rethinking the process of facilitating teacher improvement is clearly necessary to narrow the student achievement gap. Traditional in-service opportunities treated teachers as passive recipients of knowledge from outside sources. Robb (2000) viewed it more as something done *to* them. All current research indicates that quality staff development requires the teacher be more actively involved in constructing knowledge from a variety of sources and methods.

What constitutes teacher effectiveness is the teacher's content knowledge, understanding of the learning process and child development, and pedagogical skills (Shulman, 1987). The outcomes of this study will provide valuable information to policy makers, administrators, and staff developers for future planning of professional development in small school districts. Frequently, small schools do not have the necessary resources available to provide quality professional development. State mandated staff development requirements often place heavy burdens on districts with small staffs. Teachers may not always see the direct link between these mandates and improved instruction or school improvement. Smaller school staff members are often

required to serve in a wider variety of professional development roles, ranging from committee work dedicated to safe schools, standards, assessment, school improvement, data collection and interpretation, anti-bullying efforts, and technology updates. Teachers from small districts generally serve on more than one committee, thus fragmenting their efforts and limiting their time. It can be beneficial for small school districts' short-range planning and long-term implementation to identify the distinguishing characteristics of effective and meaningful staff development. Findings from the study will also assist intermediate agencies, such as Educational Service Units (ESUs), in determining future professional development offerings and activities for their member schools.

Increased accountability to the public with the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act and President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act charges every school to increase student achievement for all children (Poliakoff, 2001). Burke (2000) believed this could be achieved only if the quality of teaching improves within the district, which requires systematic results-based staff development. Student achievement is directly linked to teacher effectiveness. Reeves (2001) supported a focused three-tiered approach to professional development to improve student achievement. The district level, building level, and classroom level must be in alignment with a comprehensive accountability system. If teachers are to successfully teach all students to high standards, everyone who affects student learning must be engaged in ongoing, continuous learning (Sparks, 2000). Current budget cuts and shrinking financial resources in small Nebraska schools require administrators and policy-makers to focus their professional development dollars to maximize student achievement. This study will assist policy-makers and

administrators in identifying what essential components are needed to develop high-quality professional learning in small school districts.

<div align="center">Organization of the Study</div>

In Chapter I the context of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, definitions of terms, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and significance of the study are presented.

The purpose of Chapter II was to provide a review of selected literature, current research, and references related to effective professional development practices. An overview of adult learning theory and relevant learning principles was also synthesized.

The methods and research design used in conducting the study are described in Chapter III. A single-stage sampling procedure used a survey to collect data from randomly selected Class III Nebraska school districts with fifty or less teachers. Information on the sample, instrumentation, data collection process, and a brief description of the analysis are included in this chapter.

A presentation of the study's findings and analysis of data are included in Chapter IV. A complete description of the study's findings as prescribed by the research questions is provided in the chapter.

Chapter V contains a summary of the research's purpose, the setting and context of the study, and the major findings of the study. Implications of the findings and recommendations for further study are included in the final chapter.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of Chapter II was to review selected references, literature, and current research related to effective teacher professional development. It was recognized by the researcher that adult learners have unique needs and perceptions, therefore an overview of adult learning theory and relevant learning principles were also synthesized.

Need for Evaluation of Staff Development Programs

Research clearly supports there can be little significant improvement in administrative practice, teaching, or school programs without effective staff development (Wood, Killian, McQuarrie, & Thompson, 1993). Almost every approach to systemic school improvement requires teachers to refocus their roles, responsibilities, and opportunities. The result is intended to be new knowledge and skill acquisition on the part of the teacher and the student. In 1996, the U.S. Department of Education established selection criteria to focus on the content of professional development, the process used to create and implement professional development, and the staff and student learning results achieved. The results showed that content and process are inextricably linked in determining the level of impact professional development has on student learning (Venezky & Peterson, 1996). Comprehensive professional development, according to Lieberman and Miller (2001), emphasized inspiration, goal setting, knowledge, skill development, inquiry, collaboration, and community. Students are most impacted when teachers have the necessary knowledge, appropriate instructional techniques, and capacity to implement at critical learning opportunities (Reeves, 2001). Professional development is a shared responsibility for teachers, schools, and districts. Setting

priorities is necessary to produce an effective response to competing needs (Collins, 1997). Connecting plans for professional development across levels makes teachers and administrators more effective and more likely to receive the support needed to be successful. Bernhardt (1999) found the following:

> A continuously improving school links new approaches to assessment, curriculum, instruction, professional development, and teacher evaluation together. The training must be ongoing, planned well in advance, be congruent with the overall school plan and vision, and have an implementation component. (p. 111)

Awareness of professional development's value in advancing school improvement is evident in current research and several state and national reports. Quality teaching fed by powerful professional learning can make a difference in all schools. Hammond (1997) expressed it this way: "That is, teachers who know a lot about teaching and learning and who work in environments that allow them to know students well are the critical elements of successful learning" (p. 8). It is clear that many schools must reevaluate current practices in their staff development programs and policies (Guskey & Peterson, 1996). Schools must become learning communities dedicated to promoting the learning for all. In the 1996 NASSP report, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, a school's learning community should frame professional development around the established goals for its students, enabling teachers to better equip themselves to help students meet these aims. NASSP terms a learning community as one that "values the intellectual development of all its members and provides mechanisms to foster that growth" (p. 64).

Today's students present far greater challenges to classroom teachers than students of a decade ago. A greater percentage of students who are at risk fill classrooms across the nation than ever before (Killion, 1999). *Turning Points*, a publication by the Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development (1990), revealed "by age 15, substantial numbers of American youth are at risk of reaching adulthood" (p. 6). According to the council, a growing number of adolescents are unable to meet workplace requirements, fulfill family and peer relationships, and responsibly participate in a democratic society. Traditional professional development policies and practices are not adequate to assist teachers in meeting the increasing demands in their 21st century classrooms. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) suggested that staff development be linked to a reform agenda that supports a learner-center view of teaching and a career-long conception of teachers' learning.

The contemporary mission of high-quality professional development is to prepare and support educators to help all students achieve high standards of learning and development (Sparks, 2002). Improved school performance is a nonnegotiable tenet in today's society. Recent findings produce a sense of urgency for "the creation of a staff development system that affects student learning" and "requires the coordination of the renewal of individual practitioners, school faculties, the district, and governing agencies" (Sparks, 1995, p. 1).

Guskey (2000) upholds the opinion that professional development for educators possesses greater importance that ever before in the history of education. "All school improvement plans emphasize the need for high-quality professional development" (p. 3). This current emphasis on student achievement and increased accountability require a new

vision for staff development. Professional development for educators is being

redefined for the purpose of enhancing student performance (Burke, 2000). It can no

longer be a luxury only reserved for those interested in personal growth. Actions have to

be grounded in a certain set of beliefs (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993), which reflect

commitment to the potential for human development and personal change. These beliefs

constitute a "credo for reflective practice" (p. 46). The credo is based on the following

assumptions:

- Everyone needs professional growth opportunities.

- All professionals want to improve and can learn.

- All professionals are capable of assuming responsibility for their growth
  and development.

- People want and need information about personal performance.

- Collaboration enriches professional development. (Osterman & Kottkamp,
  1993)

Improved student learning will only become a reality if teachers improve. This

requires that all teachers engage in thoughtful and consistent professional development

that is aligned with school improvement goals (National Staff Development Council

Standards for Staff Development, 2001). Equitable access to high quality professional

development opportunities for all teachers and principals is imperative. The recent

Breaking Ranks report (NASSP, 1996) emphasized the need for administrators to model

ongoing professional growth for the staff, while helping to lead the professional

development for the entire school. Moreover, professional development works best when

it is part of a system-wide effort to improve and integrate the recruitment, selection,

preparation, initial licensing, induction, ongoing development of teachers; while

supporting and advancing the certification of all educators in the system (Goals, 2000).

The Goals 2000 legislation enacted in 1994, emphasized the importance of professional

development to enhance the skills and abilities of teachers (Seltzer & Himley, 1995).

Providing ongoing professional opportunities that support systemic school improvement

remains a challenge for rural and small schools. Declining rural enrollment and the

consequent loss of funds, school closing, taxpayer revolts, and staff reductions have been

dominant issues (Howell, 1989; Meyers, 1989; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992).

Recognizing the strong correlation between successful school reform and staff

development, Lieberman, Darling-Hammond, and McLaughlin (1995) called for a new

design for professional development delivery. The movement from direct teaching to

learning in and out of school is widely encouraged. The direct teaching model currently

dominates much of what has been previously considered staff development. Their reform

agenda supports a more learner-center view of teaching and a career-long conception of

teachers' learning. Teachers need professional development that extends far beyond the

one-shot workshop; they need opportunities to learn how to question, analyze, and

change instruction to teach increasingly challenging content (Darling-Hammond &

McLaughlin, 1995).

Professional development today means providing occasions for teachers to reflect

critically on their practice and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content,

pedagogy, and learners (Lieberman, 1995). New thinking about professional development

places teachers' learning opportunities at the center of school restructuring. North

American and international studies make it clear that linking teacher learning to student

learning and focusing on the daily improvement of instructional practice makes a

difference in student achievement (Sparks, 2002). The key to a successful instructional

program is sustained professional development. Robb (2000) found it was not enough to

tell a teacher what they must teach; teachers need to be well supported. While a one-shot

deal may work for introducing a program or idea, that kind of stand-alone development

does not work in the long run. Bernhardt (1999) maintains that "planned, ongoing

training with an implementation component and accountability" leads to "school wide

implementation where the school culture is conducive to change" (p. 111). Ongoing

professional training is essential for further growth and to maximize teacher productivity

to better meet the needs of all students.

<u>New Horizons for Teachers</u>

The act of teaching in schools, by nature, is an isolated practice. The old norms of

individualism, isolationism, and privatism (Lortie, 1975) no longer suffice. Instead,

substantive school improvement challenges teachers to become leaders in curriculum,

instruction, and assessment. According to Guskey (2000), modern educational reforms

require teachers and school administrators to transform their roles and accept new

responsibilities.

Rural school districts, in the current era of school reform, present something of an

enigma. Reaves and Larmer (1995) discovered that teaching in small, rural schools

tended to exacerbate the problem of delivering quality staff development opportunities.

The context of a small school can present significant obstacles. The 24 percent of

teachers who teach in rural areas are typically younger, less experienced, and less likely

to have a master's degree, than their counterparts in urban or suburban areas (Reaves &

Larmer, 1995). Teachers generally do not have the time within the traditional schedule

and typical school day to seek input from colleagues about instructional strategies and

challenges. The lack of professional development activities and services was also

identified as an element limiting the effectiveness of schools in rural areas (Buttram &

Carlson, 1983). Capper (1993) concluded that "…socialization with fellow professionals,

specifically with those who have access to current pedagogical knowledge, may be of

particular importance in rural areas" (p. 30). Sparks (2002) explained that the "most

powerful forms of professional development engage teachers in the continuous

improvement of their teaching" in a collaborative, supportive environment (p. 10-4).

