

Fall 2009

A Study to Identify the Components of Professional Learning Communities that Correlate with Teacher Efficacy, Satisfaction, and Morale

Shirley Robinette Weathers

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A STUDY TO IDENTIFY THE COMPONENTS
OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES THAT CORRELATE
WITH TEACHER EFFICACY, SATISFACTION, AND MORALE

by

SHIRLEY ROBINETTE WEATHERS

(Under the Direction of Charles Reavis)

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to provide information concerning the attributes of professional learning communities, i.e. supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, supportive conditions-relational, supportive conditions-structural, and shared personal practice and their correlation with teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale. These six characteristics of learning communities were studied to ascertain the association of those characteristics or attributes with teacher measures. The underlying premise for the study was that teachers who feel supported in their classroom practice are more committed and effective than those who do not. When teachers have a strong sense of efficacy, they tend to adopt new classroom behaviors and stay in the profession longer.

Pearson Correlation analysis and regression analysis were performed on nine constructs to determine their associations. The three dependent variables were teacher measures of efficacy, satisfaction, and morale. The independent variables were the six constructs of professional learning communities, i.e. supportive leadership, shared values, collective learning, conditions-relational, conditions-structural, and shared personal practice. The three control variables were teacher experience, teacher autonomy, and teacher salary contentedness.

The results of Pearson Correlation analysis showed that all six constructs of PLCs were significantly related to teacher efficacy; four of the six constructs, i.e. supportive conditions-structural, supportive conditions-relational, collective learning, and shared values of PLCs were significantly related to teacher satisfaction; and, all six of the PLC attributes were significantly related to teacher morale. Regression analysis determined that there were no significant relationships with teacher efficacy and professional learning community dimensions, one significant relationship with satisfaction and the PLC dimension of supportive conditions-structural, two significant relationships with morale and PLC dimensions of collective learning and supportive conditions-structural.

INDEX WORDS: Professional Learning Communities, Teacher Efficacy, Teacher Satisfaction, Teacher Autonomy, and Teacher Morale

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STATESBORO, GEORGIA

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Electronic Version Approved
December 2009

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation, first of all, to my parents Fred and Helen Robinette who provided the opportunity to make this journey possible. Without their love, support, and encouragement, I would have not stayed the course. Next, I would like to thank my children, Candice and Gabriel, who believed in their mother and greatly encouraged me along the way. Most of all, I would like to thank my husband, Michael, without whom I would not have reached my destination. Their continual love, encouragement, and support helped me complete this journey that covered much of a decade.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank all of the following for their invaluable assistance to me as I completed this dissertation:

Dr. Charles Reavis, who served as my committee chairman, but also encouraged me throughout the completion of this dissertation,

Dr. Bryan Griffin, who served as my methodologist and provided continued assistance throughout the writing of the dissertation,

Dr. Samuel Hardy, who served as a member of my dissertation committee, and provided stimulating conversation as we traveled to Statesboro together,

Candice Weathers, as she helped with technical needs and gave calming assistance, and

To my friends and colleagues that offered support and encouragement for the completion of this study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s numerous school improvement trends have been developed in an effort to increase school site involvement so as to improve American education. The decentralization movement in the 1960s and 1970s sought to encourage local control and community involvement. However, the resulting community involvement was seen as token and was considered ineffective (Fullan, 1993). The 1980s landmark document, *A Nation at Risk*, led to restructuring issues such as site-based management, teachers in professional training, and decision making. Fullan referred to political mandates that accelerated the urgency for educational leaders to search for initiatives designed to improve student performance and the quality of teaching and learning. One recent improvement initiative developed in the late 1990s, the professional learning community, is the most recent educational effort to increase school site involvement with the goal of increasing student achievement.

In a 5- year study conducted by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools (CORS), it was concluded that “the most important factor in successful school reform is the presence of a strong professional community” (Hord, 1997, p.58). A study conducted by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory determined that the professional learning community offers an infrastructure that supports collegiality between teachers and administrators for improving their practice through learning new curriculum and instructional strategies and methods for interacting meaningfully with students (Morrissey, 2000). DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek (2004) reasoned that for school reform to be successful and sustainable, it must be embraced by teachers, administrators, and support staff. According to Watkins and Marsick (1999), the common thread of educators working collaboratively to improve teaching strategies and student performances can be accomplished through professional learning communities.

Job satisfaction is the favorable or unfavorable subjective feeling with which employees view their work. Work satisfaction occurs when job requirement demands and employee expectations are congruent. A harmonious relationship exists among employees and job expectations and rewards. Job satisfaction is defined as an affective or emotional response toward various facets of one's job (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1998).

An important part of a person's job is a feeling of self-worth. Employees experience higher morale when they perceive that their contributions are valued and appreciated. According to Lumsden (1998), higher levels of dedication result when employees feel that they have an active voice in issues that directly impact them. He further offers that principals can help sustain teacher morale by involving them in decisions about policies and practices and by acknowledging their expertise.

Rosenholtz (1989) states that teachers who feel supported in their own learning and classroom practice are more committed and effective than those who do not. This support such as teacher networks, cooperation among colleagues, and expanded professional roles can increase teacher efficacy for meeting students' needs. He goes on to say that teachers with a strong sense of their own efficacy are more likely to adopt new classroom behaviors and stay in the profession. High levels of individual teacher efficacy are associated with a commitment to a collaborative school culture (Chester & Beaudoin, 1996; Looney & Wentzel, 2004). These authors stress that through joint work, teachers develop new strategies, enhance effectiveness, and increase perceptions of their current success and future expectations.

Hord (1997) defines a "professional community of learners" as a place in which teachers and administrators of a school continuously seek and share learning, and act on that learning. Morrisey (2000) concludes that the inclusion of the whole faculty is a significant part of the education success equation. According to Hord results of a professional learning community

include increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school, reduction of isolation of teachers, shared responsibility for the total development of students and collective responsibility for students' success, a higher likelihood that teachers will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire students with higher satisfaction and morale.

Background of the Study

Professional Learning Communities

Researchers and practitioners examined school improvement efforts of the last decade and determined an important element to be missing: the schools lacked the supportive cultures and conditions necessary for significantly making gains in teaching and learning (Morrissey, 2000). In her study conducted with Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, Morrissey determined that teachers worked in isolated classrooms, struggled with meeting the needs of challenging students, and lacked supportive interaction with colleagues. Another area highlighted in her study found that professional learning communities offer an infrastructure which supports teachers and administrators in improving instructional strategies and methods.

Fullan (1993) suggests that an important key to increasing capacity for educational improvement lies in developing the school as a learning organization. To become learning organizations, schools set up professional learning communities. These professional communities are school-based, teacher-centered organizations linked to cultural elements in such a way that promotes learning and improvement in schools (Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999).

To become learning organizations, schools must avoid fragmentation in their reform efforts, form alliances outside the school, solve problems collectively, focus on changing teaching and learning, and develop shared values and beliefs about learning and change, while continually learning within the educational environment (Fullan, 1993). Building a professional

learning community is a journey; some schools move along at a steady pace, while others seem to stall in their re-culturing process (Fullan, 2000). Change cannot be individual and fragmented, but must be collaborative and embedded in the everyday process of teaching and learning (Louis & Kruse, 1996).

According to Hord (1997) the five major attributes of a professional learning community include: collegial and facilitative participation of the principal who shares leadership, a shared vision committed to student learning, collective learning continually seeking solutions to learning problems, visitation and review of teacher classroom behavior with feedback and assistance for improvement, and physical conditions that support the learning process.

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is a set of personal abilities and beliefs that refer to the specific domain of the teacher's professional behavior and a teacher's expectation that he or she will be effective in producing student learning (Ross, 1998). These high efficacy teachers are of interest to school improvement researchers because of their willingness to try out new teaching ideas (Ross, 1992). High expectations of success motivate classroom experimentation because teachers anticipate they will be able to achieve the benefits of innovation and overcome obstacles that may arise. Teachers with high expectations about their ability produce higher student achievement in academic subjects (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Ross, 1992; Ross & Cousins, 1993) and positively influence affective characteristics such as self-esteem (Borton, 1991), self-direction (Rose & Medway, 1981), motivation (Roeser, Arbreton & Anderman, 1993), and school attitudes (Miskel, McDonald, & Bloom, 1983). High efficacy teachers try harder, use management strategies that simulate student autonomy, attend more closely to low ability student needs, and help increase student awareness in their individual abilities (Ross, 1998).

Collective teacher efficacy is a belief in collective capacity. Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy (2000)

state that collective teacher efficacy refers to “the perceptions of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students” (p.480). Schools with high collective teacher efficacy have higher student achievement than schools with lower levels of collective teacher efficacy, independent of the effects of student socioeconomic status (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, 2001, 2002b; Goddard & Hoy, & LoGerfo, 2003). Evident in other studies, as well, is that efficacy is linked to school characteristics such as prior student achievement, school socioeconomic status, and teacher involvement in school decision-making (Goddard, 2002a; Goddard et al., 2003; Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, & Gray, 2003).

Bandura (1986) argues that the sources of individual and collective self-efficacy information are similar. The most powerful source of efficacy information is mastery experience. Teachers who perceive themselves to have been successful on a particular task believe they have the ability to perform the task and anticipate that they will be successful in future encounters.

Teacher Job Satisfaction

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 1997), both intrinsic and extrinsic factors have effects on teacher job satisfaction. Intrinsic factors are classroom activities, student characteristics, and perceptions of teacher control over the class (Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991); extrinsic factors include salary, school safety, perceived support from administrators, availability of school resources, and relationship to others (Drapper, Smith, & Taylor, 1996).

Research conducted by the NCES (1997) analyzed teacher job satisfaction around four clusters of variables: school characteristics such as school sector, school level, community type, and percent of minority students; teacher background characteristics such as age, sex, race/ethnicity, years teaching experience, and education; workplace conditions such as administrative support, student behavior, family support, and routine duties; teacher

compensation such as salary and benefits. Workplace conditions are connected with high levels of teacher job satisfaction, while salary and benefits are less associated with teacher satisfaction.

Teacher Morale

Morale is defined as the willingness to endure hardship with a group, in relation to a group, or within an individual. Mendel (1987) concludes that morale is a feeling or state of mind that involves a mental and emotional attitude. Washington and Watson (1976) refer to morale as the feeling a worker has about his or her job in relationship to the importance of that job to the organization as a whole working unit. Further they contend that the organization must also meet worker expectations and needs. Evans (1997) defines morale as a state of mind that is derived by anticipation of satisfaction for needs that are perceived as important factors affecting the work environment. Bentley and Rempel (1980) consider morale the enthusiasm and interest that an individual holds towards goals and professional ambition either as a group or individually. In addition Clough (1989) states it should be thought of as a shared purpose that is forward-looking and confident. Koerner (1990) refers to staff morale as the quality of lives within a community that involves “being known and appreciated, having professional knowledge valued, and being given the freedom to act” (p.3). In addition Koerner opines that it involves learning, growing, making mistakes, reflecting on them, and moving on.

Symptoms of demoralization of the educational profession such as low morale, job related stress, teachers leaving the vocation, and recruitment problems increased in the 80s and the 90s (Andain, 1990; Blackbourne, 1990; Garner, 1985; Gold, 1990; Hofkins, 1990; Rafery & Dore, 1993). Lumsden (1998) concluded that teachers were asked to accomplish more in schools than ever before. Besides being frontline social workers, they are expected to teach specific content for testing and create in students the desire to be life-long learners.

Graves (2001) reported that in a typical year, 6% of teachers leave the field while another

7.2% transfer schools. Results from surveys given by the United States Department of Education indicated that 27% retire while 49% leave because of job dissatisfaction or a desire to pursue other careers (Graves). It does not matter what the morale level is of educators, teachers consistently describe one of their needs as the need to have higher morale (Whitaker, Whitaker, & Lumpa, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

A continuing stream of new demands from internal and external forces compels educational leaders to explore reform initiatives in order to meet federal mandates. The professional learning community is seen by some as the supportive structure needed to influence continual school improvement in teaching and learning. Anchored to these communities is an increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school while sharing responsibility for student success. These collaborative communities may contribute to increased teacher efficacy and efforts of the whole faculty to produce positive effects on students.

What is apparent in this synthesis of literature is that professional learning communities are promising vehicles for generating continuous improvement. The dimensions or attributes of these teacher learning communities (principal collegiality and participative leadership, shared vision, commitment to student learning, cooperative seeking for solutions, classroom visitation with insightful feedback, and supportive physical conditions) are thought to drive the professional community toward excellence in both teaching and learning. Change is no longer individual and fragmented, but collaborative and embedded in the daily workings of the learning environment. Teachers scaffold for peers to be successful in future encounters, creating mastery experiences that lead to greater individual and collective efficacy while producing higher levels of satisfaction and morale. Highlighted, as well, in the research is the positive relationship between learning communities and certain teacher measures: teacher efficacy, job satisfaction,

and morale. What is less clear is which of the five dimensions or attributes correlate most highly with these teacher measures.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the components of professional learning communities that correlate more highly with measures of teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, and morale. The proposed study is designed to answer the overarching research question: Which of the six dimensions of the professional learning community: A) supportive and shared leadership, B) shared values and vision, C) collective learning and application, D) supportive conditions-relational, E) supportive conditions- structural, and F) shared personal practice, correlate with teacher efficacy, teacher satisfaction, and teacher morale?

Conceptual Framework

Systems Theory will provide a cognitive lens for viewing schools as learning organizations. A system can be defined as a set of interrelated elements that functions as a unit for a specific purpose (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000). Senge (1990) conceptualizes schools as learning organizations with strategic commitments to capture and share learning to benefit individuals, teams, and the organization. This process aligns the collective capacity to sense changing environments, inputting new knowledge through continuous learning and change. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge describes a model of five interdependent disciplines necessary for organizational learning: systems thinking, personal mastery, shared vision, team learning, and mental models. These five disciplines work together to create the learning organization and establish the learning community. Each discipline is a complex system of patterns with the whole accumulation process greater than the discipline parts.

Watkins and Marsick (1999) have developed a model of the learning organization with five parts: inputs, a transformation process, outputs, feedback, and the environment. Inputs are the human, material, financial, or information resources used to produce a service. Through

administrative functions, the inputs undergo a transformation process. The interaction between students and teachers is part of the transformation or learning process by which students become educated citizens capable of contributing to society. Outputs include the production and distribution of knowledge, and feedback is information concerning the outputs of the organization. The environment includes the social, political, and economic forces surrounding the organization.

The Professional Learning Community Organizer (Huffman & Hipp, 2003) develops this open systems view of schools further with the environment represented by the social, political, and economic driving forces surrounding the professional learning community. The inputs are the administrator and teacher actions demonstrated in shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, shared personal practice, and supportive conditions, as well as the external relationships and support from the central office, parents, and community; the inputs undergo a transformation process as the school phases of development journey from initiation to implementation to institutionalization; feedback comes from external and internal relationships about the output of student learning and school improvement. A graphic organizer is displayed in Appendix G depicting the transformation process.

