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High School Administrators' Perception of the Effectiveness of Professional Development

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HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by

RODNEY J. WILLIAMS

(Under the Direction of Jason LaFrance)

ABSTRACT

The importance of professional development has been emphasized in recent legislation and accountability acts. As Georgia competes for Race to the Top Funds, high school administrators are being required to attend various professional development activities. These may address the new teacher evaluation system, common core, and techniques on how to close the gap between high-achieving students and students with a learning disability. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to understand high school administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development.

This qualitative study used a case study design with purposive sampling. Participants included twelve high school administrators currently serving in a rural Georgia school system. The participants completed a survey and participated in face-to-face interviews. Surveys were used to collect demographic information and information about professional development activities the participants experienced. Face-to-face interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and coded for patterns in responses, from which major themes evolved.

The goal of this study was to provide district level profession development coordinators, county officials, and administrators with findings regarding administrator's

perceptions of professional development activities. This study provided high school administrators an opportunity to reflect on professional development activities in which they have participated and to report on their perceptions of the effectiveness of various professional development activities. By reviewing the data provided from the survey and face-to-face interviews, district level professional development coordinators may consider new ideas on the content and delivery methods of professional development activities that could impact day-to-day activities of high school administrators.

INDEX WORDS: High school administrators' professional development, High school administrators professional learning

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EFFECTIVENESS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Bridgette, who supported me and praised my efforts. To my son, Satchel, who understood when Rodney (daddy) had work to do. To my mother and all of my family members who have always believed in me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The changing state and federal accountability movement has changed the role of school administrators. According to Davis, Darling-Hammond, Lapointe, and Meyerson (2005), school administrators need to be “educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special programs administrators, and expert overseers of legal, contractual, and policy mandates, and initiatives” (p. 3). In this age of accountability, school administrators play a vital part in the success of students and teachers. The role of school administrators has changed from a managerial role to one as a leader who builds capacity among teachers and other staff members (Lambert, 2003).

To become the type of leader who can meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, school administrators need effective professional development (Daresh, 1998). School administrators need professional development, just like teachers, so that he or she can effectively lead staff members, effect student achievement, and stay abreast to current educational research and policies. In order to meet the demands of the new accountability standards and changing roles, school administrators must receive training.

While there is a large amount of literature devoted to understanding the importance of professional development for teachers, there have been few studies that address the importance of professional development for school administrators. Not only is the amount of research limited regarding professional development for school administrators. The research shows that school administrators participate in less

professional development activities compared to teachers. In fact, the research shows that teacher professional development is conducted at a three to one ratio compared to professional development for school administrators (Grissom & Harrington, 2010.).

Research indicates there is an indirect link between the role of school administrators and student achievement. According to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Walstrom (2004), “it turns out that leadership not only matters: it is second only to teaching among school-related factors and its impact on student achievement” (p. 3). Professional development is one of the major sources for providing school administrators with the tools they need to enhance student achievement.

The purpose of this study is to examine high school administrators’ perceptions of district - level professional development activities and how these activities assist school administrators to become effective leaders. Professional development has been defined in various ways depending on the source of the definition. For this study, the term professional development is defined as on-going participation in classes, seminars, workshops, and other activities for the purpose of developing and updating professional skills.

Statement of the Problem

Research on school administrators’ professional development and its impact on student achievement are limited. Despite research suggesting that principals are second only to teachers for their impact on student achievement (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005), a gap in the literature exists regarding school administrators perspectives on professional development. One of the issues that make this topic difficult to address is that some educators do not see the connection between

school administrators and student achievement. School administrators are responsible for all aspects a school's success or failure. School administrators fill many roles, ranging from instructional leaders, disciplinarians, building managers, employing personnel, and a list of other major functions which contribute to a school's success. This study will examine high school administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development.

Literature that addresses professional development for school administrators recommends methods such as mentorships, job-embedded, include hands-on activities, provide opportunities for collaboration, and are sustained over time. However, limited research studies have been conducted that examine school administrators' perceptions of the effect of professional development on their day-to-day activities. It was also noted that the majority of the research conducted in this area has occurred in northern states with only one study conducted in the south. To address this gap in the literature, this study will examine the perceptions of high school administrators in a rural school district in Georgia.

Interestingly, professional development has been defined a number of ways by multiple sources. According to Schwartz and Bryan (1998), professional development is elusive and means something different to each person. One of the most common definitions of professional development is a providing opportunities to grow professionally or personally. According to Schwartz & Bryan (1998) professional development is participation in courses, classes, workshops and other activities for the purpose of developing and updating professional skills. Williamson (2000) suggested that professional development is difficult to define and has even been labeled as an

interruption from an administrator's schedule. Over the years it has been considered an ineffective way to develop school administrators.

One possible reason for this is that professional development activities can either be considered effective or ineffective, with most professional development activities being perceived as ineffective (Williamson, 2000). According to Kinder (2000) "over the years, professional development has been seen as an ineffective way to increase the knowledge of educators. One-shot workshops or lectures that are not connected to school improvement plans are an example of this" (p.13). Another factor to consider is that professional development activities can be delivered in various formats (e.g., conferences, seminars, on-line, mentorships, and multiple sessions) (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998). The different delivery formats of professional development may be ineffective for a particular professional development activity or objective. Sometimes professional development activities are high-quality, purposeful, and in-depth, and at other times activities are seen as ineffective and a waste of time (Kelley & Peterson, 2000). Guskey (2003) stated that the characteristics of effective professional development include multiple sessions, relevant information, and allow the participants to evaluate the activity and to provide feedback.

There are many benefits associated with providing effective professional development for school administrators. District-level professional development coordinators, county officials, and school leaders need to examine current professional development activities for high school administrators in order to see if it supports their long term goals and helps address their day-to-day activities. Literature has revealed a

need for effective professional development, but most studies have only examined teachers' professional development activities.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that was used for this study comes from Evaluating Professional Development (Guskey, 2000). Guskey provided five critical levels which can be used to assist leaders in evaluating professional development. The five critical levels are:

1. Participant's reactions - what did the participant think of the activity.
2. Participants' learning- did the activity lead to any change in the participant's knowledge or skill level.
3. Organization support and change did the organization support allow the participant to implement their new knowledge.
4. Participants' use of new knowledge and skills – did the participant apply the new knowledge or skill.
5. Student learning outcomes - was there an improvement in student achievement or a change in student behavior.

This framework for evaluating professional development provided was used as a guide for developing the interview questions for this study. Throughout the literature, the evaluation process is noted as a critical component of effective professional development activities. The inclusion of this component in this framework is another factor in choosing this model. Clearly, the evaluation process should be used at the end of professional development activities in order to measure the effectiveness of the activity.

Based on a review of literature, the need to examine the perceptions of professional development activities for school administrators exists. The next section addressed the research questions and methodology for this study.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study include:

1. From the school administrator's perspective, what professional development activities do school administrators participate in that are most effective?
2. From school administrators' perspective, what professional development activities do school administrators participate in that are not effective?
3. From the school administrators' perspective, what is needed to improve district-level professional development activities?

Significance of the Study

This study examined high school administrators' perceptions of district-level professional development activities and how these activities assist school administrators in conducting their day-to-day activities. The literature on professional development for school administrators makes several references to how important a role school administrators play in influencing of teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders. Several researchers repeat the theme that leadership matters within a school and that leadership has an indirect link to student achievement, maintaining a cohesive and effective staff, and that the overall responsibility of being a successful school begins with school administrators (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), Oliver 2005, Bottoms & Fry 2009). Professional development is integral in providing school

administrators with tools they need to lead school improvement (Fullan, 2009, Salazar, 2007)

The target audience for this study is principals and assistant principals, district level professional development coordinators, and superintendents. This study is significant in that it provides insight from the high school administrator's perspective regarding the effectiveness of professional development in which they currently participate. In addition, this study contributes to the literature by providing insight into perceptions of school leaders regarding professional development for high school administrators in a rural school district in Georgia. Furthermore, it helps district and school level leaders examine current professional activities for school administrators and provides information for determining whether they are providing the most effective professional development.

Given the continuous changes in education which require knowledge in various areas, concerns arise regarding appropriately training school leaders. For example, changes related to the Race to the Top initiative require school administrators in Georgia and across the nation to be knowledgeable about new teacher evaluations, the Common Core curriculum, and research regarding closing the gap between high achieving students and students with learning disabilities. An increased awareness of professional development activities that support school administrators to achieve long and short term goals will provide the researcher with information to make recommendations regarding the types of professional development activities that effectively increase the knowledge of high school administrators.

Procedures

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine high school administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development geared toward high school administrators. The study was conducted with a qualitative approach using the case study method. According to Creswell (2007) a case study is "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems" (p.73). The case study approach is appropriate when the researcher intends to generate an understanding of people's perceptions (Yin, 2009). This approach is an effective method for gathering information when the phenomenon to be studied is descriptive in nature (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). The case study method provides rich description through multiple means, which consisted of a survey and face-to-face interviews of the participants in their natural setting (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 2007).

Participants

This study used purposeful sampling techniques (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Glense, 2006). According to Creswell (2007) purposeful sampling is a method where "the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon" (p. 125). The initial responsibility of the researcher in a case study is to identify the phenomenon to be investigated by using the research questions as a guide. In this case study, the participants were 12 high school administrators. Since the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of high school administrators in the south, all of the participants in this study were purposefully selected to meet these criteria.

Data Collection

Prior to conducting research, permission for the study was granted by the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB). In addition, permission was granted by the district superintendent to conduct the study. Immediately following approval from the district superintendent and the IRB, approval letters were sent to principals in the district requesting permission for high school administrators to participate in the study. Before collecting data, informed consent was obtained from the participants.

Data was collected in two forms. First, a survey was used to collect demographic information and information about professional activities the participants have experienced. The purpose of collecting this data was to provide the researcher with foundational understanding of the background that the respondents brought to the study as well as specific information about the professional activities they have participated in. The second method for data collection was face-to face interviews that were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Data was collected initially by providing the participants with the survey and a self-addressed envelope. As surveys were returned, the data was organized, results were analyzed, and participants were contacted to set up face-to face interviews. Participants were contacted by email or telephone and set up a time to conduct interviews. Surveys were conducted first so that any questions which arose from the data could be clarified during the interview. The survey and face-to-face interview focused on the participants' participation of professional development activities while serving as a high school

administrator. The participants were instructed not to include professional activities that the participant participated in as a teacher or while serving in any other role.

The primary advantage of using a case study is to obtain rich descriptions and experiences of the participants, and the best way to accomplish this is through interviews (Stake, 1995). Since the qualitative approach is intended to explain a phenomenon from the viewpoint of the participants in their natural setting (Creswell, 2007), face-to-face interviews were conducted in the participants' office.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of the survey was conducted in the following manner. Initially, surveys were collected and demographic data and information about the types of professional development that was attended were organized. The researcher looked for common themes or common responses to the survey questions. The participants' responses to the survey questions were placed in descriptive tables. Data analyses of the audio taped interviews were conducted in the following manner. The primary data source for this case study was audio taped interviews that were transcribed by the researcher. The researcher also identified and coded data to identify themes from the interviews. Coding is a process of looking for various themes that derive from the interviews. After transcription of the audio taped responses, the researcher began comparing the themes that surfaced during the interviews. The researcher highlighted the various themes in different colors; for example, green identified professional development activities while yellow was used to identify recommendations for professional development.

The coding process consisted of three phases. The process began with open coding which consisted of coding the data for major categories of information. Open

coding lead to axial coding where the researcher identified the main themes that had been repeated. After axial coding was completed, selective coding took place. Selective coding provided the researcher with propositions that helped interrelate the information (Creswell, 2007, Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Analysis of data collected from the surveys and the audio recorded interviews was used to answer the research questions and develop conclusions, recommendations and implications for this study.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher has been an assistant principal in the county in which the study will be conducted for 5 years. This is a small county in Georgia which has been successful in achieving Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). Since the county has been successful in improving student achievement as measured by AYP standards, the demands on administrators has grown over the past few years.

In order to meet the ever changing demands placed on school administrators, school administrators must receive effective professional development. In order for high school administrators to improve in their day-to-day activities and to assist in the overall school improvement process, high school administrators must be trained to prepare for this role. The type of bias that might be present is that the researcher believes high school administrators can become more effective leaders if they receive the required knowledge and skills which will assist in overall school improvement.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

The purposeful sampling used in this study may limit the generalization of the findings. The participants in the study were self-selected by the researcher. The results of this study will not be generalizable to school administrators in larger or urban districts or

to elementary and middle school administrators. There are many variables impact the perceptions of the respondents which cannot be controlled, such as the years of experience, prior experiences, previous training, expectations of superiors, the demographic makeup of the school, cultural factors of the leaders, and the role of the assistant principals. For this reason these results cannot be generalized. However, this method was used because it allowed the researcher to gather data from several perspectives and sources within this group.