Small isolated, rural districts face particular challenges in supporting continued learning

for their faculties. As King (1989) stated:

> Perhaps the greatest need of rural teachers is genuine, purposeful,
>
> professional interaction. Because they seldom get together to share
>
> ideas or solve common problems, few teachers develop collaborative
>
> skills or experience the benefits of collegiality. Rural staff
>
> development offers isolated teachers an opportunity for professional
>
> growth and interaction. (p.10)

Teachers, researchers, and policymakers consistently indicated that the greatest

challenge to implementing effective professional development was lack of time (Abdal-

Haqq, 1996). Educators need time to understand new concepts, learn new skills, research,

discuss, reflect, assess, and plan their own professional development. This requires that

teachers analyze their individual growth, as well as their students' gains. Maximizing the

human potential of school personnel is by nature a growth-oriented process, which must

be systematic and empirically based (Orlich, 1989). Based on a growth perspective, staff development is a long-term, complex process, not a series of singular events. Because teachers are unique individuals, Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) deemed their personal growth was self-defined and continually evolving. This requires flexibility and personal choice in the professional development process. Teachers construct the knowledge of good teaching through discussion, problem solving, action research, and other active learning processes with one another.

The critical element for staff development planners is in knowing what special competencies are needed to function in a specific instructional environment. It is at the local level that staff development gains the most employee endorsement (Guskey, 1996). Viewing professional development as a process, rather than as a project or an event, requires a major shift in thinking and planning. Teachers and administrators will be forced to think beyond intermittent, unrelated workshops or in-service offerings.

Sparks and Hirsch (1997) described the major paradigm shifts in staff development in terms of eleven general statements:

- From individual development to individual development **and** organizational development. Success for all students depends upon both the learning of individual school employees *and* improvements in the capacity of the organization itself.
- From fragmented, piecemeal improvement efforts to staff development driven by a clear, coherent strategic plan for the school district, each school and the departments that serve schools. Becoming more familiar with outcomes and systems thinking has led to strategic planning at all school levels. This

comprehensive approach to change ensures that all aspects of the system work in tandem toward accomplishing their mission.

- From district-focused to school-focused approaches to staff development. School improvement efforts promote incremental annual improvement related to a set of common objectives for the entire staff.

- From a focus on adult needs and satisfaction to a focus on students needs and learning outcomes, and changes in on-the-job behaviors. Staff development planning processes are based on the things students need to know and be able to do. This shift recognizes that all systemic change efforts must be judged according to their effect on student learning.

- From training conducted away from the job as the primary delivery system for staff development to multiple forms of job-embedded learning. Educators cannot be passive recipients of received wisdom in traditional "sit and get', off the job trainings. Increased collaboration and communication during the school day must be built into existing schedules.

- From an orientation toward the transmission of knowledge and skills to teachers by experts to reflective study of the teaching and learning processes by teachers themselves. Teachers should regularly engage in study groups and use action research to refine their instructional knowledge and skills.

- From a focus on generic instructional skills to a combination of generic and content-specific skills. Recent studies reveal the importance for teachers to posses a deeper understanding of their content areas and specific pedagogical approaches tailored to them.

- From staff developers who function primarily as trainers to those who provide consultation, planning and facilitation services, as well as training. Results-driven education and systems thinking have placed teachers, administrators, and school employees in new roles that require additional training.

- From staff development provided by one or two departments to staff development as a critical function and major responsibility performed by all administrators and teacher leaders. The new trend in staff development spreads its responsibility throughout the entire school system.

- From staff development directed toward teachers as the primary recipients to continuous improvement in performance for everyone who affects student learning. Everyone who affects student learning must continually upgrade his/her skills to meet today's educational challenges.

- From staff development as a frill that can be cut during difficult financial times to staff development as an indispensable process, which is essential for schools to prepare young people for citizenship and productive employment. Professional development must be viewed as an essential piece in accomplishing the desired organizational goals (Sparks & Hirsch, 1997).

These shifts are significant and powerful in the school improvement forum. They are essential to creating learning communities among all who work and learn within schools. Implementing these shifts is essential in planning effective professional development for this century.

Weaving Opportunities in the Daily Routine

Effective professional development should influence the everyday life of teachers, providing varied and individual opportunities for continuous growth. NCREL (1999) suggested that making professional development an embedded part of the normal working school day allows teachers the time for inquiry, reflection, and mentoring that is necessary for long-term change in instructional practices. Sparks and Hirsch (1997) referred to this new type of professional development as "job-embedded learning" (p. 53) that links learning to the immediate and day-to-day life of teachers and administrators. This concept of job-embedded staff development represents that educators in many roles (superintendents, principals, and teachers among others) must *all* see themselves as teachers of adults and view the development of others as one of their most critical responsibilities (Sparks & Hirsch, 1997). Research reveals that adult learning can assume many forms and use various processes. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) identified five models of teacher development to support job-embedded learning: training, individually guided, observation and feedback, involvement in an improvement process, and inquiry. According to Davies (1991), the coaching element helped to embed a new practice firmly into the teachers' own context and practice. It is predicted that future professional development time will reflect less training time, with teachers and administrators devoting most of their learning time to various nontraditional forms of job-embedded activities (Sparks & Hirsch, 1997).

The research of Joyce and Showers (1998) demonstrated that the traditional in-service day rarely influences long-term instructional practice. They discovered that when teachers were given no support after an initial training workshop, up to ninety percent of

the investment in instructional improvement was lost. They further suggested that it

might take up to twenty follow-up and coaching sessions for teachers to successfully

implement a new practice. Providing additional time available and encouraging ongoing

changes make professional development more central to teachers' daily work (Joyce &

Showers, 1998). This delicate balance of providing technical information and timely

motivation are necessary for educators to pursue effective practices and excellence in

their classrooms. New learning requires repeated opportunities to be utilized within an

authentic setting (Davies, 1991). School-based professional development provides for

these invaluable teachable moments that are typical in teachers' classrooms on a daily

basis.

Willis (2002) noted that individual teachers are growing and learning from their

experiences all the time, but there is no real mechanism in a traditional school setting for

them to share what they have learned with other professionals. To really improve

teaching we must invest far more than we currently do to generate and share knowledge

about teaching. Compared with other countries, the United States clearly lacks a system

for developing professional knowledge and for giving teachers the opportunity to learn

about teaching (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). American teachers, compared with those in

Japan, have no means of contributing to the gradual improvement of teaching methods or

of improving their own skills. In contrast, a commonly used collaborative lesson design

model in Japanese schools actively promotes collaboration among teachers. The

overview, based on the work of Lewis, Stigler, Hiebert, & Yoshida (Watanabe, 2002)

promoted teachers working together from determining initial lesson goals to collaborating

on improving the instructional design and outcomes. Teacher teams plan and teach the

lesson, reflect and evaluate through observations, then revise as needed. This study process requires intense interaction and professional dialogue among all who participate. The novice sits along side the expert to enhance, grow, and learn together. This allows teachers to learn how to analyze both their own and others' instructional practices (Willis, 2002). This increased, purposeful interaction assists teachers in honing their craft and learning from one another in a collegial environment within the school building and regular workday.

Authentic professional development is attained in classrooms where teachers, not outside experts, expand their knowledge base to simultaneously promote student and teacher learning (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Such staff development moves beyond the transmission of knowledge and skills to include analytic and reflective cognitive processes. The Education Commission of the States (2000) stressed the need to focus on problems experienced by educators and reflect their input, which allows all to share the power and authority. Staff development must be grounded in a carefully conceived and clearly stated sense of purpose and be embedded in core beliefs that are under constant scrutiny by all members of the learning community (Cooper, 2002).

Key to professional development is recognizing that it is more comprehensive than an isolated workshop presented by an outside expert. According to Olivero (1982), effective staff development programs:

- Have the support of the superintendent as well as the board of education

- Are primarily defined by the learners

- Offer participants opportunities for experience and feedback in a safe environment

- Are continuous and holistic

- Illustrate a recognizable connection between newly learned behaviors and student achievement.

Effective staff development promotes continuous inquiry and self-improvement that is embedded into the daily life of schools and teachers. Research has identified learning communities as being highly effective for establishing sustained professional development within the school setting (Barth, 1990; DuFour, 1999; Senge, 1990). *Breaking Ranks* (1996) supported the learning community concept by providing that teachers, administrators, and all educators:

> must regard their own learning as integral to their professional role.
> This is especially so at a time when roles will change in conjunction
> with restructuring. The school district should help educators to create
> a learning community in which substantive professional development
> linked primarily to content knowledge and to instructional strategies,
> plays an ongoing part in their work. (p. 62)

Those who have ownership in this evolutionary, ongoing process best evaluate it continuously at the local level. Senge (1990) described learning communities as places "where people continually expand their capacities to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 5). Real instructional improvement places teachers at the center of the change process, rather than on its periphery. Strategies like peer coaching, study groups, and collective assessment of student work ensure that learning is focused, meaningful, and ongoing (Sparks, 2002). In

this way, the daily work of teachers and administrators can become a form of high quality professional development.

<center>School-wide Ownership</center>

According to Little (1997), staff development in the most successful schools is no longer the domain of a district-level curriculum supervisor. Instead, it is collectively organized to give teachers the authority and resources to take charge of their own learning. It involves all those who have something important to bring to the table. Research on teacher attitudes toward staff development activities has uncovered a fairly high degree of teacher frustration (Riley, 1991). Adult learning research indicated there are important implications to consider when planning for staff development. Malcolm Knowles (1986) emphasized that adult learners differ from young learners. Adults typically enjoy planning and conducting their own learning experiences, which are key to self-actualization. The best learning by adults takes place when the need to know coincides with the training and opportunities to apply what they have learned. Adults need a variety of independently structured options to enhance their learning (Andrews, Houston, & Bryant, 1981).

Sanders' research (1998) revealed that during the first ten years of a teaching career, the average teacher steadily became increasingly more effective in the classroom. However, during the next ten years, the majority of teachers tended to reach a plateau in terms of effectiveness. After twenty years, the effectiveness of a teacher varied a great deal, resulting in either a master teacher or a highly ineffective teacher. This research supports that teachers require varying degrees of support and levels of intervention according to their years of experience and individual needs. Adult learning theory greatly

impacts the manner in which responsible administrators and supervisors must approach

the teaching of teachers. LaPlant (1986) described adult learners as self-directed, rich

with experiences, preferring active learning, and immediate application of learning

content. Adults learn best in a climate of mutuality that is respectful, collaborative, and

informal (Riley, 1991). Teaching methods recommended for adults accommodate

independence and variation. Adult learning facilitators should utilize self-direction,

experiential learning, and inquiry-based curriculum when providing staff development.