Significance of the Study

Highlighted in the literature is that teachers who feel supported in their own learning and classroom practice are more committed and effective than those who do not. Teachers with higher efficacy levels are more likely to adopt new classroom behaviors and stay in the profession. Higher student expectations promote higher student achievement.

An increased awareness of the interrelations between professional learning communities and teacher measures of efficacy, satisfaction, and morale will be explored. The professional learning community has been highlighted in research as the vehicle for school improvement in

many areas of the United States, but this proposed research will evaluate which components of professional learning communities i.e., shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, supportive conditions-relational, supportive conditions-structural, and shared practice, correlate more highly with teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale. School leaders may then determine which of the six dimensions need more attention to become embedded in the school culture. Results may indicate as well which dimensions are more strongly related to building teacher leaders committed to facing educational challenges.

Finally, the researcher has a desire to use this deeper knowledge to enter the scholarly ranks. By adding knowledge to educational leadership, the researcher is able to share with educators an increased awareness of the components of professional learning communities in a particular Georgia school district and their relationship with teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale.

Delimitations

1. This study is delimited to five elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools in a local school district of Georgia which has implemented systemic change promoting professional learning communities.
2. Given the importance of teacher communities and their ability to produce students who meet AYP, the participants in this study are delimited to public schools only.

Limitations of the Study

1. Considering that there are 1,302 teachers who have taught anywhere from 11 years to over 30 years in this school system, there may be some response bias and resistance to change that comes with longevity.
2. Since this change scaffolding support system wide and at the local level has occurred in this decade, there may be insufficient time to fully uncover trends in the development of learning

communities.

3. The level of the development of the PLC in each school is a limitation.
4. Such factors as motivation, commitment, and efficacy may contribute to the results, as well.

Definition of Terms

- Professional Learning Communities- teams of educators systematically working together to improve teaching practice and student learning, characterized by supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective responsibility for pupils learning, the promotion of personal reflection and team collaboration, and supportive physical and personal conditions.
- Teacher morale is the quality of lives within a community that involves “being known and appreciated, having professional knowledge valued, and being given the freedom to act” (Koerner, 1990, p.3). *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* defines morale as, (a) the mental and emotional condition of an individual or group with regard to the function or tasks at hand; (b) a sense of common purpose with respect to a group; (c) the level of individual psychological well-being based on such factors as a sense of purpose and confidence in the future.
- Teacher efficacy is defined by Guskey & Passaro (1994, p.628) as “teachers’ belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be considered difficult or unmotivated.” Bandura (2000, p.3) states that personal or self-efficacy is the belief “in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments”
- Collective teacher efficacy is a belief in collective capacity. Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy (2000, p. 480) state that collective teacher efficacy refers to “the perceptions of teachers in a school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students.”

- Job satisfaction is defined by The Harvard Professional Group (1998) as the key ingredient that leads to recognition, income, involves a worker's sense of achievement and success, and is generally perceived to be directly linked to productivity as well as to personal wellbeing. Job satisfaction further implies enthusiasm and happiness with one's work.
- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the portion of the NCLB Act that builds upon the accountability provisions in the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994 which requires each state to establish challenging content and performance standards and to implement assessments that measure student performance against those standards.

Summary

With constant internal and external demands on schools to reform and to meet federal mandates, it is imperative for schools to be in a continual state of teacher and student learning. The professional learning community is seen by some as a contributing factor in this ongoing improvement. Teacher leaders are the drivers needed to propel this constant movement towards excellence. Systemic change cannot be achieved by an individual, but must be a part of the everyday workings of the entire school community to meet the needs of all students. Some hold that teacher communities provide the infrastructure to support teacher feelings of self-worth while keeping educators well informed, professionally renewed, and with higher satisfaction and morale levels. This research will contribute to the literature on the contribution of learning community components in fostering higher levels of teacher efficacy, morale, and job satisfaction.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Some hold that the fundamental vehicle for improving economic and social conditions in our society rests in educational reform. These reform efforts have previously been rooted in a bureaucratic system that is powerless in sustaining meaningful improvement in teaching and learning (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001). The traditional school model has transformed from the industrial model previously used into today's model which is more suitable for a knowledge-based society (Hargreaves, 2003). In response to this concern, approaches to school improvement have shifted from centrally mandated, standards-based reforms toward a more collaborative site-based model (Datnow, 2002; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). This has led to a paradigm shift from schools as bureaucracies to schools as professional learning communities (Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999).

Interest in the professional learning community as a scaffolding structure for school improvement stems from the belief that collaborative organizational work improves teacher development, teaching strategies, and student performance (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000; Mclaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Teacher individual and collective capacity undergirds emergent educational reform (Elmore, 1995; Lieberman, 1995; Newmann and Associate, 1996; Little, 1999) and links with schoolwide capability for promoting pupil learning (Geijsel, van den Berg & Slegers, 1999; Stoll, 1999). A thriving professional learning community offers school staff the opportunity of a rewarding and satisfying work environment, and contributes to resolving issues of teacher recruitment and retention (Toole & Louis, 2002).

Chapter 2 consists of a review of the related literature in the areas of professional learning communities, teacher efficacy, satisfaction, morale, and autonomy. The chapter is

divided into several relevant sections: (a) defining professional learning communities, (b) defining factors thought to be influenced by professional learning communities: teacher morale, satisfaction, efficacy, and autonomy, (c) primary research on professional learning communities, (d) secondary research on teacher efficacy, morale, satisfaction, and autonomy, and finally, an expository summary section that seeks to synthesize emerging themes found in educational research.

Major Topics

Definitions of Professional Learning Communities

Hord (1997) defines PLCs as professional staff learning together to direct their efforts toward improved student learning. She further conceptualizes this collaborative culture to be the vehicle needed to promote continuous learning and to endorse educational systemic improvement reflected through five dimensions, which are: (1) shared and supportive leadership, (2) shared values and vision, (3) collective learning and application, (4) shared personal practice, and (5) supportive conditions, both relational and structural. According to Hord, the results of a professional learning community for teachers include:

- reduction of isolation of teachers
- increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school and increased vigor in working to strengthen the mission
- shared responsibility for the total development of students and collective responsibility for students' success
- powerful learning that defines good teaching and classroom practice, that creates new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learners
- increased meaning and understanding of the content that teachers teach and the roles that they play in helping all students achieve expectations

- higher likelihood that teachers will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire students
- more satisfaction and higher morale
- lower rates of absenteeism
- significant advances into making teacher adaptations for students and changes for learners made more quickly than in traditional schools
- commitment to making significant and lasting changes
- higher likelihood of undertaking fundamental, systemic change (p.29)

Hord goes on to say, the benefits for students include:

- decreased dropout rate and fewer cut classes
- lower rates of absenteeism
- increased learning that is distributed more equitably in the smaller high schools
- larger academic gains in math, science, history, and reading than in traditional schools
- smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds (p.30)

In DuFour's (2004) observations of a professional learning community, school leaders should require teachers to establish individual and organizational commitment to a common mission and goals centered around ensuring student learning; collaborate regularly on curricular, instructional, and organizational decisions; and collect and analyze organizational data and results. DuFour and his colleagues argue that true school transformation will require more than changes in the policies, programs, and procedures of a school. "Substantive and lasting change will ultimately require a transformation of culture - the beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and habits that constitute the norm for the people throughout the organization" (p.11). If the PLC model is to take root in schools, it must displace the deeply entrenched traditional assumptions

among members. Morrissey (2000) points to both a culture of trust and mutual respect within relationships coupled with the collective engagement of teachers and administrators as components of successful schools.

Definitions of Factors Thought to be Influenced by Professional Learning Communities

Definitions of Teacher Efficacy

Personal efficacy is the belief “in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p.2). Individuals who feel that they will be successful on a given task are more likely to succeed because they adopt challenging goals, try harder to achieve them, persist despite setbacks, and develop coping mechanisms for managing their emotional states (Bandura, 2000). Guskey and Passaro (1994) define teacher efficacy as “teachers’ belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be considered difficult or unmotivated” (p.628). Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) define it as “the teacher’s belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context” (p.233). A typical definition of personal teaching efficacy put forth by Soodak and Podell (1996), is that personal teaching efficacy is “a teacher’s belief about his or her ability to perform the actions needed to promote learning or manage student behavior successfully” (p.406). Personal efficacy focuses specifically on teachers’ beliefs about their own ability to impact students.

Definitions of Teacher Morale

In discussions between teachers and administrators each is quick to tell you that they know what the term and concept of morale means but have difficulty when asked to clearly define it (Washington & Watson, 1976). Moreover, within the research and academic communities, “Those who take conceptual analysis and definition seriously accept that morale is

a very nebulous, ill-defined concept whose meaning is generally inadequately explored” (Evans, 1998, p.21). Because of these difficulties in definition, many researchers who begin to study morale in schools find it necessary to rely mainly on what seems to be dated material. Evans (1997) contends that the research might indeed be dated, but it is enduring because of the de-contextualized nature that provides valuable information that is useful and applicable.

Morale is defined by *The American Heritage Dictionary* as “the state of the spirits of an individual or group as shown by confidence, cheerfulness, discipline and willingness to perform assigned tasks” (p. 814). Getzel and Guba (1957) offer a theoretical model that asserts morale is composed of three different factors: belongingness, rationality, and identification. Belongingness encompasses the ability of the teacher to achieve satisfaction within the working group of the school. Rationality is the feeling of job appropriateness wherein the teachers’ expectation is that their role is in line with the goals they are required to achieve for the school. Identification refers to the ability of the teacher to combine his or her needs and values with those of the school so that they are compatible.

Keeler and Andrews (1963) find that the degree to which organizational dimensions correlate with the morale and job satisfaction of the teachers depends on the personal attitudes and dimensions of the teachers. Evan (1998) contends that morale essentially relates to the individual and is an individual phenomenon. Many of the environmental aspects that relate to job satisfaction are not necessarily the same for all subgroups of teachers. What may cause the dissatisfaction or low morale with one person may not affect the morale of another (Houchard, 2005).

Definitions of Teacher Satisfaction

Teacher job satisfaction is a key factor in teacher quality, and correlates to the stability of the teaching force and the commitment to the teaching organization (Klecker & Loadman, 1996).

Teacher job satisfaction contributes not only to teacher motivation and improvement, but also to student learning and development (Perie, Baker, & Whitener, 1997).

Researchers positioned job satisfaction as an affective reaction to the work of an individual (Garrett, 1999; Perie, Baker, and Whitener, 1997). It can be viewed as an overall emotion or reaction to some specific facet about work, and can be connected to outcomes as well (Perie, Baker, & Whitener, 1997; Hevin, 2005).

Teacher job satisfaction includes teacher involvement in, commitment to, and motivation for the job (Sargent & Hannum, 2005). In research conducted by Hoy and Woolfolk (1993), highly satisfied teachers, unlike their dissatisfied counterparts, are more likely to remain in their schools and continue in their teaching positions. Perie, Baker, and Whitener (1997) concluded that different factors affecting teacher job satisfaction can be categorized into three main groups: community factors, school factors, and teacher characteristics.

Definitions of Teacher Autonomy

Anderson (1987) expresses that autonomy is the freedom from control by others over professional action or development. Willner (1990) identifies the older interpretation of teacher autonomy as independence through isolation and alienation and the newer one as collaborative decision-making and freedom to make prescriptive professional choices concerning students. Fay (1990) agrees that for teachers to realize a new sense of professional autonomy, traditional bureaucratic governance models can no longer exist; teachers must be given authority in schools. Little (1995) states that teacher autonomy is the capacity for self-directed professional action. He further states that teachers may be autonomous in the sense of having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising continuous reflection and analysis in both affective and cognitive areas of the teaching process. Tort-Moloney (1997) emphasizes that the autonomous teacher is one who is aware of why, when, where, and how pedagogical skills can

be acquired in the self-conscious awareness of the teaching practice.

The definition of teacher autonomy is ambiguous in the literature, but has been defined as the perception teachers have regarding whether they control themselves and their work environment (Pearson & Hall, 1993). One teacher may internalize autonomy as a means to gain freedom from interference and another may consider autonomy as the means to develop collegial relationships and accomplish tasks extending beyond their classroom (Frase & Sorenson, 1992). Pearson and Moomaw (2005) point out that throughout the literature as it relates to teacher autonomy there is considerable evidence that the concept of autonomy has changed considerably and continues to evolve.

Primary Research

Professional Learning Communities

Since Peter Senge published his book, *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), the corporate world and the education world have struggled with ways to cultivate and sustain learning communities to augment educational reform. Shirley Hord, Senior Research Associate at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) in Austin, Texas, conducted an extensive review of the literature surrounding professional learning communities. Hord (1997) conceptualizes five related dimensions reflecting the essence of a PLC: shared and supportive leadership, shared vision and values, collective learning and application, supportive conditions (relational and structural), and shared personal practice. The SEDL staff searched for schools during the first year of the study that characterized these dimensions. Their findings show that schools typifying these related dimensions were rare.

In the second phase of the study (1997-1998), a federally funded project, *Creating Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement*, was initiated in which 30 educators from around the nation were invited to participate. Data were collected in the form of phone

interviews, face-to-face interviews with principals and lead teachers from each of the original study sites, and the administration of Hord's PLC questionnaire, *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* (SPSLC). The questionnaire was constructed around Hord's five dimensions and was administered for three consecutive years to the entire faculty at all schools.

In Phase 3 of the project (1999-2000), only 12 of the schools remained. The final data for this project were collected and analyzed, which included 106 on-site, structured interviews. The intent was to hear from a representative sample, beyond the principal and lead teacher, who were most committed to the PLC project, and to gain further insight into PLC implementation. The results from this representative sample identified six schools that exhibited characteristics of many dimensions of a professional learning community. All schools included in this sample had progressed from the level of initiation to implementation (Fullan, 1993).

The 64 interviews from the six study schools were conducted on-site and analyzed using Hord's five dimensions. A research team analyzed the interviews using a variety of related indicators to examine and substantiate the thoroughness of Hord's five-dimensional model.

Themes were then identified which served as critical attributes of each dimension. Fullan (1993) identifies three phases of change: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. Schools that prevailed usually moved to the institutionalization phase, where the change initiative becomes implanted into the culture of the school. The school community was viewed as committed and willingly accountable for student learning.

In their publication *Documenting and Examining Practices in Creating Learning Communities*, Hip and Huffman (2003) believed it to be essential for schools to utilize the five PLC dimensions in order to engage in sustained improvement and continuous learning. Hip and Huffman further identified exemplars and non-exemplars that promoted or hindered school efforts under each of the five dimensions of a PLC. Interviews were administered over a three

year period as schools moved more deeply into a culture of learning communities. The analysis of data from the interviews resulted in the Professional Learning Communities Organizer (PLCO), which the authors envisioned as a re-conceptualization of Hord's model with Fullan's phases of development. For each dimension themes were gleaned from the interview data as critical attributes, moving in a progression from initiation to implementation, and less often, to institutionalization. These dimensions reflected growth in schools as they further developed a culture of professional learning communities.