This study is delimited to one small rural, southeastern Georgia high school. This school system was selected because it contains a diverse population of administrators. This study was delimited to high school administrators. Since the researcher can be considered an instrument for collecting data, an element of bias is acknowledged.

This study examined high school administrators' perception of the effectiveness of professional development. No assumptions were made about the findings of this study and those of previous studies regarding high school administrators' perception of professional development. It was assumed the participants were open and honest in their responses. It was also assumed that the researcher would have access and that the instrument measured what it was intended to measure.

Definition of Terms

Annual Yearly progress (AYP): A term that comes from the No Child Behind

Legislation. Annual yearly progress is a measurement which schools try to reach in order to be considered successful. In high schools the major component to achieving AYP is how students score on the Georgia High School Graduation Test.

Conference: Professional development that is usually held by an association with contains various breakout sessions for participants to attend to learn new strategies, knowledge, or skill.

Georgia High School Graduation Test: - Consist of five tests (Writing, Mathematics, Science, English, & Social Studies. Students can take the test for the first time in May of their eleventh grade year. Students must pass all five parts of the graduation test in order to graduate from high school.

Graduation Coach: A position created to assist high schools in making annual yearly progress. Individuals selected are educators who are certified in certain areas usually Math or Science. Graduation coaches analyze students' data and make recommendations on interventions that can assist schools in making annual yearly progress.

Leadership Academy: A district-level professional development program which lasts approximately six months involving candidates from all grade levels. The academy focuses on various leadership topics.

One-shot workshop: A professional development activity that occurs one time in isolation without any follow up activities.

Online Course: An instructional course delivered via the web and other sites accessible via the internet.

Professional Development: Professional development is participation in courses, classes, workshops, and other activities for the purpose of developing and updating skills.

School Leaders: For the purpose of this study school leader is defined as principals and assistant principals.

Student Achievement: Student achievement is a student's improvement in (a) academic class work, (b) on local assessments, (c) on standardized tests, and (d) in social interactions and responsibilities.

Workshop: A professional development activity that focuses on one given topic.

Summary

Limited research has been conducted on high school administrators' perspective of professional development. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine high school administrators' perceptions of professional development. The study adds to the literature by examining the perspectives of high school administrators regarding professional development activities geared toward high school administrators. There has been no study conducted on this topic that involves high school administrators in rural Georgia.

Twelve high school administrators were surveyed and interviewed. They were selected using purposeful sampling. Data was collected using a survey and audio taped interviews. Data from the surveys provided descriptive information and assisted in developing findings. The researcher transcribed the audio taped interviews. Common themes were derived from the participants' responses. Participants' responses were coded to analyze data. After coding was completed, findings and recommendations were developed.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature regarding professional development for high school administrators. The review of literature focused on the eight major elements of professional development that are recurring themes throughout the literature. The eight major elements are:

1. Legislation and accountability.
2. The administrator's role.
3. Defining professional development.
4. Effects of professional development.
5. School administrators' professional development needs.
6. Professional development delivery methods.
7. Characteristics of effective professional development.
8. Evaluating professional development.

The literature review begins with a look at the legislation and measurements of accountability that emphasize improving professional development for educators.

Legislation and Accountability

Legislation over the past 30 years has emphasized the importance of professional development for teachers and school administrators. In 1980, Terrell H. Bell, Secretary of Education under President Ronald Reagan, organized a panel, the National Commission of Excellence in Education (NCEE), which produced the report *A Nation at Risk: The imperative for Education Reform* (A Nation at Risk, 1980).

A Nation at Risk made five recommendations for improving excellence within the U.S. educational system: (a) changing the number of core classes that a high school student would take in order to receive a diploma; (b) extending the school year; (c) adding more rigorous and measurable standards to the curriculum; (d) placing accountability measures on educators; and (e) increasing educators' level of preparation and professional learning. Even though reform had been successful in raising academic standards and the success of students, the report documented that educators' knowledge and preparation were inadequate.

The next accountability measure came in the form of *Goals 2000* (Goals 2000, 1994), known as the Educate America Act, passed on March 31, 1994 under President George W. Bush. *Goals 2000* was also supported by President Bill Clinton, Bush's successor. *Goals 2000* consisted of eight goals seen as the federal government's attempt to help all students succeed in their educational development. One of the goals stated that the nation's teachers and administrators will have access to programs for the continued improvement of professional skills needed to instruct, prepare, and manage all American students during the next century.

According to Bottoms and O'Neill (2001), "Increasingly, state accountability systems are placing the burden of school success and individual student achievement squarely on the principal's shoulders" (p. 5). The No Child Left Behind Act clearly reflects the burden noted by Bottoms and O'Neill. The Act mandated that administrators increase student achievement. One of the objectives of NCLB was to increase academic achievement by improving the quality of teachers and principals. The No Child behind Act includes a section entitled Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs

which states that the program's goal is to increase the number of highly qualified teachers, assistant principals, and principals in schools. The Academic Improvement and Teacher Quality Program offered grants that could be used for specific activities focusing on professional development for teachers and school administrators.

The most recent accountability initiative comes under President Obama's administration in the form of *Race to the Top*, an initiative in which the majority of states, including Georgia, have volunteered to participate. President Obama requested \$1.35 billion be budgeted for this program in his 2011 fiscal budget. One of the objectives included in the *Race to the Top* initiative addresses the need for increased professional development.

In a speech Arne Duncan, Secretary of the United States Department of Education (*Race to the Top*, 2012), suggested that great principals are responsible for leading talented instructional team, the driving force behind increased student achievement and closing the achievement gap. Duncan states "that excellence in teaching, good professional development, and shared responsibility for student success" (2012, p. 6) are the responsibility of all adults in the school building. In his speech, he addresses the need for additional investment in principal leadership development and professional development. *Race for the Top* offers more than \$5 billion dollars in competitive grants that can be used for teacher and school administrative professional development activities along with other instructional materials.

The implications of these legislative and accountability acts have changed the role of school administrators by placing the emphasis for school improvement directly on the shoulders of school administrators. School administrators are being challenged to create

a school culture that helps prepare students to compete in a global economy while also meeting the requirements of these various forms of legislation. The new legislative and accountability acts address the issue that school administrators are unprepared to face these new changes and professional development is needed in order to better prepare today's educational leaders.

Role of the Administrator

The accountability movement and subsequent legislation have certainly changed the role of school administrators. School administrators play a critical role in creating successful schools, and strong leadership is one of the distinguishing attributes identified by research as a significant characteristic of schools with high rates of student success. With the heightened emphasis on school leadership and the need for greater accountability for student academic performance comes the recognition that we can no longer continue to prepare school leaders as we have in the past (Angelle & Anfara, 2009).

The role of school administrators has changed from a managerial role to an instructional leader role. School administrators must now use data and research-based practices to develop high achieving schools. Several researchers have noted that "school leadership is seen as second only to classroom instruction as having an impact on student achievement" (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Wallace Foundation, 2009; Williamson, 2010).

According to Davis, Darling-Hammond, Lapointe, and Meyerson (2005), school administrators need to be: (a) educational visionaries – leaders who can see the future path for school improvement; (b) instructional and curriculum leaders – experts who

assist teachers in teaching the curriculum; (c) assessment experts – leaders who are knowledgeable about testing requirements for graduation; (d) disciplinarians – leaders who assist in correcting the behavior of students; (e) community builders – leaders who can reach out to parents and community leaders; and, (f) leaders in development of policy and initiatives – leaders who can lead their staff through state and federal mandates passed down from the district office. Each of these roles requires skills which a majority of school administrators do not possess. Even though school administrators have received some type of certification in educational leadership, this does not mean they have received training which can transform them from a school manager to an effective leader.

Further, school administrators must be prepared to handle the needs and demands of their stakeholders, who include students, parents, teachers, community leaders, district office officials, and state policy makers. Eiseman and Militello (2008) stated that most school administrators must rely on professional knowledge and skills when interacting with various stakeholders. The authors go on to say that use of professional knowledge and skills involves interacting with all stakeholders. School administrators must simultaneously apply their knowledge and skills to solving problems, communication, conflict resolution, and working with groups who differ in their opinions.

In order to meet the demands of their stakeholders, school administrators must receive ongoing professional development. According to Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007), “Clearly, the quality of training principals receive before they assume their positions, and the continuing professional development they receive once

they are hired and throughout their careers, has a lot to do with whether school leaders can meet the increasingly rough expectations of these jobs” (p.3).

Reduction of educational dollars, experienced throughout the country, is another factor to be considered when looking at the role of school administrators. As states address shrinking educational budgets, they often overlook the role school administrators play in maintaining a well prepared and stable faculty. During the Wallace Foundation’s National Conference in 2009, Christina DeVita, President of the Wallace Foundation, discussed the effectiveness of knowledgeable school administrators and their importance in retaining highly qualified teachers. Devita stated that investments in school administrators are a cost effective way to improve teaching and learning. Several speakers at the conference re-emphasized the belief of the Wallace Foundation that school leadership is second only to teaching when it comes to improving student achievement.

The role of school administrators continues to change, showing why their professional development is one of the factors affecting the success or failure of a school. One of the toughest aspects of dealing with the need for professional development is in defining what professional development is.

Defining Professional Development

Professional development has been defined in various ways. According to Lindstrom and Speck (2004), “professional development is a lifelong, collaborative learning process that nourishes the growth of individuals, teams, and the school through a daily, job-embedded, learner-centered focus approach” (p. 10). Grissom and Harrington (2007), define professional development as opportunities for continuous learning in

which school administrators participate in conjunction with their daily responsibilities. The word continuous is used in both of these definitions and is important to the definition because school administrators must receive ongoing professional development in order to be proficient in their profession. Day-to-day activities are another trait common to both of the definitions.

Several terms may come to mind when someone thinks of professional development. In the literature, professional learning is sometimes used instead of the term professional development. While some articles use the term *professional learning* and others use *professional development*, these phrases often mean the same thing. There has to be a distinction made between other terms used to describe the development of school administrators. Another term that shows up throughout the literature is *pre-service* training. Pre-service training is the training educators receive en route to becoming a school administrator. It is usually offered through universities and colleges, and courses include topics such as assessment, school improvement, curriculum, and school management (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). Although the pre-service training is important, it is not considered a component of professional development. For the purpose of this study, the researcher does not include pre-service training as a form of professional development.

The definition of professional development that will be used for this study comes from Williams (2008), who states, “professional development is participation in courses, classes, workshops, and other activities for the purpose of developing and updating professional skills” (p. 2). This definition shows that professional development can be acquired via several forms: courses or classes delivered through universities or school

districts, workshops that can be provided by state or local agencies and activities that can take place at school or a central county location. The literature also provides information about the effects of professional development activities for school administrators.

Effects of Professional Development

The effect of professional development on school administrators is not as clearly documented as the effect of professional development on teachers. Educators often express that student learning and academic achievement are directly influenced by teacher professional development. However, the effect of school administrators on student learning and achievement is indirect because of other stakeholders who may impact student achievement, such as teachers, students, and parents. Communication skills and knowledge are the tools school administrators use to help develop teachers to influence and educate students. When school administrators possess the skills to influence teachers, students, and parents, the overall goal of student achievement can be accomplished (Lowden, 2005).

The goal of school administrators is to develop teachers and improve student learning. Per the National Policy Board for Educational Leadership (2002), “the central responsibility of leadership is to improve teaching and learning, to improve the performance of school leaders, thereby enhancing the performance of teachers and students in the workplace” (p. 8). In comparison, Beavis, Ingvarson, and Meiers (2005) stated, “professional development for teachers is now recognized as a vital component of policies to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in our schools” (p. 2). The research shows that state and federal policy makers are increasingly asking for evidence

regarding the effects of professional development not only on classroom practice, but also on student learning outcomes and overall school improvement.

The majority of literature focuses on the effect of professional development on teachers. However, the same principles and accountability measures also apply to school administrators. No longer are teachers seen as the only ones responsible for educating students; school administrators are now feeling the weight of accountability measures as well. Although the majority of the literature focuses on the professional development needs of teachers, a few studies examine school administrators' needs and desire for professional development.

School Administrators' Professional Development Needs

According to Oliver (2005) with the recent changes in accountability the increasing complexity of being a school administrator there is a dire need for administrators to participate in clearly defined and consistent professional development activities. Salazar (2007) stated "with the widespread acceptance of the need for schools to improve, it is impossible to ignore the critical needs of school leaders to be more effective at their work" (p.21) School administrators must receive professional development aimed at assisting them to become more effective in facilitating continuous school improvement.