Adult learners are able to achieve extremely high levels of implementation when

support is provided after initial training. Adult learning is directed at solving a specific,

job-related problem (Snyder, 1993). It is enhanced when adults are allowed to solve the

problems they identify that have mutual and collective concern to the collaborative

group. When those concerns are understood by all and used to provide appropriate

support, new practices can then be effectively implemented. The support given after

initial training in the forms of coaching, study teams, and opportunities to learn by

watching colleagues perform strengthens the adult learning experience (Joyce &

Showers, 1988).

<div align="center">Instructional Leadership</div>

Effective professional development works best in buildings where the principal

assumes the role of instructional leader. District and school leaders play an essential and

irreplaceable role in creating high-quality professional learning for all teachers in schools.

According to Sparks (2002), traditional habits of thought and behavior are more

significant barriers to the improvement of professional learning than time or money. This

means the principal must personally join in staff development projects, involve teachers

democratically in planning activities, find ample funding, encourage innovation among faculty, reinforce the value of professional development through evaluations, and nurture curricular growth (Daniels, 1999). A strong commitment to collaborate with staff on the part of school leaders is instrumental for vital, successful professional development. Increased collaboration between teachers and administrators readily correlates with increased student learning. "Principals must create an environment that supports collaboration among teachers; provides time for teachers' professional development; and recognizes, rewards, and celebrates the concept of the teacher as leader" (Ash & Persall, 2000). When schools embark on site-based, collaborative decision making, the importance of effective professional development is magnified substantially. For the principal, providing staff development is a moral responsibility to set the conditions for teachers to thrive and essential for the organization to grow to its fullest capacity when teachers are empowered to make positive changes (Cooper, 2002).

Today's teachers live in a society and work in a profession where demands are continually changing and expanding. To prepare their students to be successful in this type of society, educators must be willing to learn continuously, expand their own abilities, and assume ever-greater leadership roles (Ash & Persall, 2000). Many of today's schools are not organized to effectively support and encourage this vital teacher growth. Schools need new strategies, updated processes, and the current mindset framing the shifting paradigm of instructional leadership. It is essential that today's administrators are highly cognizant of organizational change in planning for effective professional development (Sparks & Hirsch, 1997).

The most effective in-service education plan is one prescribed for the individual educator and chosen *by* the learner, not imposed by someone else (Reichert, 1992). Positive school change is neither top down nor bottom up. It is interactive and participative at every grade and department level. Robb (2000) supported a nontraditional form of professional study for teachers and administrators, built on a performance-based, peer-evaluation strategy. She sees the principal's new role in teacher improvement is to build an organizational climate that encourages and supports leadership throughout the school. The perspective of Sparks (2002) furthers this expectation by addressing the need for administrators to include regular opportunities for practice, research, and reflection that are embedded in the school day. He sees high-quality professional learning as being "founded on a sense of collegiality and collaboration among teachers and between teachers and principals in solving important problems related to teaching and learning" (p. 1-4).

In 2002, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) offered updated guidelines for the provision of effective staff development. The ASCD maintained that schools and districts, which are most successful in attaining high academic achievement for all students, have developed a culture that focuses on instructional leadership for both administrators and teachers. Distribution of leadership and management responsibilities among the staff is the norm, allowing for administrators and teachers to keep instruction at the forefront. They work together and welcome feedback to improve.

Sparks (2002) noted that teachers who are strongly supported in honing their skills through peer coaching, mentoring, and collaboration are more likely to become

teacher leaders and remain in the teaching profession. Strong instructional leaders

provide the necessary resources and guidance teachers need to grow and learn. According

to Osterman and Kottkamp (1993), awareness is the basis for all change. Teacher

collaboration and reflection provide teachers with the necessary insight, courage, and

incentive to try something different in their classrooms.

<div align="center">Standards for Enhancing Staff Development</div>

Today's world is much more complicated than the past. *Turning Points*, (1990),

noted that the living conditions of our youth have changed dramatically from previous

generations. Today, young people enter a society that appears to promote sexual

promiscuity and drug-use. Many adolescents live in communities where the stability of a

close-knit relationship is rare and the sense of community that shapes their identity has

eroded. The number of young people who seek jobs in an economy that requires

flexibility, creativity, and problem solving is at an all-time high (*Turning Points*, 1990).

Today's youth face unprecedented choices and pressures. With mobility and divorce rates

climbing, value systems changing, and educational systems being more closely

scrutinized, it becomes necessary to develop standards that address the continuous

professional growth of educators.

Yinger (1999) noted, "Parents, politicians, and professionals alike often point to

one means for improving the educational state of affairs: standards" (p. 85). He listed

several key issues for the teaching profession as: defining teaching in terms of its core

work (rather than its place in school organizations), expanding the research knowledge

base, adapting to organizational change, response to competition, and organization and

systemic competence.

According to Bellanca (1995), professional development from a school system's point of view is a "planned, comprehensive, and systemic program designed by the system to improve all school personnel's ability to design, implement, and assess productive change in each individual and in the school organization" (p. 6).

Guskey (2002) purported that professional development must be an intentional, ongoing, and systemic process. The principles he provided for effective professional development are to:

1. Begin with a clear focus on learning and learners.

2. Engage in rigorous self-analysis.

3. Recognize that change is an individual and organizational process.

4. Make small, incremental changes with a global, big-picture vision.

5. Ensure that procedures on ongoing and professionally embedded.

6. Work in teams to maintain support.

7. Use all available resources.

8. Include procedures for feedback on results.

9. Provide for continued follow-up, support, and pressure.

10. Integrate programs.

The ASCD (2002) offered six key considerations for maximizing professional development effectiveness. They maintain effective professional development activities should be:

1. Directly focused on helping achieve student learning goals and supporting student learning needs.

2. A collaborative endeavor with teachers and administrators working together in planning and implementation.

3. School-based and job-embedded.

4. Committed on a long-term basis.

5. Differentiated.

6. Tied to the district's improvement goals.

The organization also stressed the content of professional development programs be based on individual organizational needs. Research and best practice show that for continuous improvement, schools should focus on instructional leadership, curriculum development, instructional practices, assessment, and a deeper understanding of the learning process (ASCD, 2002).

Caldwell (1989) presented the nested nature of staff development as having three "constant" variables: context, content, and process. A staff development initiative should be planned for the purpose of addressing a set of specifically identified needs. These needs provide the "context" for that initiative. Within this context, the "content" for the initiative are selected. The "processes" are the sequence of events that occur within the structure of the chosen staff development model.

In 2001, the National Staff Development Council (NSCD) revised their standards, originally developed in 1995, for staff development intending to improve the learning for *all* students. The standards are divided into three broad categories for policy-makers to consider when planning for professional development 1) context, 1) process, and 3) content of the program opportunities.

Context standards refers to staff development that improves the learning of all students based on the following attributes:

- Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district. (Learning Communities)

- Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement. (Leadership)

- Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration. (Resources)

Context standards address the organization, system, or culture in which the new learning will be implemented. Little (1982) referred to principles such as the level of support and trust that surround educators when implementing new practices, the amount of continual assistance provided, and the presence of collaboration related to the context. The context reflects the environment in which the staff development occurs.

Process standards include focus on staff development that improves the learning of all students by providing the following:

- Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement. (Data-Driven)

- Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact. (Evaluation)

- Prepares educators to apply research to decision making. (Research-Based)

- Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal. (Design)

- Applies knowledge about human learning and change. (Learning)

- Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate. (Collaboration

The process standards refer to the "how" of staff development; they describe the means for the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Professional development processes are defined as the series of actions that lead to the accomplishment of some result and are dictated by the scheduling component of staff development opportunities.

Content standards provide for staff development that improves the learning of all students that:

- Prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement. (Equity)

- Deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately. (Quality Teaching)

- Prepares educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately. (Family Involvement) (NSDC, 2001)

Content standards refer to the actual skills and knowledge effective educators need to acquire through systematic staff development. Equity, quality teaching, and all stakeholders' involvement underpin these content standards. The goals and content are nested in the process and context attributes of professional development. Staff development that improves the learning of all students better prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their students' academic achievement (NSDC, 2001).

The inherent nature of change in schools and society requires that professionals stay abreast of new developments, latest research, and the best instructional practices available. Schools are intended to be creative cultures that nurture and inspire learning (Robb, 2000). Enhancing the potential of all is the underlying goal in every educational setting. Robb (2000) redefined traditional staff development more as professional study for teachers. They must "expand their knowledge of teaching practices and how children learn by integrating, reading, reflecting, and collaborating into school life" (p. 2). This occurs in all schools, regardless of size, with real students, classes, and situations. There must be regularly scheduled opportunities for teachers to learn and work together to improve their pedagogy while honing their craft.

Professional development based on standards is frequently referred to as results-based staff development (Burke, 2000). This process focuses on the results of the staff development for students, teachers, administrators, schools, and organizations. Improved teaching skills result in improved student learning skills. Results-based staff development establishes the goal of educators' continuous growth through individual, collective, and district efforts while providing opportunities for teachers to learn new skills. These opportunities are often in the form of demonstrations, practice, and follow-up to ensure integration of the skills into their daily instructional practices and repertoire.

The emerging system of results-based professional development personalizes learning and practice to better meet the goals of the educator and the needs of the students. This type of staff development is more effective when the teachers work in teams to achieve a common goal. The learning teams select the topic they want to address to grow professionally and brainstorm a list of essential and related questions that must

be investigated during the growth plan cycle. Specific goals that can be measured are established and plans are then developed. Data are collected and timelines are put in place. Final evaluation varies according to local school and district policies (Burke, 2000). The process is much like school improvement planning and procedures. In results-based professional development, the principal facilitates the process of teachers working collaboratively to achieve their professional and student-centered goals.

Professional development can greatly be enhanced by basing all decisions on data and using real results to guide planning. Results-based professional development provides a structure for creating a true professional learning community (Burke, 2000). Teachers and principals collaborate in formulating a professional growth plan that emphasizes the twin goals of teacher professional development and improvement in student learning. By empowering school staff to take responsibility for their own learning, schools are more likely to create professional communities where sustainable, interdependent cultures support improved learning for all.

In this chapter, an overview of the literature related to the problem and research questions set forth was provided. Literature related to professional development was reviewed. The following conclusions can be drawn from the reviewed literature:

- Staff development will be more effective if teachers assume responsibility for defining their professional needs and are actively involved in the development and implementation of their professional growth (Robb, 2000).
- Professional development needs to be an ongoing process, related to school improvement plans, with a clear and direct relationship to what

teachers do on a daily basis in their classrooms (Bernhardt, 1999;

Sparks & Hirsch, 2002).