Hipp, et al. (2003) offered a look into an international perspective on professional learning communities. This symposium provided the opportunity for two project teams from two different countries to share their research and solidify their understanding of the professional learning community. In the United State Project, *Creating Communities of Continuous Inquiry and Improvement*, research was conducted in PreK-12 schools engaging in creating professional learning communities. The authors documented examples of schools actively working to reculture by initiating and implementing actions to improve student learning (Huffman & Hipp, 2003). The purpose of their work was to document and examine evidence of efforts taking place in rural, urban, and suburban PreK-12 schools that were actively engaged in creating professional learning communities. Readers were presented with information connecting professional learning community work to a new approach in school improvement. Five case studies were written based on the work in these study schools at all phases of development. These case studies can be used in schools and university classrooms for the purpose of engaging educators in reflection, open dialogue, problem finding, and problem solving.

The English Project- *Creating and Sustaining Effective Professional Learning Communities* was implemented from January 2002 to October 2004. The belief that the quality of learning and teaching is enhanced by teachers working and learning together led the

Department for Education and Skills (DfES), National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and the General Teaching Council for England (GTC) to fund this project. The research was carried out by a team from the Universities of Bristol and Bath in England. The purpose of the project was to identify and provide practical examples of the characteristics of effective PLCs in different kinds of schools; to identify key factors inside and outside schools which seem to help or hinder the development of these communities; to examine links between characteristics of effective PLCs; bring representatives from case study schools together for workshops to share experiences and research findings; and to disseminate findings in ways to support those involved in creating and sustaining effective PLCs. English researchers identified five participant groups related to stages of change: non-starters, starters, developers, mature, and regressors. The inclusion of the state of regression was critical to consider since it speaks to the issue of sustainability. Sustaining PLCs is necessary to embed the dimensions into the school culture.

Both projects addressed internal and external membership: administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and community members. Both projects involved multiple schools across wide regions, grade levels, socio-economic levels, and settings- rural, suburban, and urban. The English project included 16 study sites to study creation development and sustainability issues in each school. Both projects spent a great deal of time in their schools and collected significant amounts of data to guide future efforts. The American research produced five case studies to be used in schools and university classrooms for reflection, analysis, and further study while the English research project produced stages of critical change for these professional learning communities.

In a doctoral dissertation study, Mitchell (2007) examined the impact of professional learning community classroom practices. These classrooms were located in higher-and lower-performing elementary schools in a southern California school district. PLC practices were visualized through the lens of the National Center for Educational Accountability's Best Practice

Framework. Five elementary schools were selected for participation in this study with equivalent demographics (65% or more English Language Learners, Socio-Economically Disadvantaged, and Hispanic/Latino), but had disparate levels of sustained high student achievement results in English Language Arts on the California Standards Test. Three schools were Higher Performing, and two were Lower Performing. General findings demonstrate a significant difference in the level to which Higher Performing Schools integrated PLC practices compared to Lower Performing Schools. The Higher Performing Schools were proficient in two PLC practices: compilation, analysis, and use of data to monitor student learning and recognition, intervention, and adjustment based on student performance.

In Improving Teacher Effectiveness through Structured Collaboration; A Case Study of a Professional Learning Community (2007), Graham reports on the results of a mixed method case study investigating the relationship between professional learning community activities and teacher improvement in a first-year middle school. Data were collected in the form of professional development surveys, teacher interviews, and a review of school documents. Results demonstrated that professional learning community activities had the potential to achieve significant improvements in teaching effectiveness, but this effectiveness depended on a number of factors. Graham highlighted these contributing factors as leadership and organizational practices, PLC activity meetings, the nature of conversations in PLC activities, and the development of community among PLC teams. Teacher interviews revealed these organizational practices to contribute to successful learning in the first year of this school: teacher teams, common planning time, and flexible instructional time. Revealed as well in the interviews were leadership practices that brought about success: creating commitment, requiring collaboration, and supporting teacher team development.

Two Canadian University professors and their graduate assistants, Williams, Brien,

Sprague, and Sullivan (2008), identified systemic barriers preventing schools from becoming professional learning communities. The purpose of their two-year study was to develop an instrument that could be used to measure the institutional barriers existing at the school, district office, and provincial levels that hindered educational reform. The intent of each instrument was to measure the extent to which a school, district, or department of education currently exhibited the characteristics. The instrument allowed for the identification of the readiness level for adopting the practices of a learning organization of PLCs. For the development of the school instrument, the university team decided to create additional site-based teams, one at each of the four schools that were chosen.

These schools were located within the districts that would be developing the district instrument. A variety of school settings was included that considered size, location, and grade levels. The distinction between communication networks and relationship dynamics were considered to vary significantly in each of the rural and urban schools differing in size from small to large. An analysis of the results collected from a schoolwide administration of the instrument at each of the four schools identified each school's strengths and barriers to becoming professional learning communities. The successful evolution of schools into these powerful learning communities was impacted by two clusters of internal characteristics: a) organizational characteristics such as culture, leadership, and capacity-building, and b) operational characteristics such as professional development, data collection, and systemic trust (Williams, et. al. 2008). This information was given to guide school leaders who wished to adopt the PLC reform.

Secondary Research

Teacher-efficacy

Self-efficacy is considered to lead individuals from knowledge to action. Bandura (1986)

posited that self-efficacy is the central mediator of effort. Increased efficacy beliefs will lead to increased persistence and high levels of performance. Dembo and Gibson (1984), Tuckman and Sexton (1990), and Woolfolk, Rosoff, and Hoy (1990) documented the bonding of teacher efficacy and persistence when facing difficulty. Similarly, researchers have found a relationship between teachers' efficacy and their performance. For example, Ashton and Webb (1986), as well as Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, and Zellman (1977), have documented the relationship of higher efficacy to the instructional practices known to foster academic achievement.

Teacher self efficacy has been extensively researched. Studies have shown that teacher self-efficacy reflects a perceived ability to produce a positive improvement among pupils (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), improve teacher effort and motivation (Ross, Cousins, & Gadalla, 1996), increase teacher satisfaction (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Boirgogni, & Steca, 2003), and ultimately produce higher student achievement (Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990). Teachers with high SE are better able to cope with stress (Chwalitsz, Altmayer, & Russel, 1992), are characterized by higher commitment to teaching (Coladarci, 1992), and are more willing to incorporate new teaching methods (Ghauth & Yaghi, 1997) and to cooperate with parents (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992). Gibson and Dembo (1984) identified two SE factors: the first is general teacher efficacy (GTE), which addressed a teacher's feeling that the educational system and teaching were capable of fostering student achievement despite negative influences, and personal teacher efficacy (PTE), which reflected a belief in the teachers' own ability to advance student achievement.

Evidence showed that PTE relates positively with satisfaction (Denzie & Anderson, 1999; Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000) and autonomy (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Lee, et al., 1991; Newmann, Rutter, & Smith, 1990; Rinehart et al., 1998). These

findings emphasized the relationship of work circumstances that individuals experience on the job and their SE. A major source of influence on the internal context from work circumstances was the transformational leadership style.

In 1995, Kristine Hipp and Paul Bredeson published a study examining the relation between teachers' self-efficacy (SE) and principal leadership style. The basic assumption of this study and of the two others that followed (Hipp, 1996, 1997) were that school principal's leadership style and teacher efficacy were directly linked. The empirical evidence led researchers to conclude that it is in the power of transformational leaders to promote teacher efficacy. A deeper look into the empirical foundation of this study raised a number of concerns that could weaken the generalization of its findings: the evidence reported is based on a small sample of schools and principals (n=10); the focus was only on transformational leadership; the research design provided no control for variables that have been identified as correlational with teacher efficacy such as satisfaction, autonomy, stress, and conflict; and finally, the strength of the relationship found between the transformational leadership components and teacher efficacy was relatively low.

Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) in Charleston, West Virginia (1999) conducted research into schools undergoing a journey of continuous school improvement. The Quest project helps schools with educational reform efforts. Quest staff were interested in investigating several constructs including teacher efficacy, professional learning community, and organizational efficacy. Data analysis indicated the amount of variation among teachers' views on internal and external efficacy and professional learning communities was fairly consistent both within and across schools. External efficacy is the belief that the organization is responsive to the individual; internal efficacy is the sense of personal competency. Elementary teachers were more similar than high school teachers in their views regarding PLCs. High school teachers

felt less efficacious and less part of a PLC than did elementary teachers. The results of the study showed that as measures of internal efficacy increased, measures of external efficacy decreased. Furthermore, internal and external measures of teacher efficacy were not significantly related to perceptions of the school as a learning community. Finally, teachers' years of experience had no bearing on their perceptions of external or internal efficacy nor on their perceptions of their school as a learning community.

When considering that the existing literature lacked additional evidence to support the assumed connection between school principals' leadership style and PTE in the Hipp and Bredeson (1995) study, Nir and Kranot (2006) reassessed the authors' findings. The researchers used a larger sample of schools and a research design that controlled for role variables correlated with PTE and leadership styles. Nir and Kranot explored whether PTE varies across leadership styles and what was the added value of the principal's leadership style for PTE when job related variables were statistically controlled. In a discussion of the findings of this study, teachers' perceived general efficacy was not related to the school principal's leadership style, but rather reflected a wider perception that, indeed, GTE and PTE are two differentiated properties of teachers' efficacy. The relation between personal teacher efficacy (PTE) and the school principal's leadership style was complex and mediated by teacher satisfaction on the job. Although the principal's leadership style did influence and shape the organizational setting, the principal's leadership style was not an exclusive element of PTE. Based on the assumptions for transformational leadership, it may be argued that this leadership style is more likely to increase teachers on-the-job satisfaction which is a significant factor in explaining their perceived PTE. Nir and Kranot assumed the contribution of transformational leadership was to increase instructional challenges while supporting teacher initiatives. Transformational leaders collaborated with teachers by developing professional opportunities that allowed teacher

satisfaction to increase.

In a study completed by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (2006), the mediating effects of teacher efficacy was examined using Bandura's social-cognitive theory as a critical lens of analysis. Two models were created: Model A hypothesized that transformational leadership contributed to teacher commitment to organizational values exclusively through collective teacher efficacy; Model B hypothesized that leadership would directly affect teacher commitment and indirectly affect teacher efficacy. Ross and Gray (2006) found that collective teacher efficacy was a partial rather than a complete mediator of the effects of transformational leadership on teacher commitment to organizational values. Although Model A fit the data reasonably well, Model B showed a direct and indirect path from leadership to teacher outcomes. Three specific findings given by the researchers were as follows: First, transformational leadership had an impact on the collective teacher efficacy of the school. Second, collective teacher efficacy strongly predicted commitment to community partnerships. Third, transformational leadership had a direct effect on teacher commitment, independent of agency beliefs. The authors concluded that collective teacher efficacy is a powerful mediator of commitment to school-community partnerships and a partial mediator of commitment to school mission and to the school as a professional community.

Teacher Morale

Maslow (1970), in his hierarchy of needs theory, offered a framework for understanding the building blocks of teacher morale. Maslow had established five basic needs of humans that emerge in a hierarchy of importance, addressing physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs. These needs were contended to be the basic needs of humans and a determining factor when looking at the morale of an individual person. Parks (1983) argued that people need certain things from life in order to maintain higher levels of morale. These needs

were grounded in motivational psychology and involved: feeling good about oneself, being free from economic worry, living a life free from both hazards to physical and mental health, having the ability to exhibit one's own creations, and having the freedom and opportunity to love and be loved. When these needs are met, job satisfaction and higher morale can begin to exist.

Hoy & Miskel (1987) believed that when school environments are healthy and teacher morale is high, teachers not only feel good about themselves and others, but they also possess a sense of accomplishment from their jobs. Furthermore, Clough (1989) stated that low morale could be attributed to factors such as frustration, alienation, and a feeling of powerlessness. The author further affirmed that high staff morale was associated with feeling of belongingness, togetherness, achievement, and self-and group-esteem. In his attempt to improve schools from within, Barth (1990) examined how teachers felt and attempted to pinpoint those areas of the teaching environment that deter higher morale. He found that teachers say they feel unappreciated, overworked, and not respected as professionals. They also tended not to trust the administration, public, or even themselves for the most part.

Ellenburg (1971) summed it up well by proclaiming that usually the teacher possessing high morale tended to be the teacher who related well with the parents and students. Schools with high staff morale had very distinctive features. School members who felt good about the school and what was happening and were more willing to perform assigned tasks, tended to be more confident, cheerful, and self-disciplined (Whitaker et al., 2000). There was a sense of community where teachers and students had input into the decision-making process and took pride and ownership in their school. Koerner (1990) believed that teachers and students must have the chance to be creative, to take risks, and to make mistakes. The school climate must be one where open communication is constant among all, conflicts are resolved, differences are appreciated, and individual voices are nurtured and developed.

In a 1997 report on job satisfaction by the National Center for Education Statistics, contributing factors were revealed that influenced higher teacher job satisfaction. Among those found were the involvement of a supportive administrative staff, leadership, better student behavior, more teacher autonomy, and a safer, supportive school that promotes a positive atmosphere. It seemed probable that school and district-level support can significantly affect teacher morale. In three recent studies, morale was viewed through three different lenses: principal leadership, teacher morale and turnover, and enhancing teacher morale by impacting pedagogies.

Rafferty (2002), in her study of teacher morale and teacher turnover rates found that there were several reasons why teachers chose to change schools or leave teaching completely. Stress related to increased demands on time, low pay, student discipline problems, low morale levels, and lack of support from campus administration were some of the issues that teachers faced. Her study attempted to determine the effect, if any, that teacher morale had on teachers decisions to change schools. The results of the study showed that there was no significant correlation between teachers morale levels and teachers decisions to change schools. Additional results found that there was no significant relationship between teachers feeling of satisfaction with their principals and the teachers decisions to change schools. A significant relationship between teachers morale levels and teachers satisfaction with their school principals was found.

Houchard (2005) conducted a quantitative study on principal leadership practices and teacher morale as it relates to student achievement in North Carolina schools. The overall results showed that there is a moderately high level of teacher morale. Satisfaction with teaching led the way in contributing to higher morale whereas the issue of teacher salary was found to lower morale. School leaders proved to inspire a common vision as well as to encourage the teacher. Many significant relationships existed between perceived leadership practices and teacher morale

factors. As measured by the *Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire*, teacher morale had a positive correlation with the End-Of-Grade/End-Of-Course test scores.

Joyous, Faith, and Marilyn (2007) conducted a study, *Impacting Pedagogies and Enhancing Teacher Morale*, at the Marymount Convent School. The current educational landscape in Singapore was one where teachers were encouraged to teach less and learn more. The IDEAS (Innovative Designs for Enhancing School Achievement) project offered a process that enabled teachers to examine their teaching practice, determine their strengths, and collectively decide the direction in which they desired to move. The study traced the experiences at Marymount Convent School as it journeyed through the IDEAS process.