In a longitudinal study conducted from 2000 to 2004 Salazar focused on the professional development needs of elementary, middle, and high school assistant principals in Orange County, California. The participants were sent a four-question questionnaire about the need for professional development. The primary question asked in this study was: Do assistant principals receive professional development? The

objectives were determined by asking the following four questions: (a) Did the districts provide professional development activities for assistant principals? (b) What was the nature of the professional development activities in which assistant principals participated? (c) What was the assistant principals' level of desire for professional development?, and (d) What were the assistant principals' perceptions of their need for professional development? The size of the student population in the districts participating in the study ranged from 2,550 students to 61,200 students. The response rate to the questionnaire ranged from 68% to 80%. Respondents varied in gender, age, and the number of years of experience as a school administrator.

In response to the question asking if districts provided professional development activities for assistant principals, Oliver (2005) reported that all respondents had some involvement in district-sponsored professional development activities. The involvement in professional development activities increased at all levels between 2002 and 2004 following a decline between 2000 and 2002. The results of the 2000-2002 survey revealed that items such as legal updates, personnel procedures, and assessment procedures dominated professional activities for assistant principals. During the 2002-2004 survey student learning and curriculum and instruction received more emphasis.

In response to the question asking about assistant principals' level of desire for professional development, the majority of the respondents indicated that ongoing professional development activities would help them become more effective assistant principals. Respondents at all levels, elementary, middle, and high school, indicated that professional development should be delivered using several methods or formats. The results indicated that time (for example during the work day or weekends), location (for

example on-site or at the district office), and model of delivery (for example short seminars or on-line courses) are factors that should be taken into consideration during the planning and design of professional development activities. Respondents expressed a need for time to be allocated for assistant principals to dialogue and reflect on the information provided in order to make the activity more meaningful.

In response to the question regarding assistant principals' need for professional development, respondents indicated that between 2000 and 2002, assistant principals identified teacher supervision and personnel matters as their first priority while curriculum and instruction ranked fifth in the study. Additionally, Oliver (2005) reported that "respondents indicated student learning, instruction, and curriculum were more important as areas needing professional development than they did in the 2000-2002 findings" (p. 94).

In this study the survey questions were well worded and provided an accurate assessment of the respondents' beliefs; however, there were two variables which might have influenced the results of this study. The first variable was the study included assistant principals at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Administrators that work at various school levels may have different perceptions of what constitutes professional development. The second variable was the significant difference in the size of the student populations, which ranged from 2,550 students to 61,200 students. The needs and ability of school administrators to serve their student populations would vary according to student population size.

The difference in professional needs in the 2002-2004 administration of the study and the needs identified in the 2000-2002 administration is the direct result of the No

Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Passage of this act changed the priority of school administrators from emphasizing personnel matters to learning more about academic achievement and school improvement

In a study conducted by Bichsel (2008), a questionnaire based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards was mailed to secondary principals in a 10 county region of Southwestern Pennsylvania. One of the questions asked, “What professional development needs do secondary principals identify in order to be more effective leaders?” (p. 88). According to Bichsel, the three highest areas of need for professional development were analyzing data (72.8%), communicating effectively (63.8%), and using research and best practices (61.3%). Respondents defined best practices as research-based teaching practices that engage students in meaningful, standards-based learning. The findings of this study showed the three highest professional development needs of secondary principals related to increasing student achievement.

Salazar (2007) evaluated the perceptions of rural school principals and their perception about professional development as a means to increase school improvement. Salazar used a questionnaire divided into three sections. The first section collected demographic information. The second section consisted of 25 items asking participants to rate their professional development needs using a four-point Likert scale. The third section of the questionnaire asked participants to rate their preference for eight formats of delivering professional development. A free-form response and comment section was included which allowed participants to add additional information. Of the 623 questionnaires sent out, 316 were returned which was a 51% return rate.

Survey findings showed that 61% of the principals worked in a rural school while 39% worked in urban schools. Seventy percent of the principals were male. Approximately 43.0% of the principals had less than 10 years of experience in administration. Another 42% had between 10 and 20 years of experience in administration, and 15% of the principals had more than 20 years of experience in administration.

In response to the first question which asked principals about their professional development needs, the principals identified the following items as most important: building a team (65.3%) followed by creating a learning organization (62.6%). The two professional development needs receiving the lowest ratings were: developing the school organization using systems thinking (39.0%) followed by managing the organization and operational procedures (38.4%). The findings from this study suggest that principals are concerned with leadership skills rather than management skills.

The second question asked if the principals had a preferred model of professional development. The activities principals were most likely to participate in were: seminar/conference (47.9%) followed by workshop (36.6%). In comparison the principals were not likely to participate in: online/self-paced training (25.7%) followed by university coursework (18.1%).

The findings from these three studies indicate that school administrators are concerned about the amount of time required by professional development activities. School administrators preferred being part of an activity that held their attention, required a short period of time, and allowed them to get the information so they could get back to their schools as soon as possible. The second major finding of these studies indicates the

respondents were more likely to participate in seminars, workshops, or hands-on field experiences. The third finding of these studies indicate school administrators have a strong desire and need for professional development activities especially in the areas of student learning and curriculum. The literature describes the professional development delivery methods and gives recommendations for what are believed to be most effective.

Professional Development Delivery Methods

The literature cites several methods for delivery of professional development as well as what should be included in professional development activities. The delivery methods most recommended were workshops and seminars. Guskey and Yoon (2009) note that “studies showed a positive relationship between professional development and improvement in student learning involved workshops and seminars” (p. 496). The authors stated that workshops and seminars can focus on research-based practices, involve active collaborative learning, and provide educators with an opportunity to adapt practices to their school’s individual situation.

Several methods can be used to provide professional development activities to school administrators. Cowie and Crawford (2007) reported on principal preparation in Western Australia, Canada, England, Jamaica, Mexico, Scotland, South Africa, Turkey, and the United States, and identified several delivery methods which could be used to provide professional development to school administrators. The methods included distance learning, internal mode – some online, some school-based, university and field experience, and face-to face (Cowie and Crawford, 2007). The authors went on to state that “in some countries, the universities are involved directly in each of the delivery methods either by providing traditional academic postgraduate courses or through

partnerships with employees or professional associations” (Cowie and Crawford, 2007, p. 136).

Professional development delivery methods identified by Fink and Resnick (2001) include an apprenticeship model that takes place in various settings and consists of site-specific and site-generated continuous learning. Site-specific and site-generated means the training is geared toward the circumstances of individual schools and the leaders within those schools. Fink and Resnick recommended “monthly principal conferences which are daylong conferences and a 1-2 day summer retreat” (p. 9). The authors went on to say that the focus of the principal’s conference is to improve instruction and learning (Fink and Resnick, 2001). The authors also recommended principal support groups and study groups. The support groups should be facilitated by the deputy superintendent of the district and, on occasion, the facilitator should be the superintendent. The principal’s study group is where a pre-selected topic or problem is addressed which allows participants to share ideas. Fink and Resnick also recommended inter-visitation where principals visit other schools, observing and analyzing on-going activities in another setting. When considering the various forms of delivering professional development some formats are preferred over others.

In a study conducted by Salazar (2007), high school principals who belonged to the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges were asked to rate their preference for each of the eight professional delivery models used in the state. The eight models were workshop, online/self-paced, mentoring/internship/coaching, university coursework, program-based projects, small study group, hands-on/field-based, and seminar/conference. Of the eight models, principals identified conference/seminar as the

most preferred model. The second and third highest preferred delivery models were workshops and hands-on/field-based. Per Salazar “the least preferred professional development delivery model was online/self-paced and university coursework” (p. 25). Salazar believed the self-paced delivery model was the least preferred method because it could be postponed to a later date and never completed by the administrator.

In another study of all the possible methods for delivery of professional development, one-shot workshops were the least preferred (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Researchers believe that one-shot workshops are an ineffective practice which is a waste of money and time. One of the major reasons researchers discourage use of one-shot workshops is because there is no follow-up or support from the organization in order to support continued or further development. The research also states that regardless of the type of delivery method, professional development must be well organized, focused on pedagogy, allocated a considerable amount of time, and directed towards the intended audience. These are some of the basic components of planning and implementing effective professional development.

Professional development can be delivered using several formats. The research shows professional development can be delivered as workshops, seminars, conferences, courses, and other related activities. Even if professional development meets the highest standard of quality, it will be seen as ineffective if it is not designed to engage participants in ongoing, sustained learning which reflects the day-to-day experiences of school administrators (Guskey, 2000; Williamson, 2010).

Characteristics of Effective Professional Development

To be effective, professional development should include certain characteristics. According to Hunzicker (2010), “effective professional development engages educators in learning opportunities that are supportive, job-embedded, instructionally-focused, collaborative, and ongoing” (p. 2). The supportive characteristic addresses the need for professional development to motivate educators and encourage their commitment to the learning process. The job-embedded characteristic addresses the need for professional development to be relevant and authentic for the everyday demands of educators. The instructional-focus emphasizes subject area content and the process of student learning outcomes. The collaborative characteristic addresses the fact that educators value the opportunity to learn from other educators. The collaborative characteristic also provides educators with the opportunity to share ideas, viewpoints, and work together to solve problems. The ongoing characteristic addresses the need for professional development to include contact hours, duration, and coherence. Even though this article was directed toward professional development for teachers, the same principles apply to professional development for school administrators.

Along the same lines as Hunzicker, Vasumanthi (2010) provided six features that should be part of professional development activities: (a) focus on educators as the fundamental root to student achievement; (b) focus on individual, collegial, and organization improvement; (c) nurture the intellectual and leadership capacities of the participants; (d) use research and best practices to guide professional development activities; (e) enable educators to develop expertise in the required areas; and (f) allocate considerable time and resources. Unlike other researchers, Vasumanthi also introduced

the idea of consideration of the physical and mental aspects of professional development, which take into consideration the school administrators' need to learn how to deal with the stress that comes with the profession. The author suggests that school administrators learn coping and relaxation strategies to increase their motivation to learn and serve.

According to Davis et al. (2005), research on principal preparation and development suggests that certain program features are essential to the development of effective school leaders. Research shows that effective professional development programs are research-based, have curricular coherence, provide experience in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activity between the program and area schools. Along the same lines, the National Staff Development Council (2000) suggested that effective programs should be long term, carefully planned; jobs embedded, and focus on student achievement and how it is reached. Programs should support reflective practice and provide opportunities to work, discuss, and solve problems with peers, and coaching.

In a review of nine studies by Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007), the researchers examined the number of hours participants felt were necessary to make the professional development effective. The study showed that professional development activities which lasted 14 hours or less had little effect on acquiring new knowledge. Professional development activities that lasted more than 14 hours provided opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills. The greatest effects came from programs which provided between 30 and 100 hours of professional development activities spread out over a 6 to 12 month period. In an article by Guskey and Yoon (2009), the researchers

agreed with Yoon et al. (2007) who found that to have a positive effect, professional development activities require at least 30 hours of contact hours.

The research identifies several elements that should be included in order to have effective professional development activities: (a) The activity should deepen the participant's knowledge; (b) The activity should provide an opportunity for active, hands-on experiences; (c) The participants should be allowed to reflect on the activity with other colleagues; (d) The activity should be a part of the school's improvement plan; (e) The activity should be conducted in a collaborative and collegial setting; and (f) the activity should be intensive and sustained over time.

While the research supports that certain elements should be part of professional development activities, the research also provides a list of elements that do not produce effective professional development. Counterproductive are: (a) activities that are a one-time workshop; (b) activities that focus on teaching new techniques or behaviors; (c) activities that are temporary and fragmented; (d) activities that do not provide organizational support; and (e) activities that are not sustained and are not presented over several days or weeks (Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Lowden, 2005).

In summarizing the characteristics of effective professional development activities, several characteristics were repeated throughout the literature: research-based, job-embedded, ongoing, collaborative, individually focused, and linked to school improvement. District and school level professional development planners should include some type of evaluation process at the completion of the professional development activity. The evaluation process allows participants to express their opinion

of the activity and provides the facilitator or planner with feedback on ways to improve the activity.

Evaluating Professional Development

An effective professional development activity must include an evaluation process that asks for more information than the participant's level of satisfaction (Linn, Gill, Sherman, Vaughn, & Mixon, 2010). Evaluation is one of the most important aspects that should be considered by professional development planners and it should be included at the end of every professional development activity. However, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to evaluating professional development. An evaluation process was not included in the majority of the literature covering school administrators' professional development.

Evaluation of professional development activities is one of the simplest ways to obtain valuable information than can lead to improving future activities. Just as the literature is sparse on professional development for school administrators, the same can be said about the literature on the process of evaluating professional development activities.

Three primary methods were found that address the need and process for evaluating professional development for educators. Although the methods were not specific to school administrators, they could be used to evaluate professional development at all levels, including teachers, school administrators, and district officials. The three methods of evaluating professional development activities are proposed by Killion (2002), Beavis, Ingvarson and Meiers (2005), and Guskey (2002).