- Administrative leadership, support, and involvement increase the success

   of staff development (Guskey, 2002; Lambert, 1998).

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

<u>Methods and Procedures</u>

The design for the population used in this study was a single-stage sampling procedure in which the researcher had access to names in the population and could sample the people directly (Babbie, 1990; Fink & Kosecoff, 1985). A stratified random sampling strategy (Schumacher & McMillan, 1993) was used to identify the sample for this research study. Using random selection, the study's sampling frame was derived from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) School Directory. The study investigated data collected from small Class III Nebraska school districts with fifty or less teachers on staff.

The 2001-02 NDE School Directory indicated 132 Class III school districts with fifty or less teachers to serve as the sample. Each school within the sample was numbered, with a random numbers table, to select thirty districts for the target population. The targeted population contained approximately 800 teachers. A random, sampling of eight teachers from each targeted district was identified by numbering all teachers in the district with the use of a random numbers table. All principals and superintendents in the sampling frame were included in the study and asked to complete the questionnaire. The number included in the study's targeted sampling frame was 240 teachers and 75 administrators, (total N = 315). The advantages of this simple random sampling method were to avoid conscious biases and allow for descriptive and inferential statistical analysis (Creswell, 1994).

The superintendent of each district selected to participate in this study was identified using the NDE School Directory. Superintendents were mailed a letter describing the research study and to inform them that their district had been selected to participate in the study. The assigned IRB # 2003-04-247 EX was included in the letter (Appendix A). Each superintendent then received a phone call from the researcher, within seven days of receiving the letter, to determine if they had any objections to the administration of the survey in their district. All superintendents granted permission for their district to participate in the research study and agreed to complete the forthcoming survey. District permission letters or emails were received and filed from all thirty school districts providing written documentation of consent. Surveys were then mailed to each of the thirty Nebraska Class III school districts by the researcher.

<u>Analysis Detail of Sample Frame's Demographic Data</u>

A general summary of the demographic data of survey respondents provides the following information. Demographic characteristics of the targeted population indicated the largest number of respondents was in the 50+-age category (38%), with the majority being age 40 or older (73%). Females accounted for 51% of the random sampling and 49% were male, resulting in a nearly even number for each gender type. The largest percentage of years in education was the category of 25+ years (32%) and 50% of all participants had at least 21 or more total years in the educational field. Grade levels were fairly evenly distributed from K-12. The ESU affiliation of the respondents did not yield large enough sample sizes for any particular service unit to be significant; therefore ESU data were not analyzed in this study. A more complete listing of the demographic characteristics and categories is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants (N = 173)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Age	20 – 29	12	7
	30 – 39	29	17
	40 – 49	61	35
	50+	66	38
Gender	Female	89	51
	Male	84	49
Years in education	1 – 5	14	8
	6 – 10	19	11
	11 – 15	23	13
	16 – 20	28	16
	21 – 25	31	18
	25+	55	32
Grade level	K – 3	22	13
	4 – 6	21	12
	4 – 8	6	4
	9 – 12	43	25
	K – 6	16	9
	K – 8	1	.6
	K – 12	64	37
ESU affiliation	1	13	8
	2	6	4
	3	7	4
	4	11	6
	5	4	2
	6	9	5
	7	16	9
	8	13	8
	9	13	8
	10	34	20
	11	4	2
	13	19	11
	14	15	9
	16	9	5

Study Design

The research study was a quantitative study, which used data collected through the use of a survey instrument. This design has the advantage of measuring current attitudes and practices (Creswell, 2002). A cross-sectional questionnaire, designed by the researcher, was used to collect information at one point in time from the research sample Appendix B). The rationale for this data collection was based on availability and convenience, as well as cost effectiveness. Cross-sectional survey design provides information in a short amount of time, such as the time required for administering the survey and collecting the information (Creswell, 2002).

A cover letter outlining the study, the questionnaire (Appendix B), and a self-addressed stamped envelope were mailed to the sample group of 240 teachers and 75 administrators for the purpose of collecting data for this study. Since the researcher did not receive any objection from the superintendents previously contacted, all 315 participants were derived from the targeted districts. The cover letter clarified the study's focus and the procedures for responding. The IRB number was included in the cover letter mailed by the researcher. It was requested surveys be returned to the researcher within a two-week period in the stamped enveloped provided.

Each survey had two codes handwritten in the upper right hand corner. The first code signified whether the respondent was an administrator, secondary teacher, or elementary teacher. The second code identified the school district. This coding assisted the researcher in gathering and disaggregating the data. Administrative surveys were run on buff colored paper and teacher surveys on white paper to facilitate with the sorting and organization of data.

Survey Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a cross-sectional questionnaire designed by the researcher to collect information at one point in time from the respondents. The Professional Development Effectiveness Survey (PDES) contained twenty-three forced-response items, open blanks for additional comments, and six demographic response item blanks (Appendix B). Item constructs were written based on an empirical research literature review of best practices and current research in the field of professional development. The items reflected the 2001 National Staff Development Council Standards for Staff Development (NSCD), professional development program elements designed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in 2002, and Thomas Guskey's effective professional development principles (2002).

The twenty-four items were categorized into three main themes in order to assist the researcher in disaggregating the data. Those themes were based on the NSDC context, process, and content standards (2001). Table 2 provides the thematic correlation to the appropriate NSDC themes for the first twenty-four survey items.

Table 2

Survey Item Relationship to Context, Process, and Content Standards' Themes

Item	Standard Theme	Item		Standard Theme
1	Context	24	Ongoing follow-up	Process
2	Context	24	Curriculum integration	Content
3	Context	24	Acknowledge change	Process
4	Process	24	Practical ideas	Context
5	Process	24	Job-embedded	Context
6	Process	24	Focus on student learning	Content
7	Process	24	Sufficient resources	Context
8	Process	24	Administrative support	Context
9	Process	24	Peer collaboration	Process
10	Process	24	Reflective practice	Process
11	Process			
12	Content			
13	Content			
14	Content			
15	Context			
16	Process			
17	Context			
18	Context			
19	Context			
20	Content			
21	Context			
22	Process			
23	Process			

The first twenty-three item PDES responses were pre-established, mutually exclusive, and positive in nature. The response pattern chosen followed a four-point Likert-scale, directing the respondent to select only one response per item, carrying from strongly disagrees to strongly agree.

The rationale for choosing a four-point scale was to eliminate a no opinion or undecided response for those items. These survey questions were scored on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 indicating "Strongly Disagree", 2 indicating "Disagree", 3 indicating "Agree", and 4 indicating "Strongly Agree".

The first fifteen items correlated with the 2001 NSDC staff development standards, reflecting the three sub themes of context, process, and content. Items 15-23 statements related to suggested 2001 guidelines by the ASCD for effective professional development design. The next response, item 24, listed ten attributes of professional development programs and asked the respondent to prioritize the top four components they deemed most valuable in professional development (with 1 indicating most important, 2 as second most important, 3 as third most important, and 4 as fourth most important). These ten principles were distilled from Guskey's (2002) research in enhancing and evaluating the effectiveness of professional development.

Respondents were asked to fill in the blanks or circle applicable responses for eight items at the end of the survey to gather pertinent biographical or demographic data (age group, gender, number of years in education, current position, grade level, school improvement goal awareness, and ESU affiliation). Additional personal comments from the respondent could be handwritten on the three blank lines provided at the bottom of page two if desired.

A Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted to analyze component variance for the Likert-type response items. PCA and total variance results for the first 23 PDES items are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3

Communality and Parameter Estimate Summary of PDES Likert-type Items

Item	Component	Communality	Parameter Estimate
1	Guided by knowledgeable school leaders	.59	.67
2	Organize teachers into learning communities	.54	.68
3	Adequately supported by local resources	.53	.66
4	Use student data to determine needs	.80	.58
5	Guided by multiple data sources	.75	.64
6	Apply current research	.48	.69
7	Utilize appropriate learning strategies	.65	.79
8	Apply principles of learning	.41	.64
9	Recognize change	.62	.64
10	Provide collaboration skills	.71	.73
11	Engage teachers in continuous self-analysis	.49	.65
12	Prepare teachers to instruct all types of students	.70	.77
13	Deepen teachers' content knowledge	.55	.63
14	Involve community members	.65	.66
15	Are aligned with district goals	.70	.69
16	Focus on student-learning goals	.65	.76
17	Enable staff to work together	.58	.75
18	Are included in daily routine	.60	.52
19	Provide for long-term commitment	.64	.73
20	Are tailored to individual needs	.68	.69
21	Directly tied to district goals	.74	.73
22	Driven by achievement data	.64	.63
23	Based on best instructional practices	.64	.75

The final solution given was a one-component analysis with an eigenvalue (latent root) of 10.71, which accounted for 46.57% of the response variance. Appendix C displays a comprehensive table with itemized eigenvalue results. For the purpose of testing the theory that there was more than a one-component solution, a Scree plot was graphed. The Scree plot displayed the eigenvalues (latent roots) plotted against the number of factors on the survey in their order of extraction. Examination of the Scree plot

depicted a resulting drop-off curve that was used to evaluate the cutoff point. The

Scree plot's sharp curve clearly indicated only a one-component solution (Appendix D).

<div align="center">Survey Administration</div>

Uniform data were gathered from the administrators and teachers to determine

each group's perceptions about professional development within their school districts.

The study gathered data from administrators, high school teachers, and elementary

teachers. Once district permission was gained from each superintendent, all respondents

received identical survey questions.

Each research participant received a cover letter, the three-page survey, and a

return envelope for ease in returning the survey. The cover letter clarified focus and

procedures for the participants, and requested surveys be mailed back to the researcher

within a two-week period.

An overall response rate of 56% was achieved in the study with the total number

of respondents being 175. While a rate of over fifty percent is generally considered

favorable for mailed surveys, the researcher had anticipated a higher number of returned

surveys. The administrative survey response rate was 80% ($n = 60$) and the teacher

response rate was 47% ($n = 113$). Participation in this study was voluntary and the

researcher incurred all costs for the research project. Completed surveys were kept in a

secured file and destroyed after analysis.

<div align="center">Variables and Measures</div>

This study was primarily descriptive in nature, with the intent being to identify the

distinguishing components of professional development in small Nebraska schools based

on the perceptions of the educators within those districts. There was no prediction made

prior to the study. Independent variables (presumed causes) were the group

membership affiliation of the participants (elementary, secondary, or administrator). The

dependent variables (presumed effects) were the participants' perceptions about

professional development. The control variable (a variable that is neutralized or

eliminated from influencing the relationship between the independent and dependent

variables) was small school status for all participants. Intervening variables (conceptual

variables that theoretically affect the relationships between the independent and

dependent variables, but are not measured) were the varying demographics of each

respondent, such as their age, years in education, gender, grade level/position, or ESU

affiliation.