The IDEAS process had five phases: initiating, discovering, envisioning, auctioning, and sustaining. The Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievements in Schools (IDEAS) was initiated and developed by the Leadership Research Institute at the University of Southern Queensland (Crowther, 1999) as a process for whole school revitalization with the potential to enhance school outcomes. The research evidence showed that when teachers engage as a professional community to shape a school philosophy that fits the community, and when they then proceed to develop a pedagogical approach that complements that philosophy, the effects on student achievement can be remarkable.

The case study was constructed from data collected from several sources. The study used data from The IDEAS Diagnostic Inventory, The Ministry of Education Forbes School Climate Survey, and interviews with MCS staff. The data indicated that teachers have perceived the school as becoming successful in increasing school achievements, that teachers have perceived a positive change in their working environment and school support, that teachers have a clear sense of purpose and focus in teaching and are moving collaboratively, and that the teachers viewed themselves as working together to support one another in pedagogical matters.

Teacher Job Satisfaction

Despite its origin in the Pittsburgh industrial sector, teacher job satisfaction research centers around the Herzberg's 'Two-Factor' Theory Model (1966). The thrust of the model is that job satisfaction is intrinsic to the nature of the work itself. Dissatisfaction on the other hand apparently derives from hygiene factors such as policy and administration, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and salary. Herzberg argued that the removal of a dissatisfier prevents dissatisfaction, but does not contribute to satisfaction. Satisfaction would increase when an improvement was made in intrinsic factors such as achievement, recognition, challenge, and independence.

Nias (1981) rejected a straightforward application of the Herzberg industrial model to teaching; she proposed that, in teaching the model is overly simplistic and work itself involves the school as a social system. Nias further modified the model for teaching by recognizing the dissatisfiers of pay, career structure, and physical conditions. Chapman (1983), in exploring teacher morale, found that teachers who remain in teaching attach greater value to recognition and approval of supervisors, family, and friends. Those who left assigned more importance to salary increases, job challenge, and autonomy. He identified the need for people in administrative posts to be aware of their impact on career satisfaction.

Nias (1989) further reported on the importance of making relationships, communities, group identity, with an aim toward oneness. Huberman (1989) talked of the stabilization phase of teaching, a stage when most or all the conditions leading to professional satisfaction are joined. The main contributing elements of that phase as identified by Huberman are an enduring commitment to the profession, manageable classes, good relationships with colleagues, and a balance between home life and personal interests.

A Jamaican study (Rodgers-Jenkinson, Faye, & Chapman, 1991) showed that teachers

felt higher job satisfaction when they work in a higher prestige schools characterized by good working conditions, with good relationships with other teachers, and parents, and who felt a part of the school structure. These researchers linked happiness and satisfaction at work to overall personal fulfillment and life satisfaction while others such as Bandura (1986) concluded that the disposition to satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a relatively stable personality trait.

Fraser, Draper, and Taylor (1998) used data drawn from teachers with 5, 10, and 15 years of experience, to examine specific aspects of job satisfaction. This data from 1998 showed that teachers at different stages of their careers see aspects of teaching differently. Teachers at the mid-career point seemed to view work as unduly stressful with more time demands made on their personal lives and compensating career advancements limited. The authors argued that this may cause the 'stabilization' phase (Huberman) to peak too soon in the present working conditions.

With the spread of globalization, educators and researchers are calling for more comparative studies world wide. Ouyang and Paprock (2006) compared teacher job satisfaction and retention in the U.S. and China using factors such as community, school, and teacher characteristics as a critical lens of analysis.

In both the U.S. and in China, teachers were more satisfied in communities with greater economic and social resources. The American teacher chooses to teach in rural areas while teachers in rural villages in China had to face a lack of access to transportation, cultural resources, or educational facilities. Education in China had just started to centralize, rendering huge gaps in education in different regions. Chinese teachers and schools that rely on their local government and community faced unequal salaries and opportunities. Because of the Confucian system, teachers were held in high regard by their communities while the teachers in the United States felt they were not held in high regard by their communities.

Ouyang and Paprock (2006) highlighted in the study that teachers in the U.S. place less concern on salary and benefits but place more importance on working conditions, including administrative support, school characteristics, and interaction with students and colleagues. U.S. teachers face the stress from their promotions and students graduation, but their job satisfaction was less influenced by this factor. Teachers in China were dedicated to their job in the midst of dissatisfactory salaries, benefits and resources. Chinese teachers had to face much more stress in the form of their ranking and promotion, relationships with colleagues, and responsibilities on students examination and graduation (Meng, 2004). Teachers in China taught less than their counterparts, but they spent more time on tutoring, class preparation, grading, home visiting, and class administration (Tsang, 1996).

Among the 5.8 million full-time Chinese teachers, most of them (65%) are in rural areas with predominantly young, less educated women (Sargent & Hannum, 2005). In the U.S. teaching ranked as the second largest occupation which employed mainly women; their earnings top other female positions (US Census, 2000). Revealed in the literature review of both countries was that in both the U.S. and in China, younger, male, less-experienced, and better-qualified teachers tended to be less satisfied with their jobs.

In the 2006 *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*, teachers' satisfaction with their jobs and careers was an indicator of whether or not highly qualified and motivated professionals would stay in the education field. The determining factors for teacher satisfaction were based on school culture and atmosphere, communication with principals, parents and others, equipment and facilities, and student behavior. Other overshadowing factors were salary, job security, and community respect for the profession.

Since 1984, *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* has been tracking teachers satisfaction with their careers. Twenty-two years ago, 40% of teachers were very satisfied with

teaching as a career. By 1986 a low point in satisfaction was reached with only one-third of teachers saying they were very satisfied with their careers. In 2006, 56% of teachers reported levels of being very satisfied with their occupation. School satisfaction does not vary by school level (elementary vs. secondary), but it does vary by school location (48% urban vs. 59% suburban/rural) and minority students (62% for one-third or fewer vs. 46% for more than two-thirds). Only 9% (one in 11 teachers) report that he/she is somewhat or very dissatisfied with teaching as a career.

Some contributing factors to satisfaction were as follows: principal treating the teacher with respect, the principal providing direction for the school, assigning first-time teachers a mentor, the principal handling student discipline fairly, and adequate opportunities for training. A majority of teachers said that they were dissatisfied with their salaries. Two-thirds reported that their salaries were not commensurate with the work they did. Elementary teachers especially felt this way with 67% vs. 60% of secondary school teachers said that their pay was not adequate for the work load. Only 5% of public school principals said that their schools or districts did not provide adequate professional training.

Teacher Autonomy

Brunetti (2001) linked teacher autonomy to teacher motivation, job satisfaction, stress, professionalism, and empowerment. Much of the research examining these constructs and their relationship revealed a common thread: the need for teachers to have autonomy (Erpelding, 1994; Jones, 2000; Wilson, 1993). Autonomy seemed to be emerging as a key variable when examining education reform initiatives; Melenyzer (1990) and Short (1994) argued that granting autonomy and empowering teachers is an appropriate place to begin in solving the problems of today's schools.

A 1997 study by the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that the degree of

autonomy perceived by teachers is indicative of current job satisfaction. Another study that same year on job satisfaction among American teachers identified more administrative support and leadership, good student behavior, a positive school climate, and teacher autonomy as working conditions that are associated with higher teacher satisfaction (Perie & Baker, 1997), and working conditions were related to satisfaction more than variables such as sex, age, and years of experience. Brunetti (2001) maintained that more teachers are in agreement that they need to retain autonomy in their classroom, and that this is a factor that is highly influential in their decision to remain in teaching.

Pearson and Moomaw (2005) conducted a study of 300 Florida teachers in three neighboring school districts in local elementary, middle, and high schools. The purpose of their study was to examine the relationship between teacher autonomy and on-the-job stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. It was found that as curricular autonomy increases, on-the-job stress decreases, but there was little association between curriculum autonomy and job satisfaction. It is also established that as general teacher autonomy increases so did empowerment and professionalism. As job satisfaction, perceived empowerment, and professionalism increased, on-the-job stress decreased and greater job satisfaction was associated with a high degree of professionalism and empowerment. Indicated in this study, as well, was that autonomy did not differ across elementary, middle, and high school teaching levels.

Crocco and Costigan (2007) determined that under the curricular and pedagogical impositions of scripted lessons and mandated curriculum as a result of the high stakes testing associated with the *No Child Left Behind Act*, New York City teachers found their autonomy undermined and their personal and professional identity diminished. These two New York City professors from the education department in a local university were in a position to seek out new teachers and to conduct qualitative research. The fieldwork began in 2000 with 200 interviews

conducted over a 5 year period, interviewing most participants on multiple occasions. At the time of the interview, most participants had anywhere from months to several years of teaching experience. No teacher had more than 5 years of teaching experience, a critical juncture in the decision process about leaving the profession.

The researchers concluded that a set of unintended consequences of the accountability movement in NYC's public schools may be the narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy. New teachers believed this regimen undermined the control they had over their teaching practice, personal and professional growth, and their ability to develop relationships with students. Crocco and Costigan suggested that even though the phenomenon existed in New York City schools, they posited that these findings were indicative of other places across the country.

Summary

The educational landscape of the 21st century challenges teachers to equip students to become life-long learners as there is a paradigm shift from "instruction delivery" to "facilitating learning". This creates a culture that is pedagogically challenging for teachers. As seen in the literature review, professional learning communities offer the scaffolding structure for successful school reform. With the maturing of these communities, the potential to achieve significant improvements in teaching effectiveness and higher student performance is evident. Collaboration among administration and teachers solidifies collective teacher efficacy with commitment to community partnerships.

In the longitudinal studies of the last decade involving professional learning communities, more favorable support from educators becomes apparent. Teachers who perceive a positive change in their working environment and school support become more satisfied with their job and more confident in teaching. Teachers have a clear sense of purpose and focus in teaching. The teaching staff are positive about establishing a no-blame culture and feel

empowered to experiment and lead in their pedagogies. Educators no longer feel that they work in isolation, but depend on the support from their colleagues in the form of expertise, experience, and knowledge.

A brief summary of all major research studies in chapter two related to the connecting themes of this research will be included in table format (see Appendix A). The themes of professional learning communities, teacher efficacy, teacher morale, teacher satisfaction, and teacher autonomy will be highlighted. The relating studies with the author and dates, the purpose for each study, the participants involved in the study, the research design of the study, and the outcomes from each study is included in separate columns.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to better understand the components of professional learning communities that correlate more highly with teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale in a local school system in Georgia. This chapter describes in detail the methods and procedures that were used to conduct the study. The sample and population is identified in this chapter along with the design of the study. The instruments used to collect the data are also identified and presented.

Research Design

This study is a quantitative study that was conducted using a survey-design method. The purpose of this study will be to make generalizations about the components of professional learning communities that impact teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale by analyzing the survey results. The results from the sample will allow the researcher and school leaders to make inferences concerning the importance of shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, supportive conditions, and shared practice and their impact on teacher measures of efficacy, satisfaction, and morale. A survey design is chosen because of the economy of the design and the rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell, 2003). The survey design also will allow for more confidentiality with those being surveyed. Those surveyed will be asked specific questions and details about teaching conditions, teaching effectiveness, and their school community. The surveys will be cross sectional and collected during a window of time. The surveys are designed to be self-administered and will be distributed in paper form. The *Teacher Measures Assessment* (see Appendix D) measures teacher job satisfaction, teacher morale, and teacher efficacy. Correlating variables of teacher experience, teacher autonomy, and

salary contentedness will be used as control variables. This instrument uses a Likert-type scale to collect and measure these factors. The *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* (see Appendix E) is chosen to measure the factors contributing to teacher communities. This instrument uses a Likert-type scale to collect and measure the five dimensions and related attributes of a PLC.

Population

This Georgia School System includes 60 schools with 35 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, 8 high schools, 3 magnet schools, 3 special schools, and 2 charter schools. There are 142 administrators and 2,258 PK-12 teachers. Teachers with 1-10 years experience number 965; teachers with 11-20 years experience number 709; teachers with 21-30 years experience number 451; teachers with more than 30 years experience number 142. Overall, there are 30,030 students with 73% African American population, 22% white population, 2% multi-racial, 2% Hispanic population, and 1% Asian population. The school system operates on a \$249 million yearly budget (Local Georgia School System, 2008).

Participants

The participants were 169 educators in five elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools in this school district. The nine schools represent both urban and suburban settings. One magnet school will be included in the study. The large number of educators included in this study is due to the response rate of survey returns. To maximize the response rate of returns, those who complete the surveys and provide their name and phone number will be entered in a drawing for two at a local restaurant. A follow-up request will be sent out in email form to the schools involved in the study.

These nine schools are chosen to represent the greater population. The selected schools are located in the city, in the west side of the district, and the south side of the district. Educators

in these schools are believed to be a homogeneous representative sample in that they are similar in status and characteristics and should be typical of the overall population. These selected schools will offer a look into professional learning communities as they exist in the different geographical regions of the county as well as in different levels of education.

Instruments

The *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* (see Appendix E) will be used to assess perceptions about principals, staff, and stakeholders based on the five dimensions of a professional learning community (PLC) and related attributes. The instrument breaks down professional learning communities into five dimensions with eight to ten critical attributes for each dimension. The following is a brief description by Hipp and Huffman (2002) of the five dimensions:

1. *Supportive and shared leadership*: School administrators participate democratically with teachers by sharing power, authority, and decision-making, and promoting and nurturing leadership among staff.
2. *Shared values and vision*: Staff shares visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning. Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching and learning.
3. *Collective learning and application of learning*: Staff at all levels of the school share information and work collaboratively to plan, solve problems and improve learning opportunities. Together they seek knowledge, skills, and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.
4. *Supportive conditions: Collegial relationships* include respect, trust,

norms of critical inquiry and improvement, and positive, caring relationships among students, teachers and administrators.

Structures include a variety of conditions such as size of the school, proximity of staff to one another, communication systems, and the time and space for staff to meet to examine current practices.

5. *Shared personal practice*: Peers visit with and observe one another to offer encouragement and to provide feedback on instructional practices to assist in student achievement and increase individual and organizational capacity.

The *Professional Learning Community Assessment* (PLCA) (Olivier, Hipp, & Huffman, 2003) extends Hord's (1998) work, the *School Professional Staff as Learning Community* questionnaire. In a field test of the PLCA instrument, 242 completed and usable surveys gave descriptive statistics that included minimum and maximum values, item means, and standard deviation. Factor analyses provided evidence of construct validity. The analysis utilized a series of statistical procedures for the total sample of respondents (n=242). Factor identification consisted of items reflecting the five dimensions of PLCs. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients were computed for the factored subscales of the measure. For the five factored subscales, the Alpha coefficients ranged from a low of .83 (Collective Learning and Application and Supportive Conditions) to a high of .93 (Shared Values and Vision) thus yielding satisfactory internal consistency (Alpha coefficient) reliability for the factored subscales (Hipp, et al., 2003).