Joellen Killion (2002), who is a member of the National Staff Development Council, presented an eight step process for evaluating professional development. In the first step assess evaluability; during this step the professional development planner must determine how the activity will be defined and if the activity can be evaluated. In the second step formulate the type of questions that will be used in the evaluation. In the third step construct the framework for developing the methodology that will be used for the evaluation. In the fourth step collect data; during this step the evaluator collects the data from the participants. In the fifth step organize and analyze the data; during this step the evaluator examines the data for patterns and trends. In the sixth step interpret the data; during this step the evaluator formulates responses to the evaluation questions. In the seventh step disseminate results; during this step the evaluator prepares written and oral reports on the findings of the evaluation. In the eighth step evaluate the evaluation; during this step the evaluator receives feedback on the usefulness of the evaluation.

Beavis, Ingvarson, and Meiers (2005) used a different set of standards to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development. The authors used four aspects to evaluate if professional development activities were effective: impact on teachers' knowledge; impact on teachers' practice; impact on student learning outcomes; and, impact on teacher efficacy. Impact on teachers' knowledge measures the extent to which teachers' participation in the professional development program increased their knowledge of the content they teach. Impact on teachers' practice asked whether their participation in professional development activities provided more effective teaching and learning strategies. Impact on student learning asked teachers whether the professional

development program made students more actively engaged in learning activities and if students had less difficulty understanding what the teachers were presenting. Impact on teacher efficacy asked teachers about the extent to which the professional development program increased their level of confidence and improved their ability to meet students' needs. Even though this process examines the evaluation of professional development for teachers, this same type of process can be used to evaluate professional development for school administrators.

Thomas Guskey (2002) provided five critical levels of evaluation that can be used to evaluate professional development activities. Level 1 examines participants' reactions and factors such as whether the participants liked the training and if they felt their time was well spent. Level 1 also includes questions that allow participants to rate the knowledge of the presenter and usefulness of the information. Level 2 evaluates participants' learning and measures the knowledge and skills participants gained. Level 2 asks participants to express how the new knowledge could be applied in everyday situations. Level 3 examines organizational support and change, and asks if the professional development activities promote changes that are aligned with the mission of the school and district. Level 4 assesses participants' use of new knowledge and skills, and asks if the new skills learned by participants made a difference in their professional practice. Level 5 examines student learning outcomes and asks if the professional development activity affected students' academic achievement or student behavior. All of the elements in the Guskey model for evaluating professional development can be measured by the use of a questionnaire, survey, and through interviews with participants.

Of the three methods for evaluating professional development for school administrators, the Guskey's model was selected instead of the other two models because it is the simplest to use and because it contains elements for evaluating professional development which provide more feedback from participants. In comparison to the Guskey model, the Killion model seems to consider the evaluator's interest more than the participants' interests. The steps in the Killion model are detailed but do not include questions that help evaluate participants' reactions to professional development activities. The Killion model provided more information about how to create an evaluation tool than about the questions necessary to evaluate the activity.

The Beavis, Ingvarson, and Meiers model contains some of the same aspects of the Guskey model, such as impact on knowledge, impact on practice, and impact on student learning outcomes. However, it does not ask participants about their reaction to the professional activity, nor does it address whether participants received support from the organization to implement change. One of the major questions that professional development planners forget to ask is whether participants felt the professional development was of use or a waste of time. The Guskey model is the only model that asks this very important question.

Summary

The role of a school administrator has changed over the last few years. School administrators are responsible for day-to-day operations, personnel issues, discipline, testing, and, most importantly, student improvement and achievement. According to Grissom and Harrington (2010), "while principals serve an important role in developing

high-performing schools, the research on what knowledge, skills, and abilities principals need to be successful is not well developed” (p. 35).

The literature review examined eight recurring themes found throughout the literature: (a) legislation and accountability, (b) the administrator’s role, (c) defining professional development, (d) effects of professional development, (e) school administrators’ professional development needs, (f) professional development delivery methods, (g) characteristics of effective professional development, and (h) evaluating professional development. While professional development for school administrators exists, the research is sparse. This study will focus on school administrators’ perceptions of professional development geared toward school administrators.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine high school administrators' perceptions of professional development geared toward school administrators. Creswell (2007) notes a case study "is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems" (p.73). A case study consists of using multiple sources of information and with findings reported as descriptive information and reoccurring themes.

This chapter contains the procedures utilized to gather data for the study and methods utilized for analysis of the data. The chapter describes the following: (a) the research questions, (b) the research design, (c) the sample and sampling procedures, (d) the instruments and the procedures used to determine the validity of the instruments, (e) the data collection and data analysis procedures, and (f) actions taken to ensure informed consent of the participants and how the data would be protected.

Research Questions

The overarching question for this study was: What are school administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development? In addition the following sub-questions will guide the research:

1. From the school administrators' perspective, what professional development activities do school administrators participate in that are most effective?
2. From the school administrators' perspective, what professional development activities do school administrators participate in that are not effective?
3. From the school administrators' perspective, what is needed to improve district-level professional development activities?

Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative approach which included surveying and interviewing 12 high school administrators. A qualitative methodology when used in a case study allows the researcher to gather in-depth information about the perceptions and experiences of the participants. Creswell (2007) defined a case study as “an exploration of a bounded system (case), through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (p. 73).

The case study format is the most appropriate format to use to understand the perceptions of the participants by using the surveying and interviewing process. The qualitative method will help provide more detailed information from high school administrators, who attend professional development activities.

Data will be collected in two forms. First, a survey will be used to collect demographic information and information about professional development activities the participants have experienced. Face-to-face interviews will also be conducted. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The survey and face-to-face interview will be focused on the participants’ participation of professional development activities while serving as a high school administrator. The participants were instructed not to include professional development activities that the participant participated in as a teacher or while serving in any other educational role. Both methods of data collection will take place in the participants’ natural settings. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned pseudonyms. The pseudonyms were assigned by the researcher.

Population

The population for this study is high school administrators from a western, middle Georgia county. All of the administrators were serving as assistant principals or principals. The county was representative of Georgia, having a diverse population in both student ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The county has three traditional high schools. The county has one nontraditional high school called Open Campus. Open Campus is a setting where students can make-up high school credits and eventually return to their home school. The county has an alternative school. The alternative school is a school where high school students must attend if they had been expelled from their home school. Administrators within all of these settings will be included in this study.

Sampling Method

This study used purposeful sampling methods (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Glense, 2006). According to Creswell (2007), purposeful sampling is a method where “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon” (p. 125). In this study the participants were 12 high school administrators. To qualify for selection, participants were currently serving as a high school administrator within the county. Purposeful sampling was used because the research was limited to high school administrators. The study was not intended to include elementary or middle school administrators.

Instrumentation

The instrument that will be used in this study will be a survey (Appendix A) and interview questions (Appendix B). Open-ended interview questions will provide

participants an opportunity to expound on their answers. The interview questions were derived from a survey found on the Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS) website. Evaluators use these GAPSS questions to help identify the current professional development activities in which school administrators engage in, how these professional activities enhance student achievement, and recommendations to enhance current professional development activities.

The survey and interview questions were reviewed by a research methodologist to check for clarity and understanding of the research instruments. After receiving approval, one high school assistant principal and one high school principal participated in a pilot study. The survey was hand delivered to the pilot administrators. The survey for the pilot included the same questions which would be used in the study. The pilot study was to determine if the administrators understood the survey questions, if the questions were relevant to the study, and the amount of time needed to complete the survey. The results of the pilot survey were analyzed, none of the survey questions had to be revised, and the survey was finalized. The pilot survey participants reported that it took approximately 10 minutes to complete the survey. The pilot administrators were asked to participate in a face-to-face interview. The pilot administrators provided the researcher a time that they were available to conduct the interview. The pilot interview was to determine if the administrators understood the interview questions, if the questions were relevant to the study, and the amount of time it took to complete the interview. The interview responses were transcribed by the researcher. None of the interview questions had to be revised so the interview questions finalized. Interviews took approximately 20-

25 minutes to complete. The pilot study survey and interview responses were not included in the findings of this study.

Data Collection

Prior to collecting data, the researcher asked the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval to conduct the study. After receiving permission from the IRB, permission was requested from the district superintendent to conduct the study in the district. Immediately following approval from the district superintendent, an approval letter was forwarded to the principals in the district, requesting permission for high school administrators to participate in the study. The research questions were attached to the Informed Consent Letter (Appendix C) explaining the purpose of the study, a list of participants who were asked to participate in the interviews and survey, time required to conduct the interviews, benefits of participating, confidentiality rights, and the researcher's contact information. The researcher emphasized that the participants' identity and responses would be confidential. In order to ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned pseudonyms.

The first step of data collection was the surveys being hand delivered to all of the high school administrators within the county (N=12). Attached to the survey was a self-addressed envelope in order for the participants to return the survey. After the surveys were returned the participants were contacted and asked if they were willing to participate in an interview. Prior to interviewing the participants, the participants were contacted to inform them of the purpose of the interview, that the interview would take approximately 30-45 minutes, and that interviews would be audio taped. The researcher

asked participants when it would be convenient for the researcher to come to their office and conduct the interview.

The interview protocol that was used is as follows: the researcher used an audiotape recorder to record the participants' responses. The researcher also made handwritten notes, which contained the research questions and was a method of recording points of interest. The time the interview began and ended was noted on the notes. The survey questions are listed in Appendix A. The interview protocol is listed in Appendix B.

The case study approach used in this study is both descriptive and intrinsic. Descriptive case studies are used to describe an intervention or phenomenon in the real-life content in which it occurred (Yin, 2003). In this study the goal was to have high school administrators describe their experiences regarding professional development. An intrinsic case study suggests that the researcher has a genuine interest in the case (Stake, 1995). In this study the researcher has a genuine interest in the case because of his experiences as a high school administrator. According to Baxter and Jack (2008) "interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information" (p. 9). Interviews allow the participants to focus on the case study topic and it provides insightful information which leads to perceived causal inferences.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the surveys was tabulated and placed into tables in order to reflect the responses of the participants. The primary data source for this case study was the audio taped interviews. One or two participants were interviewed each day in order to be able to transcribe the information on the same day it was received. The

researcher transcribed the interviews. After transcription the recording was played again. The researcher listened to the recording while reading the transcription in order to check for accuracy. After comparing the transcript to the recording the transcripts were reviewed to determine if any topics needed clarification during future interviews.

The transcribed interviews were typed, printed, and emailed back to the participants. The purpose of this was for the participants to have an opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy and it provided an opportunity for participants to elaborate on their previous responses. Of the 12 participants who were interviewed, five offered brief comments to their previous responses, one added comments to two interview questions and six stated that the transcriptions were accurate. After all transcriptions had been returned, the researcher began identifying themes from the interviews. Once themes were identified the coding process began.

Coding

Coding is a process of looking for various themes that derive from the interviews. The coding process consists of three phases. The process began with open coding which consist of coding the data for major categories of information. Open coding leads to axial coding which is where the researcher identifies the main themes that have been repeated. After axial coding is completed selective coding takes place. Selective coding provides researcher with propositions that help to interrelate the provided information (Creswell, 2007).

After transcription of the audio taped responses, the process began of comparing the themes that surfaced during the interviews. The various themes were highlighted in different colors; for example green pertained to professional development activities while

yellow pertained to recommendations for professional development. After coding the themes, the themes were organized on separate pieces of paper and the researcher began to write the findings.

Summary

The demands placed on school administrators over the past few years helped the researcher to realize that for administrators to meet these demands, school administrators must be trained to prepare for this role. Limited research has been conducted on school administrators' professional development and its impact on school improvement. The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine high school administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development. This study will add to the literature on this topic.

The researcher interviewed 12 high school administrators. Purposeful sampling was used in the study. Data was collected by the use of a survey and face-to-face interviews. The results of the survey were analyzed and the results were placed into tables. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. After each recorded interview the recording was transcribed then the recording was played again while the transcription was being read. The transcriptions were emailed to the participants who allowed them to edit or make comments on the transcription. Results of the audiotaped recordings were presented by coding participants' responses. After coding participants' responses, the researcher looked for common themes that addressed the research questions.

CHAPTER IV
REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine high school administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development for school administrators. The population of the study included 10 high school assistant principals and two high school principals. Participants were asked to complete a survey and to participate in a face-to-face semi-structured interview. The survey and face-to-face interview focused on the participants' participation in professional development activities while serving as a high school administrator. The survey was used to collect demographic information and information about professional development activities the participants had experienced. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Research Design

A qualitative design was used for this study which included surveying and interviewing 12 high school administrators. A qualitative methodology was used because it allowed the researcher to gather in-depth information about the perceptions and experiences of the participants. Creswell (2007) defined a case study as "an exploration of a bounded system (case), through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (p. 73). The case study format was the most appropriate format in order to gather and understand the perceptions of the participants through the surveying and interviewing process.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The participants in this study were selected through a purposeful selection process. Participants included 10 high school assistant principals and two high school

principals in a rural school district in Georgia. Participants in this study included five males and seven females. Principals in this study had between 6 and 12 years of experience as a principal. Assistant principals in this study had between 2 and 11 years of experience as an assistant principal.