<div align="center">Reliability and Validity Assessment</div>

For the purpose of obtaining feedback for improvement and clarity, the survey

was administered to a group of two elementary teachers, two secondary teachers, one

principal, and one superintendent in a pilot test. This testing was done to establish face

validity of the survey and improve clarity to the questions, format, and scales.

Suggestions made by the piloted group were to: add clarity to the directions on the first

page and delete the what should be column, change date of birth to an age category, and

add ESU affiliation to the demographic response section at the bottom of the third page.

Two pilot participants asked for the terms learning (in item 8) and differentiation (in item

4) to be revised using clearer, more specific language. In item 20, the term was changed

from "job-embedded" to "tailored to meet individual needs" in order to reduce ambiguity

for the researcher during data analysis. Comments were favorable by all pilot participants

about the survey's length and overall appeal.

Descriptive and/or inferential statistics were conducted on each individual item, the total results, results for each sub theme of the survey, results for each subgroup identified through the demographical section of the survey (age, gender, years in education, and grade level) with cross-tabulations of those results of each theme and subgroup conducted. The following statistics were derived from the data: the mean, the standard deviation (as an indicator of the homogeneity of the responses: the smaller the standard deviation, the more homogeneous the responses), the proportion of the responses (the larger this proportion, the fewer the items left unanswered), and p-values as indicators of statistical significance (compared to alpha = .05). Handwritten comments were transcribed and reviewed for qualitative data analysis by the researcher.

Data collection affirmed the assumption by the researcher that not all respondents would answer all the items included on the survey. Missing data from two respondents was eliminated due to no responses on any survey items. Other missing data resulted when respondents sporadically omitted various items on the survey by choice. All data analysis was based only on the non-blank items, indicating totals of some sections did not add up to the total number of respondents.

Survey responses were hand-scored and tabulated by the researcher. Data was then entered into SPSS 11.0.1 for Windows in order to run the statistical tests necessary for analysis. In addressing validity and reliability factors, the investigator was aware of the limitations and disadvantages of a needs questionnaire. It was understood the researcher was prevented from learning the respondents' motivation for answering questions, not all surveys were returned, interpretations of questions were left up to the respondents, and not all respondents completed the entire questionnaire. The validity of

these results was reflective of the respondents' degree of participation and level of awareness in regard to professional development. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the participants' responses. Reliability analysis of the participants' responses was measured using a covariance matrix to determine the alpha. Internal consistency estimates of the first 23 responses were assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Results of this analysis indicated a reliability coefficient value of .95.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire results were analyzed primarily through the use of basic descriptive statistics. Frequency distributions, means, percentages, and standard deviations were derived from the demographic data and responses to survey items. The second page of the survey provided lines for participants to include handwritten comments. These comments provided qualitative information to support the participants' perceptions about professional development. Sixteen percent of the total sampled population (N=36) who returned surveys provided handwritten comments. Of the thirty-six respondents in the study who made personal comments, 17.5% were administrators (N=10) and 15.5% were teachers (N=26). All handwritten comments were transcribed (see Appendix F). Analysis by the researcher revealed several themes that emerged from the participants' comments, which will be further discussed in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

The previous chapter presented information on the sample, instrumentation, process for data collection, and a brief description of the method of analysis. This chapter presents a complete description of the findings of the study as defined by the research questions.

The purpose of this study was to identify the distinguishing components that Nebraska teachers and administrators in small school found most prevalent in their professional development activities. Data was collected through the administration of a three page survey designed by the researcher and based on an empirical literature review of current research and best practice related to professional development. This survey was sent to thirty randomly selected Class III school districts in the state of Nebraska, with fifty or less teachers on staff. The descriptive data obtained from the survey was based solely on perceptions and responses of the participants.

The Mann-Whitney U test was used in this study to compare two independent groups providing the sampled data. The rationale in using this type of test in place of the traditional t-test was based on it being distribution free and that the study's design violated basic parametric assumptions. The Mann-Whitney U test is considered a non-parametric equivalent of the unpaired t-test. No prior assumptions about the distribution of the data were made using this type of non-parametric test. All data from both groups were ranked in order to compare responses for the two independent groups of administrators and teachers.

The two groups identified in this study were administrators (N=57) and teachers (N=167). The number of principals and superintendents were combined into one group, referred to as administrators, in order to yield more reliable results due to the small sample sizes of the superintendent and principal groups when separated. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicated a significant difference between the perceptions of administrators and teachers in the study.

A significantly higher score in the mean rank indicated administrators had more favorable perceptions about professional development effectiveness in their districts than teachers. The teacher group had a substantially lower perception in regard to professional development effectiveness compared to the administrators in the small Nebraska school districts included in this study. The combined p-value of .027 fell in the critical region by being less than the alpha level of .05. Table 4 depicts the mean rank, z score, and significant p-value derived from this test.

Table 4

Mann-Whitney U Test Results Comparing Group Types on PDES

PDES total scale score	Group type	$\underline{N}$	$\underline{M \; rank}$	$\underline{Z}$	$\underline{p\text{-value}}$
	Administrators	57	95.51		
	Teachers	110	78.04		
2479.00	Combined	167		-2.22	.027*

*$\underline{p}$ < .05

Multiple regression analysis was conducted with the survey data to determine if group type, gender, or years in education had any influence or predicted the total scale

score of the PDES. The results indicated that none of these variables had an

appreciable influence or predicted the PDES total scale score. In regard to group type,

gender, and years of experience, the derived $R^2 = .04$, $p = .05$, and SEE = 11.15. Multiple

regression results indicated there was no significant proportion of variability explained by

group type, gender, or years of experience. (See Tables 5 and 6)

Table 5

Response Consistency Summary According to Group Type, Gender, and Years in Education

Model	SS	df	M^2	F	p-value
Regression	825.46	3	275.15	2.21	.089a
Residual	19901.73	160	124.39		
Total	20727.2	163			

 a. Constant: Group type, gender, and years in education
 b. Dependent variable: PDES total scale score

Table 6

Regression Analysis Summary for Group Type, Gender, and Years in Education Variables on Effective Professional Development Survey (N = 164)

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	SEB	β	t	p-value
Group type[1]	-3.62	2.11	-.15	-1.71	.089
Gender	-.50	1.95	-.02	-.25	.800
Years in education	.73	.54	.11	1.33	.184

Note: 1-indicates administrators or teachers

It was generally understood by the researcher that respondents to surveys tend to differ from non-respondents in the characteristics being measured. Generalization of these survey results from respondents to the entire target population is usually accompanied by a measurement error of unknown magnitude. The researcher acknowledged these limitations when data were analyzed and will take this prospective error into consideration if any results are utilized for future professional development planning or continued research.

<div align="center">Survey Results and Data Analysis</div>

Data obtained from a factor analysis of the Likert-type frequencies on the first 23 responses from the survey were analyzed. The mean, median, and standard deviation were calculated for both the administrators and teachers for each item. The median for both groups, with the exception of two items, was 3.00 for all items. Item 14 ("involve community members") responses indicated a lower median of 2.00 for both groups. Administrative responses on item 15 ("are aligned with district goals") indicated a higher median of 3.50. Teacher responses on item 15 held to the 3.00 median, as did all other items on the survey. The means for administrative responses ranged from 2.25 ("involve community members") to 3.45 ("are aligned with district goals"). Teachers' response means ranged from 2.35 ("involved community members") to 3.19 ("are aligned with district goals").

The mean and standard deviation for all the administrators' items were greater than any of the means or standard deviations calculated for each of the teachers' responses. Mean and standard deviation results for each group and survey item are

summarized in Table 7. The descriptive data displayed on this table were used to address research questions one, two, three, four, six, seven, and eight in this study.

Item 24 listed ten components related to professional development and instructed the respondents to rank the top four items they felt were most important by placing a 1 next to the attribute identified as most important, a 2 as second most important, a 3 as third most important, and a 4 as fourth most important. Several of the respondents did not follow the prescribed instructions, but rather checked off four items or ranked each side one through four. This resulted in ambiguity in terms of clearly analyzing the responses to this item. Only data from respondents who ranked the four items correctly were used for analysis in this study. Cross tabulations of these ten items, according to each group type of administrators and teachers, were calculated and are displayed in Table 8. The table shows the proportion of the total sample that indicated which items were considered valuable. Note that the total yes responses will not add up to 100% of the sample because multiple responses could be given for this question.

Table 7

Statistical Summary for PDES Items for Administrators (n = 60) and
Teachers (n =113)

Item	Component	Administrators		Teachers	
		M	SD	M	SD
1	Guided by knowledgeable school leaders	3.42	.563	3.16	.702
2	Organize teachers into learning communities	2.92	.696	2.76	.771
3	Adequately supported by local resources	2.93	.861	2.59	.831
4	Use student data to determine need	3.05	.769	2.85	.732
5	Guided by multiple data sources	2.85	.732	2.59	.812
6	Apply current research	2.80	.637	2.67	.749
7	Utilized appropriate learning strategies	3.05	.622	3.03	.661
8	Apply principles of learning	2.98	.577	2.94	.645
9	Recognize change	3.17	.693	2.99	.701
10	Provide collaboration skills	2.97	.669	2.70	.731
11	Engage teachers in continuous self-analysis	2.87	.747	2.74	.765
12	Prepare teachers to instruct all student types	3.03	.610	2.78	.810
13	Deepen teachers' content knowledge	2.83	.668	2.67	.761
14	Involve community members	2.25	.704	2.35	.853
15	Are aligned with district goals	3.45	.622	3.19	.625
16	Focus on student-learning goals	3.23	.621	2.95	.721
17	Enable staff to work together	3.13	.747	2.82	.793
18	Are included in daily routine	2.67	.629	2.55	.769
19	Provide for long-term commitment	3.03	.637	2.80	.746
20	Are tailored to individual needs	2.73	.634	2.54	.708
21	Directly tied to district goals	3.37	.610	3.04	.673
22	Driven by achievement data	3.15	.659	2.85	.750
23	Based on best instructional practices	3.15	.606	2.86	.778

Table 8

Descriptive Group Summary for Most Valuable Attributes Identified on PDES Item 24

Attribute	Administrators		Response	Teachers	
	n	%		n	%
Ongoing follow-up	36	44	Yes	46	56
	24	27	No	65	73
Curriculum integration	37	39	Yes	58	61
	23	30	No	53	70
Acknowledge change	14	52	Yes	13	48
	46	32	No	98	68
Practical ideas	15	20	Yes	59	80
	45	46	No	52	54
Job-embedded	6	60	Yes	4	40
	54	33	No	107	67
Focus on student learning	56	37	Yes	93	63
	4	18	No	18	82
Sufficient resources	25	38	Yes	40	62
	35	33	No	71	67
Administrative support	32	32	Yes	69	68
	28	40	No	42	60
Peer collaboration	18	25	Yes	54	75
	42	42	No	57	58
Reflective practice	7	47	Yes	8	53
	53	34	No	103	66

Frequency percentages, for each attribute with a 1 (indicating most valuable) on this item, were also calculated for each group. Results are displayed in Table 8. Descriptive data from Tables 8 and 9 were used to answer research questions one, three, six, and seven.