Each of the 45 items of the *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* uses a five-point Likert-type scale that measures the degree of agreement with the statement: (1) strongly disagree, (2) somewhat disagree, (3) neither agree or disagree, (4) somewhat agree, and (5)

strongly agree. For the purpose of this study, the higher numbers of 4 and 5 will indicate the Institutionalization Phase of PLC development, the middle number 3 will indicate the Implementation Phase of PLC development, and the lower numbers of 1 and 2 will indicate the Initiation Phase of PLC development (see appendix G), Professional Learning Community Organizer.

The 45 questions of the *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* are divided into each of the six dimensions or descriptors as shown in Table 1. The left hand column displays the dimensions of professional learning communities with a column in the middle to further describe each dimension. The numbered items on the left are the number of the survey items that correspond with each dimension.

Table 1

Professional Learning Communities Assessment

Factor #	Description	Items
Shared and Supportive Leadership	Nurturing leadership among staff	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10
	Shared power, authority, and responsibility	
	Broad-based decision-making that reflects commitment and accountability	
Shared Values and Vision	Espoused values and norms	11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18
	Focus on student learning	
	High expectations	
	Shared vision guides teaching and learning	
Collective Learning and Application	Sharing information	19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26
	Seeking new knowledge, skills, and strategies	
	Working collaboratively to plan, solve problems, and improve learning opportunities	
Shared Personal Practice	Peer observations to offer knowledge, skills, and strategies	27,28,29,30,31,32
	Feedback to improve instructional practices	
	Sharing outcomes of instructional practices	
	Coaching and mentoring	

Supportive Conditions- Relational	Caring relationships	33,34,35,36
	Trust and respect	
	Recognition and celebration	
	Risk-Taking	
	Unified effort to embed change	
Supportive Conditions- Structural	Resources (time, money, materials, people)	37,38,39,40,41,42,43, 44,45
	Facilities	
	Communication systems	

The *Teacher Measures Assessment* Instrument (see appendix E) is a compilation of four instruments used in different studies: the *School Organisational Health Questionnaire* (Hart, Wearing, Conn, Carter, & Dingle, 2000), the *Teaching Satisfaction Scale* (Ho & Au, 2006), the *Teaching Autonomy Scale* (Pearson & Moomaw, 2006), and the *Teacher Efficacy Scale* (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Numbers 1,2,3,4 and 5 in the left hand column are five items included from the *TSS* and deal with satisfaction. Numbers 6,7,8,9 and 10 in the left hand column are five items included from the *SOHQ* and deal with morale. Numbers 11, 12, 13, and 14 in the left hand column are four items included from the *TAS* and deal with autonomy, and numbers 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 in the left and column are five items included from the *TES* that deal with efficacy. Validity and reliability data follows for each of the instruments.

The *School Organisational Health Questionnaire* (Hart et al., 2000) measures teacher morale and 11 separate dimensions of school organizational climate: appraisal and recognition, curriculum coordination, effective discipline policy, excessive work demands, goal congruence, participative decision-making, professional growth, professional interaction, role clarity, student orientation, and supportive leadership. The item reliabilities reported by Hart et al were low or

marginal levels, with 87 % being equal to, or greater than .55 ($M = .67$, $SD = .11$). The estimated true score correlations among the eight factors ranged from .49 to .82 ($M = .63$, $SD = .08$). This suggested that there was a marginal relationship between morale and the various dimensions of organizational health.

Teaching Satisfaction Scale (Ho & Au, 2006) consists of five items asking the teachers how he or she feels about his or her job satisfaction in various ways. These five items are derived from the *Life Satisfaction Scale* (LSS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Scores on the five-item *Teaching Satisfaction Scale* (Ho & Au, 2008) were validated on a sample of 202 primary and secondary school teachers. The TSS scores demonstrated good internal reliabilities, construct validities, and criterion-related validities. The TSS scores yielded on 2-week test-retest reliability coefficient of .76. The Ho and Au internal-consistency (alpha) coefficient was .77. The interitem correlations for the five TSS items ranged from .17 to .55. The corrected item-total correlations for the five TSS were .56, .56, .63, .66, and .34.

The *Teacher Efficacy Scale* (Ross & Bruce, 2007) measures responses to scale items about collective efficacy using both self-referent items and group-referent items. Scores on this five item efficacy scale have been shown to have adequate internal consistency and a one-factor structure. An exploratory factor analysis with principal axis factoring extracted a single factor from the five items in the Ross and Bruce study. Factor pattern coefficients ranged from .67 to .82 with an alpha coefficient of reliability for scores at .85. The scales are observed on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with higher values indicating a greater degree of agreement.

The *Teaching Autonomy Scale* (Pearson & Moomaw, 2006) contains items related to the general autonomy issues concerning classroom standards of conduct and personal on-the-job discretion such as those dealing with selection of activities and materials and instructional planning and sequencing. The four items selected from this instrument have an Item-Total

Correlation ranging from .48 to .62. Moomaw and Pearson alpha for autonomy was .83.

Since the *Teacher Measure Assessment* is a combination of other instruments, a pilot test was utilized to validate the instrument. A group of 17 educators were asked to complete the instrument and their answers were used to calculate internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha for satisfaction was .77; for morale was .82; for autonomy was .66; and, for efficacy was .81. Table 2 shows the Teacher Measure Assessment Instrument. The left hand column displays the items of the teacher measure instrument with a column in the middle to give the item number. The column on the left provides what dimension is being measured.

Table 2

Teacher Measures Assessment

Statement	Item #	Teacher Measure
My conditions of being a teacher are excellent.	1	Teacher Job Satisfaction
Being a teacher is close to my ideal.	2	
I am satisfied with being a teacher.	3	
So far I have gotten the important things I want from teaching.	4	
If I could choose my career over, I would change almost nothing.	5	
We have good team spirit in this school.	6	Teacher Morale
We have high morale in this school.	7	
We go about our work with enthusiasm.	8	
We take pride in this school.	9	
We have high energy in this school.	10	
What I teach in my class is determined	11	Teacher Autonomy

for the most part by myself.

The content and skills taught in my class are those I select.	12	
The selection of student-learning activities in my class is under my control.	13	
My job does not allow for much discretion on my part.	14	
When I really try, I can get through to the most difficult students.	15	Teacher Efficacy
If a student in my class becomes disruptive, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.	16	
If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to assess accurately whether the assignments was at correct level of difficulty.	17	
If I really try hard, I can get through To even the most difficult or unmotivated students.	18	
If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	19	
To what extent are you content with Your current salary?	20	Salary Contentedness
How many years have you taught?	21	Teaching Experience

Data Collection

After receiving approval of the Internal Review Board (IRB), a permission letter, cover letter, and copies of all survey instruments were given to the Director of Schools for the local

school system (see appendices B-E). With permission from the director of schools and the principals from each school, the researcher attended faculty meetings at all participating schools to explain the study. A cover letter (see appendix C) was given to all in attendance at the meetings that informed them of their role in the study. All in attendance were informed by both the cover letter and announcement that their contribution and responses were and would remain anonymous and that their participation was strictly on a voluntary basis. All educators were given the *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* to complete as well as the *Teacher Measures Assessment*. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaires after the faculty meeting. An envelope was left in the office to collect surveys and was picked up at a later time by the researcher. To protect the confidentiality of all participants, access to all surveys was restricted to the researcher only. Individual schools were never referred to by name to protect each from identification. The director of schools was given the option to receive an executive summary of the results upon completion of the study. All statistical analysis were presented in summary form with no one person or school being identified.

Summary

This chapter included a description of the study, research design, population, participants, sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. This is a quantitative study designed to investigate the relationship between professional learning communities and teacher measures of efficacy, job satisfaction, and morale. Chapter 4 will present in detail the results of the data, analysis of the data, and relevant findings from this study on the effects of learning communities.

CHAPTER 4

REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand and measure the components of professional learning communities that correlate with teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale. As seen in the literature, learning communities are viewed by some as the supportive structures needed to influence continual school improvement in teaching and learning. Collaborative communities may contribute to increased teacher efficacy and efforts of the whole faculty to produce positive effects on student learning.

Dimensions of these teacher learning communities: principal collegiality and participative leadership, shared vision and values, commitment to student learning, cooperative seeking for solutions, classroom visitation with insightful feedback, and supportive physical and relational conditions are thought to drive the professional community toward excellence in both teaching and learning.

Research Question

This study was designed to answer the overarching research question: Which of the six dimensions of the professional learning community: A) supportive and shared leadership, B) shared values and vision, C) collective learning and application, D) supportive conditions-relational, E) supportive conditions-structural, and F) shared personal practice correlate with teacher efficacy, teacher satisfaction, and teacher morale?

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The population of this study consisted of teachers in nine schools at all three levels throughout the county. Included in the study are 5 elementary, 3 middle, and 2 high schools. One school has both middle school teachers and high school teachers. There were 169 teachers who

participated in the study; 50 were males and 119 were females. Salary contentedness fell within a range where a majority of teachers were somewhat discontent or somewhat content with their present salaries. The majority of teachers participating were at the elementary level, with the next highest number participating at the middle school level, and the least number participating at the high school level. More teachers had 0-15 years experience with only 42 with 16 or more years experience. Analysis of selected characteristics of the participants is presented in the demographic profile table. The overall response rate of teachers participating in the *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* and the *Teacher Measures Assessment* was 56.1%. Table 3 presents the number of teachers who participated in this study with the *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* and the *Teacher Measures Assessment* Instruments.

Table 3

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Characteristics	N	%
Number of Teachers Surveyed	301	100
Number of Teachers Responding	169	56.1
Sex		
Male	50	29.6
Female	119	70.4
Salary Contentedness		
Very Discontent	20	11.8
Somewhat Discontent	51	30.1
Neither Discontent nor Content	30	17.8
Somewhat Content	53	31.4
Very Content	15	8.9
Level		
Elementary Teachers	71	42.0
Middle School Teachers	65	38.5
High School Teachers	33	19.5
Teaching Experience		
0-5	44	26.0
6-10	40	23.7
11-15	43	25.4
16-20	15	8.9
21-25	16	9.5
25+	11	6.5

Analysis of the Research Question

Which of the six dimensions of the professional learning community: A) supportive and shared leadership, B) shared values and vision, C) collective learning and application, D) supportive conditions- relational, E) supportive conditions-structural, and F) shared personal

practice correlate with teacher efficacy, teacher satisfaction, and teacher morale?

In an effort to uncover which independent variables (supportive leadership, shared values, collective learning, personal practice, supportive conditions-relational, and supportive conditions-structural) contributed more or less to the explanations and predictions of the dependent variables (teacher satisfaction, teacher morale, and teacher efficacy), a mean for each of the nine constructs was calculated to analyze this question statistically.

The *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* is an instrument that is designed to help identify learning community components for meaningful discoveries. The instrument is composed of 45 questions that can be divided into six specific construct variables. Using data collected for this study, Cronbach's coefficient Alpha was calculated to assess reliability for each construct measured. Alpha coefficients obtained were .94 for supportive leadership, .89 for shared values, .89 for collective learning, .88 for personal practice, .71 for supportive conditions relational, and .83 for supportive conditions-structural. Table 4 shows the Cronbach's reliability coefficient for the *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* constructs. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is a measure of a scale's internal consistency. The closer the coefficient is to 1.0, the higher the reliability.

The *Teacher Measures Assessment* is an instrument that is designed to help identify teacher dimensions. The instrument is composed of 24 questions that can be divided into six specific construct variables. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for teacher satisfaction was .84; for teacher morale was .92; for teacher autonomy was .91; and for, teacher efficacy was .84. Table 4 shows the Cronbach's reliability coefficient for the *Teacher Measures Assessment* as it pertains to the three dependent variables.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients for scores from the *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* and *Teacher Measures Assessment* range from .71 to .94 and indicate strong internal

consistency. Indications are that respondents who tended to select high scores for one item also tended to select high scores for the others; similarly, respondents who selected low scores for one item tended to select low scores for others.

After alpha coefficients of reliability were obtained, a correlation matrix was created for the variables studied. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations among the 12 variables: 1) satisfaction, 2) morale, 3) efficacy, 4) shared leadership, 5) shared vision, 6) collective learning, 7) personal practice, 8) conditions-relational, 9) conditions-structural, 10) salary contentedness, 11) experience, and 12) autonomy.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Satisfaction, Morale, Efficacy, Shared Leadership, Shared Vision, Collective Learning, Personal Practice, Conditions-Relational, Conditions-Structural, Salary Contentedness, Experience, and Autonomy

Variable	Correlations											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Satisfaction	-----											
2 Morale	.25*	-----										
3 Efficacy	.14	.34*	-----									
4 Supportive Leadership	.14	.26*	.23*	-----								
5 Shared Values	.17*	.41*	.20*	.65*	-----							
6 Collective Learning	.21*	.50*	.30*	.58*	.74*	-----						
7 Personal Practice	.12	.35*	.26*	.54*	.59*	.73*	-----					
8 Conditions-Relational	.22*	.49*	.22*	.40*	.68*	.66*	.56*	-----				
9 Conditions-Structural	.25*	.46*	.22*	.38*	.54*	.48*	.53*	.66*	-----			
10 Salary Contentedness	.04	.05	.16*	.13	.04	.09	.16*	.02	.11	-----		
11 Experience	.08	.15	.16*	.36*	.31*	.20*	.16*	.40*	.26*	-.03	-----	
12 Autonomy	.13	.20*	.20*	.15	.09	.13	.06	.14	.12	.35*	.04	-----
Mean	3.93	3.83	3.99	3.60	3.87	3.72	3.45	3.56	3.51	2.94	3.38	3.85
SD	.67	.83	.85	.83	.63	.70	.81	.68	.64	1.20	1.67	.82
Cronbach's Alpha	.84	.92	.84	.94	.89	.89	.88	.71	.83	NA	NA	.91

Note. n= 169 * p<.05

Table 4 presents Pearson's Correlation coefficients, means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's Alpha as they pertain to teacher satisfaction, morale, efficacy, supportive leadership, shared values, collective learning, personal practice, conditions-relational, conditions-structural, salary contentedness, experience, and autonomy. Pearson's Correlation coefficients obtained were .14 for satisfaction and supportive leadership, .26 for morale and supportive leadership, .23 for efficacy and supportive leadership, .17 for satisfaction and shared values, .41 for morale and shared values, .20 for efficacy and shared values, .21 for satisfaction and collective learning, .50 for morale and collective learning, .30 for efficacy and collective learning, .12 for satisfaction and personal practice, .35 for morale and personal practice, .26 for efficacy and personal practice, .22 for supportive conditions-relational, .49 for morale and supportive conditions-relational, .22 for efficacy and supportive conditions-relational, .25 for satisfaction and supportive conditions-structural, .46 for morale and supportive conditions-structural, and .22 for efficacy and supportive conditions-structural.

The r correlation coefficients range in value from .12 to .50. The closer a coefficient is to 1.0, the stronger the association; the closer a coefficient is to 0.0, the weaker the relationship. Coefficients below .30 are considered weak; those between .30 and .70 are moderate; those above .70 are fairly strong. Moderate associations exist between morale and five of the dimensions of the professional learning community, shared values, collective learning, personal practice, supportive conditions-relational, and supportive conditions-structural.