Respondents were asked about other positions they had held, and were allowed to select multiple responses, including teacher, assistant principal, academic coach, or other. Ten participants had been a teacher, two had been an assistant principal, one an academic coach, and two selected other. Other could be considered a graduation coach or county level coordinator. A graduation coach is a certified teacher who was hired to assist schools in making annual yearly progress (AYP). The graduation coach was hired to examine school and student data and to provide information to the principals on how to improve scores on the Georgia High School Graduation Test. A county level coordinator is person who works at the district/county office and is responsible for overseeing an academic area. For example, a social studies coordinator is responsible for developing training and visiting elementary, middle, and high school social studies teachers' classrooms. County level coordinators report their classroom observations to assistant principals or principals that are responsible for evaluating that particular academic area. In response to the question asking about the highest degree earned, three selected masters, seven selected educational specialist, and one selected doctorate. This information was gathered through the survey responses.

Participants Survey Responses

The second part of the survey required the participant to select one response per question. These questions pertained to the participants' professional development

experiences. This part of the survey used a Likert scale with responses of never, sometimes, often, and always. The last two questions of the survey asked the participants to select the format of professional development they have experienced as well as what they believed to be the most effective format for delivering professional development. The choices for the last two questions were workshop, video-conference, mentoring (collegial relationship that is supportive and self-selected), coursework (graduate work, continuing education), and seminar/conference (held across days, multiple targeted sessions). Table 1 presents the responses for the second part of the survey.

Table 1

Participants' Survey Responses

Question	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. Administrators participate in job-embedded professional learning and collaboration addressing curriculum, assessment, instruction, and technology.	1	7	1	3
2. District leaders set clear expectations and monitor the effectiveness of professional learning and teacher practices and student learning.	0	8	4	0
3. Opportunities exist for administrators in our school to participate in instructional leadership development.	0	8	4	0
4. District leaders plan professional learning by utilizing data to determine adult learning priorities.	3	4	5	0
5. Resources are allocated to support job-embedded professional learning which is aligned with our school improvement goals.	0	9	3	0
6. Administrators participate in long-term (two-three year) in-depth professional learning which is aligned without school improvement goals.	5	5	2	0
7. Our professional development prepares administrators to teach practices that convey respect for diverse cultural backgrounds and high expectations for all students.	1	8	3	0

8. Our professional development prepares administrators to assist teachers to adjust instruction and assessment to meet the needs of diverse learners.	1	8	3	0
9. Administrators participate in professional development to deepen their content knowledge.	4	6	2	0
10. Our professional development designs are purposeful, and are aligned with specific individual and group needs.	0	10	2	0

Survey Analysis

The findings from the professional development experiences survey revealed the following information. For question 1, administrators participate in job-embedded professional learning and collaboration addressing curriculum, assessment, instruction, and technology. Seven selected sometimes, three selected always, one selected never, and one selected often. The purpose of this question was to measure if participants were receiving job-embedded professional development in several areas.

For question 2, district leaders set clear expectations and monitor the effectiveness of professional learning and teacher practices and student learning. Eight selected sometimes and four selected often. None of the participants selected never or always. The purpose of this question was to measure if district leaders set expectations and monitored the effectiveness of professional development activities.

For question 3, opportunities exist for administrators in our school to participate in instructional leadership development. Eight selected sometimes and four selected often. None of the participants selected never or always. The purpose of this question was to measure one of the types of professional development activities that are being

offered. In this case it was to measure instructional leadership professional development activities.

For question 4, district leaders plan professional learning by utilizing data to determine adult learning priorities. Three selected never, four selected sometimes, and five selected often. No one selected always. The purpose of this question was to determine if the district used data (e.g., student data, test scores, or teacher evaluations) to determine what professional development opportunities school administrators need first compared to other types of activities.

For question 5, resources are allocated to support job-embedded professional learning which is aligned with our school improvement plan. Nine selected sometimes and three selected often. No one selected never or always. The purpose of this question was to determine if the district provides resources (money and facilitators) to support professional development. The other measure was to determine if the activities are aligned with school improvement plans. District level professional development coordinators can provide resources for professional development activities but that does not mean that the activities are aligned to school improvement plans.

For question 6, administrators participate in long-term (two-to three-year period) in-depth professional learning which is aligned with our school improvement goals. Five selected never, five selected sometimes, and three selected often. No one selected always. The purpose of this question was to determine if administrators participate in long term in-depth professional development activities. Long term was defined as two to three years. Also, a key point of the question was to determine if professional learning was aligned with school improvement goals.

For question 7, our professional development prepares administrators teach practices that convey respect for diverse cultural backgrounds and high expectations for all students. One selected never, eight selected sometimes, and three selected often. No one selected always. The purpose of this question was to measure if professional development activities prepare administrators to teach practices that convey respect for diverse cultures and high expectations for all students. The demographics of this district have changed over the past five years from being 70% Caucasian to 30% African American in 2007 compared to 60% African American to 40% Caucasian in 2012. Because of the changes in demographics leaders must be prepared to respect the various cultures while maintaining high expectations for all students.

For question 8, our professional development prepares administrators to assist teachers in how to adjust instruction and assessment to meet the needs of diverse learners. One selected never, eight selected sometimes, and one selected often. No one selected always. The purpose of this question was to measure school administrators' perception on their ability to assist teachers in teaching diverse learners.

For question 9, administrators participate in professional development to deepen their content knowledge. Four selected never, six selected sometimes, and three selected often. No one selected always. The purpose of this question was to determine if high school administrators participate in professional development that deepens their content knowledge. Administrators, like teachers, receive a certification in a specific area and at some point go back to school to earn a leadership certificate. Administrators are required to evaluate teachers in various subject areas but do not have the content knowledge to assist the teachers in planning lessons or delivering the content.

For question 10, our professional development designs are purposeful, and are aligned with specific individual and group needs. Ten selected sometimes, two selected often, no one selected never or always. The purpose of this question was to measure if professional development activities are purposeful, and are aligned to specific and group needs. Purposeful was defined as having meaning to administrators' day-to-day activities. Aligned to specific and group needs was defined as professional development activities that assisted in their day-to day activities. For example, high school administrators who are in charge of instruction receiving training that covered instructional needs.

The last two survey questions asked the participants to select the format of professional development they have experienced as well as what they believed to be the most effective format for delivering professional development. The choices for the last two questions were workshop, video-conference, mentoring (collegial relationship that is supportive and self-selected), coursework (graduate work, continuing education), and seminar/conference (held across days, multiple targeted sessions).

Table 2

Professional Development Format Responses

Question	Workshop	Video Conf.	Mentoring	Coursework	Seminar
11. What is the most common format for delivering professional development in your setting?	9	0	0	1	2
12. In your opinion, which format for delivering professional development is the most effective?	2	0	6	1	3

For question 11, what is the most common format for delivering professional development in your setting? Nine selected workshop, one selected coursework, and two

selected seminar. No one selected video conferences. For question 12, in your opinion, which format for delivering professional development is the most effective? Two selected, workshop, six reported mentoring, one selected coursework, and three selected seminar. No one selected video conferences.

One of the most informative findings from this survey came from the last two questions. Participants' responses (75%) (N=8) indicated that the workshop format was the most common format for delivering professional development in their setting. However, only 16% (N=2) of the respondents indicated that the workshop format was the most effective format for delivering professional development compared to 50% (N=6) who indicated that mentoring was the most effective format for delivering professional development. The following findings represent the results from the interview portion of this study.

Research Questions

The researcher focused on the following overarching question: What are high school administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development? The following sub-questions were used to answer the overarching question.

1. From the school administrators' perspective, what professional development activities do school administrators participate in that are most effective?
2. From the school administrators' perspective, what professional development activities do school administrators participate in that are not effective?
3. From the school administrators' perspective, what is needed to improve district-level professional development activities?

Findings

The following data represent the high school administrators' responses to the face-to-face structured interviews and present their perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development for school administrators. The researcher attempted to create a safe and open environment so that participants felt comfortable engaging in an honest open dialogue about their professional development experiences. The researcher attempted to engage the participants throughout the interview process in order to obtain honest and informative information for the study. The researcher used pseudonyms in reporting the interview responses.

Responses to Research Sub-Questions

Using interview responses there were six themes that derived from the first sub-question. The six themes were: (1) self-selected, (2) assistant principal of instruction meeting (3) assistant principal of discipline meeting, (4) principal's monthly meeting, (5) start-up, and (6) the district's leadership academy.

Sub-question One: From the school administrators' perspectives, what professional development activities do school administrators participate in that are most effective?

The researcher asked three questions during the interview to address this question: (a) Tell me about your professional development experiences as a high school administrator; (b) Try to recall two of the better or most productive professional development activities you have participated in; (c) What was it about the activity, the presenter, or method that made it high quality? In response to the question tell me about

your professional development experiences as a high school administrator the following themes emerged.

Self-Selected

In response to the question about professional development experiences, eight out of the twelve administrators stated their experiences had been self-selected. Self-selected experiences included reading educational leadership journals such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), International Reading Association, Kappa Delta Phi, and Leaning Forward, formerly known as the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). All these professional education organizations have a web site which offers newsletters, e-learning opportunities, conferences, and monthly journals. Ms. Scott stated

The information I receive from reading the various educational journals helps me to understand the various changes in the educational system.

The educational journals provide information on several administrators' topics and I can choose what I want to focus on. The web sites contain e-learning experiences that I can participate in and this allows me an opportunity to communicate with administrators all across the United States. Being able to self-select the areas that I want to focus on is an effective means of improving my professional knowledge.

Assistant Principals' Monthly Meetings

Eight out of the ten assistant principals stated their experiences in professional development included the assistant principal of instruction and assistant principal of discipline meetings which are held monthly. At two of the high schools, the assistant

principals have a rotation schedule where each assistant principal has an opportunity to attend the assistant principal of instruction and discipline meeting. The rotation schedule allows each assistant principal to attend two or three meetings a year. At one school, one administrator attended the assistant principal of instruction meetings while another assistant principal attended the assistant principal of discipline meetings. At the assistant principal of instruction meeting county coordinators discussed the latest changes regarding their area of interest. For example, the science coordinator discussed changes to the science curriculum as well as dates for various training opportunities that teachers could attend. At the assistant principal of discipline meeting, the county's discipline and safety officer explained the latest procedures for conducting a discipline hearing. The meeting also included a safety scenario where administrators were given a scenario and provided an opportunity to respond to the scenario. The meeting included assistant principals, law enforcement, and the district's attorney. The purpose of this meeting is to provide assistant principals with the latest issues regarding school discipline and safety procedures.

Principals Monthly Meeting

Principals attend a monthly principals' meeting. At the principals' meeting, the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and county officials brief the principals on the latest updates and changes. Changes included information on the new teacher evaluation system and the latest information on budget cuts. Updates usually deal with what is required to make annual yearly progress or any new state requirements which must be met. Each county level coordinator has a chance to talk about his or her specific area;

e.g., the coordinator of teaching and learning might discuss the latest testing calendar or state requirements.

Startup Session

A theme that repeated itself among the participants was the district's start up sessions, which were viewed as a form of school administrators' professional development. Startup takes place at the beginning of the school year, one week before teachers return to work. Startup is a two-day event and all school administrators and county level coordinators/cabinet members are required to attend. Startup began with the superintendent giving a state of the district presentation. The presentation in the past covered the district's annual yearly progress. The presentation showed the district's current demographic make-up as well as socioeconomic changes that occurred over the past five years. After the state of the district presentation, the cabinet members provided the latest updates and reminders on how to begin the school year. For example, the food service coordinator provided current information and dates for receiving free and reduced lunch forms. The human resource coordinator provided dates for evaluations to be conducted and submitted.

The superintendent presentation and the cabinet's updates usually take up the morning of the first day of startup. The second half of the first day consists of administrators attending either self-selected or district-selected workshops. The selection process varies from year to year; one year the district allowed the participants to select the workshop while in other years the district chose which workshop participants would attend. Every start up session included mandatory technology training. The technology training in the past has covered issues such as the new student information and grading

system, which is GradeSpeed. GradeSpeed is a system which provides parents and administrators with more information on which standards students have not met. GradeSpeed allows administrators and county officials to see what percentage of students are mastering certain standards and what type of assessments teachers used to assess students' progress. Another form of technology training included the new teacher evaluation system. The new teacher evaluation system is called Teacher Knowledge Assessment System (TKES). TKES is a paperless evaluation system. School administrators received training on how to access the TKES web site as well as information on how to complete the observation and evaluation forms.