Table 9

Frequency Summary of Attributes Selected by Administrators (N=59)

and Teachers (N=109) as Most Valuable for PDES Item 24

Attribute	Administrators		Teachers	
	n	%	n	%
Ongoing follow-up	9	15	3	3
Curriculum integration	0	0	5	5
Acknowledge change	2	3	3	3
Practical ideas	2	3	14	13
Job-embedded	1	2	1	1
Focus on student learning	31	53	57	52
Sufficient resources	6	10	6	6
Administrative support	7	12	16	15
Peer collaboration	2	1	3	3
Reflective practice	0	0	1	1

Results Summary

The first question investigated in this study investigated the educators'

perceptions in regard to sub themes of context, content, and process standards of

professional development determined by the researcher.

Question 1: *Do teachers, principals, and superintendents have similar*

perceptions about the context, processes, and content of professional development? The

twenty-four survey questions were categorized into three main areas of context, process,

and content adapted from the NSDC Standards for Staff Development (Revised, 2001).

There were twenty-four NSCD standards at the time of this research investigation.

Context standards relate to learning communities, leadership, and resources (items 1, 2, 3, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, and "job-embedded, practical ideas, sufficient resources", and "administrative support" from 24). The professional development process standards are data-driven, research-based, collaborative, and include its design, evaluation, and application of knowledge about learning and change (items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 22, 23 and "ongoing follow-up, acknowledge change, peer collaboration," and "reflective practice" from 24). Equity, quality teaching, and stakeholders' involvement represent content standards (items 12, 13, 14, 20, and "curriculum integration" and "focus on student learning" from 24).

As previously stated, the respondents were divided into two main groups of administrators (principals and superintendents) and teachers to provide a larger sample for more effective data analysis by the researcher.

Results: The researcher examined all Principal Component Analysis data to determine whether the NSDC standards' categories were significant in the responses. All PCA data and analysis indicated there was no significant variance among, or correlation with, the previously identified sub themes of context, process, or content in this research study. The respondents' perceptions of professional development indicated a one-component solution. Therefore, it can be concluded there was no recognizable degree of difference in the perceptions of the teachers, principals, and superintendents in this study according to the context, processes, or content of professional development standards. There was a noticeable difference in the overall perceptions of the administrator group compared to the teacher group. On the whole, administrators responded more favorably

on all PDES items. The magnitude of this higher perception was revealed by the Mann-Whitney U test result of a p-value of .027.

The second question addressed the areas of current educational research and best professional practice as they related to professional development.

Question 2: *Do administrators and teachers in small Nebraska school districts perceive that professional development opportunities are reflective of current educational research and best professional practice?* Survey items 6 "prepare teachers to apply current research to decisions" and 23 "are based on best instructional practices" spoke more directly to this research question.

Results: Factor analysis data from item 6 revealed little difference in comparing the administrators' response mean of 2.80 to that of the teachers of 2.67. Teacher responses on item 23 indicated only a slightly lower mean of 2.86, compared to that of 3.15 for administrators participating in the study. In looking at both items, it is apparent that administrators perceived professional development to be more reflective of research and related to best professional practice than did teachers who responded on the survey. The degree of variance for these two items compared to the other twenty-one Likert-type responses was not large enough to be determined as significant.

The third question connected professional development activities to their focus on learning.

Question 3: *Are professional development opportunities for Nebraska educators in small districts perceived to focus on learning?* Data obtained from survey items 8 "apply knowledge about principles of learning", 16 "directly focus on achieving specific

student-learning goals", and 24 "focus on student learning" were analyzed to address this question.

Results: The means and standard deviations for these two Likert-type items were lower for teachers than administrators on the survey. However, there was not a large enough difference between them to interpret any valid significance. Again, the PCA indicated that the variance of these two items, compared to the other twenty-one Likert-type responses, was not large enough to be determined as significant.

For item 24, 53% of administrators and 52% of teachers marked the "focus on student learning" attribute with a 1, indicating it to be their most valuable component choice in the ranking. Only 38% of administrators marked it with a 1, 2, 3, or 4, while 63% of teachers chose it as one of their top four attributes. It was noted that a larger percentage of teachers marked this attribute overall. Data analysis of the PDES did not clearly indicate whether current professional development activities were actually being directly focused on student learning, but left little doubt that it was a desirable facet for both respondent groups.

The extent to which districts planned their professional development activities based on data was the emphasis of question four.

Question 4: *Are staff development offerings perceived by staff to be largely data-driven in Nebraska small schools?* Likert-type survey items 4 "use student data to determine areas needing improvement", 5 "are guided by multiple data sources to demonstrate impact", and 22 "are driven by student achievement data" addressed this question.

Results: The means and standard deviations for these items were all higher for administrators' responses than teachers' responses. However, the variance of these three items compared to the other twenty-one Likert-type responses was not large enough to be determined as significant in this study.

The fifth question explored the relationship of the respondents' level of familiarity with school improvement goals and their perceptions of professional development.

Question 5: *Do educators' perceptions of professional development opportunities differ according to their familiarity with school improvement plans?* Responses to survey items 15 "are aligned with district improvement goals", 21 "are directly tied to district goals", and participants' level of familiarity with school improvement goals (ranging from "very familiar" to "somewhat familiar" to "not at all familiar" on the final page of the survey) were analyzed to address this question. No participants chose the "not at all familiar" with school improvement goals response.

Results: Means and standard deviations for both group's responses were very similar for items 15 and 21 on the PDES, with the teachers' items being just slightly lower than those of the administrators. The results from the two-way analysis indicated that administrators and teachers differed in their overall general perceptions. Effect size estimates based on comparisons of the means from each group were calculated. A Cohen's value of 0.36 indicated a relatively small effect size between the two levels of familiarity for the groups analyzed in this study.

Levels of their familiarity with school improvement goals had no distinguishable effect between the two groups surveyed. It was interesting to note that the majority of

both groups were either somewhat or very familiar with the district's school

improvement goals. No administrators or teachers selected the "not at all familiar" with

school improvement goals response. However, it is not possible for the researcher to

interpret the appreciable difference between the participants' interpretation of

"somewhat" compared to "very" in terms of responding to this item. The comparison

indicated there was no difference between the two groups based on their levels of

familiarity. Tables 10 and 11 display the summary of administrators' and teachers' levels

of familiarity with school improvement goals for the population in this study.

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations for Level of Familiarity with

School Improvement Goals for Administrators (N=54) and Teachers (N=110)

Level	Group type	M	SD
somewhat familiar	Administrators	69.43	5.32
	Teachers	59.85	11.88
very familiar	Administrators	68.36	10.41
	Teachers	67.14	10.81

Table 11

Summary of Two-by-Two Analysis of Variance for Group Type by

Level of Familiarity with School Improvement Goals

Source	df	SS	MS	F	p-value
SIP familiarity level	1	190.84	190.84	1.63	.204
Group	1	573.65	573.65	4.90	.028*
SIP x Group	1	344.10	344.10	2.94	.089
Error	160	18752.29	117.20		
Total	164	730104.00			

*p < .05

The sixth research question in this study investigated the opportunities for professional development collaboration and learning communities in small Nebraska school districts.

Question 6: *Do current professional development programs in small Nebraska school districts provide opportunities for collaboration among educators through the development of learning communities?* Survey items 2 "organize teachers into learning communities", 10 "provide teachers with collaboration skills", 17 "enable staff to work together for implementation of activities", and 24 "peer collaboration" gathered data for this question.

Results: Means and standard deviations for survey responses to items 2, 10, and 17 generally indicated that teachers had a somewhat lower perception in regard to professional development collaboration and learning communities. On item 24, only 1%

of administrators and 3% of teachers marked the attribute of "peer collaboration" with a 1. Within the group, 25% of administrators denoted it with a 1, 2, 3, or 4, while 75% of teachers chose it as one of the top four most valuable attributes for effective professional development. This significant difference between group responses on item 24 indicated that teachers perceived collaborating and learning communities to be an important professional development attribute.

The key issue of adequate resources for professional development activities was included in question seven of the study.

Question 7: *Do teachers and administrators perceive there are adequate local resources for staff development activities in small Nebraska school districts?* This question was addressed on the survey by items 3 "are adequately supported with local resources" and 24 "sufficient resources".

Results: The mean and standard deviation for item 3 was only slightly higher for administrators than teachers. There was insufficient response variance on this one PDES item to determine any significance in relationship to any other Likert-type items on the survey. Responses on item 24 showed 10% of administrators and 6% of teachers marked "sufficient resources" with a 1 to indicate it as a most valuable attribute. Overall, 39% of administrators and 62% of teachers marked it with a 1, 2, 3, or 4 to indicate it as one of the top four ranking attributes of effective professional development.

The eighth question explored the relationship between professional development activities and student achievement data small Class III school districts located in Nebraska.

Question 8: *Do Nebraska educators perceive the current professional development in small schools is tied to student achievement data (such as: assessment or testing results)?* Survey items 16 "directly focus on achieving specific student-learning goals" and 22 "are driven by student achievement data" supplied data pertinent to this research question.

Results: Due to a one-component solution, the variance of the means and standard deviations calculated for these three items compared to the other twenty-one Likert-type responses was not large enough to be determined as noteworthy. The results again indicated an overall lower opinion from teachers than administrators participating in the survey.

The ninth question of the study compared participants' professional development perceptions with their varying demographics.

Question 9: *Does position, age, gender, years in education, or grade level impact Nebraska educators' perceptions about professional development?* Participants' responses taken from page three of the survey regarding categories for position, age group, gender, number of years in education, and grade level spoke to this question. Varying categorical characteristics were included on Table 1.

Results: According to all demographic gathered and analyzed by the researcher, there was no significance relating to the age, gender, years in education, grade level, or ESU affiliation in the responses given on the PDES. As previously stated, the administrators' group of superintendents and principals responded significantly higher in their overall perceptions of effective professional development in this study. Both teachers and administrators fell in the top two categories for age and years in education.

Thus, indicating the average age of all respondents was over forty and that they had at least twenty years of educational experience.

<div align="center">Themes Emerging from Survey Comments</div>

Appendix E lists the transcribed participants' individual comments provided by administrators and teachers on the bottom of page two of the survey. Since less than one-fourth of the respondents chose to provide additional information about their personal perceptions in regard to professional development, it is not possible to generalize these qualitative results to the targeted population. However, there were several major recurring themes that emerged from the personal comments when coded and analyzed by the researcher that were notable.