There are four significant relationships with satisfaction: satisfaction and supportive conditions-structural, satisfaction and supportive conditions-relational, satisfaction and collective learning, and satisfaction and shared values. These are listed in descending order with the strongest first and the weakest in the last position.

The professional learning community constructs form six significant relationships with the dependent variable morale. These are in descending order as follows: morale and collective learning, morale and supportive conditions-relational, morale and supportive conditions-structural, morale and shared values, morale and personal practice, and finally, morale and shared leadership.

Nine constructs form significant relationships with the dependent variable efficacy. In descending order of the strongest to the weakest relationship is efficacy and collective learning, efficacy and personal practice, efficacy and shared leadership, efficacy and supportive conditions-structural, efficacy and supportive conditions-relational; efficacy and shared values, efficacy and autonomy, efficacy and salary contentedness, and efficacy and teacher experience. Therefore, as PLC variables of supportive leadership, shared values, collective learning, personal practice, supportive conditions-relational, supportive conditions-structural, increase, so do the dependent variables of teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale increase, as well.

The analysis of all 12 factors show that the means range from a low of 2.94 with salary contentedness to a high of 3.99 with teacher efficacy. Means obtained were 3.93 for satisfaction, 3.83 for morale, 3.99 for efficacy, 3.60 for supportive leadership, 3.87 for shared values, 3.72 for collective learning, 3.45 for personal practice, 3.56 for supportive conditions-relational, 3.51 for supportive conditions-structural, 2.94 for salary contentedness, 3.38 for teacher experience, and 3.85 for autonomy. Standard deviations obtained were .67 for satisfaction, .83 for morale, .85 for efficacy, .83 for supportive leadership, .63 for shared values, .70 for collective learning, .81 for shared personal practice, .68 for supportive conditions-relational, .64 for supportive conditions-structural, 1.20 for salary contentedness, 1.67 for experience, and .82 for autonomy. The large SD values for morale, efficacy, shared leadership, shared personal practice, and autonomy indicate that while most feel they do experience high morale, efficacy, shared leadership, shared

personal practice, and autonomy, some feel that they do not experience these characteristics of professional learning communities.

Regression analysis further analyzes these data to determine how two or more independent variables work together in making sense of the variation that exists in the dependent variables. In multiple regression analysis predictions are made about the dependent variables by using linear regression. This concept builds on the use of a prediction equation that has the formula, $Y = a + bX_1 + bX_2 + bX_3 + bX_4 \dots + bX_n$ that contains a coefficient (b) for each predictor. Y is the value of the predicted dependent variable; X is the value of the independent variable or predictor. a is the constant or the value of Y when X is zero; b represents the predicted change in Y when X is changed by one unit (Nardi, 2006).

Each beta value, b , has an associated standard error indicating to what degree these coefficients may vary across different samples. These standard errors are used to determine whether or not the b value differs significantly from zero using the t -statistic. If the t -test associated with a b value is significant, then the predictor is making a significant contribution. Table 5 shows the regression of PLC factors and covariates on first dependent variable, efficacy.

Table 5

Regression of PLC Factors and Covariates on Efficacy

Variable	b	se	95% CI	t
Shared Learning	0.03	0.075	-0.12, 0.18	0.37
Shared Values	-0.10	0.121	-0.34, 0.14	-0.86
Collective Learning	0.21	0.113	-0.01, 0.43	1.87
Personal Practice	0.04	0.084	-0.13, 0.21	0.47
Conditions-Relational	-0.03	0.111	-0.25, 0.18	-0.31
Conditions-Structural	0.08	0.094	-0.11, 0.27	0.86
Salary Contentedness	0.04	0.039	-0.04, 0.11	0.94
Experience	0.04	0.030	-0.12, 0.10	1.35
Autonomy	0.10	0.057	-0.02, 0.21	1.72
Intercept	2.59	0.336	1.93, 3.26	7.72 *

Note. $R^2 = .145$, $\text{adj. } R^2 = .096$, $F = 2.993^*$, $df = 9$, $n = 169$.

$\underline{P} < .05$

Research Question, Part One, Efficacy

Which of the six dimensions of the professional learning community: A) supportive and shared leadership, B) shared values and vision, C) collective learning and application, D) supportive conditions- relational, E) supportive conditions-structural, and F) shared personal practice correlate with teacher efficacy?

Results of the regression analysis for teacher efficacy are reported Table 5. None of the nine predictors used in the regression analysis were statistically significant at the .05 level of significance. Two predictors, collective learning and autonomy, however, had p-values that were close to the .05 level for significance. Overall, 14% variance ($R^2 = .145$) in efficacy can be

predicted by the nine variables, and this R^2 value is statistically significant at the level ($F = 2.99, p < .05$). Why the overall model is significant when none of the individual predictors are significant is unclear. As noted above the two best predictors appear to be collective learning and autonomy. Both show marginal, positive associations. This suggests, weakly, that as collective learning is rated higher, so too is teacher efficacy. Similarly, as teacher autonomy is judged to be greater, so too is teacher efficacy. Table 6 shows the regression of PLC factors and covariates on the second dependent variable, satisfaction.

Table 6

Regression of PLC Factors and Covariates on Satisfaction

Variable	b	se	95% CI	T
Shared Learning	0.03	0.090	-0.15, 0.21	0.36
Shared Values	-0.07	0.144	-0.36, 0.21	-0.50
Collective Learning	0.19	0.134	-0.08, 0.46	1.41
Personal Practice	-0.13	0.100	-0.33, 0.07	-1.30
Conditions-Relational	0.05	0.132	-0.21, 0.31	0.40
Conditions-Structural	0.23	0.112	-0.01, 0.46	2.08*
Salary Contentedness	-0.01	0.046	- 0.10, 0.08	-0.17
Experience	-0.00	0.035	-0.07, 0.07	-0.06
Autonomy	-0.07	0.067	-0.07, 0.20	1.02
Intercept	2.60	0.400	1.81, 3.39	6.50*

Note. $R^2 = .093$, $\text{adj. } R^2 = .042$, $F = 1.817$, $df = 9$, $n = 169$.

$p < .05$

Research Question, Part Two, Teacher Satisfaction

Which of the six dimensions of the professional learning community: A) supportive and shared leadership, B) shared values and vision, C) collective learning and application, D) supportive conditions- relational, E) supportive conditions-structural, and F) shared personal practice correlate with teacher satisfaction?

Results of the regression analysis for teacher satisfaction are reported in Table 6. One of the nine predictors used in the regression analysis was statistically significant at the .05 level of significance, supportive conditions-structural. Overall, 9.3% variance ($R^2 = .093$) in satisfaction can be predicted by the nine variables. As more emphasis was given to structural elements such as collaborative work time, collective learning and shared practice, open dialogues, fiscal resources availability, appropriate technology availability, human resource support, attractive and inviting facilities, close proximity of grade levels, and adequate flow of communication systems across the entire school community including central office personnel, parents, staff, and community members, the greater the level of satisfaction among teachers. Table 7 shows the regression of PLC factors and covariates on the third dependent variable, morale.

Table 7

Regression of PLC Factors and Covariates on Morale

Variable	b	se	95% CI	t
Shared Learning	-0.06	0.094	-0.25, 0.12	-0.66
Shared Values	-0.03	0.150	-0.33, 0.27	-0.19
Collective Learning	0.50	0.140	-0.23, 0.78	3.58*
Personal Practice	-0.14	0.104	-0.35, 0.07	-1.32
Conditions-Relational	0.17	0.138	-0.10, 0.45	1.26
Conditions-Structural	0.34	0.117	-0.11, 0.57	2.92*
Salary Contentedness	-0.03	0.048	-0.12, 0.07	-0.54
Experience	-0.01	0.037	-0.08, 0.07	-0.17
Autonomy	-0.14	0.070	-0.00, 0.27	1.91
Intercept	0.53	0.418	-0.29, 1.36	1.28

Note. $R^2 = .352$, $\text{adj. } R^2 = .315$, $F = 9.594^*$, $df = 9$, $n = 169$.

$p < .05$

Research Question, Part Three, Teacher Morale

Which of the six dimensions of the professional learning community: A) supportive and shared leadership, B) shared values and vision, C) collective learning and application, D) supportive conditions- relational, E) supportive conditions-structural, and F) shared personal practice correlate with teacher morale?

Results of the regression analysis for teacher morale are reported in Table 7. Two of the nine predictors used in the regression analysis were statistically significant at the .05 level of significance, collective learning and supportive conditions-structural. Overall, 35.2% variance ($R^2 = .352$) in morale can be predicted by the nine variables. As more emphasis was given to

collective learning elements such as collaborative work times, collegial relationships, learning through open dialogues, respect for diverse ideas leading to continual inquiry, professional development focused on teaching and learning, and staff and stakeholders committed to solving problems, the greater the level of morale among teachers. Similarly, as more emphasis was given to structural elements such as collaborative work time, collective learning and shared practice, open dialogues, fiscal resources availability, appropriate technology availability, human resource support, attractive and inviting facilities, close proximity of grade levels, and adequate flow of communication systems across the entire school community including central office personnel, parents, staff, and community members, the greater the level of satisfaction among teachers.

Summary

The overarching research question was addressed: Which of the six dimensions of the professional learning community: A) supportive and shared leadership, B) shared values and vision, C) collective learning and application, D) supportive conditions-relational, E) supportive conditions-structural, and F) shared personal practice correlate with teacher efficacy, teacher satisfaction, and teacher morale? The previous section addresses the findings obtained from the data analysis as it pertains to the dependent variables, i.e. teacher efficacy, teacher satisfaction, and teacher morale.

This chapter included a demographic profile of the respondents, Cronbach's Alpha Reliability for PLC Assessment and analysis, Cronbach's Reliability for Teacher Measures and analysis, an analysis of the research question using correlation and multiple regression analysis, and a summary of the data findings. Chapter 5 will present in detail the summary, conclusions, and implications of this study on professional learning communities and teacher efficacy, teacher satisfaction, and teacher morale.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

Research over the last two decades has supported the concept of schools as learning organizations. Senge (1990) views schools as learning organizations with professional commitments to capture and share learning to benefit individuals, teams, and the organizations. This process aligns the collective capacity to sense changing environments, inputting new knowledge through continuous learning and change. In *The Fifth Discipline* Senge (1990) describes a model of five interdependent disciplines necessary for organizational learning: systems thinking, personal mastery, shared vision, team learning, and mental models.

Huffman and Hipp (2003) took the Senge model and further applied his five interdependent disciplines necessary for organizational learning to the educational world. Six dimensions were created as they applied to the schools as professional learning communities. The dimensions or attributes of these teacher learning communities became the focus of this study.

The primary goal of this research was to identify the dimensions of professional learning communities that support teacher efficacy, teacher satisfaction, and teacher morale. Transforming the six dimensions of learning communities and the six dimensions of teacher measures into mathematical constructs permitted the collection of data which were then examined and evaluated. The sampling was from nine schools throughout a certain school district in Georgia.

To gather data for the study, the survey method was utilized. Two instruments were used in this study: the *Professional Learning Community Assessment* (Olivier, Hipp, & Huffman, 2003) and the *Teacher Measures Assessment*, which was created for this study. These were

distributed to 301 teachers, of which 56.1% (n = 169) responded. The *Professional Learning Communities Assessment* consists of 45 questions that cover the six dimensions of learning communities. Data from the instruments analyzed with descriptive statistics, Pearson's Correlation, and regression analysis were presented in Chapter 4. The results are summarized in the next section.

Summary of the Findings

Research Question, part 1

Which of the six dimensions of the professional learning community: A) supportive and shared leadership, B) shared values and vision, C) collective learning and application, D) supportive conditions- relational, E) supportive conditions-structural, and F) shared personal practice correlate with teacher efficacy?

Teacher Efficacy

Teachers judged themselves capable of teaching with an efficacy level of 3.99 on a 5 point scale. Correlation analysis determined that all six independent variables pertaining to the professional learning community were significantly associated with teacher efficacy at .05 level. Collective learning had the strongest association, .30; personal practice was next,.26; shared leadership followed in line with .23; supportive conditions-structural and relational carry a .22 coefficient; and finally, shared values impacted the least at .20.

Regression analysis showed that of the six factors associated with teacher efficacy, there were no relationships that are statistically significant, therefore teacher efficacy and the six independent variables of shared leadership, shared values, collective learning, personal practice, conditions-relational, and conditions-structural did not appear to be related at the .05 level. However, collective learning and autonomy were close to the threshold level with a p-value of .06 which showed some statistical evidence that there may be a relationship worth considering

for future studies. This dimension of collective learning put in place such practices as the existence of collegial relationships committed to school improvement, searching for solutions to address diverse student needs, and opportunities and structures existing for collectively learning through open dialogue.

Research Question, part 2

Which of the six dimensions of the professional learning community: A) supportive and shared leadership, B) shared values and vision, C) collective learning and application, D) supportive conditions- relational, E) supportive conditions-structural, and F) shared personal practice correlate with teacher satisfaction?

Teacher Satisfaction

Teachers had a satisfaction level of 3.93 on a 5 point scale. Correlation analysis determined four of the six independent variables pertaining to the professional learning community had a significant association with teacher satisfaction. These all fell into the lower levels of significance: supportive conditions-structural had .25, supportive conditions-relational had .22, collective learning had .20, and shared values had .17.

Regression analysis indicated that of the six factors relating to teacher satisfaction, there was one that was statistically significant, supportive conditions-structural, ($t = 2.08$, $p < .05$). As the elements of supportive conditions-structural increased, so, too, did teacher satisfaction. This attribute had as its elements, time to collaboratively work, time for collective learning and sharing practices, availability of appropriate technology and instructional materials, availability of resource people, and a communication system that allows for a flow of information across the entire school community.

Research Question, part 3

Which of the six dimensions of the professional learning community: A) supportive and

shared leadership, B) shared values and vision, C) collective learning and application, D) supportive conditions- relational, E) supportive conditions-structural, and F) shared personal practice correlate with teacher morale?

Teacher Morale

Teachers had a morale level of 3.93 on a 5 point scale. Correlation analysis determined that all six independent variables pertaining to the professional learning community were significantly associated with teacher morale at $< .05$ level. Collective learning had the strongest association, .50; supportive conditions-relational was next at .49; supportive conditions-structural was third at .46; shared values was fourth at .41; personal practice was fifth at .35; and in last position was shared leadership at .26. The first four had a moderate but significant association with teacher morale.