On the second day of start up all attendees met in one location and sometimes there is a guest speaker or the district's professional development coordinator presents information about changes to the evaluation system. The second half of the day is spent in small group workshops. Breakfast and lunch are provided at start up giving participants an opportunity to discuss issues with other administrators or county officials. The participants in this study felt eating breakfast and lunch together was an important opportunity for fellowship with other administrators because once school begins, it might be two to three months before they would see each other again.

While some administrators praised the start-up session, others saw it as a waste of time. Mr. Smith praised the startup session. Mr. Smith stated,

Startup gives me an opportunity to collaborate with other school administrators. Once the school year starts we are off and running.

During start up I have an opportunity to meet with other administrators and find out what they are doing differently in their building. It also

provides me an opportunity to ask county officials questions regarding personnel and academic issues.

Ms. Sanders and Mr. Clark expressed a different view of startup. Ms. Sanders stated, “Startup is beneficial, but startup is something I can read. Startup just goes over what I am supposed to do; they (county officials) just make sure I know it. That is not professional development that is just making me aware.” Mr. Clark stated,

Start up to me is about the nuts and bolts and getting everybody motivated and ready to start the year. Last year it was better than the year before because we had some breakout sessions and were able to talk through some things. But in terms of day-to-day activities, it lacked real application and relevance. I would be more in favor of a time during start up where breakout sessions are arranged by job assignment; i.e., elementary principals, middle school assistant principals, etc. Because we do similar roles and focusing on issues that are common to that group.

The district’s start-up session had mixed reviews. While some administrators expressed that start-up was beneficial and productive other administrators felt it was a waste of time. Startup is the district’s attempt to bring school administrators and county officials together and prepare them for the up and coming school year.

District Leadership Academy

Another theme which emerged was that some of the assistant principals have attended the district’s leadership academy. In order for an administrator to be admitted to the leadership academy, he or she must fill out an application and be selected for an interview. The interview is held in the board room and a panel of cabinet level officials

conducts the questioning. The leadership academy accepted eight candidates per academic school year. The candidates were teachers or assistant principals who desire to become an assistant principal or a principal. The candidates came from each school level, including elementary, middle, and high school. The purpose of the leadership academy is to maintain a pool of candidates who can be promoted to assistant principal or principals. Since, the academy provides specific professional development activities, once a candidate completed the academy they are considered prepared to take on a leadership position.

The leadership academy consists of various components. One component, candidates must attend three board meetings. The candidates had an opportunity to meet with all cabinet members and ask questions of the different district coordinators and agencies. The coordinators include curriculum and instruction, buildings and grounds, human resources, the district legal representative, and the assistant superintendents. One of the assistant principals who attended the academy stated, “It was a wonderful experience and it provided a fantastic overview of what is expected as an administrator.”

Another component of the academy, candidates are assigned a book to read as part of a book study. The candidates are expected to read certain chapters of the book by a certain week and they are required to write a reflection on what they have read. The candidates met, shared their reflections, and discussed the lessons they learned from the book. Last year the candidates were required to read the book *A Leader's Legacy* by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner. The book consists of twenty-two chapters which details the critical questions all leaders must ask themselves in order to leave a lasting impact. The

book is divided into four sections, covering the following topics: significance, relationships, aspirations, and courage.

Candidates in the leadership academy shadow two principals or assistant principals for a day. Teachers shadowed an assistant principal while assistant principals shadowed a principal. The candidate decided which administrator he or she wants to shadow, and the candidate is responsible for contacting the administrator to arrange a day when he or she came to the administrator's school. The one stipulation is that the candidate had to shadow someone at a different grade level than the one in which they currently work. For example, a high school assistant principal would shadow an elementary or middle school principal.

The school administrators expressed that the shadowing experience was one of the most worthwhile components of the academy. Ms. Haynes, a high school assistant principal, stated:

I loved the shadowing experience. I remember one of the administrators I shadowed was Billy Cross, an elementary principal. I would have liked to spend a week with him. He is an excellent administrator and since it was an elementary school and I never have been an elementary administrator, it gave me a different perspective.

Mr. Smith, a high school assistant principal stated:

The shadowing experience gave me an opportunity to see how a middle school works. Since I have never been a middle school administrator I had no idea the issues that go on at the middle school. The students are a lot more sensitive than high school students and you have to consider that

when dealing with discipline or personal issues. The maturity level of the students is not what I expected but the experience helped me to better understand the way things are done at the middle school. One major difference is there is not as much movement in the middle school compared to a high school. For example, middle school teachers walk the students to lunch where at the high school the bell rings and everyone goes to lunch on their own. At the middle school you never see a bunch of students in the hallway moving to all parts of the building like we do at the high school.

The culminating event of the academy requires the administrator to produce a PowerPoint presentation on a topic of his or her choice. The PowerPoint presentation could be on any educational topic and the administrator presents it to the cabinet and other academy candidates. One example of an educational topic that a participant presented was comparing the block schedule, traditional schedule, and a modified block schedule. In a high school where students are on a block schedule, students have four, ninety minute classes for one semester. The students attend each class every day during the first semester and then they are assigned four different classes the second semester. In a high school where students are on a traditional schedule, students have seven, forty-five minute classes a day. The students attend the same seven classes all year. In a high school where students are on a modified block schedule, students have four, ninety minute classes on one day and they attend four different classes the next day. The students attend four different classes every other day. Some schools refer to a modified block as an odd and even day because on one day they attend odd classes periods 1, 3, 5,

& 7 and on even days they attend even class periods 2, 4, 6 & 8. In a modified block the students attend all of the same classes all year long with a few exceptions of classes that are only one semester.

Five out of the ten assistant principals completed the leadership academy. Four out of the five of the school administrators who attended the academy felt the PowerPoint presentation was a waste of time. Ms. Haynes stated,

There was a culminating project that intimidated me because I felt like whoever could have been the cleverest would sound the best. You had to present it to the cabinet and it was kind of high anxiety. Everything we had to do made an impression on me except for the PowerPoint presentation.

Overall the responses to the question asking about the participant's professional development experiences were mixed. One of the issues in dealing with this question was the participant's definition of professional development. While some participants identified a certain event as a form of professional development, other administrators did not feel that the activity was professional development. The comment that stood out the most came from Mr. Phillips, who stated, "His current professional development activities were limited and not very intensive. Mr. Phillips was an administrator in another school system and in that school system administrators spent a good bit of time in focused professional development for school administrators." Mr. Phillips came from a school system that provided quality professional development activities for school administrators. Mr. Phillips explained that the school system he came from partnered with the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and High Schools That Work

program (HSTW). SREB is an organization that partners with schools in 16 states. HSTW is the nation's largest organization partnered with more than 1,200 high schools in 30 states. Both organizations focus on school improvement initiatives for high school leaders and teachers. The organizations offer a web site, monthly publications, case studies, site development guides, and conferences. In the district where Mr. Phillips worked the school system received a grant funded by Wachovia bank that sponsored leadership change initiatives. The leadership change initiatives provided two years of workshops and conferences that contained various leadership modules.

Summary to sub-question one:

Tell me about your professional development experiences as a high school administrator. The responses identified six themes which were: (1) self-selected, (2) assistant principal of instruction meeting (3) assistant principal of discipline meeting, (4) principal's monthly meeting, (5) start-up, and (6) the district's leadership academy. Participants shared their professional development activities experiences. Participants have participated in various professional development activities, however, the effectiveness and quality of the activities varied amongst the participants.

Most productive activities

In response to the question asking which asked "better or most productive professional development activities, some participants repeated the same theme of the district's leadership academy, start up activities at the beginning of the school year, and the meeting with the assistant principal of instruction as their most productive professional development activities. However, two different themes emerged from this question as being the most productive professional development activities. The two

themes were Advancement Via Individual Determination and training on how to evaluate various staff member including teachers, media center personnel, and counselors.

Advancement Via Individual Determination

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a program the district adopted and implemented in the middle and high schools throughout the county. AVID provides a week long summer conference where a team of administrators and teachers rotate through the school providing several certified individuals in the school an opportunity to attend the training. AVID provides training and techniques on how to take middle level students and assist them in becoming high achieving students. Mr. Riley stated,

During AVID training, you get a chance to share ideas with other school administrators from all over the country. You have a chance to ask them what they are doing at their high school which has the same number of students who have the same economic make-up. Even though AVID is not a district sponsored professional development activity, the districts pays and supports administrators in attending the training.

Participants stated that the staff evaluation training received from the Regional Education Service Agencies (RESA) was a one of the most productive professional development activities they had participated in. RESA provides the training administrators need to effectively evaluate counselors and media specialists. Mr. Hill stated, “The training was useful because I can apply it immediately and since I am not certified in those areas, it provides me with information on the responsibilities of the different staff roles.” Administrators are either selected to attend specific RESA training

or they can volunteer to participate in the training. The district pays for the training and recommends all administrators attend the various sessions. In response to the question what are some of the better or most productive professional development activities that you have participated in, two themes emerged. The two themes were AVID and staff development training provided by the Regional Education Service Agencies. Participants expressed that these activities were productive because they could apply what they learn once they returned to their school. Participants expressed that AVID and RESA training provided an opportunity to collaborate with other administrators from other school systems. AVID and RESA provided the participants with information and resources that they could use in their day-to-day activities.

What makes a professional development high quality?

The third question asked what was it about a professional development activity, the presenter, or method that made it high quality. The themes that were derived from this question were the use of the information, knowledge of the presenter, and the enthusiasm of the presenter. The response that stands out in reference to the use of information came from Ms. Jones, who stated,

Professional development is considered high quality when the presenter presents something that can be used on a day-to-day basis. It gave you strategies that you could apply to real world situations. I think relevant content is really important, relevant to me as a leader or staff in leading them some place. The training shows you how to do something different. You have ideas in your head and unless you talk to someone and start to make a plan or take steps, or have a discussion it kind of goes by the way

side. Also, it provides you with a chance to collaborate with other participants.

While some participants felt that real world application was an important factor, Mr. Smith commented on the knowledge of the presenter. Mr. Smith stated,

One of the things is if the presenter is knowledgeable. If the presenter is knowledgeable and knows the information when you ask them a question they can answer it. A lot of times they have been in education and they are not like these guys the county spends all of this money for that is an expert on kids in poverty and they have never dealt with kids in poverty. You can tell if they have actually taught or can deal with a variety of students.

Other participants addressed the enthusiasm of the presenter.

The final characteristic of high quality professional development pertained to the energy level of the presenter. Mr. Smith stated, "I would say having an energetic presenter. A lot of times when I go to professional development and they have someone that is high energy, then it gets me motivated to learn." Mr. Jones stated, "I am a visual and tactile learner; the best presenter is the one that come in and are high energy and do not read a PowerPoint presentation word for word."

One of the participants provided an example of a high energy presenter - Linda Saul. Saul was the coordinator for the district's school safety department. Mrs. Saul selected several administrators to be part of a school safety scenario. The scenario included the use of firemen, emergency medical specialist, and teachers pretended to be injured. The administrators had to respond to an emergency situation and they were

critiqued on their actions. The scenario seemed so realistic, and Ms. Saul could be heard giving orders and directions over the radio. The majority of the school administrators expressed how their creativity and energy provided a valuable learning experience.

In response to the question what was it about a professional development activity, the presenter, or method that made it high quality three themes emerged -- the use of the information, knowledge of the presenter, and enthusiasm of the presenter. Participants expressed that the information has to be of use in their day-to-day activities. The presenter must be knowledgeable of the subject and be able to answer questions. The presenter must be energetic and should not read a PowerPoint presentation word for word.

Sub-question Two: professional development activities that are not effective.

Sub-question #2 asked participants about professional activities that are not effective. The researcher asked the following questions to help participants recall the least effective or least productive professional development activities they had attended. First, the researcher asked participants to explain what made an activity ineffective or less than productive. Two themes emerged from this question: format of delivery and training that did not address their need.

Respondents identified two formats of delivering professional development which they described as being least effective. The two formats were: one-shot workshops and PowerPoint presentations. The delivery format that school administrators found least effective was one-shot workshops. A one-shot workshop conducts training or an activity for either a half a day or a full day. All participants are put in a room and a facilitator presents the bulk of the information in a short amount of time. Ms. Johnson stated:

All of the ones (professional development activities) I have attended in the county have been one-shot deals. It is like either a half a day or less, like an hour or an hour and a half and it is never talked about again. For example I can recall our first session on GradeSpeed, the new system for inputting grades. The facilitator sat behind a computer, while 20-25 administrators watched him go from screen to screen. He covered ten to twelve items and no one understood the majority of the information. The session lasted for an hour and a half. What made it worst was none of the administrators had a computer to follow along with his instructions. We basically sat there and people answered emails on their Black Berry or had conversations with other participants.