The issue of time constraints was mentioned by 39% of the participants as being a setback in the area of providing effective professional development. Several administrators which added written comments saw it as their responsibility to provide the necessary time for staff development, but voiced frustration with state mandates and other obligations. One administrator commented, "As an administrator, it is essential to provide time for improvement of instruction." Another added, "Time during the regular school day is another issue." An additional administrator noted "Professional development suffers lost time to STARS and NE LEARNS."

Teacher comments supported the administrative feeling that the amount of time for effective professional development was inadequate. One teacher said, "We need more time during the school day to work on these things" and another mentioned, "Time restraints are on the educator." A response given by one teacher, "I do not have enough time to do everything that is expected of a teacher and do it well enough," revealed the

frustration felt due to the lack of time. It was readily apparent in reviewing the comments provided, time was the greatest concern for all who added additional comments to the survey.

The second major theme revealed by 22% of the participants who provided comments was the lack of funding and the matter of money. One administrator stressed, "School finance has had a direct negative impact on staff development." Another mentioned, "With constant reduction of state dollars to keep our school open, minimum dollars are being spent on professional development." While teachers did not stress budget issues as heavily as administrators, one participant wrote, "Smaller schools do not have the resources or funds to implement some of these."

Other minor themes that surfaced in reviewing the comments were the lack of consistency, ongoing follow-up, and inconsistency in planning. One administrator noted it was, "very important to have ongoing follow-up with all staff," and then added "we don't go over a checklist like this when deciding on professional planning." At least half of the commenting teachers provided statements that denoted a sense of frustration in relation to their available staff development opportunities. One teacher mentioned, "Staff development focus can change from administration to administration." Another commented it was, "haphazard at best," and with little "forethought in planning." They went on to say, "If we taught the way some of this information was presented to us, we'd be canned!" Additional comments revealed that the professional development of those surveyed lacked "two-way communication and follow through" and were primarily based on the "principal's ideas." One teacher did not feel the "administration had been trained" and they needed more "guidelines and directions."

Comments by both administrators and teachers revealed the need for teachers to be more "involved in the process" and to create "ownership that will make it more likely that teachers will use the information to improve teaching practices." Two teachers favorably mentioned that their local Educational Service Unit provided opportunities that were "very important to our school's professional development" and if there was a need, "they always try and fill it." The ESU workshops were stated as "an excellent way to stay updated and current with professional development."

Chapter V presents a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further research in effective professional development practices and areas related to this study.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"Learning, above and beyond the lab rat level, is a change in a person, brought about through conversation. ... The best and most memorable conversations are often the most dangerous. They are risky, but just as relationships without risk never develop trust, conversations without danger fail to open us up to the potential for change."

Ron Zemke (2001)

Summary of the Purpose of this Research

The purpose of this study was to identify the distinguishing components that Nebraska teachers and administrators in small schools found most prevalent in their professional development activities. This study was undertaken to assist educational policy-makers and leaders in small school districts in providing effective professional development opportunities based on the perceptions of the sampled administrators and teachers. The study was designed to focus on small school districts that had no designated curriculum director or formal staff development department. Also, small school staffs frequently have fewer resources than larger districts. Increased accountability for improved student learning and decreased financial resources in these small school districts creates a need for more comprehensive, effective professional development programs and practices. This study advances the state's research in the area of enhancing teacher effectiveness with the primary intent of improving student performance.

Summary of the Setting and Context

The study was conducted during the 2002-03 school year and data were collected from thirty Class III school districts located in Nebraska. This number of districts was manageable for the independent researcher, yet yielded a large enough sample size to

produce generalizable results. These districts shared the common control variable of having fifty or less teachers on staff. The sampling frame of 323 educators was identified through a stratified random sampling procedure.

The research study comes at a time when there is a perceived need to improve our students' performance levels. In fact, the most important issue in education today is the improvement of our schools. Professional development opportunities should create improvement that will allow our students to obtain the skills and knowledge they will need for the future. Specifically, the purpose of this investigation was to identify the distinguishing components that Nebraska teachers and administrators in small schools found most prevalent in their professional development activities. By identifying these characteristics, school leaders can model desired behaviors, facilitate effective school practices, and implement school policies that stimulate teacher leadership and participation in continuous staff development.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

1. Do teachers, principals, and superintendents have similar perceptions about the context, content, and processes of professional development?

2. Do administrators and teachers in small Nebraska school districts perceive professional development opportunities are reflective of current educational research and best professional practice?

3. Are professional development opportunities for Nebraska educators perceived to focus on learning?

4. Are staff development offerings perceived by staff to be largely data-driven in small Nebraska schools?

5. Do educators' perceptions of professional development opportunities differ according to their familiarity with school improvement plans?

6. Do current professional development programs in small schools provide opportunities for collaboration among educators through the development of professional learning communities?

7. Do teachers and administrators perceive there are adequate local resources for staff development activities in small Nebraska school districts?

8. Do Nebraska educators perceive the current professional development in small schools is tied to student achievement data (such as: assessment or testing results)?

9. Does position, age, gender, years in education, or grade level impact Nebraska educators' perceptions about professional development?

<u>Summary of Findings</u>

Data gathered from the three-page questionnaire in this study revealed that administrators had more favorable perceptions of professional development opportunities within their districts than teachers. There was a significant difference in comparing the response results from the two groups. The mean rank of the administrators was 95.51, compared to the mean rank of the teachers being 78.04. This finding indicates that the administrators and teachers in this study have dissimilar perceptions about the professional development opportunities in their districts.

Overall, the teachers' perceptions were closely correlated with each other, as were the administrators in the study. Since their combined response rate was only 56%, it may be problematic to generalize these results to the entire target population without an error

of unknown magnitude. Administrators had a notably higher response rate of 80%, than the teachers' rate of only 47%.

The multiple regression results indicate the group type, gender, or years in education had no influence or effect on the responses and survey's total scale score. It should be recognized however, that the majority of both groups responding were at least 40 years of age, or older. The majority also had over twenty years in education. These demographic characteristics no doubt influenced the respondents' perceptions about professional development. It can be inferred that since the average age of the respondent was greater than thirty-nine and the average number of years in education was greater than twenty, administrators and teachers in small Nebraska districts currently have relatively few educators entering the profession directly from college.

The researcher did not address the respondents' level of education; therefore it cannot be determined if advanced degrees or educational level had any influence on the study's results. Since administrators are required to have additional education for certification, it is understood this group all had a minimum of a master's and/or specialist's degree. With the targeted population of administrators being predominately male (82%) and the targeted population of teachers being predominately female (73%), it is likely there may be some influence related to gender groups in the overall results that was not revealed in this investigation. These percentage differences provide opportunities for future research studies in regard to gender roles and attitudes in the educational field.

All survey responses were originally categorized into three sub themes of context, process, and content. The purpose for this categorization was to relate results to the National Staff Development Council's standards for staff development and assist in data

analysis. A Principal Component Analysis (PCA) revealed only a one-component solution, indicating this study revealed there was no statistical significant correlation between the twenty-four item responses based on their relationship to the context, process, or process standards. The PCA also revealed there was no statistical significance in terms of any other descriptors, such as: being reflective of current research or best educational practice, focus on learning, largely data-driven, driven by student achievement data, opportunities for collaboration and learning communities, or adequate local resources.

The study revealed that all respondents had at least a somewhat or very familiar level of school improvement awareness. However, there was no calculable variance in the overall responses for those administrators and teachers who were either somewhat or very familiar with school improvement goals. The researcher had anticipated at least some of the respondents would not be at all familiar with their school improvement goals. These results imply that there is a greater awareness of school improvement goals in small school districts than expected.

The qualitative data was limited to the handwritten survey comments (N = 36) provided by ten administrators and twenty-six teachers. Survey comments revealed several common themes from both administrators and teachers about professional development perceptions in these small Nebraska districts. The issues of inadequate time and money revealed it is vital for school leaders to better manage the staff development within their districts. Their challenge is to determine what actions are required to maximize the allotted time and their limited funding to better facilitate their teachers' professional growth. Improved teacher performance will translate into increased student

achievement. Ongoing follow-up and forethought in planning were noted as essential criteria for quality staff development.

School administrators are further challenged to consider whether the level of resources used to support mandated staff development sufficiently meet the demands that teachers face in this era of stringent accountability. Both administrators and teachers mentioned teacher ownership and involvement as critical components of professional development. Each group made comments in reference to the state standards and assessment requirements as being too time consuming and implied that time could be better spent on more effective professional development. It is the opinion of the researcher that the standards/assessment mandates are timely opportunities for small districts to gain increased insight into improved instructional strategies, deeper content knowledge, and collaborative learning communities. These are all indicators of high-quality staff development. Respondents' comments disclose the real need for all educators to see the close connection between the state's requirements and improved teaching for increased achievement. Since attitudes are the underpinnings for actions, by embracing these mandates as opportunities to improve, administrators can create a climate that cultivates positive change.

There was mutual agreement that a focus on student learning was considered a highly valuable attribute for effective professional development. All respondents relegated the need to focus staff development on enhancing students' learning. This suggests the need to use authentic information related to student learning to design professional development within districts. Schmoker (Sparks, 2000) recognized that data can help educators face difficult realities, select programs, and provide motivation by

charting progress in achieving goals. If a new teaching strategy or method results in increased student achievement, it should be shared school-wide and used consistently by all teachers within the district.

Sparks (2002) maintained that time, money, and the current state of research are not as significant to improving professional learning in schools as are new ways of thinking and acting. Systemic change begins with a change in leadership. The capacity of schools to create positive results for students is directly related to the leaders within them. According to Sparks (2002), "Leaders matter because they can affect the fundamental choices, mental models, and sense of efficacy of those with whom they interact."

Comments provided by the respondents in this study substantiate how influential administrators are in the change process. Teachers perceived them to lack knowledge and expertise in providing a coherent long-term plan for improving teacher performance. This perception is indicative of a lack in traditional administrative training for effective change management and critical communication skills. It appears school leaders must keep a closer pulse on their organization's needs in relationship to their goals. This study's results are indicative that the communication flow between teachers and administrators should be more open and consistent.

Since the study revealed genuine statistical significance between the administrators' and teachers' responses, the researcher believes further research on this topic is warranted. Administrators are largely responsible for the professional development and planning in their districts. They need to have greater awareness and insight about what their teachers perceive concerning their professional growth and needs. Student achievement heavily relies on teachers' expertise and effectiveness for

which administrators are directly responsible for enhancing. Building an organizational culture that supports professional development requires that leaders must demonstrate their commitment to its value through the provision of adequate funding and sufficient time.