Regression Analysis indicated that of the nine factors related to teacher morale, there were two that were statistically significant: collective learning, ($t = 3.578$, $p < .05$) and supportive conditions-structural, ($t = 2.922$, $p < .05$). As collective learning and supportive conditions-structural increased so, too, did teacher morale. The collective learning attribute of professional learning communities had certain conditions in place that facilitated these communities such as time being set apart for teachers to share strategies and seek solutions for student needs. The supportive conditions-structural attribute of professional learning communities supported teacher learning by providing both human and capital resources and allowing for the flow of communication to reach each stakeholder. However, teacher autonomy was close to the threshold level with a p-value of .06 which showed some statistical evidence that there may be a relationship between teacher morale and teacher autonomy that may be worth considering for future studies. Teacher autonomy was described as the need for the teacher to teach what he/she determined, the need for the teacher to select the content and skills, and the

need for the teacher to select the classroom activities. Supportive leadership, shared values, and supportive conditions- relational did not appear to be related to teacher morale. Regression analysis indicated that approximately 35.2% of the variation in morale could be explained by the combined effect of the nine independent and control variables, i.e. shared leadership, shared values, collective learning, personal practice, supportive conditions-relational, supportive conditions-structural, salary contentedness, experience, and autonomy.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the findings from this study and from those found in prior research, some similarities and differences are highlighted. The following sections are divided by findings from this research and prior research as they relate to the dependent variables of efficacy, satisfaction, and morale; the independent variables, professional learning community attributes; as well as, the control variables of teacher autonomy and teacher salary contentedness.

Discussion of Findings on Teacher Efficacy

In the Cowley (1999) study internal and external measures of teacher efficacy were not significantly related to perceptions of the school as a PLC. In the current study correlation analysis determined that all six independent variables pertaining to the PLC were significantly associated with teacher efficacy at the .05 level. However, regression analysis showed that none of the six PLC dimensions were associated with teacher efficacy at the .05 level. In the Ross and Gray (2006) study, collective teacher efficacy strongly predicted commitment to community partnerships. In the present study regression analysis indicated that collective learning was close to .05 which may indicate that further study is needed to explore the efficacy and collective learning constructs as they relate to community partnership commitments. In the Nir and Kranot (2006) study principal's leadership style did influence and shape the organizational setting, but it was suggested that principal leadership style was more likely linked to teacher job satisfaction.

In the current study correlation analysis determined that supportive and shared leadership was significantly associated with teacher efficacy. Once again, regression analysis determined that supportive and shared leadership were not associated with teacher efficacy.

Discussion of Findings on Teacher Satisfaction

Nir and Kranot (2006) determined that principal leadership style was more likely to increase teacher job satisfaction; in this study four of the six attributes of the professional learning community, supportive conditions-structural, supportive conditions-relational, collective learning, and shared values correlated significantly to job satisfaction at the .05 level. As these professional learning constructs increased, so did teacher job satisfaction. Fraser, Draper, & Taylor (1998) showed that teachers rated friendliness of staff, intellectual challenge, and autonomy at the top of the teaching preferences list; the first two preferences were characterized as supportive conditions-relational in the present study and were highly related to satisfaction. The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher (2006) results indicated a 67% teacher dissatisfaction level with salary; in this study a similar result was indicated with a 62% teacher dissatisfaction rate with current salary. In the Ouyang and Paprock (2006) study most teachers in both China and the United States were satisfied with their jobs. The current study teachers had a satisfaction level of 3.93 on a 5 point scale which indicated that teachers were generally satisfied with their jobs.

Discussion of Findings on Teacher Morale

In the Rafferty (2002) study a significant relationship was found between teacher morale levels and their level of satisfaction with their principals. Correlation analysis findings from the current study demonstrated a moderate association between supportive and shared leadership and morale. Findings from the Houchard (2005) study demonstrated a significant relationship between perceived leadership practices and teacher morale factors. Once more correlation

analysis determined a moderate but significant relationship existed between shared and supportive leadership. However, regression analysis determined no statistically significant relationship between morale and shared and supportive leadership. In this study regression analysis determined that collective learning and morale were significantly related. Collective learning has as its indicators the collegial relationships that allow staff to reflect commitment to school improvement efforts, collaborative commitment to school improvement efforts, and collective learning that applies new knowledge to solve problems. As these indicators of the collective learning dimension increased, so too, did teacher morale. In the Joyous, Faith, and Marilyn (2007) study teachers were positive about establishing a no-blame culture in the school and felt that they could count on support from their colleagues in the form of experience, expertise, and knowledge.

Discussion of Findings on Professional Learning Communities

In the present study no theory of PLC was discovered, and no links between findings here and PLC findings were established. The six dimensions of PLCs, shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, shared personal practice, supportive conditions-relational, and supportive conditions-structural were the kind of things that built efficacy, satisfaction, and morale in the previous studies. A look at the mean for each of the six independent variables gave some insight as to why the results that theory and prior research predicted were not obtained. The Professional Learning Community Organizer (Huffman and Hipp, 2003) divided the school phases of development into three phases of development, Initiation, Implementation, and Institutionalization. As stated earlier, the lower numbers indicated the Initiation Phase of PLC development, the middle number indicated the Implementation Phase of PLC Development, and the higher numbers indicated the Institutionalization Phase of PLC Development. The means for each of the six dimension were

3.60 for shared and supportive leadership, 3.87 for shared values and vision, 3.72 for collective learning and application, 3.45 for shared personal practice, 3.56 for supportive conditions-relational, and 3.51 for supportive conditions-structural. All of the means were over the three mark approaching the four level, but they did not reach the upper numbers of the scale which indicated that the schools were not at the Institutionalization Phase of Development. The middle numbers determined that the schools were in the Implementation Phase of Development. At this phase of development these schools demonstrated shared power, authority and responsibility; a focus on students with high expectations; collaborative problem solving; shared outcomes of new practice with feedback; and, conditions of trust and respect with recognition and celebration as part of these teacher learning communities. This may have determined why the PLC dimensions have not more strongly related to the dependent variables of teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale. The school system has moved towards the Institutionalization Phase of development. This phase will have schools with broad-based decision making for commitment and accountability; shared vision that guides teaching and learning; application of knowledge, skills, and strategies; analysis of student work and related practices, and risk taking and unified effort to embed change. At his stage of development we may see which components of professional learning communities correlate more highly with teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale.

Implications

Highlighted in the literature is the premise that teachers who feel supported in their own learning and practice are more committed and effective than those who do not have this support. These teachers were more likely to adopt new classroom behaviors and promote higher student achievement. The interrelations between professional learning communities and teacher measures of efficacy, satisfaction, and morale were explored. This research evaluated which components of learning communities correlated more highly with teacher measures in hopes that

teachers may have the needed support to face continual educational challenges.

It is the hope of this researcher that the data from this study will assist state level, district level, and school level leaders in making informed decisions about enhancing support for the attributes of the professional learning community within the local schools and throughout the district, and into the state. Based upon the findings of this study, the following points should be considered:

1. Since the strength of association between teacher measures of efficacy, satisfaction, and morale and professional learning communities was significant, more effort should be made by state, district, and local school leaders to move school communities to the PLC Institutionalization Stage of Development.
2. School systems across the state need to scaffold more support in the form of workshops and training in relation to building effective professional learning communities.
3. Georgia should provide the school systems and school leaders definitions, guidelines, and/or policies that address the attributes of professional learning communities.
4. Regional Education Service Agencies should train county and school administrators in the skill of scaffolding support for these TLC communities.
5. Leadership programs in colleges and universities should hold seminars with educational leaders who have experienced success in moving their teacher learning communities through the phases of development of TLCs, Initiation, Implementation, and Institutionalization.
6. Administrators in this county should increase the attention that is paid to incorporating structural elements in the teachers' workday since it plays an important role in both teacher satisfaction and teacher morale. These indicators were continually rated lower than the others: time provided to facilitate collaborative work, school schedule promotes

collective learning, resources are available for professional development, resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning, communications systems promote a flow of information among staff, and communications systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community including: central office personnel, parents, and community members.

Dissemination

The leadership in the local system would be the most important group to review the findings. This would give them the opportunity to see the variations in the establishment of the constructs of the professional learning communities. The results of this study could further their understanding of the issues surrounding the attributes of these learning communities as they relate to the continuum of success in teaching and learning.

Additionally, at the state level, educational leaders should review the findings to have a more complete understanding of the need for structural elements to be placed in the daily schedule of classroom teachers. These time allotments for collective learning and collaborative planning should be of the utmost importance in all three school levels.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based upon the findings of this study;

1. Further study should be conducted to determine if the knowledge and experience of principals about professional learning community dimensions is sufficient for the success of these communities.
2. A comprehensive study should be conducted to determine the amount of time allotted to the development of these communities throughout the state school systems.
3. Educational Leadership programs at colleges and universities across the state could utilize these findings as they prepare future school leaders in the importance of

developing strong professional learning communities that display all characteristics of systems learning.

4. Other states may want to pursue similar studies to determine what PLC dimensions need to be put in place to promote success in their school systems.
5. And lastly, a national standard could be developed that would pave the way for successful teaching and learning communities to developed throughout our nation.

The purpose of this research was to identify the components of professional learning communities that correlated with teacher efficacy, teacher satisfaction, and teacher morale. While no theory of PLCs was discovered, this study provided information that highlighted the need for school systems and local school communities to develop PLCs that exhibit the Institutionalization Phase of Development that should promote increased teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale as discovered in earlier research. This increase in teacher measures has as a by-product, increased student productivity. As local school system leaders and school principals gain knowledge into moving schools through the phases of development of professional learning communities more quickly, the more likely it is that teachers will have greater levels of efficacy, satisfaction, and morale. Leaders will have the scaffolding ability necessary to promote strong educational structures that have the needed strength to withstand trials that come with continual mandates from the state and national levels. Regardless, of the initial mandate to promote teacher success, the product will always be more productive learners. The student will be the beneficiary of this increased attention paid to the dimensions of professional learning communities.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table A1

Studies Related to Professional Learning Communities

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Hord (1997)	Initiate federally funded project to create PLCs	30 educators from around the nation	Qualitative: face to face interviews, phone interviews Quantitative: Survey	Representative sample produced six schools that exhibited many characteristics of PLCs
Hipp & Huffman(2003)	Identify further exemplars and non-exemplars that hinder or facilitate creating and sustaining PLCs	Six high readiness schools located in the South and Midwest regions of the nation	Qualitative: Survey	Analysis of data resulted in <i>Professional Learning Communities Organizer (PLCO)</i> and <i>Professional Learning Community Assessment (PLCA)</i>
Hipp, K.K. et al. (2003)	An international view of PLCs:			
	U.S.-to examine evidence of efforts taking place in schools that were actively engaged in creating PLCs	PLC schools in rural, urban, and suburban PreK-12 schools in U.S.	Quantitative: Survey	Five case studies written to engage educators in open-dialogue about PLCs
	Great Britain- to identify and provide practical examples of effective PLCs	PLC schools in Great Britain	Quantitative: Survey	Identified 5 participant groups related to PLC stages: non-starters, starters, developers, mature, and regressors

Mitchell (2007)	Determine the impact of PLC classroom practices	Five elementary schools in California with 65% or more English Language Learners, Socio-Economically Disadvantaged, or Hispanic/Latino	Mixed method case study: survey, interviews, review of school documents	Findings demonstrate a significant difference in the level to which Higher Performing Schools integrate PLC practices
Graham (2007)	Investigates the relationship between PLC activities and teacher improvement	6 th , 7 th , and 8 th grade teachers in a first year middle school	Mixed method case study	-Results demonstrated that professional learning community activities that comprise same-subject, same-grade teacher teams had the potential to achieve significant improvements in teaching effectiveness
Williams, R. et al (2008)	Study traces the process for developing a school-based instrument that identifies systemic barriers that may prevent schools from becoming professional learning communities	Four schools located in two school districts in Canada with a variety of school settings that include different sizes, location, and grade levels	Mixed-methods action research	School based instrument developed that identifies the readiness level for adopting PLC practices

Table A2

Studies Related to Teacher Efficacy

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Hipp & Bredeson (1995)	Study the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and principal leadership style	10 principals, 280 teachers in Wisconsin	Quantitative: Survey Qualitative: Interviews	8 principal leadership behaviors identified that influence teacher self-efficacy
Cowley (1999)	To investigate the relationship of several constructs: -teacher efficacy, -professional learning community -organizational efficacy	Charleston, West Virginia schools that were undergoing journeys of continuous school improvement	Quantitative: Survey	Results indicate: -as measures in internal efficacy increase, measures in external efficacy tend to decrease -internal and external measures of teacher efficacy are not significantly related to perceptions of the school as a PLC -teachers' years of experience had no bearing on their perceptions of school as a PLC
Nir & Kranot (2006)	Explore whether personal teacher efficacy varies across leadership styles and what is the added value of the principal's leadership style when job related variables are statistically controlled	Elementary school teachers in 134 Israeli schools	Quantitative: Survey	-Teachers' perceived GTE is not related to school principal's leadership style, but reflects that GTE and PTE are two differentiated properties of teachers' efficacy -principal's leadership style did influence and shape

Ross & Gray (2006)	To study the effects of teacher efficacy by comparing two models derived from Bandura's social-cognitive theory: Model A- transformational leadership would contribute to teacher commitment to organizational values through collective teacher efficacy Model B- leadership would have direct effects on teacher commitment and indirect effects through teacher efficacy	Elementary teachers in 218 schools in Ontario, Canada	Quantitative; Survey	<p>the organizational setting</p> <p>-may indicate that principal leadership style is more likely to increase teacher job satisfaction</p> <p>-transformational leadership impacted collective teacher efficacy</p> <p>-collective teacher efficacy strongly predicts commitment to community partnerships</p> <p>-transformational leadership has a direct effect on teacher commitment, independent of agency beliefs</p>
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Table A3

Studies Related to Teacher Morale

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Rafferty (2002)	To study the relationship between teacher morale levels and turnover rates; to study the relationship between level of satisfaction with principal and teacher turnover rates	Primarily kindergarten through sixth grades teachers	Quantitative: Survey	- no significant correlation between teacher morale levels and teachers' decisions to change schools -no significant relationship between level of satisfaction with principals and teachers' decisions to change schools -significant relationship between teachers' morale levels and their level of satisfaction with their principals
Houchard (2005)	To study the relationship of principal leadership practices, teacher morale, and student achievement	Two elementary, four middle, and one high school in Mitchell County, North Carolina Schools	Quantitative: Survey and End-Of-Grade/End-Of-Course tests	-Significant relationships existed between perceived leadership practices and teacher morale factors -Teacher morale has a positive correlation with the End-Of-Grade/End-Of-Course test scores
Joyous, Faith, & Marilyn (2007)	Track the experiences of staff as they engage in a whole school revitalization project (IDEAS) focusing on teachers' professionalism, pedagogy, and staff morale	A government aided all girl school (Marymount Catholic School) in Singapore with 1400 pupils and 58 teaching staff	Quantitative: Survey, diagnostic inventory Qualitative: Interviews	-teachers perceive the school as becoming successful in obtaining greater school achievements -teachers perceive a positive change in their working environment and school support resulting in teachers becoming more satisfied with their job and confident in

teaching
-teachers have a clear sense of purpose and focus in teaching and are moving together collaboratively
-staff were positive about establishing a no-blame culture in the school and agreed that every person should be responsible and accountable for his/her actions
- teachers feel more empowered to experiment and lead in their pedagogies
-teachers feel that they no longer work in isolation; they could count on support provided by their colleagues in the form of experience, expertise and knowledge