The other format of delivering professional development which was considered ineffective was when the presenter uses a PowerPoint presentation and they read it word for word. Mr. Wilson stated,

I cannot recall the name of it, but the ones I can tell you are where the people came over, and they have a PowerPoint presentation, and they read the PowerPoint to everyone. That turns everyone off. As a matter of fact I can remember it and that was when the county office came over to explain differentiated instruction. It appeared to me that they were told how to present the information and they could not answer the questions from the audience. When a presenter reads a PowerPoint word for word it gives you the feeling they do not know the information.

Participants expressed that professional development activities that did not fit their need was another form of ineffective professional development. In order for professional development to be considered effective it must provide information that is relevant to the participants. In talking with Mr. Wilson he provided an example of a professional development activity that was considered ineffective because it did not fit the needs of the participants or school setting. Mr. Wilson stated,

A group came over a few years ago. The training was specific to our school. The training consisted of looking at videos dealing with sexual orientation and ethnicity. The intent was to provide the administrators with diversity type training. It was too encompassing because I thought maybe it was too broad or too specific because it ranged from all type of kids and how to deal with them. It did not fit our needs and it was not delivered in the right format. I can remember watching the videos thinking, this is crazy. We do need that type of training but that one was not well planned.

There were some other general comments which were made regarding ineffective professional development experiences such as:

“The district - county level stuff - is worthless”.

“The activities do not address our needs”.

“Sometimes the training comes at you like a train”.

“There are some great ideas out there, but we do not talk about the idea or how we are going to use it”.

Participants also commented that often there is no follow up to the training which they have received. The administrators attend a workshop and are presented information, but no one comes back to see if the training could be implemented. Participants expressed that professional development should be tailored to the student population in that district. Participants stated they do not want someone to come in and give them techniques on what works in their school when the school does not reflect the population of the district. Mr. Taylor stated,

The activities do not address my needs. I need to go to schools and see what other schools are doing. I do not need this expert presenter from states and counties that do not reflect this county to tell me what works.

What works in Northern Missouri or Montana does not work in our county. We have a different type of student.

In response to the question what professional development activities are not effective two major themes emerged. The two themes were format of delivery and training that did not address the participant's needs. One-shot workshops and PowerPoint presentation were described as the two most ineffective ways to deliver professional development. Training that did not address the participant's need was seen as ineffective because the participant's expressed they needed training that could be used to affect their day-to-day activities. Participants also indicated that professional development activities should include activities geared toward the population of the students in the county.

Sub- question Three: What is needed to improve district-level professional development activities?

Sub-question #3 asked what is needed to improve district-level professional development activities? The researcher asked participants if they were in charge of district-wide professional development for principals (assistant principals), what would they do differently in planning and implementation so that professional development would improve student achievement. Four themes emerged from this question: (a) scheduling, (b) content of the activities, (c) delivery method, and (d) collaboration.

In terms of scheduling, school administrators expressed that there should be a calendar developed and disseminated which displays the school administrators' professional development activities for the upcoming year. There should be opportunities throughout the year, whether quarterly or at an agreed upon time, for individuals with similar responsibilities to come together for the purpose of professional development. A needs assessment should be conducted at the end of the school year in order to identify the type of professional development to be offered the following year.

The content of professional development activities should be obtained from a needs assessment. Sessions should address day-to-day activities that school administrators face. Participants who attended the district's leadership academy recommended that topics covered in the leadership academy should be offered to all school administrators. The topics ranged from budgeting, personnel issues, buildings and grounds, to legal issues, transportation, and food services. Participants responded that school administrators should be provided a list of professional development activities and allowed to choose the activities they would like to attend.

The recommendations for delivery of professional development varied. The majority of participants agreed that face-to-face delivery was the most effective method.

Some participants agreed that, because of time constraints, technology could be used to deliver professional development. Some suggestions for the effective use of technology to deliver professional development included a phone conference or possibly a chat room or blog responses. Mr. Jones stated, “Because moving in today’s time, administrators expect our teachers to use technology; but, we are not learning about the tools that are out there that we can use for leading professional development.”

One participant suggested that one method of delivery could include the use of scenarios. Scenarios could be used by providing school administrators with a written case study and where they would respond with a written narrative about the situation. This approach would give participants an opportunity to reflect on the situation and what they would do. After a certain amount of time, the participants would be allowed to discuss their responses with other participants.

The final theme that emerged from participants’ responses was repeated over and over. School administrators’ professional development should allow time for collaboration. The concept of collaboration among administrators was repeated more than any other theme throughout the interviews. Participants recommended collaboration between high school administrators as well as between middle school and high school administrators. The majority of the participants stated that professional development should be leveled in the sense that high school assistant principals collaborate with high school administrators and middle school principals collaborate with middle school principals. Ms. Livingston stated,

Collaboration between school administrators is so important. Providing clear directions and activities for school administrators to work together

on training or various topics. It has been great this summer to spend a few hours with other assistant principals, and that just does not happen through the school year. We preach collaboration, and the teachers are doing it; however, we never plan or allow administrators to come together and learn from each other.

Another question asked during the interview encouraged administrators to comment on some of the major reasons professional development activities are not effective. Participants were asked what might have made it easier for them to more effectively implement the strategies learned from professional development activities. The recurring response was time. The participants continually stated, “If we had more time . . .” Participants stated that since the majority of professional development activities such as start up take place at the beginning of the school year, once they return to school there was no time to implement the training they received. Mr. Scott stated:

If you want to implement a new activity, by the time you attend the training and come back to your school there are a million things to do. It is hard to do this and do that and I wear 20 different hats.

Participants expressed that they are not provided the time to digest or implement the activity which they recently attended.

The researcher asked participants if they were in charge of district-wide professional development for principals (assistant principals), what would they do differently in planning and implementation so that professional development would improve student achievement. Four themes emerged from this question: (a) scheduling, (b) content of the activities, (c) delivery method, and (d) collaboration. Participants

expressed the district could develop a calendar which displays professional development activities for the upcoming year. The content of the activities should be obtained from a needs assessment. The delivery method most preferred was face-to-face. There should be opportunities for participants to collaborate with their peers. The theme that was repeated more than any other element regarding professional development was the issue of time. School administrators do not feel as if they have enough time to attain professional development activities and to have the time to implement the training they received.

Summary

The researcher conducted a qualitative study to examine high school administrators' perception of the effectiveness of professional development. Data was collected from a survey and face-to-face interviews. This study revealed several themes related to high school administrators' perception of district-level professional development activities. The study identified several types of high school administrators' professional development activities. The activities included self-selected activities, various district sponsored events (start-up, attending assistant principal of instruction and discipline meetings, and the district's leadership academy), AVID, and RESA training activities.

In response to sub-question 1 from the school administrators' perspective, what professional development activities do school administrators participate in that are most effective: Participants identified workshops as the most common format for delivering professional development; however, they stated that mentoring, followed by seminars, are the most effective format for delivering professional development. The delivery

method most preferred was face-to-face and where activities lasted multiple days. Collaboration could be achieved by providing opportunities for school administrators to come together and share ideas. Collaboration should occur between school administrators at the same level and who share the same responsibilities (high school assistant principals meet with high school administrators).

Six themes emerged from the question what professional development activities do school administrators participate in. The six themes were: (1) self-selected, (2) assistant principal of instruction meeting, (3) assistant principal of instruction meeting, (4) principal's monthly meeting, (5) start-up, and (6) the district's leadership academy. AVID and staff evaluation training received from RESA were identified as the most productive professional development activities in which administrators had participated.

In response to sub-question 2 from the school administrators' perspective, what professional development activities do school administrators participate in that are not effective: participants indicated that the enthusiasm and knowledge of the presenter, and information that could be used on a day-to-day basis were considered most effective? An activity where the presenter read a PowerPoint presentation or presented information that did not meet their needs was considered ineffective.

In response to sub-question 3 from the school administrators' perspective, what is needed to improve district-level professional development: several themes and suggestions were made for improving district-level professional development: (a) scheduling, (b) content of the activities, (c) delivery method, and (d) collaboration. In terms of scheduling, participants suggested that the district provide a calendar of upcoming professional development activities at the beginning of the year. Content of

activities should be identified through a needs assessment administered to administrators so they can indicate their professional development needs.

Finally, the study revealed that time was a major factor that affected the efficacy of professional development activities. School administrators expressed that once they attend an activity, there is not enough time to implement what they learn and the new ideas they come back with. The following chapter provides further discussion of the findings, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The importance of professional development continues to be emphasized in legislation and accountability acts. As this study was being conducted, school administrator in Georgia began receiving professional development on how to meet the new standards of accountability. The state of Georgia requested a waiver from the No Child Left Behind Act and has been required to implement common core standards, a new teacher evaluation system, and training on how to close the gap between high achieving students and special education students. Schools have been assigned a representative from the Georgia Department of Education who meets with the administrators and provides professional development activities focused on achieving the new standards.

This study examined high school administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development for school administrators. The study was conducted in a rural school district in Georgia. The study involved 12 high school administrators. The administrators completed a survey and participated in a face-to-face interview. This chapter presents an analysis of research findings, discussion of research findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations. The chapter begins with an analysis of how the findings from the study relate to Thomas Guskey's (2002) five critical levels of professional development.

Research Findings

After the data was collected, the researcher identified which form of data correlated to Thomas Guskey's (2002) five levels of professional development evaluation. Guskey identified five critical levels of professional development evaluation. The five critical levels are:

Level 1: Participant reactions to professional development experience

Level 2: Participant learning measured by the knowledge and skills the participant gained

Level 3: Organization support and change for implementation of professional development

Level 4: Participant use of new knowledge and skills in professional practice

Level 5: Student learning outcomes

The theoretical framework of this study was framed around Guskey's critical levels of professional development evaluation.

Level 1: Participant Reactions

Level 1 of the critical levels of professional development evaluation, participants' reactions, was obtained through both the survey and the face-to-face interviews. The researcher learned which professional development activities school administrators attended the most and which professional development activities school administrators thought were effective. According to the survey results, the most common format for delivering professional development activities was in the form of workshops. The findings of this study support the research conducted by Guskey and Yoon. According to Guskey and Yoon (2009) "studies showed a positive relationship between professional

development and improvement in administrators' day-to-day activities involved the use of workshops and seminars" (p. 296) However, the format which school administrators expressed was the most effective method for delivering professional development was mentoring, followed by seminars.

Through face-to-face interviews, the researcher discovered that the three most attended professional development activities were the district's leadership academy, principal and assistant principal monthly meetings, and start up at the beginning of the new school year. The data indicated mixed responses to the effectiveness of these activities, ranging from effective to a waste of time. Participants felt that the district's leadership academy was one of the most effective professional development activities they had experienced.

The findings of this study indicate there is a strong desire and need for effective professional development for high school administrators. Salazar (2007) stated "with the widespread acceptance of the need for schools to improve, it is impossible to ignore the critical needs of school leaders to be more effective at their work" (p. 21). Today's high school administrators face many challenges in their role as school leaders. Legislation and accountability acts such as *A Nation at Risk*, Goals 2000, No Child Left Behind, and Race to the Top have addressed the importance of providing quality professional development activities for school administrators. Georgia, while competing for Race to the Top funds, has realized the importance of the role of high school administrators. According to Bottoms and O'Neill (2001), increasingly, state accountability systems are placing the burden on school success and individual student achievement squarely on the shoulders of school administrators" (p. 5)

LEVEL 2: Participant Learning

Level 2 of the critical levels of professional development evaluation is participant learning. According to the survey results, school administrators sometimes participated in job-embedded professional development activities that are purposefully designed and aligned with specific individual and group needs.

Through face-to-face interviews, the researcher discovered that certain types of professional development activities help participants gain new knowledge or skills. High school administrators stated that knowledge was gained from activities where the presenter was enthusiastic and presented information that related to their day-to-day experiences. Presenters who used a PowerPoint presentation and could not relate to the demographics of the district were not seen as effective.

Responses from this study indicate that school administrators have different definitions of professional development. This term, used throughout this study, came from Williams (2008) who defined professional development as “participation in courses, classes, workshops, and other activities for the purpose of developing and updating professional skills” (p. 2). Participants who participated in the district’s leadership academy considered the academy to be the most effective professional development activity. While the district’s start up process was seen by some participants as a professional development activity, others felt it was an informational session

Responses from this study indicate that school administrators have different definitions of professional development. This term, used throughout this study, came from Williams (2008) who defined professional development as “participation in courses, classes, workshops, and other activities for the purpose of developing and updating

professional skills” (p. 2). Participants who participated in the district’s leadership academy considered the academy to be the most effective professional development activity. While the district’s start up process was seen by some participants as a professional development activity, others felt it was an informational session.