Much of the fragmentation common in current programs is the result of inappropriate structure and lack of time. The need for time for professional development during the school day and year that is not used for administrative purposes is paramount to building a culture of professional growth among all teachers. There is a need for acculturating teachers early into an environment that values and recognizes continual learning by all. With limited resources in small districts, it is essential for administrators to better align school and district goals with professional development goals and plans. Successful professional development must be sustained over time and directly related to, or integrated into, a teacher's everyday work.

<div align="center">Implications of the Study</div>

It is evident the measures in this study are deficient in certain aspects. A large portion of the researcher's intent was to compare responses in terms of context, process, and content. Since the PCA revealed only a single component solution, any larger comparison or correlation was undeterminable. The researcher had anticipated an undetermined amount of difference between the administrators' and teachers' perceptions. The fact that there was such a varying degree reveals an overwhelming demand for increased communication between administrators and teachers. Teachers require ample ownership in their professional development in order for it to be more effective. When professional development is integral to school life and change, leaders

support activities that examine teaching and learning, promote teacher leadership, and shared decision-making that is focused on improving student performance. Teachers should have enormous input; they need to be heard and supported by their administrators in their professional learning endeavors.

The teaching profession is undergoing revolutionary transformation. The implications are clear for the role of administrators to become more focused on teachers' individual attitudes and personalized needs. School leaders are, therefore, challenged to implement staff development programs that build on teachers' knowledge and skills. Administrators must acknowledge their responsibility to foster teacher development in the upcoming educational era. The implications for principals in using professional development, as a strategy to improve teaching and learning are to establish norms of increased communication and collaboration, allocate money and time to support staff development, and model a commitment to a coherent long-term professional development plan that involves their teachers. A structured systematic process needs to be in place to assure that ongoing training is occurring and effective (Joyce & Showers, 1988). Those who will participate in and facilitate that development should plan high-quality professional development collaboratively. Traditional top-down, fragmented staff development does not sustain the teachers' need to improve or satisfy the quest for improved student achievement. Authentic learning occurs when increased communication heightens mutual understanding and a collective purpose.

Researcher's Reflections

Every research study reveals much more than data allows to support or present. The findings in this study certainly indicate the need for an increase in candid communication between administrators and their teachers in the area of professional development. The question remains as to why the superintendents and principals had such significantly higher positive perceptions in regard to professional development in their districts. One might have initially inferred that small school districts were more site-based and inductive to increased communication. Since this was not the case, how can administrators become more familiar with their teachers' authentic perceptions?

The roles of the superintendency and principalship are continually evolving, demanding more of administrators than ever before. It is clear that small Nebraska school districts have unique characteristics and needs. It may be possible the national standards and effective principles defined by NSDC, ASCD, and Guskey were not readily applicable or feasible in districts with such limited professional development expertise. The fact that the impact of the themes of context, process, and content was not discernable, may have suggested that rural school staffs did not have as many available staff development options as those in larger districts. All current professional development research stated the need for strong instructional leadership and ongoing support. It may not be realistic for rural administrators to adequately plan, implement, and evaluate professional development based on these standards with no outside expertise or additional support. The researcher has accepted the possibility that the standards themselves were somewhat ambiguous and left largely to individual interpretation; hence clouding the results of the study. What remains clear is that administrators and teachers

should be uniform in their perceptions in order for high quality professional

development to occur in school districts.

<center>Recommendations for Future Research</center>

Significant disparity between the administrators' and teachers' perceptions was

determined in this study. Since each data-gathering procedure had its own weakness or

bias, the researcher suggests there would be merit in using multiple methods, by

supplementing one with the others to counteract bias and generate more adequate data. It

is recommended the study be replicated using a larger number of schools and a mixed

methods approach. By adding qualitative data gathered through interviews, a deeper

perspective about administrators' and teachers' perceptions could be attained. Reports

from reviewing school improvement plan documents would add another dimension to the

research results. Review and critique of school improvement documents could support or

negate the perceptual data gathered from future surveys and interviews in a replicated,

expanded study.

Future research opportunities exist within the realm of educational services across

the state. Participants in this study frequently saw these intermediate agencies as being

quality providers of professional development opportunities. Individual service units

could conduct ongoing action research studies within their regions to assist these small

districts in adequate follow-up based on sound educational practices. A future

investigation to measure the direct impact that specific staff development programs and

initiatives could contribute positively to the teacher development efforts made by state

ESUs.

A potential increase in the perceived value of staff development could result in more funding support from research organizations to identify strategies to improve student learning and teacher development. The expanding teacher's role requires professional development that enhances pedagogy, assessment literacy, data-driven decision-making, and differentiation. The face of teaching must adapt to better meet the challenges that public expectations and new reforms demand. Future research could shed light on how best to plan and provide meaningful, practical professional development opportunities for all teachers.

Education in this century will require that educators know more about their students, their subject matter, and the context of their work than ever before. The question remains, how do we accomplish these demanding and daunting tasks? There is no single answer or magic bullet that will prepare teachers for the 21st century. However, the author, as well as many educational research experts, believe that educational leaders have collected enough expertise and insight over the past two decades to chart a course for change that places ongoing professional development at the center of future reform initiatives. It is an obligation for today's school leaders to create schools in which it is everyone's job to learn and where no teacher or student is left behind.

Possible solutions lie in the sorting out and sharing of what works among professionals dedicated to educational excellence. The power of what we think can be altered and children's lives greatly enhanced, by disclosing what we already know and sharing the challenge to discover what we still need to know about effective professional development.

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Appendices

Appendix A:
IRB Approval Letter

Appendix B:
Questionnaire
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to collect information from teachers and administrators about their perceptions regarding professional development in their schools. Please respond to the following statements openly.
Thank you, in advance, for your time and opinions.

Please circle your responses using the following key:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

(Please circle one response for each item.)

Professional development activities within my district-

are guided by knowledgeable school leaders	1 2 3 4
organize teachers into learning communities	1 2 3 4
are adequately supported with local resources	1 2 3 4
use student data to determine areas needing improvement	1 2 3 4
are guided by multiple data sources to demonstrate impact	1 2 3 4
prepare teachers to apply current research to decisions	1 2 3 4
utilize learning strategies appropriate to intended goals	1 2 3 4
apply knowledge about principles of learning	1 2 3 4
recognize change is inherent to all organizations	1 2 3 4
provide teachers with collaboration skills	1 2 3 4
engage teachers in continuous self-analysis	1 2 3 4
prepare teachers to better instruct all types of students	1 2 3 4

deepen teachers' content knowledge		1 2 3 4
appropriately involve community members		1 2 3 4

Please circle your responses using the following key:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

(Please circle one response for each item.)

Professional development activities within my district-

are aligned with district improvement goals   1 2 3 4

directly focus on achieving specific student-learning goals   1 2
3 4

enable staff to work together for implementation of activities 1 2 3 4

are included in my daily routine   1 2 3 4

provide for long-term commitment   1 2 3 4

are tailored to meet individual needs   1 2 3 4

directly tied to district goals   1 2 3 4

are driven by student achievement data   1 2 3 4

are based on best instructional practices   1 2
3 4

For the following statement, please prioritize the top four items you feel are most important with 1 indicating most important, 2 as second most important, 3 as third most important, and 4 as fourth most important.

The four most valuable components in professional development are:

Ongoing follow-up___	Focus on student learning ___
Curriculum integration___	Sufficient resources___
Acknowledge change___	Administrative support ___
Practical ideas___	Peer collaboration ___
Job-embedded ___	Reflective practice ___

Please add any additional professional development comments on the lines below:
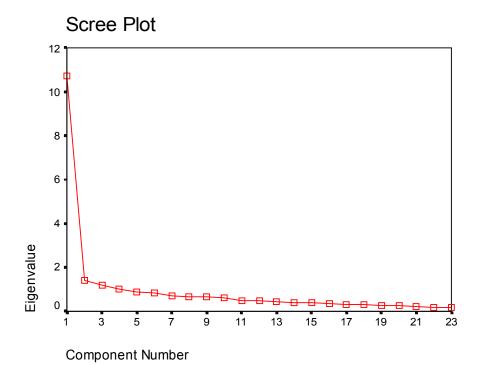
_____

_____

Please fill in the blanks or circle the appropriate category for the following:

Age group:

20 – 29   30 – 39   40 – 49   50+

Gender:

Female   Male

Number of years in education:

1 – 5   6 – 10   11 – 15   16 – 20   21 – 25   25+

Grade level:

K – 3   4 – 6   4 – 8   9 – 12   K – 6   K – 8   K – 12

The level of my familiarity with our school improvement goals is:

very familiar   somewhat familiar   not at all familiar

The Educational Service Unit my district belongs to is #_____

Thank you for taking your valuable time to respond to this questionnaire!

Appendix C:
Eigenvalues, Percentages of Variance, and Cumulative Percentages
For Factors of the 23-Item Professional Development Survey

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	10.71	46.57	46.57
2	1.41	6.15	52.71
3	1.18	5.13	57.85
4	1.02	4.47	62.31
5	.88	3.83	66.14
6	.85	3.68	69.81
7	.72	3.14	72.95
8	.68	2.97	75.92
9	.65	2.83	78.75
10	.62	2.70	81.45
11	.48	2.09	83.54
12	.47	2.04	85.58
13	.42	1.83	87.41
14	.40	1.75	89.15
15	.38	1.65	90.80
16	.37	1.62	92.42
17	.32	1.38	93.80
18	.31	1.33	95.14
19	.28	1.20	96.33
20	.24	1.06	97.39
21	.23	1.02	98.41
22	.20	.85	99.25

| 23 | .17 | .75 | 100.00 |

Appendix D:

Scree Plot

Appendix E:
SURVEY COMMENTS
Administrative

"As an administrator it is essential to provide time for improvement of instruction through staff development."

"We are our worst enemies at times when it comes to professional development. Supts. go to meetings, find out what the flavor of the month is and want to present it to the staff. That's fine but there has to be ongoing follow-up."

"School finance has had a direct negative impact on staff development. Time during the regular school is another issue, as there are so many things, standards/assessments, that are pulling teachers out of the classroom."

"With constant reduction of state $ to keep our school open, minimum $ are being spent on professional development. Even if you pay for it yourself you may not be able to attend a professional development session/class/meeting. It's not happening in this economy."

"Professional development suffers lost time to STARS and NE LEARNS, demands usurping leadership, the multitude of student diversity, time demands, i.e.: IEPs, SATs, MDTs., the demand of technological upgrading, safety/security issues, and antiquated calendar provisions, etc."

"Very important to have ongoing follow-up with all staff, without it the application phase does not materialize into meaningful change. No, we don't go over a checklist like this when deciding on professional planning. Who does?"

"Curricular or content collaboration is especially difficult in small school settings-teachers are rarely able or likely to collaborate with teachers in other districts."