Table A4

Studies Related to Teacher Job Satisfaction

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Fraser, Draper, & Taylor (1998)	To examine specific aspects of job satisfaction	Primary and secondary teachers in Edinburg, Scotland with 5, 10, and 15 years teaching experience registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland	Quantitative: Survey Qualitative: Interview	-teachers agree about how they rate different facets of teaching in terms of satisfaction (friendliness of staff, intellectual challenge, and autonomy at the top) (workload, administration and society's view of teachers at the bottom) -teachers with longer service are overall less satisfied with teaching
Ouyang & Paprock (2006)	To compare teacher job satisfaction and retention in the U.S. and China in terms of community factors, school factors, and teacher characteristics	Elementary, middle, and high school teachers in the U.S.; primary teachers (grades 8 and lower) and secondary teachers (grade 9 and up) in China	Quantitative: Survey	-most teachers in both countries are satisfied with their jobs -both have to deal with community and school factors that have both positive and negative impact -indicates satisfying teachers' needs is essential for retention and should involve the community and school

MetLife Survey of the American Teacher (2006)	Examines perceptions of what it takes to be a teacher in American public schools today and the experiences that contribute to a fulfilling career in the field	Teachers, school principals, education leaders involved in the training and development of teachers, education school deans, and chairpersons of education programs	Quantitative: Survey Qualitative: Telephone Interviews	-56% of teachers report levels of being very satisfied with their occupation -School satisfaction does not vary by school level -Satisfaction does vary by school location -Satisfaction level does vary with % minority students -9 % are very dissatisfied -67% of teachers are dissatisfied with their salary
Bindhu & Sudheeshkumar (2006)	To compare job satisfaction and stress coping skills between male and female primary school teachers	500 teachers (165 males and 335 females) in Kerala, India	Quantitative: Survey	-no significant difference is found between males and females in stress coping skills - a positive correlation is found between job satisfaction and stress coping skills

Table A5

Studies Related to Teacher Autonomy

STUDY	PURPOSE	PARTICIPANTS	DESIGN/ ANALYSIS	OUTCOMES
Pearson & Moomaw (2005)	To examine the relationship between teacher autonomy and on-the-job stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism	300 Florida teachers in 3 neighboring districts in elementary, middle, and high schools	Quantitative: Survey	-as curriculum autonomy increased, on-the-job stress decreased -as teacher autonomy increased, empowerment and professionalism increased -as job satisfaction, empowerment and professionalism increased, on-the-job stress decreased -greater job satisfaction was associated with higher degrees of professionalism and empowerment
Crocco & Costigan (2007)	To determine the relationship between high-stakes testing and teacher autonomy and pedagogy	Teachers in New York City with no more than 5 years teaching experience, and who were predominantly white women	Qualitative: Interviews, “focus group” conversations, observations, and journal writing,	-unintended consequences of accountability movement in NYC’s public schools may be the narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy, particularly in ELA and social studies

APPENDIX A

Letter of Permission: School System

January 12, 2008

Dear Director of Schools,

I am currently a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern University. Approval to conduct this study was obtained from GSU Internal Review Board. The purpose and overall goal of this study is to understand better the relationship between professional learning communities and teacher efficacy, satisfaction, and morale. I plan on using two instruments for the study, The *Professional Learning Community Assessment* and *Teacher Measures Assessment*. I would like to include five schools in Richmond County: Warren Road Elementary School, Freedom Park Elementary School, Davidson Fine Arts School, Tutt Middle School, and Westside High School. All responses will remain confidential, with neither schools, principals, nor teachers names ever being revealed.

I respectfully request your permission to survey all teachers in these five schools. Your permission and support are crucial to this study and will be greatly appreciated. I have included a copy of the survey instruments, and cover letters for your review.

Thank you for your time and consideration with this request. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at National Hills Elementary at 706.737.7266, my home at 706.733.2481, or on my cellular phone at 706.951.1248 or my email at Weathsh@rcboe.org. The results of this study will be available to you upon your request.

Sincerely,

Shirley R. Weathers
Doctoral Candidate
Georgia Southern University

APPENDIX B

Educators' Cover Letter

January 8, 2009

Dear Fellow Educator,

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern University. I am currently conducting a study for my dissertation dealing with the relationship between professional learning communities and teacher efficacy, satisfaction and morale. This study will be conducted through the use of surveys given to teachers in five Richmond County Schools. This instrument will be used for the sole purpose of gathering data for the study and should only take a few moments of your time. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participants will be asked to fill out two surveys. The first survey deals with your school as a learning community. The other survey measures teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, and morale.

Your input is essential to the success of my study. Because these surveys remain “nameless”, your anonymity is guaranteed. Completion of the surveys will be considered permission to use your responses in this study. All surveys are identical and your responses will be kept confidential. Neither you nor your school will be identified in the results.

Respectfully,

Shirley R. Weathers
Doctoral Candidate
Georgia Southern University

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Form

**Georgia Southern University
Department of Leadership, Technology, and Human Development****Informed Consent**

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to identify characteristics and interrelationships between the attributes of the professional learning community and measures of teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, and morale.

Procedures to be Followed: Respondents are educators in two elementary, two middle, and two high schools in this system. You will need to answer 45 questions on one survey and 23 on another survey.

Discomforts and Risks: There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort.

Possible Benefits:

Subjects will not be compensated for their time but could possibly benefit from taking surveys of this nature by simply taking the time to think about their own efficacy, morale, and job satisfaction and what motivates them individually. The added benefits to the school community may include a renewed commitment to the school as a learning community.

Duration/Time: *The Professional Learning Communities Assessment* and the *Teacher Measures Assessment* surveys should take a total of fifteen to twenty minutes to complete.

Statement of Confidentiality: Confidentiality for the participants will be a primary concern for this research. These surveys will remain “nameless” through the study guaranteeing the anonymity of any and all who participates.

Right to Ask Questions: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. 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: Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Participation in this research may end at any time by not returning the instruments. You do not have to answer any question that you do not want to answer.

Penalty: There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study. You may decide at any time that you don’t want to participate further and may withdraw without penalty or retribution.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: A Study to Identify the Components of Professional Learning Communities that Correlate with Teacher Efficacy, Satisfaction, and Morale.

Principal Investigator: Shirley R. Weathers
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706.951.1248
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Faculty Advisor: Dr. Charles Reavis
P.O. Box 8131
Statesboro, Georgia 30460
912.478.5307
careavis@georgiasouthern.edu

Participant Signature

Date

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

Investigator Signature

Date

APPENDIX D

*Teacher Measures Assessment***Directions:**

This questionnaire contains a number of statements about teacher efficacy, job satisfaction, and morale. There are no right or wrong responses. Read each statement and then use the scale below to select the scale point that best reflects your personal degree of agreement with the statement. Circle the appropriate number to the right of each statement. Be certain to select only one response for each statement. *Completion and return of the survey questionnaire implies that you agree to participate and your data may be used in this research.*

- Scale:** 1= Strongly Disagree (SD)
 2= Disagree (D)
 3= Neither Agree Nor Disagree (N)
 4= Agree (A)
 5= Strongly Agree (SA)

		STATEMENTS				
		SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	My conditions of being a teacher are excellent.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Being a teacher is close to my ideal.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I am satisfied with being a teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	So far I have gotten the important things I want from teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	If I could choose my career over, I would change almost nothing.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	We have good team spirit in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	We have high morale in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	We go about our work with enthusiasm.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	We take pride in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	We have high energy in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	What I teach in my class is determined for the most part by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	The content and skills taught in my class are those I select.	1	2	3	4	5

13.	The selection of student-learning activities in my class is under my control.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	My job does not allow for much discretion on my part.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	If a student in my class becomes disruptive, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	If one of my students couldn't do a class assignment, I would be able to assess accurately whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.	1	2	3	4	5

Demographics

20. To what extent are you content with your current salary?

Very discontent Somewhat discontent Neither Content nor Discontent

Somewhat contented Very contented

21. Number of years you have taught:

0-5 6-11 11-15 21-25 25+

24. Gender:

Male Female

23. Grade level currently teaching:

Elementary Middle High

APPENDIX E

*Professional Learning Communities Assessment***Directions:**

This questionnaire assesses your perceptions about your principal, staff, and stakeholders based on the five dimensions of a professional learning community (PLC) and related attributes. There are no right or wrong responses. This questionnaire contains a number of statements about practices which occur in some schools. Read each statement and then use the scale below to select the scale point that best reflects your personal degree of agreement with the statement. Circle the appropriate number provided to the right of each statement. Be certain to select only one response for each statement. *Completion and return of the survey questionnaire implies that you agree to participate and your data may be used in this research.*

- Scale:** 1= Strongly Disagree (SD)
 2= Somewhat Disagree (D)
 3= Neither Agree or Disagree (N)
 4= Somewhat Agree (A)
 5= Strongly Agree (SA)

	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	The staff is consistently involved in discussing and making decisions about most school issues.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The principal incorporates advice from staff to make decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The staff has accessibility to key information.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The principal is proactive and addresses areas where support is needed.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Opportunities are provided for staff to initiate change.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The principal shares responsibility and rewards for innovative actions.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The principal participates democratically with staff sharing power and authority.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Decision-making takes place through committees and communication across grade and subject areas.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Stakeholders assume shared responsibility and accountability for student learning without evidence of imposed power and authority.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	A collaborative process exists for developing a shared sense of values among staff.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Shared values support norms of behavior that guide decisions about teaching.	1	2	3	4	5

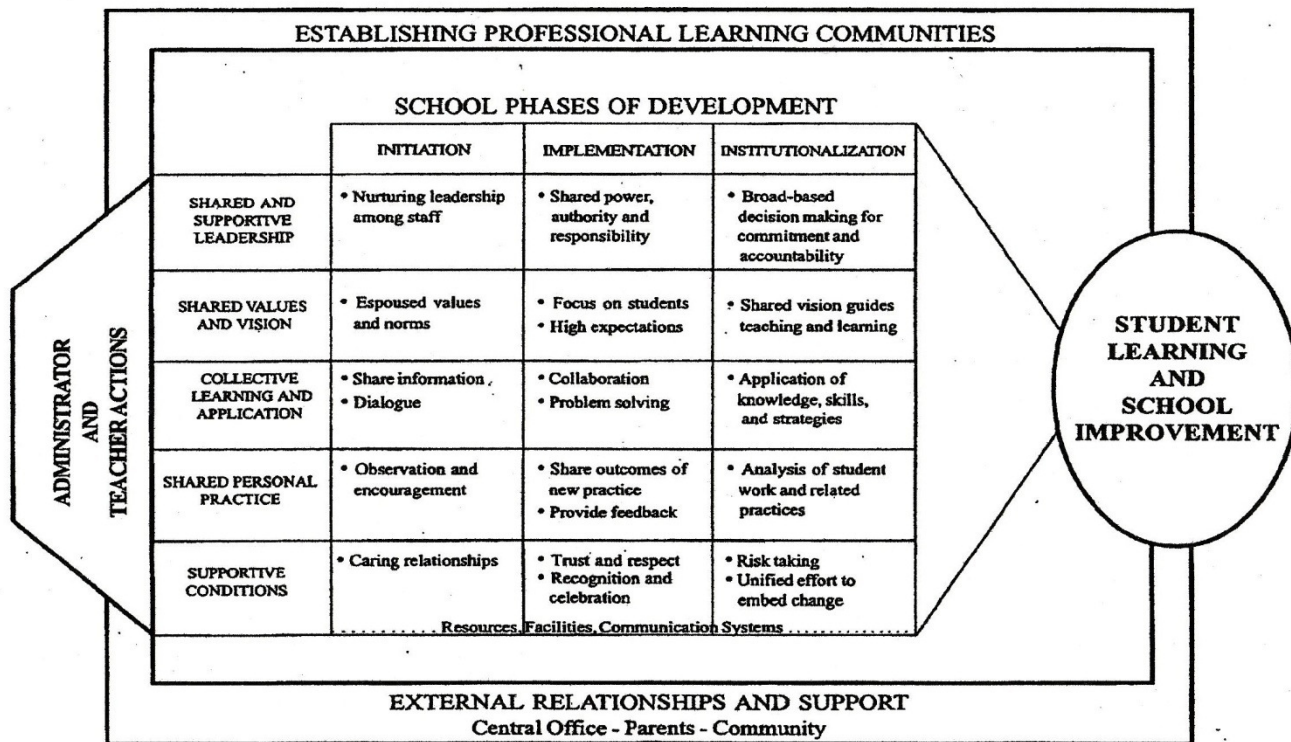
13.	The staff shares visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Decisions are made in alignment with the school's values and vision.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	A collaborative process exists for developing a shared vision among staff.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	School goals focus on student learning beyond test scores and grades.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Policies and programs are aligned to the school's vision.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Stakeholders are actively involved in creating high expectations that serve to increase student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	The staff work together to seek knowledge, skills and strategies and apply this new learning to their work.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Collegial relationships exist among staff that reflects commitment to school improvement efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	The staff plan and work together to search for solutions to address diverse student needs.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	A variety of opportunities and structures exist for collective learning through open dialogue.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	The staff engages in dialogue that reflects a respect for diverse ideas that lead to continued inquiry.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Professional development focuses on teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	School staff and stakeholders learn together and apply new knowledge to solve problems.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	School staff is committed to programs that enhance learning.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Opportunities exist for staff to observe peers and offer encouragement.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	The staff provides feedback to peers related to instructional practices.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	The staff informally shares ideas and suggestions for improving student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	The staff collaboratively reviews student work to share and improve instructional practices.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	Individuals and teams have the opportunity to apply learning and share the results of their practices.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	Caring relationships exist among staff and students that are built on trust and respect.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	A culture of trust and respect exists for taking risks.	1	2	3	4	5

35.	Outstanding achievement is recognized and celebrated in our school.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	School staff and stakeholders exhibit a sustained and unified effort to embed change into the culture of the school.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	Time is provided to facilitate collaborative work.	1	2	3	4	5
38.	The school schedule promotes collective learning and shared practice.	1	2	3	4	5
39.	Fiscal resources are available for professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
40.	Appropriate technology and instructional materials are available to staff.	1	2	3	4	5
41.	Resource people provide expertise and support for continuous learning.	1	2	3	4	5
42.	The school facility is clean, attractive and inviting.	1	2	3	4	5
43.	The proximity of grade level and department personnel allows for ease in collaborating with colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
44.	Communication systems promote a flow of information among staff.	1	2	3	4	5
45.	Communication systems promote a flow of information across the entire school community including: central office personnel, parents, and community members.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX F

Professional Learning Community Organizer

Professional Learning Community Organizer



Source: Huffman, J. B. & Hipp, K. K. (2003). Professional learning community organizer. In J. B. Huffman & K. K. Hipp (Eds.). Professional learning communities: Initiation to implementation (in-press). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