LEVEL 3: Organization Support and Change

Level 3 of the critical levels of professional development evaluation is organization support and change. When high school administrators attend professional development activities, they must determine if the activity can be used in their schools’ climate. Data collected from the survey indicated that the school district supports high school administrators by allocating resources to support job-embedded professional learning which is aligned to school improvement goals.

Data collected through face-to-face interviews indicated that high school administrators receive professional development activities; however, two factors prevent the training from being implemented. The first factor is time. High School administrators indicated that once they return to their school there is not enough time to implement changes. The other factor is follow-up. High school administrators indicated that there is rarely any follow up conducted to determine the results obtained from specific professional development activities.

LEVEL 4: Participant’s Use of New Knowledge and Skills

Level 4 of the critical levels of professional development evaluation is participant use of new knowledge and skills. Data collected from the survey indicated that high school administrators participate in professional development activities that prepare them to assist teachers in adjusting instruction and assessment tools to meet the needs of

diverse learners. However, administrators indicated the majority of professional development activities do not deepen their content knowledge.

Data obtained during the face-to-face interviews indicated the majority of the knowledge and skills obtained through district-sponsored professional development involved technology and teacher evaluation procedures. The district's start up procedures consisted of pre-selected activities which always included a session on technology. The technology session concentrated on new features in the teachers' grading report system or student information portals. The technology training was considered to be ineffective because a barrage of information would be presented in an hour session.

The teacher evaluation system training was usually presented by a representative from the Department of Education or the county's professional development coordinator. The training would consist of groups ranging from 20-25 participants. The participants would be placed in small groups. The presenter would walk the participants through the evaluation process. The participants would participate in hands on activities on how to complete the evaluation paperwork. The teacher evaluation training was seen as effective because it provided the participants with knowledge and skills that would be used throughout the school year.

LEVEL 5: Student Learning Outcomes

Level 5 of the critical levels of professional development evaluation refers to how student learning outcomes are affected by professional development. Data collected from the survey indicated that high school administrators felt that the majority of the time (sometimes) district leaders set clear expectations and monitored the effectiveness of professional learning, teacher practices, and student learning. However, 40% (N=5) of

the participants indicated that school administrators never participate in long-term (two-to-three year), in-depth professional learning that is aligned with the school improvement goals.

Data collected through face-to-face interviews indicated the majority of professional development activities did not address student learning outcomes. The one activity that school administrators agreed on was teacher evaluation training. Participants indicated that knowing how and what to look for during instruction and being able to assist teachers in making adjustments to their delivery methods was their way of effecting positive student outcomes.

The results of this study indicated that school administrators prefer certain types of professional development delivery methods over other methods. The findings of this study support the findings of Salazar (2007). Salazar's study indicated school administrators were most likely to participate in seminar/conferences (47.9%) (N=6), followed by workshops (36.6%) (N=4). In this study, when participants were asked about the most common format for delivering professional development, the responses were: (a) workshops (75%) (N=9), followed by seminars (17%) (N=2). The selection of workshops and seminars shows that these are the two most common forms for delivery of professional development. However, in this study, workshops and seminars were not considered the most effective means of delivering professional development.

According to Hunzicker (2010), professional development should include certain characteristics. Hunzicker stated, "Effective professional development engages educators in learning opportunities that are supportive, job-embedded, instructionally-focused, collaborative, and ongoing" (p.2). This study's survey responses revealed the following:

The majority of participants selected sometimes (58%) (N=7) compared to always (25%) (N=3) in response to the question asking if school administrators participate in job-embedded professional learning. The majority of participants selected sometimes (66%) (N=8) compared to always (0%) when asked if opportunities exist for administrators to participate in instructional leadership development. Responses obtained from the face-to-face interviews indicated high school administrators have a strong desire to collaborate with other school administrators. However, there are few occasions that allow them to collaborate with colleagues who serve in the same capacity.

Linn, Gill, Sherman, Vaughn, & Mixon (2010) note that an effective professional development activity must include an evaluation process that asks for more information than the participant's level of satisfaction. Guskey (2002) provided five critical levels of evaluation that can be used to evaluate professional development activities. The participants in this study indicated there was rarely any follow up or evaluation in place to determine the effect of professional development activities. Participants indicated that once a professional development activity had ended, they returned to their schools and dealt with the normal day-to-day activities.

After completing the findings the researcher compared the research findings to Guskey's five critical levels of professional development evaluation. The findings indicated the participants do participate in school administrators' professional development activities. The findings indicated the most common format for delivering professional activities was in the form of workshops. However, the format which school administrators expressed was the most effective method was mentoring. The findings indicated school administrators have a strong desire and need to collaborate with other

school administrators. Two of the major findings were school administrators expressed the need for time to implement the information from professional development activities. The other major finding was participants expressed there is no follow-up to the majority of the professional development activities.

Conclusions

The researcher analyzed the findings from the study and came to the following conclusions:

1. High school administrators are participating in district level professional development activities.
2. High school administrators have different definitions and concepts of what are considered professional development activities.
3. The district's leadership academy is the most effective professional development activity within the district. The components of the leadership academy should be provided to all school administrators. The major components were the shadowing experience, the ability to meet with the various county officials and the local board of education, and the opportunity to share and collaborate with other school administrators.
4. The district level professional development coordinator needs to examine professional development delivery formats. Participants indicated mentoring is the most effective format for delivering professional development.
5. School administrators have a strong desire to collaborate with other school administrators. Professional development should be designed so school

administrators have an opportunity to collaborate with administrators who serve at the same grade levels.

6. A needs assessment should be used to help identify the type of professional development that is preferred and needed.

Implications

This study is significant to district level professional development coordinators, superintendents, and county officials. It is significant for district level professional development coordinators because they are responsible for the planning, implementation, and delivery methods of professional development activities. It is significant to superintendents because superintendents are responsible for the overall development of school administrators. It is significant to county officials because county officials must be willing to provide the funding for professional development activities. Findings from this study revealed the need and desire of high school administrators for effective professional development activities. These findings would be of interest to school districts that are focused on providing effective professional development for school administrators.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. Future studies are needed to determine school administrators' perceptions of professional development.
2. District level professional development coordinators along with district leaders should conduct continuous observation of professional development activities.
3. The district should conduct an ongoing study to evaluate gaps in school administrator professional development activities.

4. Further studies on the topic of school administrators' professional development activities at various grade levels are recommended. This study included only high school administrators.

Dissemination

School administrators who participated in this study will have an opportunity to review the findings. As a result of these findings the researcher hopes county level professional development coordinators, county level officials, and school administrators will begin to focus more on professional development activities for school administrators. Perhaps the information gained from this study will place more emphasis on the development of administrators who are the key to overall school improvement.

Concluding Thoughts

As I stated in the role of the researcher, I have been a high school administrator for more than six years. Coming from a military background, I am accustomed to receiving leadership training accompanying promotion to different ranks. In education, I have observed the countless hours of professional development provided to teachers and wondered why school administrators receive so little. The district provides opportunities for professional development for school administrators, but these are not always the most effective development activities. Since school administrators play such an important role in the day-to-day activities of the school, opportunities should exist for them to become the most productive leaders possible.

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Appendix A

Survey

Professional Development Survey

1. Gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
2. Current position
 - a. Principal
 - b. Assistant Principal
3. How many years have you been in your current position?
 - a. 1-5 years
 - b. 6-10 years
 - c. 11-15 years
 - d. More than 15 years.
4. What other roles have you had in the district? (circle all that apply)
 - a. Teacher
 - b. Assistant principal
 - c. Academic coach
 - d. other
5. What is the highest degree you have earned?
 - a. Bachelors
 - b. Masters
 - c. Educational Specialist
 - d. Doctorate

For the following questions please select one response per question.

1. Administrators participate in job-embedded professional learning and collaboration addressing curriculum, assessment, instruction, and technology (e.g. developing lesson plans, examining student work, monitoring student progress).
Never Sometimes Often Always
2. District leaders set clear expectations and monitor the effectiveness of professional learning on teacher practices and student learning.
Never Sometimes Often Always
3. Opportunities exist for administrators in our school to participate in instructional leadership development.
Never Sometimes Often Always

4. District leaders plan professional learning by utilizing data (student learning, demographic, perception, and process) to determine adult learning priorities.
- Never Sometimes Often Always
5. Resources are allocated to support job-embedded professional learning that is aligned with high priority school improvement goals.
- Never Sometimes Often Always
6. Administrators participate in long-term (two- to three-year period) in-depth professional learning which is aligned with our school improvement goals.
- Never Sometimes Often Always
7. Our professional development prepares administrators teach practices that convey respect for diverse cultural backgrounds and high expectations for all students.
- Never Sometimes Often Always
8. Our professional development prepares administrators to assist teachers in how to adjust instruction and assessment to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Never Sometimes Often Always
9. Administrators participate in professional development to deepen their content knowledge.
- Never Sometimes Often Always
10. Our professional development designs are purposeful, and are aligned with specific individual and group needs.
- Never Sometimes Often Always

11. What is the most common format for delivering professional development in your setting?
- a. Workshop – (professional conference session, half-day seminar).
 - b. Video-conference.
 - c. Mentoring - (collegial relationship that is supportive and self-selected).
 - d. Coursework – (graduate work, continuing education).
 - e. Seminar/Conference – (held across days, multiple targeted sessions).
12. In your opinion, which format for delivering professional development is the most effective?
- a. Workshop – (professional conference session, half-day seminar).
 - b. Video-conference.
 - c. Mentoring - (collegial relationship that is supportive and self-selected).
 - d. Coursework – (graduate work, continuing education).
 - e. Seminar/Conference – (held across days, multiple targeted sessions).

Adapted from the Georgia assessment of performance on School Standards.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol for Administrators

1. What is your current position? How long have you been in your current position?
2. Tell me about your professional development activity experiences as a high school administrator.
3. Try to recall two of the better or most productive professional development activities you have participated in.
4. What was it about the activity, the presenter, or the method that made it high quality?
5. In what ways did the activity help you to promote school improvement?
6. Which information, strategies, or skills obtained from administrator professional development activities have you used at your school with teachers or students? Describe the source, format, and content of the activity.
7. If you perceived a principal professional development activity to be of high quality, how did you implement the strategies you learned from professional development activities?
8. What might have made it easier for you to more effectively implement the strategies you learned from professional development activities?
9. How often do you attend administrator professional development activities? (e.g. once a month, every quarter, once a year, other)?
10. Recall the least effective or least productive professional development activities you have attended. Tell me what made it ineffective or less than productive.

11. If you were in charge of district-wide professional development for principals, what would you do differently in planning and implementation so that professional development would help improve school improvement?

Appendix C

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY & HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

My name is Rodney Williams, and I am a Doctoral Candidate at Georgia Southern University. As a requirement for the degree, Doctor of Education, I will be conducting a research project entitled High School Administrators' Perception of the Effectiveness of Professional Development. I am requesting to include you as a participant.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the research is to examine high school administrators' perception of the effectiveness of professional development activities for school administrators.

Procedures: Participation in this research will include the completion of a survey and a face-to-face interview.

Discomforts and Risks: There are no more than minimal risks involved for the participants.

Benefits:

a. While there are no direct benefits to the participants, the findings will contribute to the professional body of knowledge in relation to secondary education.

b. The benefits to society include increased knowledge of how school administrators view professional development activities.

Duration/Time required from the participant: The survey will take 10-15 minutes to complete. The primary investigator will contact the participants by phone to see if they are willing to participate in the study. The primary investigator will hand deliver the survey to the participants. There will be a self-addressed envelope attached to the survey in order for the participant to return the survey.

The face-to face interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes. The primary investigator will contact the participants by phone to set up a date and time for the face-to-face interview. The interviews will be audio taped by the primary investigator. The interviews will take place in the participant's natural setting which will be the participant's office. The interviews will take place between July 1, 2012 and August 15, 2012.

Statement of Confidentiality: The survey, interview tapes and transcriptions will be confidential. The names of volunteer participants and identifying school and district information will not be used. The survey, audio tapes and transcriptions will be kept in a locked cabinet for three years. They will be discarded and destroyed August 2015. Only the researcher and the college advisor will have access to the instruments used throughout this study.

Right to Ask Questions: You have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. You also have the right to inspect any instrument or materials related to the study. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern university Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0843.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may also decline to answer specific questions. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or retribution.

Cost/Incentive: There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. No incentive will be offered to you to participate in this study.

Penalty: You will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you decide not to participate in this study.

You must be 18 years or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and you agree to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been reviewed and approved by the GSU Institutional Review Board under tracking number H12496.

Title of Project: High School Administrators' Perception of the Effectiveness of Professional Development.

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Participant Signature Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

Investigator Signature Date